Enhancing agricultural development project implementation in Nigeria: The case for early-stage communication and stakeholder engagement strategies

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Abstract

The practical implementation of agricultural development projects is crucial to advancing socio-economic growth in Nigeria, where the agrarian sector forms a vital part of the economy. Despite progress in project execution, many agricultural initiatives lack foundational communication strategies and stakeholder engagement frameworks in their early stages. This study examines the impact of these missing elements on project outcomes, drawing on the author's first-hand experiences and insights from training programs focused on strategic communication and stakeholder management for agricultural projects across Nigeria. The study's findings reveal that the absence of structured communication plans and stakeholder engagement mechanisms leads to various project challenges, including delays, increased costs, and reduced effectiveness due to misaligned stakeholder expectations and inadequate community support. This research advocates for a paradigm shift toward integrating communication and stakeholder engagement strategies from the inception of agricultural projects. Through a qualitative methodology, including field observations and literature reviews, this study underscores the necessity of these strategies to foster trust, transparency, and collaboration among all project stakeholders. Key recommendations are provided for policymakers, development organisations, and project managers to prioritise the early adoption of comprehensive communication and engagement frameworks, enabling smoother project execution and enhanced sustainability. This approach aligns with Stakeholder Theory and Participatory Development Theory, emphasising the need for inclusivity, empowerment, and continuous engagement throughout the project lifecycle. By embedding these principles, agricultural development projects in Nigeria can achieve greater resilience, foster community buy-in, and promote sustainable agricultural growth, ultimately contributing to broader national development goals.

Keywords: Agricultural Development, Stakeholder Engagement, Communication Strategies, Sustainable Project Implementation

Introduction

Development projects are fundamental to the socio-economic advancement of any nation, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. These projects, spanning infrastructure, healthcare, education, and agriculture sectors, address pressing societal needs and foster sustainable growth. However, the successful implementation of these projects often hinges on more than just technical and financial resources; it requires robust communication strategies and active stakeholder engagement from the outset. Despite significant investments and efforts in project execution, a critical gap has been identified in the Nigerian context - the absence of structured communication and stakeholder management plans in many state-led projects. This gap was starkly revealed during interactive strategic communications and stakeholder management training conducted across various Nigerian states over the past four years. In these interactive sessions, it became evident that none of the states had established communication strategies or stakeholder engagement plans before the commencement of implementation and had advanced well into at least two years or more before considering the need for strategies or technical support on the subject matter.

The success of development projects is often contingent on effective communication and stakeholder engagement strategies. This is even more imperative in Nigeria, where diverse cultural, economic, and political factors play crucial roles in project implementation. This makes early-stage communication and stakeholder engagement particularly important. According to the Project Management Institute, PMI (2021), and as widely recognised within project management discussions, about 90% of project management is spent communicating with stakeholders. However, many development projects do not incorporate communication strategy into their plans or give it any consideration until about the second or more years of implementation. Ineffective communication puts the project's success at risk, as the efficiency and sustainability of development initiatives could be seriously jeopardised. Projects that lack well-defined communication and stakeholder management frameworks are more likely to have miscommunication, misplaced expectations, and less transparency. Similarly, a project's failure may result from a lack of support from the community, resistance, and stakeholder participation.

This paper explores the critical importance of integrating communication and stakeholder engagement strategies at the early stages of project implementation. By analysing the current practices observed during the training programmes and interactions and drawing on relevant literature and case studies, this study underscores the need for a paradigm shift in project management approaches within the agriculture sector in Nigeria. The objective is to provide actionable recommendations for policymakers, project managers, and development organisations to enhance project success and ensure long-term impact. In the following sections, the paper will delve into the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of communication and stakeholder engagement in project management, present detailed findings from the recent training programmes, and offer practical steps for developing and integrating these strategies into project planning and execution. Ultimately, this study advocates for a comprehensive and proactive approach to project management that can significantly improve development outcomes in Nigeria.

Project Implementation and Agricultural Development Policies in Nigeria

As one of Africa's largest economies, Nigeria has seen many development projects to bolster its socio-economic growth. Historically, these projects span various sectors, including infrastructure, healthcare, education, and agriculture. Nigeria's national development plans, such as the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) 2017-

2020, included development initiatives to rebuild economic growth through diversification, human capital investment, and creating an internationally competitive economy. Agriculture has long been a strong backbone of Nigeria's economy, providing livelihoods for a significant portion of the population and contributing to the national Gross Domestic Product, GDP. The sector has evolved through various phases, from subsistence farming practices to more structured, policy-driven approaches to boost productivity and ensure food security.

In the pre-colonial era, Nigerian agriculture was predominantly small-scale and subsistence-based, with farming practices tailored to local ecological conditions. The colonial period saw the introduction of cash crops such as cocoa, palm oil, and groundnuts, cultivated primarily for export. This shift had a lasting impact on the agricultural landscape and economy. After gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria's government initiated several agricultural development programs to improve food production and reduce dependency on food imports. Key initiatives included the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) in the 1970s and the Green Revolution in the 1980s. While each of these programmes sought to improve food production, the Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) represented the major practical demonstration of Nigeria's integrated approach to agricultural development (Alahira, 2012). Despite these efforts, the sector struggled with inadequate infrastructure, poor funding, and policy inconsistencies. In recent decades, Nigeria has seen a renewed focus on agricultural development through programs like the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and the Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP), 2016-2020 and the current National Agricultural Technology and Innovation Policy (NATIP), 2022 – 2027. These initiatives aim to modernise agriculture, enhance value chains, and increase private sector participation. The current emphasis is diversifying the economy away from oil dependence and achieving sustainable agricultural growth.

Challenges in Implementing Agricultural Development Projects

Despite numerous initiatives, implementing agricultural development projects in Nigeria faces several challenges: Poor infrastructure, including farm access roads, processing and storage facilities, and irrigation systems, hamper agricultural productivity and market access. Farmers often struggle to transport their produce to markets, leading to post-harvest losses and reduced incomes. Access to finance: Limited access to finance is another major constraint for farmers and agribusinesses, especially smallholder farmers. High interest rates, collateral requirements, and lack of financial literacy impede investment in modern farming practices and technologies. Inconsistent Policies: Frequent government policy and programme changes create uncertainty and disrupt long-term planning. Inconsistent implementation of agricultural policies undermines efforts to achieve sustained growth and development. Climate change: This poses significant risks to agriculture, with increased frequency of extreme weather events, changing rainfall patterns, and rising temperatures. Environmental degradation, such as deforestation and soil erosion, worsens these challenges. Capacity: There is a persistent need for capacity building among farmers and extension workers. Limited access to training and extension services restricts the adoption of modern agricultural practices and technologies.

Early Integration of Project Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Plans

A communication strategy is a systematic plan that ensures effective information exchange among project stakeholders. It involves planning, implementing, and monitoring communication activities to support project objectives and foster

stakeholder engagement. Effective communication ensures that all stakeholders are informed, engaged, and aligned with the project goals. It also entails setting clear objectives, identifying target audiences, crafting messages, and selecting appropriate communication channels. Clear and consistent communication promotes transparency, which builds trust and credibility among stakeholders. It ensures all parties know the project goals, progress, and challenges. Effective communication ensures the project's goals and expectations are in sync by informing all stakeholders. This alignment helps to avoid miscommunication and disputes. Prompt communication enables the early identification and resolution of concerns and prevents minor issues from growing into more serious ones. Maintaining open lines of communication makes it possible to get stakeholder feedback, which is essential for ongoing development and project success.

Strategic communication can help disseminate critical information about project timelines, good agricultural practices, and available resources for agricultural projects, raising awareness and promoting best practices among farmers and other stakeholders. It also aids in building trust and collaboration among farmers, government agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders. Clear and consistent messaging helps build trust, fosters collaboration and ensures that project objectives are well understood and supported. Early-stage communication is crucial in setting the tone for project implementation and ensuring all stakeholders are aligned with the project's goals and objectives. Early communication helps build trust, clarify expectations, and prevent misunderstandings that could lead to project delays or failures (Heath & Frey, 2004). A study by Mazzei and Ravazzani (2015) on corporate communication strategies highlights the importance of transparent and consistent communication from the project's inception to foster stakeholder trust and cooperation.

In Nigeria, the lack of early-stage communication has been identified as a significant barrier to the successful implementation of development projects. A study by Nwafor (2018) found that many projects in Nigeria failed to achieve their intended outcomes due to inadequate communication strategies, leading to stakeholder disinterest and resistance. The research emphasised the need for a strategic communication plan that includes clear messaging, regular updates, and active listening to stakeholder concerns from the project's outset. A communications and stakeholder management plan specifies who should be informed, what information should be provided, and when, just like a project management plan lays out tasks and deadlines. This methodical approach guarantees that no vital communication gets lost in the shuffle. As Minois (2023) puts it, there is a need to create a thorough communication plan before the project even begins, outlining the objectives, target audiences, channels, etc., and updating frequently.

Stakeholder engagement involves identifying, understanding, and involving all relevant stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle. This engagement is critical for gaining stakeholder buy-in, addressing concerns, and leveraging local knowledge and resources (Bryson, 2004). Effective stakeholder engagement strategies include stakeholder mapping, regular consultations, participatory decision-making, and feedback mechanisms. In the Nigerian context, stakeholder engagement can be particularly challenging due to the country's diverse and often conflicting interests. A study by Idemudia (2009) on the Niger Delta region demonstrates that development projects often face resistance from local communities when their interests are not adequately considered. The research underscored the importance of inclusive engagement strategies that recognise and address different stakeholder groups' unique needs and expectations. Additionally, a study by Ogunyemi (2020) highlights successful case studies in Nigeria where early and continuous stakeholder engagement led to more sustainable project outcomes. The research shows that projects prioritising stakeholder engagement from the planning stage were more likely to achieve community support, reduce conflicts, and enhance project sustainability.

Understanding stakeholders' perspectives can uncover risks that may not have been initially apparent. Projects that incorporate stakeholders' inputs are more likely to be relevant to their needs and sustainable in the long term. Engaged stakeholders are more committed to maintaining project outcomes. Effective stakeholder engagement helps prevent and resolve conflicts by fostering a collaborative environment where issues can be addressed constructively. Informed stakeholders contribute valuable insights that enhance project planning and design, ensuring realistic and feasible plans. For stakeholder engagement to succeed, mapping is imperative. Stakeholder mapping identifies and analyses individuals, groups, or organisations with a stake in a project. This analysis helps understand stakeholder interests, influence, and potential impact on the project. Stakeholder mapping ensures that all relevant parties are considered in the project planning and implementation. Engaging stakeholders such as farmers' associations, local governments, and community leaders can enhance project acceptance, mitigate risks, and foster collaboration.

Regular communication and engagement foster a sense of accountability among project teams and stakeholders, as they are kept informed and involved in the project's progress, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and stakeholders are aware of their roles and responsibilities. Projects with robust communication and stakeholder engagement strategies will likely meet their objectives and deliver lasting benefits. Strategic communication and effective stakeholder engagement are essential to overcome these challenges and ensure the successful implementation of agricultural development projects. Encouraging the adoption of new technologies and practices in agriculture requires behaviour change communication strategies. These strategies should be tailored to local contexts and address cultural, social, and economic factors influencing behaviour. Engaging stakeholders at all levels, from farmers to policymakers, is fundamental to the success of agricultural development projects. Inclusive and participatory approaches ensure that diverse perspectives are considered and projects are aligned with the needs and priorities of the communities they aim to serve. Involving stakeholders in the planning and decision-making processes fosters ownership and accountability. Participatory planning helps identify local challenges and opportunities, ensuring that projects are relevant and responsive to community needs. Collaborative partnerships with government agencies, the private sector, civil society, and international organisations enhance resource mobilisation, knowledge sharing, and capacity building. Multi-stakeholder partnerships leverage the strengths of different actors and create synergies for sustainable development. Continuous monitoring and evaluation involving stakeholders ensure that projects stay on track and achieve their intended outcomes. Feedback mechanisms enable adaptive management and allow timely adjustments based on lessons learned.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on two theories: (1) Stakeholder Theory and (ii) Participatory Development Theory. Combining Stakeholder Theory and Participatory Development Theory provides a comprehensive framework for examining the role of early-stage communication and stakeholder engagement in optimising development project implementation. Stakeholder Theory offers insights into various stakeholders' identification, analysis, and engagement, while Participatory Development Theory emphasises the importance of communication, inclusivity, empowerment, and collaboration. Together, these theories underscore the need for a holistic approach to stakeholder management that begins at the project's inception and continues throughout its lifecycle. By integrating these theories, the paper provides a nuanced analysis of how early-stage stakeholder engagement strategies can lead to more effective, inclusive, and sustainable development projects in Nigeria.

Developed by R. Edward Freeman in the mid-1980s, Stakeholder Theory posits that organisations should consider the interests and influences of all stakeholders, not just shareholders. According to Freeman (1984, Pg. 46), "Stakeholders are defined as any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives". The central tenet of Stakeholder Theory is the need for organisations to create value for all stakeholders, not just shareholders. This involves understanding and addressing different stakeholder groups' needs, concerns, and expectations. The theory emphasises the following core principles: Stakeholder Identification and Analysis: Organizations must identify their stakeholders and analyse their needs, interests, and potential impact on the project. Stakeholder Engagement: Active engagement with stakeholders through communication, consultation, and collaboration is essential to consider their input and concerns. Balancing Interests: Organizations must strive to balance the interests of various stakeholders to achieve sustainable success. Ethical Considerations: Ethical behaviour and responsibility towards stakeholders are fundamental to Stakeholder Theory.

Several scholars have explored the application of Stakeholder Theory in the context of project implementation. Freeman & McVea (2001) highlight that stakeholder engagement is not just a reactive strategy but should be proactive and integrated from the earliest stages of project planning. This proactive approach helps identify potential conflicts and align project goals with stakeholder expectations, which is crucial for the success of development initiatives. Brugha and Varvasovszky (2000) argue that incorporating stakeholder analysis early in project planning helps map out various stakeholders' power dynamics and interests. This understanding allows project managers to devise strategies to mitigate risks, leverage support, and ensure that the project aligns with the local context and needs. Friedman and Miles (2006) discuss the importance of trust and communication in stakeholder engagement. According to them, early incorporation of a stakeholder engagement plan fosters trust, reduces resistance, and increases the likelihood of project acceptance and success. Similarly, Eskerod and Huemann (2013) emphasise that early stakeholder engagement is essential for managing stakeholder expectations and avoiding scope creep in development projects. They argue that stakeholder management should be viewed as a continuous process that begins at the project's inception and continues through its lifecycle. Turner & Zolin (2012) provide evidence that projects with early and effective stakeholder engagement are more likely to meet their objectives on time and within budget. They also suggest that early engagement helps identify critical success factors and potential challenges that might be overlooked.

Nigerian scholars provide valuable insights into applying Stakeholder Theory locally, highlighting challenges and strategies for effective stakeholder engagement in development projects. Sadiq A. (2018) explores the challenges and opportunities of stakeholder engagement in Nigerian development projects. He emphasises the need for early stakeholder involvement to address local needs and mitigate conflicts that may arise due to diverse interests. Bola, A. (2020) examines how stakeholder theory can be applied in the Nigerian public sector, particularly in large-scale infrastructure projects. She discusses the importance of stakeholder mapping and engagement strategies for project success. Although Osemeke, L., & Adegbite, E. (2016) focused on corporate governance, their study touches on stakeholder engagement in Nigeria, particularly how regulatory environments influence stakeholder relationships. Ojo, A., & Fadeyi, O. (2019) address the challenges of engaging stakeholders in rural development projects. The authors highlight the role of local communities, traditional leaders, and government agencies in successful project implementation. Eyinla, B. (2017) critically assesses the application of Stakeholder Theory in promoting sustainable development in Nigeria. He argues for a more inclusive approach to stakeholder engagement that considers the socio-economic realities of the Nigerian context.

Challenges of Applying the Stakeholder Theory

While Stakeholder Theory is widely regarded as a valuable framework for early stakeholder engagement, some challenges have been identified. The first challenge is determining which stakeholders should be prioritised, especially in resource-constrained projects. Greenwood (2007) critiques Stakeholder Theory by questioning whether it is always possible or desirable to engage all stakeholders, particularly in projects with conflicting stakeholder interests. This raises the need for a nuanced approach to stakeholder engagement that considers power dynamics and the potential for stakeholder exclusion. Clegg, Kornberger, and Pitsis (2005) also discuss the potential for stakeholder theory as a managerial tool that can sometimes overlook the broader social implications of development projects. They advocate for a more critical approach that questions the underlying assumptions of stakeholder theory, particularly in development contexts where power imbalances are prevalent.

Stakeholder Theory provides a robust framework for understanding and managing the complex relationships underpinning development projects. Its relevance to early stakeholder engagement is well-supported by academic literature, with numerous scholars advocating for its integration into the planning and execution phases of projects. However, challenges remain, particularly in balancing the interests of diverse stakeholders and managing the power dynamics that can influence project outcomes. Therefore, while stakeholder theory is essential for development practitioners, it must be applied thoughtfully and contextually to achieve the best results. This can be achieved by conducting a holistic stakeholder mapping that clearly defines the stakeholder influence and interest dynamics. In the context of development projects in Nigeria, where stakeholder dynamics can be complex due to diverse social, economic, and political factors, Stakeholder Theory underscores the need for a systematic approach to stakeholder management. It highlights the potential for improved project outcomes through proactive stakeholder engagement, which aligns with the paper's focus on early-stage communication strategies.

Participatory Development Communication Theory

The Participatory Development Communication Theory (PDCT) emerged in response to the limitations of traditional top-down development approaches that often overlooked the needs and inputs of local communities. The theory advocates involving community members in planning, implementing, and evaluating development projects. It emphasises the importance of local knowledge, empowerment, and active participation in achieving sustainable development outcomes. It is rooted in the belief that sustainable development can only be achieved when those affected by development initiatives actively engage in decision-making. Participatory Development Communication Theory is grounded in several fundamental principles: Inclusivity: All stakeholders, particularly marginalised and vulnerable groups, should have a voice in the development process. Empowerment: Development initiatives should empower local communities by building their capacity and providing them with the tools and resources to take control of their development. Local Knowledge: Local knowledge and experiences are invaluable and should be integrated into project planning and decision-making. Collaboration: Development efforts should be collaborative, involving partnerships between communities, governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders. Sustainability: Participatory approaches promote sustainable development by ensuring that projects are relevant, accepted, and maintained by the community.

Participatory Development Theory is particularly relevant to the paper's focus on early-stage communication and stakeholder engagement strategies in development project implementation. The theory provides a strong rationale for involving and communicating with stakeholders, especially local communities, from the beginning of

the project lifecycle. It highlights the benefits of leveraging local knowledge and fostering a sense of ownership among stakeholders, leading to more sustainable and effective project outcomes. By allowing rural communities to be contributors and communicators and not merely passive consumers, they can help change hearts and minds (Mundy & Sultan, 2001). In the Nigerian context, where socioeconomic disparities and governance issues often compound development challenges, Participatory Development Theory offers a pathway to more inclusive and equitable development. By applying this theory, the paper illustrates how early-stage participatory approaches can enhance project relevance, acceptance, and long-term success. It also aligns with the paper's argument that early and continuous stakeholder engagement can mitigate risks, address community needs, and foster collaborative solutions to development challenges.

Relevance of PDCT to Early Integration of Communication Strategy in Projects

Banjo (2015) explores the role of indigenous media in participatory development communication within Nigeria. She argues that integrating traditional communication channels with modern media enhances community participation and ensures that development communication strategies are culturally relevant and practical. Okon (2017) examines the integration of participatory development approaches in Nigerian rural development projects. He highlights the importance of early stakeholder engagement and local communication methods to foster community ownership and ensure the sustainability of development initiatives. Nwosu (2019) discusses the practical challenges and opportunities of applying participatory communication strategies in Nigeria. He emphasises the need for culturally sensitive approaches and the inclusion of local knowledge in designing and implementing communication plans for development projects. Ojebode (2014) investigates the role of community radio in participatory development, focusing on how it has been used to enhance community engagement in development projects. He advocates using community-driven communication platforms to ensure local populations receive and act upon development messages. Obono (2016) examines the intersection of traditional media and participatory development in Nigeria, arguing that traditional forms of communication can be effectively leveraged to enhance participation in development projects. He stresses the importance of integrating these media into communication strategies from the early stages of project planning.

Robert Chambers (1994) emphasises the importance of putting the "last first" by involving marginalised communities in decision-making. His work highlights how communication strategies should be co-designed with local stakeholders to ensure that they are culturally relevant, context-specific, and responsive to the needs and realities of the communities involved. In their work on power and participatory development, Nici Nelson and Susan Wright (1995) argue that communication strategies must be designed to empower communities rather than inform them. They stress the importance of creating spaces for dialogue where local voices can be heard and influence project design and implementation. Cornwall (2002) discusses the significance of participation in development communication, advocating for the use of participatory tools such as focus group discussions, community meetings, and participatory rural appraisal (PRA). She argues that these tools enable the co-creation of communication strategies that reflect local stakeholders' needs, preferences, and knowledge.

Participatory Development Theory has been applied to the early design and integration of communication strategies. Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) emphasise that communication strategies should be integral to project planning. They advocate for a dialogic approach to communication, where project implementers and stakeholders engage in ongoing dialogue to co-create and adjust communication strategies as the

project evolves. Servaes (2008) highlights the need for participatory communication strategies that are not only informative but also transformative. He argues that early integration of these strategies ensures that communication is a tool for social change, empowering communities to take ownership of development projects. Waisbord (2001) discusses the importance of participatory communication in health development projects, arguing that communication strategies should be designed with active input from local communities to ensure they are effective and culturally appropriate. He provides case studies showing how early stakeholder involvement in communication planning leads to more successful project outcomes. Gumucio (2001), in his work on participatory communication and social change, advocates for the use of participatory media to integrate communication strategies into development projects. He highlights the importance of early involvement of communities in the design of communication materials and channels to ensure that they resonate with local audiences.

Challenges of Applying the Participatory Development Communication Approach

While Participatory Development Theory offers a valuable framework for integrating communication strategies, challenges exist. The first issue is the assumption that all stakeholders have equal power and capacity to participate in communication planning. White (1999) argues that power imbalances can lead to tokenistic participation, where the most marginalised voices are still not adequately heard. This highlights the need for careful facilitation and power-sensitive approaches to participatory communication. Mohan (2001) also raises concerns about the potential for participatory approaches to be co-opted by external agendas. He argues that participatory communication strategies can become formalities rather than meaningful engagements without a genuine commitment to local ownership. Mohan calls for a deeper understanding of local contexts and a commitment to genuinely participatory processes. Cleaver (1999) critiques the overly idealistic view of participation in development, pointing out that it can sometimes lead to unrealistic expectations and project delays.

The caution notwithstanding, several studies have explored the interplay between communication, stakeholder engagement, and project success. For example, a meta-analysis by Zwikael and Smyrk (2015) found that projects with robust communication and stakeholder engagement strategies were significantly more likely to succeed. The analysis emphasised the need for early and proactive communication to address potential issues before they escalate. In the Nigerian context, a comprehensive study by Ofori and Anumba (2021) examined various development projects across different sectors. The study concluded that early-stage communication and stakeholder engagement were critical factors in determining project success and that projects which invested in these strategies reported higher levels of stakeholder satisfaction, reduced delays, and improved overall project performance. From the preceding, we can safely suggest that while participation is essential, it must be balanced with practical considerations and an understanding of the limitations and complexities of participatory approaches.

Integration of Empirical Findings with the Theoretical Frameworks

The empirical research reveals that many agricultural development projects in Nigeria suffer from poorly defined communication and stakeholder engagement strategies at the inception stage. This gap often results in missed opportunities for early engagement, relationship building, and information dissemination, ultimately impacting project success. Absence of Early Engagement: The recurrent absence of well-defined communication strategies in the early stages of projects directly contradicts the

principles of Stakeholder Theory. This oversight undermines the ability to identify and address stakeholder concerns from the beginning, leading to difficulties in managing relationships and aligning interests throughout the project lifecycle. Impact on Stakeholder Relationships: The delayed development of communication strategies, often only considered in the second or third year of a project, indicates a failure to manage stakeholder expectations and build trust, as Stakeholder Theory recommends. This delay aggravates issues such as project abandonment and ineffective stakeholder management, as observed in the findings of this paper. Late Integration of Communication Strategies: The observation that communication strategies are often not developed until later stages reveals a significant gap in applying Participatory Development Theory, as the theory highlights the importance of early and ongoing stakeholder involvement to ensure that their perspectives and needs are integrated into the project design and implementation processes. Missed Opportunities for Participation: The empirical data showing that projects miss critical opportunities for engagement and information dissemination aligns with the theory's assertion that participatory processes should be embedded from the outset. This gap in practice undermines the project's ability to achieve meaningful participation and effective stakeholder engagement, leading to reduced impact and success. According to Lindenberg & Bryant (2001), the only key to unlocking the impasse is increasing the participation of "beneficiaries" in project identification and implementation.

This paper emphasises the importance of integrating Stakeholder Theory and Participatory Development Theory from the beginning of project planning to address the identified gap. This integration involves Early Identification and Engagement: Applying Stakeholder Theory by identifying key stakeholders and their interests early in the project cycle and developing comprehensive communication strategies from the outset. Embedding Participation: Following Participatory Development Theory by involving stakeholders in decision-making processes from the start, ensuring their input shapes the project's design and implementation.

Methodology

This paper employs a qualitative research methodology, integrating primary data from field experiences and secondary data from document reviews. The approach is designed to explore the relevance and impact of early-stage communication and stakeholder engagement strategies in the implementation of development projects in Nigeria. The research follows a case study design, leveraging my extensive field experience and observations during training sessions with project staff across various Nigerian states. This design is chosen to provide in-depth insights into the practical challenges and opportunities associated with integrating communication and stakeholder engagement strategies in development projects.

These field experiences provided a unique opportunity to observe the existing practices or lack thereof regarding communication and stakeholder engagement strategies in development projects, especially at the early stage. Field notes were systematically recorded, focusing on key themes such as project implementation challenges, the role of communication, and the level of stakeholder involvement. Secondary data is obtained through a comprehensive review of relevant literature, including academic articles, project reports, and policy documents. The document review also focuses on existing research on Stakeholder Theory and Participatory Development Theory and their application in development projects. The review also includes an analysis of best practices and case studies from Nigerian and international contexts, providing a broader perspective. A triangulation approach is employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. Data from the field experience, document review, and work experience are cross-referenced to identify consistencies and discrepancies. This triangulation enhances the robustness of the conclusions

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drawn from the study. Given the reliance on professional experiences and field observations, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants involved in the training sessions are maintained. The study adheres to ethical guidelines, ensuring that the insights drawn from these sessions are used responsibly and with respect for the participants' privacy.

Discussion of Findings:

Late Integration of Communication/Stakeholder Engagement Plans in Projects

I have had the opportunity to interact directly with project teams, first as a team member and secondly as Lead Trainer on Strategic Communication and Stakeholder Engagement for some international donor-funded projects within the agricultural sector in Nigeria. These projects, which are located across different states in Nigeria, are funded by key development partners, including the World Bank Group, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), etc. The training programmes and interactions were a significant step forward in enhancing the strategic communication and stakeholder engagement capabilities of the project teams at the state and national levels. The key objective of the training was to equip the team with the skills and knowledge necessary for effective project communication and stakeholder management.

Over 300 project team members were involved in the training and interactions that
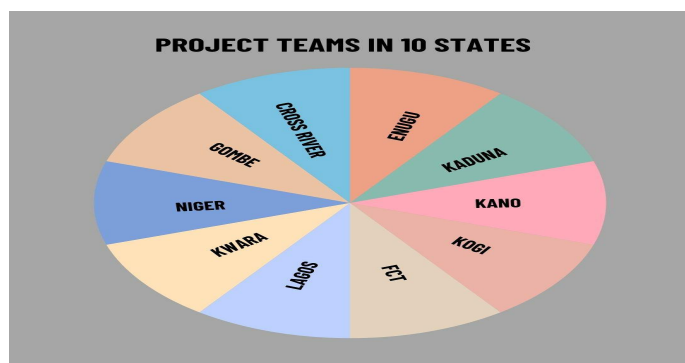
took place across ten states, namely: Cross River, Enugu, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Kwara, Kogi, Niger, Lagos and the FCT, Abuja. Generally, the teams at the various states displayed a high level of enthusiasm and readiness to learn throughout the training sessions, showing a keen interest in enhancing their skills. The interactive nature of the training, combined with practical exercises, facilitated understanding and demonstration of lessons learnt. Their active engagement and willingness to embrace new concepts were commendable. However, gaps in specific areas where further development is necessary were identified to fully leverage the benefits of the training and ensure long-term success.

The project teams comprise professionals of diverse backgrounds, including Project Coordination, Agro-Processing, Productivity Enhancement, Gender, Environmental and Social Safeguards, Communication, Knowledge Management, ICT, Business and Commercialization, Value Chain Development, Rural Infrastructure Engineering, Project Administration, M&E, Financial Management, Internal Audit, Procurement, Agricultural Extension, Animal Husbandry, Veterinary Services etc.

Table 1: Key Areas of Training and Appraisal in Ten States

S/N	Subject Matter Area	Understanding/Attitude	Recommended Actionable Next Steps

1	Strategic Project Communication	Average understanding of clear and consistent communication strategies for achieving project objectives.	Capacity building/ Technical Assistance on developing strategy for Communication and Stakeholder Engagement.
2	Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement	Participants were learning about stakeholder engagement for the first time and actively contributed to stakeholder mapping exercises.	More capacity development is needed.
3	Social Media Communication	Low knowledge but high interest in leveraging social media for project visibility and citizens engagement.	Hands-on social media management training.
4	Success Storytelling /Media Relations	Average news writing and project reporting skills.	A specialised writing workshop will focus on impact reporting and success story writing.
5	Multimedia Documentation of Activities	Lack of awareness on importance of early/proper documentation of activities.	Hands-on workshop on multimedia documentation, covering basic and advanced techniques.
6	Crisis Communication	Low knowledge of theory and practical aspects.	Both theory and practical skills need reinforcement.
7	Knowledge Management	Lack of understanding of the concept and application in projects.	Training on concept and practice recommended.

A critical insight drawn from these interactions is the recurrent absence of well-defined communication and stakeholder engagement strategies at the project inception stage, even when the subject matter is well captured in the Project Appraisal Document. This gap often leaves projects ill-equipped to manage stakeholder relationships and effectively communicate with key audiences. In many cases, projects only begin to consider the development of communication strategies in their second or even third year of existence. By this time, critical opportunities for early engagement, relationship building, and information dissemination may have already been missed, affecting the overall impact and success of the project.

This late integration of communication strategies undermines the projects' ability to foster trust, manage expectations, and align stakeholder interests from the start. It also reveals a significant oversight in project design, highlighting the need for a more structured approach to embedding communication and stakeholder engagement as core elements. This observation reinforces the argument that early-stage integration of communication and stakeholder strategies is essential for optimising project outcomes and ensuring long-term sustainability.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The agriculture sector in Nigeria needs development projects to be implemented with a comprehensive strategy that considers past setbacks and uses stakeholder participation and strategic communication. Nigeria can attain sustainable agricultural growth and development through establishing robust partnerships, promoting inclusive and participatory procedures, and improving information dissemination. Unlocking the full potential of agriculture through development projects will require a commitment to effective communication and collaboration as the country continues to manage the sector's complexity.

Stakeholder engagement and early communication are essential to successfully implementing development projects in Nigeria. Project managers can create and carry out initiatives promoting cooperation, trust, and inclusion using stakeholder engagement and strategic communication techniques. This approach not only complements the likelihood of project success but also guarantees that development efforts remain viable and aligned with the expectations of all stakeholders.

The following recommendations aim to strengthen communication and stakeholder engagement in optimising the implementation of development projects in Nigeria, especially within the agricultural sector, ensuring that projects are more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable.

1. To ensure impactful communication and successful stakeholder engagement in development projects, it is crucial to involve communication professionals from the earliest stages of project planning to execution. Their expertise is vital for making informed contributions to the project document, enabling the early integration of communication and stakeholder engagement strategies. This proactive involvement ensures that these essential elements are not an afterthought but are embedded in the project's design from the outset, leading to more effective stakeholder relationships, enhanced project outcomes, and a smoother implementation process.

2. Development agencies, government bodies, and NGOs should institutionalise the requirement for early-stage communication and stakeholder engagement strategies as a mandatory part of project design and planning. Ensuring these strategies are integrated from the outset will help align project objectives with community needs, foster ownership, and increase the likelihood of successful outcomes.

3. Create and disseminate standardised guidelines and toolkits for project managers that detail best practices for designing and implementing communication and stakeholder engagement strategies. Practical, context-specific tools will help project teams effectively engage stakeholders and communicate project goals, leading to more consistent and successful implementation across various regions and sectors.

4. Build capacity through training and professional development by implementing regular training programmes and workshops for project staff on the importance of communication and stakeholder engagement, including stakeholder mapping, participatory communication, and conflict resolution techniques. Enhancing the skills and knowledge of project staff in this area will empower them to better engage with stakeholders and manage communication processes, leading to more effective and inclusive project implementation.

5. Promote policy advocacy for stakeholder engagement at national, state and local levels that mandate stakeholder engagement and participatory communication in development projects. Policy support will create an enabling environment for the widespread adoption of these practices, ensuring they are prioritised and adequately funded.

6. Actively involve local communities in co-creating communication strategies, using indigenous knowledge systems and traditional communication channels alongside modern technologies. Leveraging local knowledge and channels will enhance communication efforts' relevance, acceptance, and effectiveness, making them more resonant with the target communities.

7. Maintain ongoing communication and stakeholder engagement throughout the project lifecycle, not just during the initial stages. Continuous engagement helps sustain trust and collaboration, allowing projects to adapt to changing circumstances and stakeholder needs, thereby improving overall project sustainability.

8. Allocate sufficient resources for communication and engagement activities within project budgets. Adequate funding is essential to implement robust communication strategies and meaningful stakeholder engagement, preventing these critical components from being excluded due to resource constraints.

9. Encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing between development agencies, government bodies, and NGOs on effective communication and stakeholder engagement practices. Sharing lessons learned and best practices across agencies will enhance the overall effectiveness of development initiatives and reduce duplication of efforts.

10.   Establish mechanisms to monitor and document best practices and lessons learned in communication and stakeholder engagement, creating a repository to inform future projects. Documenting successful strategies and challenges will provide valuable insights for future projects, contributing to Nigeria's continuous improvement of development practices.

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Strategic media campaigns in electoral politics: Analysing the impact of Team Peter Obi in Nigeria's 2023 presidential election

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of Media Campaign Teams (MCTs), focusing on Team Peter Obi's digital strategies during Nigeria's 2023 Presidential Election. The research marks a step toward understanding the evolving dynamics of digital campaigning and its implications for electoral politics. It explores the impact of digital campaigning on voter engagement, particularly among the youth, and the overarching electoral outcomes. Leveraging a comprehensive analytical framework that integrates theoretical perspectives from the Agenda-Setting Theory, Spiral of Silence Theory, and Social Identity Theory, this research elucidates how Team Peter Obi's innovative use of digital platforms—social media engagement, targeted digital marketing, and data analytics—reshaped political communication and mobilisation. The comparative analysis underscores Team Peter Obi's campaign as a benchmark in digital electoral strategy within Nigeria, characterised by its novel engagement approaches and extensive outreach, setting a new precedent for the strategic use of digital media in political campaigning. The findings reveal a significant shift in electoral strategies towards digital engagement, evidencing increased voter interaction, community building, and mobilisation through platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. This study contributes to the academic discourse on media influence and political communication by highlighting the efficacy of digital platforms in shaping political discourse, amplifying supportive voices, and fostering a cohesive supporter base online. It offers insights for political campaigners and media strategists on the importance of digital engagement, targeted messaging, and community building in the digital era. Despite its contributions, the study acknowledges limitations, including the reliance on publicly available data and the challenge of attributing electoral outcomes directly to digital strategies.

Keywords: Strategic Media Campaign, Electoral Politics, Presidential Election

Introduction

In the evolving landscape of global electoral politics, Media Campaign Teams (MCTs) have emerged as significant agents in shaping political narratives, influencing voter perceptions, and ultimately determining electoral outcomes. The strategic deployment of MCTs, particularly in leveraging digital platforms, has redefined traditional campaigning methods, introducing a dynamic interplay between political communication and technology (Apuke & Tunca, 2018). This study delves into the significant role of MCTs in the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria, an event marked by intense digital campaigning and social media engagement. The political landscape of Nigeria leading up to the 2023 elections presented a complex tapestry of socio-political dynamics, with social media and digital campaigning at the forefront of electoral strategies. The proliferation of digital platforms has facilitated broader engagement and introduced new challenges and opportunities for political discourse (Apuke & Tunca, 2018; Bamigbade & Dalha, 2020). During this period, we witnessed an unprecedented utilisation of social media tools by political entities, aiming to harness the power of digital communication to sway the electorate, a reflection of a global trend towards digitised political engagement (Bello et al., 2019).

This study focuses on Team Peter Obi, the media campaign team supporting Peter Obi's candidacy, renowned for its innovative and impactful use of digital strategies in the 2023 Presidential Election. Team Peter Obi's approach to digital campaigning, characterised by a significant online presence and strategic social media utilisation, presents a unique case for exploring the efficacy and impact of MCTs in modern electoral processes. The selection of Team Peter Obi is rationalised by its distinct campaign strategies, which stood out amidst a highly competitive political environment, offering insights into the evolving dynamics of digital political communication in Nigeria (Bello et al., 2019). This study aims to: 1. Examine Team Peter Obi's strategic use of digital platforms in the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election. 2. Analyse the impact of Team Peter Obi's digital campaigning on voter engagement and electoral outcomes. The guiding research questions include: 1. How did Team Peter Obi leverage digital platforms for campaign purposes? 2. What impact did Team Peter Obi's digital campaigning strategies have on voter engagement and the electoral outcome of the 2023 Presidential Election?

Digital Campaigning and Social Media

The landscape of political campaigning has undergone a significant transformation with digital technologies. The transition from traditional media—such as television, radio, and print—to digital platforms marks a shift in electoral strategies (Graber & Dunaway, 2018). Digital campaigning, using social media, blogs, and online forums, offers unprecedented opportunities for political engagement and voter mobilisation (Bello et al., 2019). This evolution is driven by the broader reach, cost-effectiveness, and interactive nature of digital platforms, enabling candidates to communicate directly with the electorate (Effing, Hillegersberg, & Huibers, 2011). Social media platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, have shaped political discourse and voter behaviour. Studies have demonstrated the significant role of social media in increasing political awareness, facilitating discussion, and influencing electoral outcomes (Apuke & Tunca, 2018; Bamigbade & Dalha, 2020). Social media serves as a platform for candidates to disseminate their campaign messages and enables voters to actively participate in the political process, share their opinions, and engage in debates (Rossini et al., 2018). The 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria exemplifies the profound impact of social media on voter engagement. Team Peter Obi, for instance, leveraged digital platforms to galvanise support, particularly among the youth, demonstrating the effectiveness of social media in mobilising a significant segment of the electorate (Ajetunmobi & Imam, 2022).

While traditional campaign methods have their strengths, such as broader accessibility among older demographics and those in rural areas, digital campaigning offers several advantages that have reshaped electoral strategies. Digital platforms provide real-time interaction, enabling candidates to respond swiftly to political developments, gauge public sentiment, and adjust their campaign messages accordingly (Graber & Dunaway, 2018). Additionally, the analytical tools available on social media platforms allow campaign teams to target specific demographic groups with tailored messages, enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of campaign outreach (Bello et al., 2019). However, the reliance on social media also presents challenges, including spreading misinformation and creating polarised echo chambers, which can distort the political discourse and undermine democratic processes (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Despite these challenges, the benefits of digital campaigning in engagement and mobilisation are undeniable. The evolution of digital campaigning and the role of social media in contemporary electoral processes signify a paradigm shift in political communication. The 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria underscores the transformative power of digital platforms in engaging voters and shaping electoral outcomes. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, future research should explore the long-term implications of this shift on democratic engagement and the integrity of electoral processes.

Comparative Perspective on MCTs in Nigeria's Electoral Context

Media Campaign Teams (MCTs) have played essential roles in shaping electoral outcomes globally. In Nigeria, the evolution of MCTs reflects a broader trend towards digitalisation and sophisticated voter engagement strategies. This section provides a comparative perspective on MCTs in Nigeria's electoral context, emphasising their evolution, techniques, and impacts on electoral processes. Historically, Nigerian electoral campaigns relied heavily on traditional radio, television, and print media. The 2011 elections marked a turning point with the advent of social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, allowing for more direct and interactive communication between candidates and voters (Apuke & Tunca, 2018). This transition underscored a shift towards digital campaigning, with subsequent elections witnessing increasingly sophisticated use of digital platforms by MCTs.

Comparing strategies employed by MCTs in different electoral cycles reveals a trend towards more targeted and data-driven approaches. In the early 2000s, MCTs focused on broad messaging through conventional media. By contrast, recent strategies involve using social media analytics for targeted messaging, sentiment analysis, and real-time voter engagement (Bamigbade & Dalha, 2020). Digital tools have enabled MCTs to segment the electorate and tailor messages to specific demographic groups, enhancing the effectiveness of campaign communications. The impact of MCTs on Nigeria's electoral processes has been profound. Digital campaigns have increased political participation and raised concerns about misinformation, polarisation, and the integrity of electoral processes (Ajetunmobi & Imam, 2022). Comparative analysis indicates that digital MCTs have democratised electoral campaigning, enabling smaller parties and candidates to reach wider audiences. However, they have also necessitated regulatory responses to address challenges such as fake news and online harassment.

Internationally, MCTs in countries like the United States and India have similarly embraced digital technologies, though the scale and regulatory environments differ. Unlike Nigeria, where regulatory frameworks for digital campaigning are still evolving, countries like the U.S. have established more comprehensive regulations governing digital campaign activities (Williams & Gulati, 2018). Additionally, integrating big data and artificial intelligence in campaign strategies in these countries provides insights into potential future directions for MCTs in Nigeria. For Nigeria, the way forward

involves balancing the benefits of digital MCTs with the need to safeguard electoral integrity. Learning from international best practices, there is a need for robust regulatory frameworks, voter education programs to combat misinformation, and ethical guidelines for digital campaigning. The comparative analysis of MCTs in Nigeria's electoral context highlights the transformative impact of digital technologies on political campaigning. While offering new opportunities for engagement, it also presents challenges that require careful management to ensure free, fair, and credible elections.

Electoral Psychology

The intersection of digital campaigning and electoral psychology offers insights into voter behaviour, perceptions, and decision-making processes. As political campaigns increasingly migrate to digital platforms, understanding the psychological underpinnings influencing how voters receive, process, and act on digital campaign content has become essential (Rossini et al., 2018). Digital campaigns, through their targeted messaging and interactive capabilities, have the potential to influence voter behaviour significantly. The selective exposure theory suggests that individuals prefer information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs. This tendency is amplified in the digital environment, where algorithms can create echo chambers (Stroud, 2008). However, digital campaigns can break through these barriers by leveraging the persuasive power of social media to engage with undecided or swing voters, potentially altering their voting intentions (Bello et al., 2019).

The framing effects theory posits how information is presented can influence perceptions and decision-making (Graber & Dunaway, 2018). Digital campaigns skillfully use framing to shape voters' perceptions of candidates and issues. For instance, the positive framing of a candidate's policies can enhance voter perceptions of their competence and suitability for office. In contrast, negative framing of opponents can lead to adverse perceptions, affecting voter preferences and choices (Bamigbade & Dalha, 2020). The abundance of information available through digital platforms can both aid and complicate the decision-making process for voters. On one hand, access to diverse viewpoints and detailed policy explanations can enable more informed decision-making. On the other hand, the overload of information and prevalence of misinformation can lead to confusion and voter fatigue, potentially discouraging electoral participation (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). The cognitive dissonance theory explains how conflicting information can create psychological discomfort. It leads voters to seek consistency in their beliefs and choices, often influenced by the most persuasive or prevalent digital campaign content (Apuke & Tunca, 2018).

Digital campaigns also capitalise on the psychological principles of engagement and mobilisation. By creating content that resonates with voters' emotions and identities, campaigns can enhance engagement and encourage electoral participation. Social identity theory elucidates how digital campaigns that appeal to shared group identities can mobilise individuals towards collective action, including voting (Effing, Hillegersberg, & Huibers, 2011). The sense of belonging and community fostered through digital platforms can translate into increased voter turnout and active participation in the political process. The dynamics of electoral psychology in the context of digital campaigning reveal complex interactions between voter behaviour, perceptions, and decision-making. Digital platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for influencing voters through the strategic framing of messages and the psychological engagement of the electorate. As digital campaigning continues to evolve, understanding these psychological mechanisms will be crucial for political practitioners and scholars seeking to navigate the digital electoral landscape effectively.

Strategies Employed by MCTs to Combat or Propagate Misinformation

The proliferation of digital platforms has significantly influenced the dynamics of electoral campaigns, particularly in the context of misinformation. During the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria, Media Campaign Teams (MCTs) employed various strategies to combat or, unfortunately, propagate misinformation in some cases. These strategies reflect the dual-edged potential of digital media to influence electoral integrity and voter behaviour. Recognising the adverse impact of misinformation on electoral processes, several MCTs collaborated with fact-checking organisations to verify the accuracy of information circulating online. These initiatives involved verifying political actors' claims in real time and disseminating correct information through social media channels. To mitigate the spread of false information, MCTs launched public awareness campaigns to educate voters on the importance of verifying news sources. These campaigns often utilised infographics, videos, and interactive content to engage the electorate and encourage critical engagement with digital content. To curb the spread of misinformation, some MCTs worked directly with social media platforms to implement algorithms and policies that flag or remove false information. These collaborations also included promoting verified information to ensure greater visibility for accurate content.

Some MCTs engaged in the selective sharing of information, emphasising content that cast their candidates in a favourable light while disregarding or distorting facts. This strategy involved using out-of-context quotes, selective editing of video clips, and presenting opinion pieces as factual reports. A more nefarious strategy involved the creation of websites that mimicked legitimate news outlets. These sites published false or misleading articles to influence voter perceptions and attitudes towards specific candidates or political issues. Use of Social Media Bots and Trolls: Some MCTs employed social media bots and trolls to amplify certain narratives artificially. These automated accounts and paid individuals spread misinformation, engaged in harassment, and created a perception of widespread support for or opposition to specific candidates. The strategies employed by MCTs during the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria highlight the complex role of digital media in contemporary electoral politics. While digital platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for engaging voters and promoting transparency, they also present significant challenges related to misinformation. The ethical implications of these strategies underscore the need for regulatory frameworks, media literacy, and ethical campaigning practices to safeguard electoral integrity and promote informed democratic participation.

Theories of Media Influence and Political Communication

The Agenda-Setting Theory, initially proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), posits that the media plays a crucial role in shaping public perception by selecting the issues deemed worthy of public discourse. In electoral contexts, this theory suggests that media campaign teams (MCTs) can influence the political agenda by highlighting specific themes or issues related to their candidates, thereby shaping voter perceptions and priorities (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). For instance, Team Peter Obi's strategic use of digital platforms to emphasise economic policies and anti-corruption measures illustrates the application of agenda-setting in political campaigning, directing public attention towards these issues (Bamigbade & Dalha, 2020). The Spiral of Silence Theory, introduced by Noelle-Neumann (1974), describes the tendency of individuals to remain silent on their views when they perceive these views to be in the minority for fear of social isolation. In the digital era, this theory finds relevance in how social media can amplify and suppress political discourse. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook, utilised extensively by Team Peter Obi, can create echo chambers

reinforcing majority opinions, while minority voices may feel pressured to remain silent (Noelle-Neumann, 1974; Bello et al., 2019). This dynamic potentially influences political engagement and mobilisation, as supporters may feel emboldened or dissuaded from expressing their electoral choices.

Social Identity Theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), explores how individuals' self-concepts are influenced by their membership in social groups. Applied to political communication, this theory underscores how digital campaigning strategies can foster a sense of identity and belonging among supporters. Team Peter Obi's campaign, for example, successfully cultivated a collective identity among its followers, dubbed the "Obidients," leveraging social media to strengthen group cohesion and mobilise voters based on shared social and political identities (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Apuke & Tunca, 2018). This phenomenon illustrates how MCTs can use digital platforms to communicate political messages and build and reinforce community amongst supporters. These theories collectively offer an understanding of the mechanisms through which media influence operates in electoral contexts. The agenda-setting role of MCTs, as seen in Team Peter Obi's case, demonstrates the media's power to focus public attention on selected issues, thereby influencing the criteria by which the electorate evaluates political candidates. Meanwhile, the Spiral of Silence Theory elucidates the challenges and opportunities presented by social media in political discourse, highlighting the potential for both inclusivity and exclusivity in online political engagement. Lastly, Social Identity Theory provides insights into the strategies employed by MCTs to galvanise support, suggesting that the cultivation of a strong, shared group identity among supporters can be a critical factor in political mobilisation and voter turnout.

Comparative Studies

The study of media campaign teams (MCTs) across different electoral contexts, both within Nigeria and internationally, offers a rich comparative perspective on the evolving nature of digital campaigning. This section analyses similar studies, drawing parallels and identifying divergences in strategies, outcomes, and voter engagement.

The evolution of MCTs in Nigeria from traditional media strategies to digital platforms has been marked by a significant shift in campaign dynamics. Nigeria's 2011 and 2015 general elections serve as pivotal moments, showcasing the initial stages of digital campaign adoption. Studies conducted during these periods underscored the role of social media in enhancing political participation and shaping voter perceptions, with the 2015 elections particularly noted for the instrumental use of platforms like Twitter and Facebook by political parties and their supporters (Apuke & Tunca, 2018; Okoro & Santas, 2015). The effectiveness of these digital campaigns was further evidenced by increased political awareness and engagement among the electorate, especially the youth. Utilising MCTs in the United States, particularly during the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections, illustrates a more mature application of digital strategies. The campaigns employed sophisticated data analytics and targeted advertising to reach specific voter segments, leveraging social media to a greater extent than earlier Nigerian campaigns (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). The American approach to digital campaigning has emphasised customising messages, deepening engagement through interactive content, and mobilising supporters via social media platforms.

In Europe, the use of MCTs has varied significantly across countries and elections. For instance, the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom and various national elections across the continent have highlighted the role of digital platforms in disseminating campaign messages and rallying support. Unlike the Nigerian context, European campaigns have often faced challenges related to misinformation and the regulation of online political content, prompting a broader discussion on the need for digital

campaign transparency and accountability (Effing, Hillegersberg, & Huibers, 2011). One of the key insights from the comparative analysis is the universal recognition of digital platforms as crucial tools for modern electoral campaigning. However, the degree of sophistication and ethical considerations surrounding digital campaigns vary significantly. While Nigerian campaigns have increasingly adopted digital strategies for broader engagement, they still grapple with issues of misinformation and polarised online spaces. In contrast, countries with more established digital campaigning practices, like the U.S., have moved towards refining targeting techniques and addressing the challenges of fake news and electoral interference.

Additionally, the impact of digital campaigns on voter behaviour appears to be a common theme across studies, with evidence suggesting that social media can significantly influence election outcomes by mobilising support, shaping perceptions, and enhancing political participation (Bello et al., 2019; Graber & Dunaway, 2018). Comparative studies of MCTs across different electoral contexts reveal a complex landscape where digital campaigning has become an indispensable component of modern elections. While the tactical application of these strategies varies, the overarching goal remains the same: to engage voters, influence perceptions, and secure electoral victories. As digital platforms continue to evolve, understanding these comparative dynamics will be crucial for political practitioners and scholars seeking to navigate the intricacies of global electoral campaigning.

Gaps in the Literature:

The burgeoning field of digital campaigning and the role of Media Campaign Teams (MCTs) in electoral politics have been extensively explored in scholarly literature. However, despite the considerable body of research, several gaps remain, particularly in developing democracies like Nigeria. This section outlines these gaps and positions the current study as an effort to address them.

While numerous studies have focused on the impact of social media and digital campaigning in developed countries (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Effing, Hillegersberg, & Huibers, 2011), less attention has been paid to their roles in developing democracies. Comparative analyses that juxtapose digital campaigning strategies, effectiveness, and challenges across different political and cultural contexts within developing countries are scarce (Bello, Inuwa-Dutse, & Heckel, 2019). This study fills this gap by offering a comparative perspective on MCTs in Nigeria's electoral context. The literature provides insights into how digital campaigns influence voter behaviour. However, there remains a lack of depth in understanding the psychological mechanisms underpinning these influences, especially in African electoral contexts (Okoro & Santas, 2015). This study attempted to delve deeper into electoral psychology, exploring how digital campaigning shapes voter perceptions, decision-making processes, and political engagement in Nigeria.

While the challenge of misinformation and its impact on elections have been acknowledged in the literature, there is a notable gap in comprehensive studies that examine the mechanisms of misinformation dissemination within digital campaigns and its effects on voter trust and electoral outcomes in Nigeria (Apuke & Tunca, 2018). The current study aims to address this gap by analysing the strategies employed by MCTs to combat or propagate misinformation during the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria. This study is positioned to address these gaps in the literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of MCTs in Nigeria's 2023 Presidential Election. Through comparative analyses, a deeper exploration of electoral psychology, an examination of misinformation dynamics, and methodological diversification, this research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on digital campaigning and its implications for electoral democracy in developing contexts.

Research Design

This research design utilises a multi-method approach, combining content analysis, case study, and scoping review elements to explore the Peter Obi campaign's use of digital platforms in the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election. The data sources included news articles, which were reputable Nigerian and international news sources used to gather information on the campaign's activities, strategies, and performance. Social media data: Publicly available data from the campaign's pages, such as follower count, engagement metrics, and content themes. Campaign statements and press releases provide insights into the campaign's official messaging and strategies. Expert opinions: Interviews with political analysts, digital marketing professionals, and academics offer valuable insights and interpretations. Existing research: A limited scoping review of academic literature and reports on African digital campaigning was conducted to identify broader trends and contextualise the findings.

For data analysis, thematic content analysis identified recurring themes, messages, and strategies employed by the campaign across different platforms. Case study analysis examined the campaign's overall approach, strengths and weaknesses, and potential impact on voter engagement and participation. Findings from limited scoping review analysis provided context and compared the Obi campaign's strategies to broader trends in digital campaigning. This data collection and analysis approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the campaign's digital strategies using various data sources and perspectives. It acknowledges the limitations of available data and relies on multiple methods to triangulate findings and enhance credibility. However, due to the reliance on existing data and anecdotal evidence, establishing causal relationships or measuring the precise impact of the campaign's strategies is challenging. The limited scope of the research (focusing on a single case) restricts the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Nevertheless, the research design offers a valuable framework for exploring the Peter Obi campaign's innovative use of digital platforms within the context of the 2023 Nigerian elections. While acknowledging the limitations, the combined approach can provide valuable insights and contribute to the evolving understanding of digital campaigning in Africa.

Sample Selection

This study strategically focuses on Team Peter Obi's campaign during the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria to explore the transformative impact of media campaign teams (MCTs) in electoral politics. This choice is underpinned by several vital rationales that align with the study's objectives to delve into the nuances of digital campaigning and its effects on political engagement and voter behaviour. Team Peter Obi represents a paradigm shift in the Nigerian political landscape, particularly in utilising social media and digital platforms for campaign purposes. Unlike traditional campaigns relying on physical rallies and mainstream media, Team Peter Obi's approach was notably innovative, leveraging digital platforms to galvanise support and engage with the electorate. This campaign team's strategies mirror broader global trends towards digitalisation in political campaigning but are contextualised within the unique socio-political fabric of Nigeria (Apuke & Tunca, 2018). Several criteria guided the selection of Team Peter Obi for this analysis:

Team Peter Obi's campaign demonstrated significant digital engagement, with a substantial online presence and active participation across multiple social media platforms. This makes it a pertinent case for examining the dynamics of digital campaigning in Nigeria (Bamigbade & Dalha, 2020). Preliminary data indicated that Team Peter Obi's digital campaign had a broad reach and potentially influenced voter

perceptions and engagement, aligning with the study's interest in the impact of MCTs on electoral outcomes. Compared to other campaign teams in the 2023 Presidential Election, Team Peter Obi's strategies presented a unique blend of traditional and digital approaches, offering a rich case for analysis within the Nigerian electoral context. The campaign's innovative use of digital platforms and its implications for political communication, voter engagement, and the broader democratic process directly relate to the research objectives of this study.

The focused analysis of Team Peter Obi's campaign provides an invaluable opportunity to explore Nigeria's evolving landscape of electoral campaigning, particularly the shift towards digital engagement. By examining this case in depth, the study aims to contribute to understanding digital campaigning's effectiveness, challenges, and potential to reshape political communication and engagement in emerging democracies.

Findings

Key Digital Strategies Employed by the Peter Obi Campaign

The 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election was a notable event that witnessed unprecedented digital engagement by various political campaigns. Team Peter Obi, representing the Labour Party, stood out for its extensive use of digital platforms to galvanise support. This digital strategy encompassed social media engagement, digital marketing, and data analytics to effectively target voters and disseminate campaign messages.

1. Social Media Mobilization: Team Peter Obi leveraged platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to reach a broad audience, significantly younger voters. The campaign created viral content to engage the electorate, including memes, videos, and infographics. The hashtag #Obidients became a rallying cry for his supporters, showcasing the campaign's ability to create a digital movement (Oladapo, 2023).

2. Digital Marketing and Advertising: The campaign also employed digital marketing techniques, including search engine optimisation (SEO) and targeted online advertising to reach potential voters. Using data analytics, Team Peter Obi could tailor its messages to different demographics, optimising ad spend and message reach (Smith & Lu, 2023).

3. Data Analytics and Voter Targeting: Advanced data analytics played a crucial role in the campaign's strategy. The campaign identified key voter segments by analysing online behaviour and demographic data and targeted them with customised messages. This approach allowed for efficient resource allocation and maximised the impact of their messaging (Politivos, n.d.).

4. Use of Digital Platforms for Donations and Volunteer Recruitment: Team Peter Obi's campaign used digital platforms to facilitate donations and recruit volunteers. This broadened their funding base beyond traditional political donors and engaged a larger pool of supporters in the campaign process (Okeke & Ibrahim, 2023).

5. Engagement with Diaspora Voters: Recognising the influence of the Nigerian diaspora, the campaign actively engaged these communities through webinars, social media live streams, and digital town halls. This strategy helped to garner financial support and amplify their message internationally (*The Guardian* 2023, August 26).

6. Reports and Studies: Although specific reports and studies detailing the quantitative impact of these digital strategies on the election's outcome are still emerging,

preliminary analyses suggest that digital engagement significantly increased voter awareness and participation among the youth demographic. Studies focusing on social media analytics, voter behaviour, and campaign strategies will likely provide further insights into the effectiveness of these digital tactics (Oladapo, 2023).

7. Professional Commentary and Analysis: Political analysts and digital marketing professionals have highlighted Team Peter Obi's digital campaign as a case study in modern electoral strategy. The campaign's ability to mobilise support through digital channels has been cited as a significant factor in its performance in the election, reflecting a broader global trend towards digital-first political campaigns (Oladapo, 2023).

Team Peter Obi's campaign for the 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election exemplifies the growing importance of digital platforms in political campaigning. By effectively leveraging social media, digital marketing, and data analytics, the campaign was able to engage with a broad spectrum of voters, demonstrating the potential of digital strategies to transform electoral engagement and political communication. Further research and analysis will undoubtedly provide deeper insights into these digital tactics' specific impacts and effectiveness.

Impact of the Strategies on Voter Engagement and Participation

The digital campaigning strategies employed by Team Peter Obi during the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria marked a significant departure from traditional electoral campaign methods, leveraging social media platforms, digital tools, and online engagement to reach a broader audience, particularly among the youth demographic. Obi was very active on platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, where he directly engaged with voters and answered their questions. He also used social media to share his policy positions and to attack his opponents. This direct engagement with voters effectively generated enthusiasm for his candidacy. This approach capitalised on the rising digital literacy and the expansive use of social media among the Nigerian population, aiming to galvanise support and increase voter engagement through platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Empirically, the impact of these digital strategies can be assessed through several indicators:

1. Social Media Engagement: There was a noticeable surge in social media activities related to Peter Obi and the Labour Party, with hashtags like #PeterObiForPresident2023 widely used across platforms. This increased visibility and fostered a sense of community among supporters. The engagement metrics, including likes, shares, and comments, demonstrated high interaction with the campaign's content (Oladapo, 2023).

2. Voter Turnout: While the overall voter turnout in the election reflected multiple factors, including the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) data, anecdotal evidence suggests that regions with higher concentrations of youth and digital engagement showed a more pronounced turnout. However, quantifying the direct correlation between digital campaigning and voter turnout requires advanced empirical research (Wisevoter, 2023).

3. Polling and Surveys: Pre-election polls and surveys indicated a significant positive perception of Peter Obi, especially among younger voters who are more active on social media platforms. These polls often reflected the enthusiasm and support generated through digital campaigns, suggesting a correlation between digital engagement and voting intentions. A poll by Bloomberg revealed that 72% of "decided voters" said they would support Peter Obi in the elections (*The Guardian*, 2023).

4. Electoral Outcome: While Peter Obi did not win the presidency, the Labour Party saw a remarkable improvement in its performance compared to previous elections, securing a significant portion of the vote share. This outcome can be partly attributed to the effectiveness of digital campaigning in mobilising support, particularly among first-time and young voters (Siegle & Cook, 2023).

It is imperative to acknowledge that while digital campaigning strategies play a crucial role in shaping voter engagement and perceptions, the electoral outcome is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including but not limited to political alliances, electoral integrity, and the broader socioeconomic context. Furthermore, the reliance on digital platforms for campaigning also raises questions about digital divides, misinformation, and the need for digital literacy to ensure informed and equitable participation in the democratic process.

Team Peter Obi's digital campaigning strategies significantly impacted voter engagement, particularly among the youth, and contributed to the Labour Party's electoral performance in the 2023 Presidential Election. While indicative of trends, the empirical evidence necessitates further research to comprehensively understand the dynamics and long-term implications of digital campaigning in electoral politics.

Discussion

The study investigates the strategies of Team Peter Obi's Media Campaign Team (MCT) during Nigeria's 2023 Presidential Election, focusing on digital engagement's role in influencing voter behaviour and electoral outcomes. Central to our findings is the innovative utilisation of digital platforms, which markedly enhanced voter engagement, especially among the youth. This aligns with the Agenda-Setting Theory, illustrating how Team Peter Obi prioritised specific political issues, such as economic policies and anti-corruption, in the electorate's minds through strategic digital content dissemination. Empirical evidence from the campaign underscores the potent use of social media to mobilise support, generating a significant online movement characterised by the hashtag #Obidients. This phenomenon illustrates the Spiral of Silence Theory's relevance in digital spaces. Team Peter Obi's online strategies effectively amplified supportive voices while mitigating dissenting ones, fostering a more vocal and unified online community.

Social Identity Theory's application through digital strategies also played a pivotal role, as Team Peter Obi's campaign fostered a robust collective identity among supporters. This digital cultivation of "Obidients" illustrates how MCTs can leverage online platforms to not only disseminate political messages but also to build and reinforce community amongst supporters, enhancing voter mobilisation and engagement. Comparing Team Peter Obi's digital strategies with those of other campaigns within the same electoral cycle reveals a significant differential in the scope and effectiveness of digital engagement. While other campaigns also employed digital platforms, Team Peter Obi's approach was distinguished by its innovative use of social media for direct voter engagement, content virality, and diaspora outreach. This comparative analysis underscores Team Peter Obi's campaign as a benchmark in Nigeria's strategic use of digital platforms for political campaigning, setting a new standard for digital engagement in electoral politics.

The findings from this study contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge on media influence, political communication, and electoral psychology. They reinforce the Agenda-Setting Theory, highlighting the critical role of digital media in shaping the political agenda. Moreover, the study challenges and expands the Spiral of Silence Theory by demonstrating that digital platforms can counterbalance traditional media's silence, empowering minority voices to create a significant impact. Furthermore,

applying Social Identity Theory in the digital realm through this campaign provides fresh insights into how political campaigns can effectively leverage digital platforms to foster a sense of identity and belonging among supporters.

The practical implications of this study are multifaceted, offering valuable insights into political campaign strategies, media engagement practices, and the future role of digital campaigning. For political strategists, the success of Team Peter Obi's digital campaign highlights the necessity of integrating digital platforms into campaign strategies, emphasising the importance of targeted messaging and community building online. For media practitioners, this study underscores the evolving role of digital platforms in political communication, suggesting a shift towards more interactive and participatory forms of media engagement. Finally, the findings illuminate the growing significance of digital campaigning in future elections, indicating that digital platforms are not merely supplementary channels but essential tools for voter engagement, mobilisation, and electoral success.

Conclusion

This study delves into the strategies employed by Team Peter Obi's Media Campaign Team (MCT) during Nigeria's 2023 Presidential Election, highlighting the transformative impact of digital campaigning on electoral politics. Key findings underscore the strategic use of digital platforms to engage voters, particularly the youth, and the effectiveness of social media in mobilising support and fostering a collective identity among supporters encapsulated in the "Obidients" movement. Theoretical frameworks such as the Agenda-Setting Theory, Spiral of Silence Theory, and Social Identity Theory provided insights into how digital platforms were leveraged to shape political discourse, amplify supportive voices, and build a cohesive supporter base. The comparative analysis revealed that Team Peter Obi's digital campaign set a new benchmark in using digital media for political campaigning in Nigeria, distinguishing itself through innovative engagement strategies and extensive outreach.

The study contributes to the academic field by integrating theoretical insights with empirical evidence to elucidate the role of digital strategies in modern electoral campaigns. It expands the understanding of how digital platforms can influence voter perceptions, engagement, and participation, exploring the mechanisms through which MCTs can shape electoral outcomes. The findings offer valuable lessons for political campaigners and media strategists, emphasising the importance of digital engagement, targeted messaging, and community building in the digital era. The study sets a precedent for the strategic use of digital media in electoral politics, providing a foundation for future campaigns to build upon.

While the study offers comprehensive insights into Team Peter Obi's digital campaigning strategies, it acknowledges limitations, including the reliance on publicly available data and the challenges of directly attributing electoral outcomes to digital strategies alone. Future research could employ more robust methodological approaches, such as longitudinal studies and experimental designs, to precisely measure the impact of digital campaigning on voter behaviour and election results. Additionally, comparative studies across different political contexts and electoral systems would enrich the understanding of digital campaigning's effectiveness and adaptability to various socio-political environments.

The evolving role of media campaign teams in the digital age signifies a paradigm shift in electoral politics. As demonstrated by Team Peter Obi's campaign in Nigeria's 2023 Presidential Election, digital platforms have become indispensable tools for political communication, enabling campaigns to reach wider audiences, engage voters more effectively, and shape the political landscape in unprecedented ways. This study

illuminates the potential of digital strategies to enhance democratic participation and underscores the need for political actors and institutions to adapt to the changing dynamics of electoral campaigning. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, the insights derived from this study contribute to a broader discourse on the role of digital media in strengthening the democratic process, offering a roadmap for future research and practice in political campaigning.

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Cultural diversity and identity in Samba dance of the Bajju people of Southern Kaduna and Brazil

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Abstract

Culture encompasses a rich tapestry of human creativity, continuously adapting to and modifying its environment. As a prominent cultural expression, it intricately shapes and mirrors cultural identity through its unique body movements, styles, and patterns, often symbolising the diversity and interaction of distinct cultural influences. This study examines cultural fusion through the lens of Samba dance, comparing its manifestations among the Bajju people of Southern Kaduna, Nigeria, and Brazil. Despite the absence of direct ethnographic connections, these two geographically and culturally distinct groups exhibit notable similarities in their dance traditions' nomenclature and movement forms. This study investigates how cultural diversity fosters identity, emphasising Samba as an embodiment of cross-cultural exchange and adaptation. The research traces the historical and cultural intersections of Bajju and Brazilian Samba dances using interviews, participatory observation, and ethnographic studies. Grounded in Cultural Studies Theory and the Theory of Cultural Relativism, the analysis highlights the interplay of cultural dominance and resistance while situating these dance traditions within their unique socio-historical contexts. The findings illuminate the dances' shared symbolic significance and rhythmic patterns, reflecting broader narratives of migration, cultural diffusion, and identity formation. While Brazilian Samba evolved as a national symbol shaped by the African diaspora's influence, Bajju Samba, rooted in local traditions, underscores the impact of cultural exchange within African communities. This comparative analysis enriches the understanding of how body movement articulates identity, history, and resilience. By exploring the dynamic interplay between preservation and innovation, this study emphasises the enduring power of dance to transcend geographic boundaries and assert cultural identity amidst evolving socio-historical realities.

Keywords: Cultural Identity, Samba Dance, Cultural Diffusion, Cross-cultural Exchange

Introduction

Culture is a complex concept encapsulating ideas, behaviours, and practices transmitted across generations. It is the foundation of human creativity, providing the means through which people express themselves and shape their environments. According to Mead (1935), culture encompasses "the whole complex of traditional behaviour which has been developed by the human race and is successively learned by each generation" (p. 5). This definition highlights culture's dynamic nature, as the activities, ideas, and material creations of people within a society continuously shape it. Cultural identity, therefore, is forged through a continuous process of learning, transmission, and transformation. One of the most potent forms of cultural expression is dance. Dance physically manifests cultural values, enabling individuals and communities to express identity, emotions, and societal roles. As Kim (2011) argues, dance converts movement into a form of language, revealing how different cultures conceptualise and communicate body movement (p. 4). This study focuses on Samba dance, a vibrant cultural phenomenon shared by two seemingly unrelated groups: the Bajju people of Southern Kaduna and Brazilians. Despite their vast geographic and cultural distance, both groups have developed a dance form known as Samba, characterised by similar movement patterns and shared nomenclature. The objective of this paper is to explore the historical and cultural connections between the Samba dance of the Bajju people and that of Brazil. By doing so, it seeks to understand how cultural diversity and migration have contributed to the evolution of dance forms across distant regions. Furthermore, the study aims to illuminate how Samba dance has evolved within these two cultures, reflecting broader patterns of cultural exchange, identity formation, and social cohesion. Through a comparative analysis, this research will trace the historical roots of Samba in both contexts and examine the similarities and differences in how the dance is performed and understood in each culture.

The Concept of Culture and Dance

Culture is a foundational concept in the study of human societies, encompassing a wide array of beliefs, practices, values, and artefacts that shape human behaviour and social organisation. Anthropologically, culture refers to the learned behaviours and symbolic systems shared among society and transmitted from generation to generation. As Bodley (1994) explains, culture comprises three fundamental elements: (i) what people think, (ii) what people do, and (iii) the material products they create (p. 2). These elements form the basis of societal structures, shaping how people interact with each other and how they interpret and engage with the world around them. Culture is dynamic and constantly evolving as societies change in response to internal developments and external influences. Through this process of cultural evolution, art forms like dance emerge, adapt, and flourish. As an intrinsic part of culture, dance is a form of non-verbal communication that expresses a society's values, beliefs, and emotions through movement. It is a physical manifestation of culture that reveals much about a person's way of life, social structure, and historical context. According to Cottam and Jefferson-Buchanan (2008), dance is a concentrated form of physical behaviour that embodies the cultural values of a group. In this sense, dance is an artistic endeavour and a social activity that reinforces cultural identity and fosters community cohesion. For example, specific dance movements may symbolise critical historical events, religious beliefs, or social hierarchies within a given culture.

In many societies, dance is central to communal life and serves various functions, from religious rituals to social celebrations and political events. It is both a form of entertainment and a medium for conveying complex cultural narratives. The anthropological study of dance, often referred to as dance ethnography, seeks to understand how dance reflects and influences the cultural dynamics of a society. By analysing dance movements, rhythms, and contexts, researchers can gain insights into how a culture conceptualises body movement, space, and time and how it

negotiates identity, power, and social order issues. The Samba dance, which is the focus of this paper, provides a compelling example of how dance can function as a cultural identifier and a vehicle for expressing social values. Samba is a highly rhythmic and energetic dance form with roots in the African diaspora, particularly in Brazil, where it has evolved into a national symbol. However, the Bajju people of Southern Kaduna, Nigeria, also have a tradition of Samba dance, which shares similarities in movement patterns and social significance with its Brazilian counterpart. This study explores how these two distinct yet related traditions of Samba have developed in different cultural and historical contexts, illustrating the role of cultural diffusion in shaping dance forms.

Theories of Cultural Identity and Relativism

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in two key concepts: cultural studies theory and cultural relativism theory. Both theories offer critical insights into how broader cultural, social, political, and historical forces shape practices like dance. Cultural Studies Theory, developed by scholars such as Stuart Hall, emphasises the role of power and hegemony in shaping cultural practices. According to Hall (2020), culture is not a static or neutral entity but rather a site of struggle, where dominant groups seek to impose their values and norms on subordinate groups. Culture becomes a battleground for expressing identity, resistance, and social change in this context. Dominant cultural groups, often associated with political or economic power, attempt to control cultural production and marginalise the practices of less powerful groups. However, marginalised groups usually resist this domination by creating artistic forms reflecting their unique experiences and perspectives.

In the context of Samba dance, Cultural Studies Theory helps explain how African-descended communities in Brazil, historically marginalised by European colonial powers, used dance to assert their identity and resist cultural assimilation. As Chasteen (1996) notes, Samba evolved in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as Afro-Brazilians integrated African rhythms and dance forms with European and indigenous Brazilian cultural elements. This process of cultural fusion allowed Afro-Brazilians to carve out a space for their artistic expression in a society that sought to erase their African heritage. With its vibrant rhythms and expressive movements, the Samba dance symbolised Afro-Brazilian resilience and creativity, eventually gaining national and international recognition as a quintessential part of Brazilian culture. Similarly, the Bajju people of Southern Kaduna have used Samba dance to preserve and express their cultural identity. Despite the influence of external forces, including colonialism and globalisation, the Bajju have maintained their traditional dance forms, adapting them to new social contexts while retaining their core elements. The adoption of the name "Samba" by both the Bajju and Brazilian communities reflects the broader patterns of cultural diffusion and resistance that characterise the history of marginalised groups worldwide.

The Theory of Cultural Relativism, first articulated by Franz Boas, complements Cultural Studies Theory by emphasising that all cultural practices should be understood within their own social and historical contexts. Boas (1911) argued that no culture is intrinsically superior or inferior to another; each culture develops in response to its environment's specific challenges and opportunities. Cultural relativism calls for a non-judgmental approach to studying artistic practices, recognising that what may seem unusual or unfamiliar in one culture may be entirely rational and meaningful within another. In the case of Samba dance, cultural relativism allows us to appreciate the differences between the Brazilian and Bajju traditions without viewing one as more "authentic" or "advanced" than the other. While the two forms of Samba share certain similarities, they have also developed in response to their regions' unique social, political, and historical conditions. For the Bajju people, Samba is deeply connected to

their agricultural lifestyle and communal values, while in Brazil, Samba has become a symbol of national identity, reflecting the country's diverse cultural heritage. By applying a relativist lens, we can better understand how these two traditions have evolved independently, yet parallel, as expressions of cultural identity.

Studies on Samba Dance

A substantial body of research has been devoted to studying Samba dance in Brazil, widely regarded as a national symbol and an integral part of the country's cultural heritage. Scholars such as Chasteen (1996) have traced the origins of Samba to the African diaspora, particularly the influence of West African and Angolan dance traditions brought to Brazil by enslaved Africans during the transatlantic slave trade. According to Chasteen, Samba began as a form of resistance among Afro-Brazilian communities in Rio de Janeiro, where it served as a way for enslaved and freed Africans to preserve their cultural heritage in the face of European cultural domination. Over time, Samba evolved into a popular dance form performed in Carnival celebrations and social gatherings, eventually becoming a national symbol of Brazilian identity. Despite its widespread popularity in Brazil, Samba has also been the subject of scholarly debate, particularly regarding its commercialisation and globalisation. Some scholars argue that the global success of Brazilian Samba has led to its commodification, with the dance being stripped of its original cultural significance and transformed into a spectacle for international tourists and audiences. Others contend that Samba remains a powerful symbol of Afro-Brazilian identity, even in its commercialised form, as it continues to represent the resilience and creativity of marginalised communities.

In contrast, the study of Samba dance among the Bajju people has received relatively little scholarly attention. The Bajju, a predominantly agricultural ethnic group in Southern Kaduna, Nigeria, have practised Samba as part of their traditional maiden dance known as Song Bvin. This dance, performed during festivals and social ceremonies, is characterised by coordinated waist movements and rapid leg actions, similar to the Brazilian Samba. While the origins of the Bajju Samba are less well-documented than its Brazilian counterpart, the dance likely developed through cultural diffusion, facilitated by migration and trade between different ethnic groups in West Africa. Blench (2018) suggests that the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Plateau region, where the Bajju people are located, has contributed to the development of unique dance traditions that reflect a fusion of influences from neighbouring communities. Therefore, the similarities between the Bajju and Brazilian Sambas may be evidence of the broader patterns of cultural exchange that have shaped the development of dance forms across the African diaspora.

Migration has long been recognised as a critical driver of cultural exchange, facilitating the transmission of ideas, beliefs, and artistic expressions across geographic boundaries. In the case of Samba, the transatlantic slave trade played a crucial role in shaping the cultural landscape of both Africa and the Americas, particularly in Brazil, where African cultural traditions were integrated into the local culture. According to Oliviera and Campos (2021), enslaved Africans brought a rich heritage of dance, music, and religious practices, which were gradually incorporated into the fabric of Brazilian society. As it is known today, Samba is the product of this cultural fusion, combining elements of African, indigenous Brazilian, and European traditions. The influence of migration on the development of Samba is not limited to Brazil, however. In West Africa, where the Bajju people are located, migration has also significantly shaped cultural practices. As Blench (2018) notes, the Plateau region of Nigeria is home to a diverse array of ethnic groups, each with its unique cultural traditions. Over the centuries, these groups have engaged in extensive trade, intermarriage, and cultural exchange, developing shared practices, including dance. The similarity between the Bajju and Brazilian Sambas may, therefore, be seen as a reflection of the

broader patterns of cultural diffusion that have characterised the history of the African diaspora.

The transatlantic slave trade, which forcibly displaced millions of Africans to the Americas between the 16th and 19th centuries, played a pivotal role in shaping the cultural connections between Africa and the New World. Khan (2016) emphasises that enslaved Africans brought with them not only physical labour but also cultural practices, including dance, music, and religious traditions. These practices were transplanted into new environments, where they blended with local customs and adapted to new social realities. As it evolved in Brazil, Samba represents one of the most prominent examples of this cultural blending, combining African rhythms and movements with elements of European and indigenous Brazilian dance forms. In addition to the forced migrations of the slave trade, voluntary migration within Africa also contributed to the diffusion of cultural practices such as dance. The Bajju people, for example, migrated from the Congo Basin to the savanna plains of present-day Bauchi State in Nigeria before settling in Southern Kaduna. This history of migration, coupled with interactions with neighbouring ethnic groups, facilitated the exchange of cultural ideas, including dance traditions. The similarities between the Samba of the Bajju people and the Brazilian Samba can be understood as part of a larger pattern of cross-cultural influence that has shaped the development of dance forms across the African diaspora.

Migration facilitated the exchange of cultural practices and influenced how these practices were adapted and transformed in new contexts. In Brazil, the Afro-Brazilian population used Samba as a means of preserving their African heritage while also negotiating their place within a racially and culturally diverse society. Samba became a symbol of resistance and resilience, embodying the experiences of enslaved Africans and their descendants as they navigated the complexities of Brazilian culture. Similarly, the Bajju people adapted their traditional dance forms to reflect their evolving social and cultural realities, incorporating new movements and influences while maintaining the core elements of their cultural heritage. The cultural diffusion that resulted from migration is evident in the similarities between the Bajju and Brazilian Sambas and the broader patterns of cultural exchange that have shaped the development of dance forms across Africa and the Americas. As Dietz (2007) notes, cultural diversity is often the product of historical processes that blend multiple cultural traditions. In the case of Samba, the dance represents a fusion of African, European, and Indigenous influences, reflecting the complex histories of migration, colonisation, and cultural exchange that have shaped the regions in which it is performed. In sum, studying migration and cross-cultural influence provides essential insights into the development of Samba as a dance form in Nigeria and Brazil. The similarities between the two traditions highlight how cultural practices can transcend geographic boundaries and evolve in response to new social and historical contexts. At the same time, the differences between the Bajju and Brazilian Sambas underscore the importance of understanding cultural practices within their specific local contexts, as each tradition reflects the unique experiences and histories of the communities that perform it.

Plate 1: Samba Dance of the Bajju People of Southern Kaduna

Methodology

This study's methodological approach draws on qualitative research methods, including interviews, participatory observation, and ethnographic studies. These methods are complemented by content analysis of relevant literature and historical evidence to explore the cross-cultural links between the Samba dance of the Bajju people in Southern Kaduna and the Afro-Brazilian Samba tradition.

1. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including elders and leaders of dance troupes from the Bajju community. The interviews aimed to collect oral histories about the origin and evolution of the Samba dance within the Bajju culture, its role in community life, and the significance of its nomenclature. Participants were asked to describe the dance movements, the social contexts in which Samba is performed, and their views on the similarities between Bajju Samba and Brazilian Samba.

2. Participant Observation: Fieldwork was conducted in several Bajju communities, including Zonkwa, Tsoriyang, Tabak, Madakiya, and Kamrum Bajju, where Samba dances are still performed during festivals and social gatherings. The researcher observed the choreography, props, costumes, and overall structure of Samba performances. This method allowed for a deeper understanding of the dance as a lived cultural practice.

3. Ethnographic Study: A comparative ethnographic study was conducted to analyse the shared characteristics between the Samba of Southern Kaduna and that of Brazil. This involved reviewing historical documents and academic literature on the evolution of Samba in both regions and investigating the broader social, economic, and cultural contexts that may have contributed to the development of similar dance traditions.

4. Content Analysis: Secondary data, including journal articles, books, and online sources, were reviewed to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the cultural dynamics that influence dance creation and diffusion. The content analysis focused on identifying cultural, historical, and social factors that may have shaped the Samba dance in Nigeria and Brazil.

Plate 2: Brazilian Samba Dancers

Results

This research revealed several key insights into the cultural and historical connections between the Samba dances of the Bajju people and Brazil. These findings are presented in three categories: historical linkages, similarities in dance form, and the role of cultural diffusion.

1. Historical Linkages: The research confirmed that the historical trajectory of migration and cultural exchange between Africa and Brazil, mainly through the transatlantic slave trade, played a significant role in shaping the dance traditions of both regions. Oral histories from the Bajju community suggest that the term "Samba" may have been introduced to the Bajju people through interactions with Afro-Brazilians who returned to West Africa after the abolition of slavery. This supports existing literature, such as the work of Khan (2016), which emphasises the role of the slave trade in facilitating cross-cultural exchange between Africa and the Americas.

2. Similarities in Dance Form: The comparison of the dance forms revealed notable similarities between the Bajju and Brazilian Samba dances. Both dances emphasise rhythmic body movements, particularly the waist wriggling, a central choreography feature. In both traditions, Samba is performed in processions, with the dancers moving in a coordinated line or circle, accompanied by drums and other percussion instruments. However, while the Brazilian Samba is often more fluid and improvisational, the Bajju Samba tends to be more structured, with specific movements passed down through generations.

3. Cultural Diffusion and Identity Formation: The research identified cultural diffusion as a critical factor in the development of the Samba dance. The adoption of the name "Samba" by the Bajju and Brazilian communities reflects a shared cultural heritage despite the lack of direct contact between the two groups. This finding aligns with the theory of cultural relativism, which suggests that cultural practices develop in response to local social and historical conditions but may share standard features due to broader patterns of human interaction (Hall, 2020). The use of Samba as a cultural identifier in both regions underscores the role of dance in expressing and preserving cultural identity.

Additionally, the study highlighted the role of cultural dynamism in the evolution of Samba. In Brazil and Southern Kaduna, Samba has evolved from a traditional folk dance into a more modern performance art, influenced by external cultural forces such as Western media and global tourism. The Bajju Samba, in particular, has changed choreography, costumes, and performance settings, reflecting the community's adaptation to contemporary cultural trends. The results of this study support the hypothesis that cultural migration and diffusion played a central role in shaping the Samba dance tradition in Brazil and Nigeria. The dance form and nomenclature similarities between the Bajju and Brazilian Sambas provide strong evidence of cross-cultural exchange, likely facilitated by the transatlantic slave trade. However, it is also clear that the two dance traditions have developed independently, shaped by their respective regions' unique social and historical contexts. (The findings further demonstrate that dance is a powerful tool for cultural identity formation. In both the Bajju and Brazilian contexts, Samba is more than just a dance; it symbolises communal heritage, social cohesion, and resistance to cultural domination. As noted by Ojuade (2007), dance is often used to "portray the cultural interpretations of history and reality," and this is evident in the way Samba has evolved to reflect the lived experiences of both Afro-Brazilians and the Bajju people (p. 2). The following section will further explore the implications of these findings and discuss the broader cultural significance of Samba in both regions.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study demonstrate that cultural exchange, mainly through migration, played a crucial role in the development of the Samba dance among both the Bajju people of Southern Kaduna and the Afro-Brazilian population. The dance's shared nomenclature, movement forms, and symbolic significance suggest that Samba is a product of cultural fusion shaped by historical and social contexts. This supports existing research on the influence of the transatlantic slave trade on cultural development in the Americas, particularly in Brazil, where African cultural traditions were absorbed and transformed into new expressions of identity (Chasteen, 1996). In the case of the Bajju people, the introduction of the name "Samba" may have been influenced by returning Afro-Brazilian communities who resettled in West Africa after the abolition of slavery. These communities likely brought elements of Brazilian culture, including music, dance, and religious practices. Adopting Samba as a dance name in Southern Kaduna reflects the dynamic nature of cultural exchange, where ideas, customs, and artistic expressions cross geographic and cultural boundaries. Such cultural fluidity is not unique to the Bajju and Brazilian contexts; it is a common

feature of human societies where migration and trade have historically facilitated the blending of cultural practices.

Cultural Studies Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how marginalised groups, such as enslaved Africans and their descendants in Brazil, resisted the cultural domination of European colonial powers by maintaining and adapting their traditional practices. The evolution of Samba in Brazil, for example, reflects how Afro-Brazilians used dance as a form of cultural resistance, asserting their identity in the face of oppression (Hall, 2020). Similarly, the Bajju people's adoption and adaptation of Samba underscores the importance of cultural dynamism in preserving and transforming identity. The study highlights the role of dance as a critical cultural identifier. In Southern Kaduna and Brazil, Samba is an art form and a medium through which communities express and preserve their cultural heritage. As argued by Cottam and Jefferson-Buchanan (2008), dance is a concentrated form of physical behaviour communicating a community's values and social structures (p. 1). In both the Bajju and Brazilian contexts, Samba provides a platform for communal expression, reinforcing social cohesion and shared identity.

The specific movements of Samba, characterised by rapid hip rotations and rhythmic footwork, embody cultural narratives and historical experiences. Among the Bajju people, Samba has evolved from a traditional maiden dance, Song Bvin, into a broader cultural practice incorporating traditional and contemporary dance forms. The continued performance of Samba in festivals and ceremonies reflects its enduring role in the social and cultural life of the Bajju people. Similarly, in Brazil, Samba has transitioned from a folk dance rooted in Afro-Brazilian communities to a symbol of national identity, celebrated during Carnival and other public events. This evolution illustrates the flexibility of dance as a cultural form, capable of adapting to new social and historical contexts while retaining its core significance as a marker of identity.

Cultural Relativism and the Interpretation of Samba

One of the critical contributions of this study is its application of the Theory of Cultural Relativism to the interpretation of Samba in Nigeria and Brazil. As Boas (1911) articulates, cultural relativism emphasises that cultural practices should be understood in the context of their specific social and historical conditions. This perspective is beneficial for analysing the similarities and differences between the Samba dances of the Bajju people and Brazil. While the two dance traditions share standard features, including nomenclature and movement patterns, they also reflect the unique cultural dynamics of their respective regions. For the Bajju people, Samba is deeply tied to their agricultural lifestyle and communal values. The dance is often performed during festivals celebrating the harvest or marking significant social events, such as weddings or religious ceremonies. The structured nature of the dance, with its emphasis on coordinated group movements, reflects the collectivist ethos of Bajju society. In contrast, while rooted in Afro-Brazilian cultural traditions, the Brazilian Samba has evolved into a more fluid and improvisational form, reflecting the diverse cultural influences that have shaped Brazilian society. By applying a relativist lens, this study avoids the pitfall of viewing one Samba tradition as a derivative of the other. Instead, it recognises that the Bajju and Brazilian Sambas developed independently in response to local cultural conditions. This approach aligns with the broader goals of cultural relativism, which seeks to understand cultural practices on their terms without imposing external value judgments (Ferraro & Briody, 2017). The cross-cultural analysis presented in this study thus contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how dance functions as a product and a driver of cultural identity.

Modern Adaptations and Global Influence

One of the study's more contemporary findings is the influence of modernity and globalisation on the evolution of Samba in Nigeria and Brazil. As globalisation has increased cultural exchange between nations, Samba has been increasingly performed in international settings, particularly Brazilian Samba, and is showcased during Carnival and in global dance competitions. This globalisation of Samba has had a reciprocal influence, with modern dance styles and aesthetics being incorporated into the traditional forms of Samba in both regions. In the Bajju context, younger generations have integrated contemporary music and movement into the traditional Samba dance, transforming it into a hybrid expression that resonates with global cultural trends. This transformation is similar to how Samba in Brazil has incorporated elements of modern dance styles, blending traditional Afro-Brazilian movements with contemporary jazz, ballet, and hip-hop influences. While these adaptations reflect the global impact on local cultural practices, they also highlight the importance of maintaining a connection to the traditional roots of the dance.

The role of globalisation in shaping cultural practices, including dance, raises important questions about the future of traditional art forms in a rapidly changing world. As more cultural practices become globalised, the challenge for communities like the Bajju and Afro-Brazilians is to preserve the integrity of their cultural heritage while embracing new influences. This delicate balance is critical for ensuring that Samba remains a meaningful expression of cultural identity for future generations. The findings of this study suggest several avenues for future research. First, further comparative studies of dance traditions in other African and Latin American cultures could shed light on the broader cultural diffusion and migration patterns that have shaped these art forms. Additionally, research into the role of media and popular culture in shaping modern adaptations of traditional dance would provide valuable insights into how globalisation affects cultural practices. Finally, studying gender dynamics in Samba, particularly the role of women in both the Bajju and Brazilian Samba traditions, could offer essential perspectives on the social significance of dance in different cultural contexts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has explored the cultural and historical connections between the Samba dance of the Bajju people in Southern Kaduna, Nigeria, and that of Brazil, highlighting the role of migration, cultural exchange, and identity formation in shaping these dance traditions. Through a comparative analysis, the research has demonstrated that despite the vast geographical distance and distinct social contexts, the two forms of Samba share significant similarities in movement patterns and nomenclature. These similarities suggest that cultural diffusion, mainly through the transatlantic slave trade and other migratory patterns, played a crucial role in transmitting and transforming cultural practices across continents. The study's application of Cultural Studies Theory and Cultural Relativism has further enhanced the understanding of how dance functions as both a product and an agent of cultural identity. In both the Bajju and Brazilian contexts, Samba is more than a dance; it is a powerful medium for expressing collective memory, social values, and resistance to cultural domination. The research findings underscore the dynamic nature of culture, illustrating how traditional practices like Samba evolve in response to new social and historical circumstances while retaining their core significance as markers of identity.

This study's comparative approach also reveals the importance of viewing cultural practices through a relativist lens, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of how cultural expressions develop independently in different contexts. By recognising the unique social, historical, and geographical factors that shaped the Bajju and Brazilian Samba traditions, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how migration

and cultural exchange shape the evolution of cultural practices worldwide. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to ensure the preservation and further understanding of the Samba dance in both the Bajju and Brazilian contexts:

1. Increased Scholarly Attention on Bajju Samba: The literature concerning the Bajju people's Samba dance is Significantly lacking. Scholars in African dance studies should focus on conducting more in-depth research into the history, evolution, and cultural significance of Bajju Samba. Such research would contribute to the academic understanding of African dance and enhance the visibility of the Bajju people's cultural heritage in the broader discourse on global dance traditions.

2. Creation of an African Dance Dictionary: A comprehensive African Dance Dictionary should be developed to preserve and promote African dance traditions. This resource would document various dance forms across the continent, including the Bajju Samba, ensuring that future generations can access accurate and detailed information about these cultural expressions.

3. National Recognition of Samba in Nigeria: In collaboration with cultural and artistic bodies, the Nigerian government should recognise the significance of Samba as a national cultural asset. This recognition would involve promoting the Bajju Samba through national dance festivals, artistic exhibitions, and international collaborations with countries like Brazil, where Samba is already a well-established national symbol. Such initiatives would preserve and position the tradition as a cultural bridge between Nigeria and the broader global community.

4. Support for Samba Dance Schools and Cultural Institutions: In Nigeria and Brazil, dedicated institutions, such as Samba dance schools, that focus on preserving and teaching the traditional and modern forms of Samba are needed. These schools would serve as centres for cultural exchange, where dancers and researchers from different countries can collaborate, share knowledge, and promote the art form globally. Governments and cultural organisations should provide funding and support for establishing these institutions.

5. Encouragement of International Cultural Exchange Programs: To strengthen the cultural ties between Nigeria and Brazil, international cultural exchange programs should be encouraged. These programs would allow dancers, choreographers, and scholars from both countries to collaborate on projects, attend festivals, and share their traditions. Such exchanges would enrich both countries' cultural landscapes and promote mutual understanding and appreciation of their shared heritage.

6. Further Research on Gender Dynamics in Samba: This study has highlighted the importance of dance in expressing cultural identity but has not fully explored the role of gender in shaping these dance traditions. Future research should examine the gender dynamics within the Samba dance traditions of both the Bajju and Brazil. Understanding the roles that men and women play in these cultural practices would provide valuable insights into the social significance of dance in each region and how it reflects broader patterns of gender relations.

In sum, this study has provided insights into the cultural connections between the Bajju people's and Brazil's samba dance traditions, emphasising the role of migration, cultural exchange, and identity formation in shaping these practices. By recognising the value of Samba as an artistic expression and promoting its preservation, Nigeria and Brazil can continue to celebrate their shared heritage and strengthen the bonds between their peoples.

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The aesthetics of the Okanga dance of the Enu-ani people of Delta State

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Abstract

This study investigates the aesthetics of the Okanga dance, a traditional performance of the Enu-ani people in Delta State, Nigeria, elucidating its cultural and artistic essence. Anchored in the theoretical frameworks of aesthetics and performance, the research examines elements such as music, costumes, movements, body language, and formations. Employing qualitative methods−participant observation, interviews, and multimedia documentation−the findings reveal Okanga dance as a dynamic interplay of rhythmic traditional music, vibrant costumes adorned with intricate designs, fluid and symbolic movements, expressive body language, and coordinated group formations. These elements collectively reinforce the dance's role as a medium for cultural expression and non-verbal communication, deeply rooted in the socio-economic and spiritual lives of the Enu-ani people. The study underscores the significance of Okanga dance in fostering communal identity and cultural continuity, advocating for its adaptation and preservation amid globalisation. Recommendations include integrating Okanga dance into professional choreography, promoting research through academic and cultural initiatives, and supporting its documentation via national festivals to protect this intangible heritage. The conclusions affirm that Okanga dance is not merely an art form but a repository of cultural memory and identity, offering a powerful medium for promoting Igbo cultural values globally. The dance can transcend local boundaries by leveraging its aesthetic and performative elements, enabling broader recognition and appreciation. This research is a foundation for further explorations in African traditional dance studies and provides actionable insights for cultural policymakers and educators committed to preserving indigenous art forms.

Introduction

Dance is an art form involving body movements in rhythm to music or beats, used for expression, social interaction, or worship (Bakare, 1994). It serves as a means of non-verbal communication, evident in imitating animal movements, retelling hunting experiences, and the rhythmic behaviours seen in mating or hunting animals (Thompson, 1974). The definition of dance is influenced by social, cultural, aesthetic, and moral frameworks. For this presentation, *dance* will be defined as a human activity involving body movements in response to rhythm or music, which can be vibrant for spiritual communication and social interaction (Graham, 1998). Dance can be considered a derivative art form from music, with many dances accompanied by music that dictates the steps (Nwala, 1985). Music enhances human expression of mood and attitude, just as dance visually represents and recreates these feelings through movements (Omatsola, 1998). Dance and music are inseparably linked, complementing each other (Schechner, 1985). Although some dance experts advocate for dance without music through mime, this relies on mental imagination to express feelings through meaningful movements (Turner, 1988).

Dance is an ephemeral, performance-based art. Nearly all communities in Nigeria have distinct forms of dance, each within its ritual origin, social milieu, and functional objectives (Okeke, 2016). These dances are dynamic, constantly evolving and reflecting the cultural state of the region (Asante & Asante, 1990). African dance, deeply embedded in culture and life, is classified into ritual and social categories. Ritual dance is rooted in religious aspects, using symbols, music, and metaphors, while social dance, usually for entertainment or moral cleansing, has less severe content and form (Goffman, 1969). In Igbo, dance is intertwined with the people's socio-economic lives. The Enu-ani people in the Eastern part of the Niger Delta are predominantly farmers, and their dances reflect their socio-economic life, tied to the fertile land of the region (Kofworola, 1987). Dance embodies the symbolic and cultural aspects of the people, uniting communities through shared identity, faith, and values (Feibleman, 1949). Enu-ani people often dance at festivals like the Iwu festival of Ogwashi-uku and Ubulu-uku to honour their deity or give thanks for received favours (Nwala, 1985).

Aesthetics, derived from the Greek word 'aisthanestai' meaning 'perception', is a mode of intellectual energy applied to actual cases to judge dance performances (Kelly, 1998). Aesthetics and dance are inseparable; a good dance is inherently beautiful. The aesthetics of African dance primarily lie in its presentation, which reveals each element of aesthetics, including music, costume, make-up, and accoutrements, playing vital roles in traditional and technically choreographed dance (Graham, 1998). Performance integrates skills and knowledge to produce valuable results involving either individuals or teams, characterised by the quality and effectiveness of their performance (Elger, 2015). This paper proposes to appreciate the beauty of Okanga dance, a traditional dance of the Enu-ani people in Delta State.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two primary theoretical frameworks: aesthetics and performance theories. These frameworks provide the conceptual tools to analyse and appreciate the Okanga dance's artistic and performative qualities. Aesthetics, a branch of philosophy, examines the nature of beauty, art, and taste and the creation and appreciation of beauty. Derived from the Greek word aisthanestai, meaning 'perception,' aesthetics was first formally conceptualised by Alexander Baumgarten in 1737 (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2021). Baumgarten described aesthetics as a mode of intellectual energy applied to actual cases, which can be used to judge art forms, including dance. Aesthetics involves critical reflection on art, culture, and

nature, focusing on sensory or emotional values, often called judgments of sentiment and taste (Kelly, 1998). This framework is pertinent to this study as it helps assess the visual and sensory appeal of the Okanga dance, considering factors such as beauty, grace, and artistic coherence.

Beauty in aesthetics is intrinsic and often linked to the pleasure of engaging with an art form. As Nehamas (2015) posits, finding something beautiful is akin to believing that integrating it into one's life will enhance one's overall well-being. This perspective underscores the value placed on the Okanga dance by the Enu-ani people, where the dance is not merely a form of entertainment but a vital cultural expression that enhances communal and spiritual life. The theoretical underpinnings of aesthetics also involve understanding the harmony and balance within an art form. Feibleman (1949) articulates this by explaining that beauty is the qualitative aspect of the intrinsic relations of things, while goodness refers to the extrinsic relations. This distinction helps evaluate the Okanga dance, which combines rhythmic music, intricate costumes, and symbolic movements to create a harmonious and aesthetically pleasing performance.

Performance theory, developed by scholars like Victor Turner and Richard Schechner, explores the performative nature of societal events and daily life. Turner (1988) emphasised the performative aspect of rituals and social interactions, suggesting that performance codes govern these activities. Schechner (1985) further articulated that performance should be viewed as a cross-cultural phenomenon encompassing everyday life, social rituals, and artistic expressions. Performance theory is crucial for understanding how individuals present themselves and their actions within a societal context. Goffman (1959) introduced that life is a performance, where individuals constantly manage their impressions to fit societal expectations. This theoretical lens applies to the Okanga dance, as the dancers perform for entertainment and convey cultural values and social norms through their movements and expressions. Schechner's framework includes vital principles such as the presentation of self, restored behaviour, and expressive culture. He argues that performance studies are inherently interdisciplinary and intercultural, which is evident in the Okanga dance's ability to convey complex cultural narratives through choreography (Schechner, 1985). The dance embodies restored behaviour, reenacting traditional movements to preserve and communicate cultural heritage.

Elger (2002) expands on performance theory by introducing concepts such as performance mindset, immersion, and reflective practice. He asserts that achieving optimal performance involves engaging performers in a positive emotional state, immersing them in enriching environments, and encouraging reflective practice. These principles are evident in the Okanga dance, where performers are deeply immersed in the cultural and spiritual significance of the dance, leading to a highly expressive and meaningful performance. Performance theory also highlights the importance of community and collaboration in enhancing performance quality. According to Schechner (1985), a performance's success relies on the collective effort of the participants, which aligns with the communal nature of the Okanga dance. The dance involves the performers and the audience, who actively participate and contribute to the overall experience. The theoretical frameworks of aesthetics and performance provide a comprehensive basis for analysing the Okanga dance. Aesthetics allows for the appreciation of the dance's beauty and sensory appeal, while performance theory offers insights into the social and cultural dynamics that underpin the dance. Together, these frameworks enable a deeper understanding of the Okanga dance as an artistic and cultural phenomenon.

In recent years, dance aesthetics has seen significant advancements, particularly in integrating digital media and globalisation. Scholars like Foster (2011) and Lepecki (2016) have explored the dynamic nature of traditional dances in a contemporary context, focusing on how these forms evolve in response to global audiences and technological mediation. Foster's work on corporeality in dance highlights how the

body becomes a site of cultural negotiation. It is particularly relevant to the Okanga dance as it moves from a localised ritual form to a performative spectacle accessible to wider audiences. Similarly, Lepecki's (2016) exploration of dance's political and cultural implications can provide deeper insights into the performative aspects of the Okanga dance, especially in how it conveys socio-political messages through symbolic movements.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore the aesthetics of Okanga dance among the Enu-ani people. The qualitative approach was chosen due to its effectiveness in providing in-depth insights into cultural practices and the meanings attributed to them (Creswell, 2014). The research design included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and the collection of oral histories, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the dance's aesthetic and cultural significance. Participant observation was a crucial method used in this study. The researcher attended festivals and ceremonies where Okanga dance was performed, engaging actively and passively in the events. This method allowed for collecting detailed, first-hand accounts of the dance's execution and the audience's reactions, essential for understanding its aesthetic appeal (Spradley, 1980). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with various stakeholders, including dance performers, cultural custodians, and members of the Enu-ani community. Approximately thirty individuals were interviewed, including three cultural custodians and several dance masters and mistresses. This approach provided rich, qualitative data, as respondents could elaborate on their experiences and perspectives regarding Okanga dance (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Oral histories were collected to capture the historical and cultural context of Okanga dance. These narratives were gathered from older members of the community, who provided valuable insights into the evolution and significance of the dance. Oral histories are particularly useful in ethnographic studies for preserving and understanding indigenous knowledge and practices (Perks & Thomson, 2015).

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who could provide the most relevant and insightful information regarding Okanga dance. This method ensured that the sample included individuals with deep knowledge and experience related to the dance, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings (Patton, 2015). The primary research instruments included observation checklists, interview guides, and recording devices (audio and video). These tools facilitated the systematic data collection, ensuring that all relevant aspects of the dance and its performance were documented comprehensively (Bernard, 2017). Observation checklists were used to systematically record the various elements of Okanga dance, such as costume, music, choreography, and audience interaction. This tool helped maintain consistency and focus during field observations (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Semi-structured interview guides were developed to ensure that key topics were covered while allowing flexibility for participants to express their views freely. The guides included questions about the history, significance, and aesthetic elements of Okanga dance (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The data collection process was conducted in three phases:

1. Pre-Field Preparation: This phase involved developing research instruments, obtaining ethical approval, and familiarising with the cultural context. The researcher, being a native of the region, used her knowledge of the local language and customs to build rapport with participants, facilitating a smoother data collection process (Creswell, 2014). 2. Fieldwork: During the fieldwork phase, the researcher attended several festivals and ceremonies, observed and participated in Okanga dance performances, and conducted interviews and oral history sessions. Detailed field notes were taken, and all performances and interviews were recorded using audio and video

equipment to ensure accurate documentation (Emerson et al., 2011). 3. Post-Fieldwork Analysis: The recordings and notes were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis after data collection. This involved coding the data to identify patterns and themes related to the aesthetics and cultural significance of Okanga dance. The analysis was guided by the theoretical frameworks of aesthetics and performance (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The data analysis process involved a thematic analysis of the transcriptions from interviews, participant observations, and oral histories. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis, the researcher first familiarised herself with the data through repeated readings of field notes and interview transcripts. Next, initial codes were generated based on recurring patterns related to key aesthetic elements, such as music, costume, and choreography. The data were then organised into broader themes, such as 'cultural symbolism in dance' and 'ritualistic functions of music.' These themes were reviewed and refined through peer debriefing sessions with experts in African dance studies to ensure the reliability of the findings. This rigorous coding process allowed for identifying overt and subtle aesthetic principles in the Okanga dance, enhancing the depth of the analysis. The study's thematic analysis ensures that the aesthetic elements discussed are grounded in systematic and verifiable qualitative data.

Main Analysis

The Enu-ani people are the Igbo-speaking inhabitants of Delta State. Their diverse origins contribute to a rich cultural tapestry that includes influences from Nshi in Anambra State and Benin in Edo State. For instance, Ogwashi-Ukwu, one of the prominent Enu-ani towns, has roots in these areas, with many villages referred to as 'Umu Nshi,' meaning Nshi children. This bicultural heritage is evident in their cultural expressions, including costume, dance, mime, music, norms, and kingship, which can be traced to Igbo and Edo origins. Okanga dance is a vigorous and dynamic funeral dance traditionally performed for the burial of older men and warriors, though it has also been used for older women. This dance is an integral part of the funeral rites, intended to appease and celebrate the spirits of the deceased ancestors. Elaborate funeral rites are necessary to secure the goodwill of these spirits, ensuring they continue to guide and protect the living. As one respondent noted, "Okanga gives pleasure to the spirit of the dead, ensuring their goodwill" (Personal Interview, 2023). The dance uses specific musical instruments such as talking drums, small metal, and wooden gongs. These instruments are played by professional Okanga players and members of the deceased's family, who are part of the dancers participating actively, highlighting the communal involvement in the performance. Traditional staging systems for Okanga dance include arena and semi-circle configurations, where performers are surrounded by the audience, creating an intimate and immersive experience (Nwankwo, 2018).

Audience engagement is a crucial aspect of Okanga dance. The dance captivates spectators with its creative movements and cultural significance. Audience reactions vary depending on the occasion, but there is always a communal involvement where members and friends of the deceased join in the dance, enhancing the participatory nature of the event. During the "Igba-Ilo" ceremony, for instance, Okanga dancers, often from the deceased's family, form a line of 8 to 10 rows, leading a procession through the streets. The audience usually joins in, responding to songs and synchronising their movements with the drum beats (Okeke, 2016). The "inye-nni" rite, or feeding of the dead, is performed under the high beat of drumming by the Okanga musicians. The head of the group breaks the last meal, which is presented on an earthen plate, and places it on the coffin. This rite symbolises the last feeding from the deceased's wife, culminating in the "Iya-Isi" rite, which physically separates the widow from her dead husband. During this rite, two strong women from the Umu-Ada group

carry the widow around the coffin, lowering her buttocks at the four corners. This poignant ceremony underscores the deep cultural roots and the emotional resonance of the Okanga dance (Ezeala, 2015).

The aesthetic elements of Okanga dance, such as music, costume, dance movements, body language, and dance formation, are deeply intertwined with theoretical concepts of aesthetics and performance. Music: The rhythmic beat, created by traditional instruments like the metal gong, talking drums, and samba drums, sets the pace for the dance. As Ilozue (2015) explains, "The combination of these instruments creates a unique and captivating sound that engages the audience." This musical rhythm not only guides the dancers' movements but also enhances the aesthetic appeal of the performance. Costume: The vibrant and bold colours of the costumes, such as red, yellow, green, and blue, symbolise the cultural identity of the Igbo people. The intricate designs and patterns, often adorned with embroidery and beading, add richness and texture to the visual presentation (Okeke, 2016). As one dancer mentioned, "Our costumes tell the story of our heritage and bring our history to life" (Personal Interview, 2023). Dance Movements: The fluidity and grace of the dance movements, characterised by rhythmic synchronisation with the music, are integral to the aesthetic appeal of Okanga dance. Each gesture and movement is symbolic, conveying specific cultural messages. For instance, some movements express joy and celebration, while others convey solemnity or reverence (Nwankwo, 2018). This symbolic use of dance movements aligns with the performance theory's emphasis on non-verbal communication and social signalling (Goffman, 1969). Body Language: Facial expressions, posture, and hand gestures enhance the dance's emotional and spiritual essence. Facial expressions communicate emotions, from joy to sorrow, creating a deeper connection with the audience. "The expressions on the dancers' faces tell a story that words cannot," remarked a spectator (Observation Notes, 2023). This aspect of body language is crucial in conveying the cultural values of the Igbo people, emphasising strength, resilience, and community (Ilozue, 2015). Dance Formation: The use of group formations, such as circles or lines, and the strategic use of space and symmetry add depth and texture to the dance. These formations enhance the visual appeal and reflect the cultural importance of community and cooperation. The dynamic changes in formation during the dance create an engaging visual experience for the audience, highlighting the adaptability and flexibility valued in Igbo culture (Okeke, 2016).

The empirical findings from observations and interviews provide strong support for the theoretical insights into the aesthetics and performance of Okanga dance. For example, the music's rhythmic beats and call-and-response techniques align with the aesthetic principles of engaging the audience and creating a sense of unity. The elaborate costumes and symbolic dance movements reflect the aesthetic theory's emphasis on beauty and cultural significance. In practice, these theoretical concepts manifest vividly in the performances observed. During one festival, the intricate patterns of the dancers' movements and the vibrant costumes created a mesmerising spectacle that captivated the audience. The participatory nature of the dance, where audience members joined the dancers, illustrated the social and communal aspects emphasised in performance theory. Moreover, integrating ritualistic elements, such as the "inye-nni" and "Iya-Isi" rites, underscores the deep cultural and spiritual connections inherent in Okanga dance. These elements not only enhance the aesthetic experience but also serve to reinforce the cultural identity and communal bonds of the Enu-ani people.

Theory and Empirical Findings

This section connects theoretical discussions with empirical observations of Okanga dance, comprehensively understanding its aesthetic and performative elements. The

theories of aesthetics and performance serve as the foundation for analysing the dance's various components, such as music, costume, dance movements, body language, and dance formations. Music is an essential component of Okanga dance, characterised by its rhythmic beats created using traditional musical instruments. The primary instruments include the metal gong, talking drums, and samba drums. The *agogo* (metal gong in Enu-ani) provides the melody, while the talking and samba drums set the rhythmic pace. This combination of instruments creates a unique and captivating sound that guides the dancers' movements and engages the audience (Ilozue, 2015).

The use of rhythm in Okanga dance music is particularly noteworthy. The consistent and infectious beat the various instruments produce ensures synchronisation among the dancers. This rhythmic unity creates an immersive experience for the audience, enhancing the overall aesthetic appeal of the performance (Nwankwo, 2018). Call-and-response techniques are another significant element of Okanga dance music. This involves a lead singer or musician singing or playing a phrase, followed by a response from the rest of the group. This interaction adds depth and complexity to the music, fostering community and unity among the performers (Ezeala, 2015). The lyrics of Okanga dance music, often in the Igbo language, are poetic and metaphorical, conveying cultural narratives and messages. These lyrics enhance the music's authenticity and cultural relevance, contributing to the dance's overall aesthetics (Okeke, 2016).

Ccostumes in Okanga dance are designed to enhance the visual appeal and reflect cultural identity. Traditionally, Enu-ani dancers wear akwa ocha (white cloth). However, due to the high maintenance of white cloth, dancers from different villages have adopted bright-coloured red, yellow, green, and blue fabrics. These colours symbolise cultural identity and infuse the dance with vibrancy and energy (Okeke, 2016). Costumes are often adorned with intricate embroidery, beading, and other embellishments, adding richness and texture. These designs draw from Igbo cultural heritage, enhancing the dance's aesthetic appeal (Ezeala, 2015). Make-up, another critical component, is applied in bold, bright colours like red and black. These colours are used in distinctive patterns unique to Okanga dance, unifying the group's appearance. Facial markings using uli, a natural dye, symbolise cultural values and beliefs, reinforcing cultural identity and tradition (Nwankwo, 2018; Ilozue, 2015).

The dance movements in Okanga dance are characterised by fluidity and grace, with dancers moving rhythmically and in sync with the music. These movements are smooth and natural, integral to the dance's aesthetic appeal (Ezeala, 2015). Gestures and symbolism play crucial roles in Okanga dance movements. Each gesture conveys cultural messages or values, such as joy, reverence, or solemnity. This symbolic use of movements adds meaning to the performance, making it a rich cultural expression (Nwankwo, 2018). Group dynamics and cooperation are emphasised in Okanga dance. Dancers move in unison, contributing to the dance's overall aesthetic appeal. The choreography often involves multiple dancers, each playing a specific role, demonstrating the importance of community and collective performance (Ilozue, 2015). The synchronisation of movements with music highlights the importance of rhythm and timing. Dancers carefully choreograph their movements to match the music's beat and tempo, creating a harmonious and engaging performance (Okeke, 2016).

Body language in Okanga dance includes facial expressions, posture, and hand gestures, all used to convey the dance's emotional and spiritual essence. Facial expressions communicate emotions like joy, sorrow, and reverence, connecting the dancers and the audience (Ezeala, 2015). Posture in Okanga dance is upright and balanced, emanating movements from the centre of gravity. This posture reflects strength, resilience, and cultural values while allowing for fluid and graceful movements (Ilozue, 2015). Hand gestures in Okanga dance express various emotions and ideas, each with a specific meaning. For instance, a raised hand might symbolise victory, while a downward hand could indicate humility or submission. These gestures

add complexity and depth to the dance, allowing nuanced expression (Nwankwo, 2018). Spatial awareness and movement are crucial in Okanga dance. Dancers move purposefully and intentionally, contributing to the dance's aesthetic appeal. The choreography creates dynamic visual experiences, with dancers moving in and out of different formations, reflecting cultural values of community and cooperation (Okeke, 2016).

Dance formations in Okanga dance involve group patterns that add depth and texture to the performance. Dancers form circles, lines, or semi-circles, each formation conveying different meanings and emotions. Group formations emphasise cooperation and community cultural values (Ezeala, 2015). Spatial design in Okanga dance is intentional, with movements contributing to the overall aesthetic appeal. The spatial arrangement creates depth and perspective, enhancing the performance's visual engagement (Nwankwo, 2018). Symmetry and asymmetry are used in dance formations to create balance and harmony or tension and contrast. These elements add complexity to the dance, allowing for expressive and nuanced performances (Okeke, 2016). Formation changes are dynamic and engaging, with dancers moving between patterns to convey emotions and meanings. These changes reflect adaptability and flexibility, vital cultural values among the Igbo people (Ilozue, 2015).

The integration of contemporary dance aesthetics reinforces the cultural significance of Okanga dance but also highlights its adaptability in a globalised world. By employing performance theory in conjunction with modern aesthetic principles, this study reveals that Okanga dance, while deeply rooted in local tradition, possesses the potential for reinterpretation and recontextualisation. These findings underscore the importance of further interdisciplinary research to explore how traditional African dances can maintain cultural integrity while engaging with modern artistic and globalised platforms.

Conclusion

Igbo music, dance, and aesthetics have gained recognition on a global scale, demonstrating the rich cultural heritage and performative values embedded within traditional Igbo dances. Okanga dance, a traditional Igbo dance from the Enu-ani people of Delta State, epitomises these aesthetic and performative standards. The main objective of this research was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the aesthetic values of Okanga dance and how these findings can serve as practical tools for researchers and cultural development experts interested in preserving and promoting this cultural heritage. The study reveals that Okanga dance is a complex interplay of music, costume, dance movement, body language, and dance formation. These elements contribute to the overall aesthetic experience, making Okanga dance a captivating and meaningful performance. Music in Okanga dance is characterised by rhythmic beats and traditional instruments such as the *agogo*, talking drums, and samba drums, creating an engaging auditory experience (Ilozue, 2015; Nwankwo, 2018). The costumes, with their bright colours and intricate designs, enhance the visual appeal, reflecting the cultural identity of the Igbo people (Ezeala, 2015; Okeke, 2016). Dance movements emphasise fluidity, gestures, and group dynamics, while body language, including facial expressions and posture, conveys the emotional and spiritual essence of the dance (Ezeala, 2015; Ilozue, 2015; Nwankwo, 2018). Dance formations create visually appealing patterns and shapes, adding depth and texture to the performance (Okeke, 2016).

The connection between theoretical frameworks and empirical findings is crucial in understanding Okanga dance. Aesthetics, as a philosophical inquiry, provides a lens through which to evaluate the beauty and artistic value of the dance (Graham, 1998). On the other hand, performance theory offers insights into the performative nature of

societal actions and interactions (Schechner, 1985; Turner, 1988). These theories underscore the importance of presentation, cultural context, and performative excellence in Okanga dance. Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to preserve and promote Okanga dance:

1. Cultural Sensitivity and Adaptation: When performing Okanga dance for audiences unfamiliar with the myths and customs of the Enu-ani people, removing any elements that might be considered offensive is essential. This ensures cultural sensitivity and broadens the appeal of the dance (Bakare, 1994).

2. Global Relevance: Professional choreographers should explore and recreate Okanga dance, emphasising its aesthetic values while adapting it to global audiences. This approach can help transform the dance into an appreciable form worldwide (Asante & Asante, 1990).

3. Support for Dance Research: Dance research must be promoted through educational institutions, the Ministry of Arts and Culture, and the National Orientation Agency. This can lead to discovering and celebrating more Nigerian dances, enriching the global dance landscape (Kofworola, 1987).

4. National Dance Festivals: In addition to the National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST) and a few state carnivals, more national festivals incorporating traditional dances and music are needed. Such events can foster national cohesion and unity by bringing together diverse cultural expressions (Turner, 1988).

5. Documentation and Preservation: Given dance's ephemeral nature, it is essential to document and preserve traditional dances to protect cultural heritage. Efforts should be made to classify and archive information related to Okanga dance, ensuring its survival for future generations (Omatsola, 1998).

The study concludes that Okanga dance is a vibrant cultural expression and a valuable asset that can contribute to cultural preservation and promotion. By understanding and harnessing its aesthetic and performative elements, Okanga dance can gain recognition and appreciation locally and globally. This research provides a foundation for further studies and practical applications in the field of cultural development, ensuring that the rich heritage of the Enu-ani people continues to thrive.

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The influence of digital media on ethical decision-making: A philosophical analysis of algorithmic bias and moral responsibility

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Abstract

The pervasive integration of algorithms within digital media has significantly transformed how information is curated, consumed, and disseminated, presenting critical ethical challenges. This paper investigates the role of algorithms in shaping ethical decision-making processes, with a primary focus on algorithmic bias, moral responsibility, and the need for comprehensive governance structures. The study evaluates algorithmic design's complexities and societal implications by employing ethical theories such as utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics. Through case studies, including YouTube's recommendation system, facial recognition technologies, and Facebook's content moderation practices, the paper underscores how algorithms can reinforce biases, challenge user autonomy, and diffuse accountability across stakeholders—developers, platform operators, and end-users. These insights underscore the societal consequences of algorithmic biases, which can entrench discrimination, skew public discourse, and erode trust in digital platforms. The study further discusses the potential for ethical transformation by advancing transparency, accountability, and the development of fairness-oriented algorithms, emphasising the necessity for independent oversight mechanisms. This collaborative approach, involving developers, regulators, and civil society, is imperative to create an algorithmic ecosystem that aligns with democratic principles, respects individual rights, and fosters societal trust. Through these interventions, the paper advocates for an ethical digital media environment that prioritises equity, accountability, and transparency, with a shared commitment to upholding public trust. The findings underscore the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach to digital media governance, wherein each participant is integral to creating a fair and responsible digital ecosystem that respects and actively promotes ethical engagement.

Introduction

The proliferation of digital media has fundamentally transformed the landscape of global communication, reshaping how information is disseminated, consumed, and interpreted. Central to this transformation is the advent of sophisticated algorithmic systems that curate content tailored to individual users, thereby enhancing engagement and personalising user experiences. However, these systems offer substantial benefits and raise profound ethical concerns, particularly regarding algorithmic bias and moral responsibility. Algorithms, often designed to maximise user engagement and platform profitability, can inadvertently perpetuate societal biases embedded within their training data. Reflecting historical and systemic prejudices, these biases can lead to discriminatory outcomes that significantly impact various aspects of life, including social interactions, access to services, and shaping public opinion (Christodoulou & Iordanou, 2021).

The opaque nature of these processes further compounds the ethical challenges posed by algorithmic decision-making. Algorithms operate within "black boxes," where their design's complexity and proprietary nature obscure their decision-making mechanisms from public scrutiny. This lack of transparency complicates efforts to hold algorithms accountable, as the locus of responsibility is often diffused across multiple stakeholders, including developers, platform operators, and the algorithms themselves (Coeckelbergh, 2019). As Coeckelbergh (2019) discusses, the difficulties in attributing responsibility undermine trust in digital platforms and raise fundamental questions about the ethical implications of delegating significant decision-making power to non-human agents. Moreover, the digital age has introduced a paradigm where algorithms are not merely tools but active participants in shaping societal norms and values. Social chatbots and other AI-driven entities have become significant actors within the digital ecosystem, necessitating a reevaluation of traditional notions of agency and accountability (suárez-Gonzalo, 2019). This shift requires a more profound philosophical inquiry into the nature of moral responsibility in a world where human and algorithmic actions are increasingly intertwined.

The ethical implications of algorithmic bias extend beyond individual users to broader societal structures. For instance, in journalism, AI-driven tools have raised concerns about the integrity and objectivity of news production. Helberger et al. (2022) emphasise the importance of developing normative frameworks that guide the ethical use of AI in journalism, ensuring that these technologies serve the public interest rather than corporate agendas. This perspective is critical in understanding the potential of AI to shape public discourse and influence democratic processes. The ethical challenges associated with algorithmic decision-making are not confined to developed nations but are pertinent in various political contexts, including competitive authoritarian regimes. Jamil (2021) explores how automated journalism impacts media freedom in such environments, highlighting the legal and ethical dilemmas that arise from the intersection of technology and political power. This global perspective underscores the need for a comprehensive ethical discourse considering the diverse cultural and political landscapes in which these technologies operate.

Given these complexities, this research aims to critically examine how digital media algorithms influence ethical decision-making and moral judgments. It seeks to address the following key questions:

1. How do digital media algorithms influence ethical decision-making and moral judgments?
2. What are the nature and extent of algorithmic biases in digital media platforms?
3. How can philosophical theories of ethics inform our understanding of moral responsibility in the context of algorithmic decision-making?
4. What are the broader implications of algorithmic bias on collective ethical norms and societal values?

By addressing these questions, this paper aims to comprehensively analyse the ethical implications of digital media algorithms and offer practical recommendations for enhancing transparency, accountability, and fairness in algorithmic decision-making.

Ethical Theories Relevant to Digital Media

A theoretical framework is essential to effectively address the ethical challenges of algorithmic decision-making in digital media. This section explores the applicability of utilitarianism, deontology, virtue ethics, and transparency and accountability to provide a comprehensive foundation for analysing algorithmic biases and moral responsibility.

Utilitarianism is a consequentialist ethical theory that posits that the morality of an action is determined by its capacity to produce the greatest good for the most significant number (Mill, 1863). In digital media, algorithms are often designed with utilitarian principles to maximise user engagement and satisfaction. For instance, recommendation algorithms on platforms like YouTube and Netflix use data-driven insights to suggest content that aligns with user preferences, ostensibly enhancing user experience and overall satisfaction (Floridi, 2018). However, the utilitarian approach to algorithm design can lead to ethical dilemmas when the pursuit of engagement conflicts with broader societal interests. Research has shown that algorithms optimised for engagement can inadvertently promote divisive or sensational content, thus reinforcing echo chambers and polarisation (Pariser, 2011). This raises concerns about the utilitarian calculus employed by these systems. While individual users may experience increased satisfaction, the societal impact can be detrimental, such as eroding a shared factual basis for public discourse. Floridi et al. (2018) argue that utilitarian principles must be re-evaluated in the digital age to account for algorithmic decisions' long-term and collective consequences rather than focusing solely on immediate user gratification. The challenge lies in recalibrating algorithms to balance individual preferences with the broader public good, thereby aligning utilitarian goals with ethical digital media practices.

Deontology, rooted in the works of Immanuel Kant, emphasises the importance of moral duties and principles regardless of the consequences (Kant, 1785). This ethical framework posits that actions are morally right if they adhere to established rules or duties, such as respect for individual rights and autonomy. In digital media, a deontological approach would advocate for algorithms that uphold fundamental ethical principles, including fairness, transparency, and respect for user privacy (Himma, 2008). For example, deontological ethics would criticise algorithmic practices that violate user privacy or manipulate information without consent, as these actions disregard the moral duty to respect individuals as autonomous agents. Transparency, a cornerstone of deontological ethics, is particularly pertinent in digital media, where algorithms often operate opaquely, making it difficult for users to understand how their data is used or how decisions are made (Coeckelbergh, 2019). Coeckelbergh argues that transparency is not just a technical requirement but a moral duty that empowers users to make informed decisions and to hold platforms accountable. This aligns with the Kantian imperative to treat individuals as ends in themselves rather than merely as means to an end. Moreover, deontology challenges the permissibility of biased algorithms, as these systems inherently fail to treat all users with equal respect and fairness. An algorithm that disproportionately disadvantages certain groups based on race, gender, or other characteristics violates the deontological principle of universalizability, which holds that ethical rules should apply equally to all (Himma, 2008). By prioritising adherence to moral principles over the pursuit of outcomes, deontology provides a critical framework for evaluating the ethical implications of algorithmic decision-making in digital media.

Virtue ethics, a framework that emphasises individuals' character and moral virtues, offers a distinct perspective on ethical decision-making in digital media. From Aristotelian philosophy, virtue ethics focuses on cultivating moral character traits such as honesty, integrity, and responsibility (Aristotle, 350 B.C.E.). In algorithm design and

implementation, virtue ethics calls for developers and platform operators to embody virtues that promote the common good rather than merely prioritising profit or efficiency (Sison & Ferrero, 2015). From a virtue ethics standpoint, the ethicality of algorithmic decisions depends not only on the outcomes or adherence to rules but also on the intentions and moral character of those involved in developing and deploying these technologies. Developers prioritising virtues such as fairness and empathy are more likely to design algorithms that account for diverse user needs and mitigate potential harms (Sison & Ferrero, 2015). For example, a virtuous approach to algorithm design would involve actively seeking to understand and address the biases that may affect marginalised groups, demonstrating a commitment to justice and social responsibility. Virtue ethics also emphasises the importance of moral reflection and continuous improvement, encouraging developers to critically assess their work's ethical implications and strive for moral excellence in their professional conduct (MacIntyre, 1984). This perspective aligns with calls for more excellent ethical education and awareness among technology professionals and for establishing industry standards that reflect virtuous practices. By fostering a moral reflection and virtue culture, this approach can help counteract the potential for harm in algorithmic decision-making, contributing to a more just and equitable digital media environment.

Role of Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability are essential to ethical algorithmic decision-making, particularly in digital media, where algorithms shape public perception and discourse. The concept of explainability, which involves making the decision-making processes of algorithms understandable to users, is a crucial aspect of transparency. Coeckelbergh (2019) posits that explainability is not only a technical feature but a moral imperative grounded in the epistemic condition for responsibility. According to this view, those affected by algorithmic decisions have a right to understand how and why those decisions are made, reflecting a relational approach to responsibility that emphasises the needs and rights of the "patients" of responsibility—the individuals and communities impacted by algorithmic actions. Explainability also serves as a mechanism for accountability, enabling users and regulators to scrutinise and challenge algorithmic decisions when necessary. This aligns with broader philosophical arguments that hold transparency as a fundamental ethical requirement in democratic societies, where informed decision-making and accountability are critical (Floridi et al., 2018). By providing clear and accessible explanations of how algorithms operate, platforms can foster greater trust and facilitate more ethical interactions between users and digital systems.

Transparency and explainability are widely recognised as essential for ethical algorithmic governance, but implementing these principles in practice presents significant challenges. The complexity of modern algorithms, especially those involving machine learning and artificial intelligence, often makes it challenging to provide meaningful explanations without oversimplifying the underlying processes (Burrell, 2016). Additionally, proprietary concerns and the desire to protect intellectual property can limit the extent to which companies are willing to disclose the inner workings of their algorithms (Pasquale, 2015).

Floridi et al. (2018) argue that transparency initiatives must balance providing sufficient information to satisfy ethical and regulatory demands while avoiding information overload that could confuse or overwhelm users. This requires the development of standardised explainability practices that are both technically feasible and ethically robust, accommodating the diverse needs of stakeholders involved in digital media. Collaborative efforts between developers, policymakers, and civil society organisations are essential to advancing these standards and ensuring that transparency is a genuine tool for accountability.

Accountability in algorithmic decision-making extends beyond individual developers to encompass the broader ecosystem of stakeholders creating, deploying, and

overseeing these technologies. Martin (2019) proposes a distributed model of accountability that recognises the interconnected roles of developers, platform operators, policymakers, and users in shaping algorithmic outcomes. This approach emphasises the importance of collective responsibility, where each stakeholder group contributes to the ethical governance of algorithmic systems. For instance, developers are accountable for ensuring that algorithms are designed with ethical considerations, such as minimising biases and respecting user privacy. Platform operators are responsible for implementing these technologies to align with ethical standards and provide avenues for users to report concerns or seek redress. Policymakers, in turn, play a critical role in establishing regulatory frameworks that promote accountability and protect the public interest (Martin, 2019). By fostering a culture of shared responsibility, this distributed model of accountability can help address the complex ethical challenges associated with algorithmic decision-making in digital media. This theoretical framework provides a comprehensive foundation for understanding the ethical dimensions of algorithmic decision-making in digital media. By applying utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics and emphasising the importance of transparency and accountability, this section sets the stage for critically analysing algorithmic biases and their impact on ethical decision-making.

Algorithmic Bias in Digital Media

Algorithmic bias in digital media is a critical issue that has garnered significant attention due to its profound implications on public perception, decision-making, and societal norms. As digital platforms increasingly rely on algorithms to curate content, personalise recommendations, and even moderate user interactions, the presence of biases within these algorithms can lead to unintended and often harmful outcomes. This section explores the nature and sources of algorithmic bias in digital media, examines its ethical implications through the lens of various moral theories, and discusses potential strategies for mitigation. Algorithmic bias refers to systematic and repeatable errors in a computer system that create unfair outcomes, such as privileging one group over another or perpetuating existing societal prejudices. In digital media, biases can arise from various sources, including biased training data, flawed design choices, and the operational goals of the algorithms themselves (Friedman & Nissenbaum, 1996). One of the primary sources of algorithmic bias is data bias, which occurs when the data used to train algorithms reflect historical and societal biases. For example, if a recommendation algorithm is trained on data that over-represents certain demographic groups while under-representing others, it will likely perpetuate those imbalances in its output. This can result in content that predominantly reflects the experiences and perspectives of majority groups while marginalising or misrepresenting minority voices (Noble, 2018). Data bias is particularly concerning in digital media, where algorithms prioritising engagement may surface content that aligns with popular but potentially biased views, reinforcing existing stereotypes and social divisions.

Design bias is another significant contributor to algorithmic bias in digital media. This bias arises from developers' choices during an algorithm's design and implementation phases. For instance, if developers prioritise specific outcomes, such as maximising click-through rates or watch time, without adequately considering the ethical implications, the algorithm may favour sensationalist or emotionally charged over balanced or informative content (Tufekci, 2018). This can skew public perception, as users are repeatedly exposed to content prioritising engagement over accuracy or diversity. Operational goals and business models also play a crucial role in shaping algorithmic biases. Many digital platforms are driven by advertising revenue, which incentivises algorithms to maximise user engagement and time spent on the platform. This commercial imperative can lead to biases favouring content likely to keep users engaged, such as highly partisan or provocative material. While this approach aligns with business objectives, it often comes at the expense of informational integrity and

ethical considerations, as algorithms may amplify divisive or misleading content that attracts attention but distorts public discourse (Zuboff, 2019).

Empirical evidence and case studies illustrate the pervasive impact of algorithmic bias in digital media. One notable example is the case of Google's search engine, which has been criticised for reinforcing gender and racial stereotypes through biased search results. Research by Noble (2018) highlights how searches for terms related to Black women often return results that are derogatory or sexualised, reflecting broader societal biases encoded in the algorithm. Such biases not only misrepresent marginalised groups but also shape public perception in ways that perpetuate harmful stereotypes. Another case study involves social media platforms like Facebook, which have faced scrutiny for their role in spreading misinformation and extremist content. Algorithms designed to maximise engagement have been shown to amplify sensationalist and polarising content preferentially, contributing to spreading false information and radicalising users (Sunstein, 2018). This phenomenon was particularly evident during the 2016 U.S. presidential election and the COVID-19 pandemic, where misinformation spread rapidly on social media platforms, fueled by algorithms prioritising engagement over accuracy. The societal impacts of these biases are profound, as they can influence electoral outcomes, public health decisions, and the overall quality of public discourse. The ethical implications of algorithmic bias in digital media are multifaceted and can be critically analysed through various moral theories. From a utilitarian perspective, the negative externalities of algorithmic bias—such as the spread of misinformation, the reinforcement of stereotypes, and the marginalisation of minority voices—suggest a failure to achieve the greatest good for the most significant number. While algorithms may optimise individual engagement, the broader societal harms undermine collective well-being, challenging the ethical validity of these systems under a utilitarian framework (Floridi et al., 2018).

Deontological ethics offers a different critique, focusing on violating duties such as fairness, transparency, and respect for autonomy. Biases in digital media algorithms often result in discriminatory outcomes that breach the deontological imperative to treat all individuals equally. The lack of transparency in algorithmic processes further violates the moral duty to provide users with the information necessary to make informed decisions about their interactions with digital platforms. This lack of accountability disrespects individual rights and erodes public trust in digital media, highlighting the ethical shortcomings of biased algorithms (Coeckelbergh, 2019). From the perspective of virtue ethics, algorithmic bias reflects a failure to cultivate virtues such as fairness, integrity, and empathy in the design and deployment of digital media technologies. Virtue ethics emphasises the importance of moral character and the intention behind actions, suggesting that developers and platform operators are responsible for considering the broader social impacts of their technologies. Biased algorithms that perpetuate harmful stereotypes or prioritise profit over the public good indicate a lack of ethical reflection and a failure to prioritise virtuous action in technological design (Sison & Ferrero, 2015).

Addressing algorithmic bias in digital media requires a multifaceted approach that includes technical, organisational, and policy interventions. On the technical side, fairness-aware algorithms and bias mitigation techniques can help reduce the impact of biased data and design choices. These approaches involve developing algorithms explicitly designed to detect and correct biases, ensuring that outputs are more representative and equitable (Mehrabi et al., 2021). For instance, techniques such as re-weighting training data, incorporating fairness constraints into optimisation processes, and using diverse training sets can help create algorithms that better reflect a wide range of perspectives. Organisational changes, such as fostering diversity among algorithm designers and decision-makers, can also play a critical role in mitigating bias. A more diverse workforce can bring varied perspectives and experiences to the table, helping identify and address biases that might be overlooked. Additionally, creating ethical oversight bodies within organisations can provide a structured approach to evaluating the social impacts of algorithmic decisions and

ensuring that ethical considerations are integrated into the design process. Policy interventions are also essential in addressing the broader implications of algorithmic bias. Regulatory frameworks that enforce transparency, accountability, and fairness can help ensure digital platforms uphold ethical standards in their algorithmic practices. For example, regulations that require platforms to disclose how their algorithms operate and to conduct regular audits for bias can provide greater oversight and encourage more responsible algorithmic design (European Commission, 2020). Such measures align with the ethical imperative to protect users' rights and to promote a digital environment that supports equity and inclusivity. Algorithmic bias in digital media presents significant ethical challenges that require a comprehensive and collaborative approach. By integrating technical solutions, organisational strategies, and regulatory measures, stakeholders can work towards creating digital media algorithms that not only optimise engagement but also uphold ethical standards of fairness, transparency, and respect for all users. This approach mitigates the negative impacts of bias and promotes a more inclusive and just digital media landscape that better serves the needs of diverse societies.

Moral Responsibility in the Age of Algorithms

Moral responsibility in the age of algorithms has become increasingly complex as digital media platforms rely more on automated decision-making systems. These algorithms significantly shape the content users see, influencing public opinion and individual choices, but the assignment of moral responsibility within these systems is far from straightforward. In traditional contexts, responsibility could be attributed to human agents whose actions directly led to specific outcomes. However, this clarity is lost in algorithmic decision-making, as decisions are made by automated processes based on complex and often opaque logic. This creates what has been termed the "many hands" problem, where responsibility is diffused across multiple actors, including the developers who design the algorithms, the platform operators who deploy them, and even the users who interact with them (Matthias, 2004, pp. 175–83). As a result, accountability becomes ambiguous, and no single actor may feel fully responsible for the outcomes produced by these systems. Developers and platform operators bear significant moral responsibility as they are the architects and custodians of these algorithms. From a deontological perspective, they must ensure that their algorithms adhere to ethical principles such as fairness, transparency, and respect for user autonomy. However, the proprietary nature of many algorithms, combined with commercial pressures to maximise engagement and profitability, often complicates this duty. This commercial imperative can overshadow ethical considerations, leading to design choices prioritising engagement metrics over ethical outcomes, resulting in harmful or biased outputs (Pasquale, 2015). The challenge is compounded by the fact that many algorithms are designed to function as "black boxes," with decision-making processes that are not easily interpretable even to their creators. This opacity undermines the ability of users and regulators to scrutinise and challenge algorithmic decisions, further diffusing accountability and complicating efforts to assign responsibility when algorithms produce harmful outcomes (Burrell, 2016).

A critical aspect of moral responsibility in algorithmic decision-making is the concept of epistemic responsibility, which emphasises the obligation to ensure that affected parties have access to sufficient information to understand and challenge decisions. In the context of algorithms, this translates into the need for Explainability, the capacity of an algorithm to provide clear and understandable reasons for its outputs (Coeckelbergh, 2019). Explainability is not only a technical requirement but also a moral one, as it underpins the ability of individuals to make informed choices and to hold relevant parties accountable. However, achieving meaningful explainability in digital media remains a significant challenge due to the inherent complexity of machine learning models, particularly those based on deep learning. These models often operate with high levels of abstraction and complexity, making it difficult to trace

specific decisions back to understandable causes. This lack of transparency disempowers users and hampers regulatory efforts to enforce accountability, failing to meet epistemic responsibility's ethical imperative. Ethical accountability in digital media must extend beyond individual actors to encompass the broader sociotechnical systems in which algorithms operate. Sociotechnical systems, which integrate human actions with technological processes, require a collaborative approach to accountability that includes all stakeholders, developers, users, platform operators, and regulators. This approach recognises that responsibility is distributed across a network of actors and that ethical accountability must be shared. For example, developers are responsible for incorporating ethical considerations into algorithmic design, platform operators are tasked with implementing these systems to respect user rights, and regulators are charged with ensuring compliance with ethical and legal standards. Users, too, have a role to play by engaging critically with digital platforms and exercising agency in their interactions.

Regulatory bodies play a crucial role in this ecosystem by providing frameworks that enforce algorithmic practices' transparency, accountability, and fairness. Regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Digital Services Act seek to hold platforms accountable for their algorithmic decisions, emphasising the protection of user rights and promoting transparency (European Commission, 2020). These regulations aim to create an environment where the ethical implications of algorithmic decision-making are systematically addressed, and accountability is clearly defined and maintained across the entire digital ecosystem. Such regulatory efforts reflect a commitment to ethical governance in digital media, ensuring that the benefits of algorithms are realised in ways that respect both individual rights and societal values. The increasing prevalence of algorithms in decision-making processes necessitates a redefinition of accountability reflecting modern digital environments' complexities. Traditional notions of accountability, which focus on direct causation and individual culpability, are insufficient for addressing algorithmic systems' diffuse and indirect impacts. Instead, a more holistic approach is needed to consider the collective responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in algorithm development, deployment, and regulation. This redefined accountability should encompass technical, legal, and moral dimensions, including the duty to minimise harm, promote fairness, and respect user autonomy.

In rethinking accountability for algorithmic decision-making, it is essential to incorporate ongoing monitoring and evaluation of algorithmic performance, along with mechanisms for redress when systems fail to meet ethical standards. This approach recognises the dynamic nature of digital media, where algorithms continuously learn and adapt, necessitating flexible and responsive frameworks for accountability that can keep pace with technological change. It also underscores the importance of aligning algorithmic practices with broader societal values, ensuring that digital media platforms operate in a manner that is consistent with ethical duties and moral principles. Moral responsibility in the age of algorithms is a multifaceted challenge that requires a shared approach to accountability, enhanced explainability, and a redefinition of traditional notions of responsibility. By addressing these complexities, stakeholders can better navigate the ethical challenges of algorithmic decision-making, fostering a more moral and transparent digital environment. This approach supports the development of more responsible digital media platforms and empowers users, contributing to a digital landscape that respects individual rights and the collective good.

Strategies for Mitigating Ethical Challenges in Digital Media Algorithms

As digital media platforms increasingly rely on algorithms to drive user engagement and personalise content, addressing the ethical challenges associated with these systems has become paramount. Mitigating algorithmic bias, the diffusion of moral responsibility, and the erosion of privacy and autonomy requires a multi-faceted

approach that combines technical solutions, organisational reforms, and regulatory interventions. One of the most effective strategies involves the development of fairness-aware algorithms designed to identify and correct biases in data and decision-making processes, thereby promoting more equitable outcomes. Techniques such as re-weighting training data, implementing fairness constraints within algorithmic models, and utilising diverse datasets have proven effective in reducing the impact of biased data on algorithmic outputs (Mehrabi et al., 2021). For instance, re-weighting techniques adjust the influence of specific data points to counterbalance the underrepresentation of minority groups, ensuring that the algorithm's decisions reflect a more inclusive and fair perspective. This approach improves the equity of digital media environments and aligns with deontological principles, emphasising the moral duty to treat all individuals with respect and fairness (Floridi et al., 2018).

Enhancing the transparency and explainability of algorithms is another critical strategy in mitigating ethical challenges. The "black box" nature of many algorithms poses significant ethical dilemmas by obscuring the processes behind decision-making and limiting the ability of users and regulators to scrutinise these decisions effectively. Improving the interpretability of algorithms through techniques such as simplified models, visual explanations, and interactive tools that allow users to explore the factors influencing algorithmic outcomes can significantly enhance transparency (Rudin, 2019). Enhanced explainability not only empowers users by providing them with the knowledge to make informed choices but also fulfils the epistemic responsibility of developers and platform operators, who must ensure that their algorithms are understandable and accountable (Coeckelbergh, 2019). By making these systems more transparent, platforms can better address public concerns about bias and manipulation, fostering a more trustworthy digital media landscape. This approach supports deontological ethics, which underscore the importance of transparency and truthfulness in respecting individuals' rights to make informed decisions (Kant, 1785).

Organisational reforms and regulatory interventions also play vital roles in mitigating the ethical challenges digital media algorithms pose. Within organisations, ethical awareness can be fostered by integrating ethical considerations into every stage of the algorithm development process, from design to deployment and monitoring. This can involve the establishment of dedicated ethics committees or teams tasked with overseeing algorithmic decisions and ensuring their alignment with ethical guidelines and societal values (Binns, 2018). Furthermore, increasing diversity within development teams can bring a broader range of perspectives to the table, helping to identify and address biases that might otherwise go unnoticed. Regulatory frameworks, such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Digital Services Act, set essential standards for transparency, accountability, and user rights protection in the digital space (European Commission, 2020). These regulations compel platforms to disclose how their algorithms operate, give users more control over their data, and implement measures to mitigate the spread of harmful content. Such regulatory oversight ensures platforms adhere to ethical standards and encourages adopting best practices for fairness and transparency, aligning commercial objectives with societal values (Gorwa, 2019).

Public education and digital literacy initiatives further complement these efforts by empowering users with the knowledge and skills to engage critically with digital content. By increasing awareness of how algorithms function, the potential biases involved, and the importance of data privacy, digital literacy programs enable users to navigate digital spaces more safely and responsibly (Schafer, 2020). Educated users are better positioned to recognise when algorithms may be manipulating their perceptions or behaviours, allowing them to make more informed decisions about their interactions with digital media. Moreover, fostering a more informed user base helps to counterbalance the power asymmetries between platforms and users, contributing to a more equitable digital environment. Collaboration among stakeholders, including developers, platform operators, regulators, and civil society organisations, is crucial in

establishing shared ethical standards and best practices for algorithmic governance. By working together, these groups can develop industry-wide ethical guidelines, create open-source tools for bias detection, and establish independent bodies to audit and evaluate algorithmic systems. These collaborative efforts are essential for addressing the multifaceted ethical issues associated with digital media algorithms and ensuring that these technologies are used to benefit society (Pasquale, 2015).

Ongoing research into the ethical implications of algorithms and the development of new mitigation strategies is critical. As algorithms evolve and become more integrated into daily life, continuous research is necessary to keep pace with their ethical impacts and to innovate new solutions. Academic and industry research can provide valuable insights into emerging ethical challenges and help develop novel approaches to address them. Supporting research initiatives and encouraging cross-disciplinary collaboration can create a more ethical and resilient digital media ecosystem. In conclusion, mitigating the ethical challenges of digital media algorithms requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach that integrates technical, organisational, and regulatory strategies. By adopting fairness-aware algorithms, enhancing transparency, implementing organisational reforms, enforcing regulatory standards, and promoting public education, stakeholders can create a digital environment that optimises user engagement and upholds ethical standards of fairness, transparency, and respect for individual rights. This approach not only addresses the immediate ethical concerns associated with algorithmic decision-making but also promotes a more inclusive and just digital media landscape that serves the diverse needs of society.

Case Studies: Ethical Implications of Algorithmic Decision-Making in Digital Media

Case studies are crucial in exploring the ethical implications of algorithmic decision-making in digital media. They offer a practical and real-world perspective, allowing us to understand better how theoretical frameworks and mitigation strategies are applied. In this section, we delve into notable case studies that vividly illustrate the impact of algorithmic bias, the diffusion of responsibility, and the challenges of ensuring transparency and accountability in digital media. These examples highlight the potential harms and the proactive steps being taken to address the ethical challenges posed by algorithms.

One prominent case study is the controversy surrounding YouTube's recommendation algorithm, which has been criticised for promoting extremist content and misinformation. YouTube's algorithm, designed to maximise user engagement by recommending videos that keep viewers on the platform longer, has been found to favour sensationalist and polarising content, often leading users down rabbit holes of increasingly extreme material (Tufekci, 2018). Studies have shown that this algorithmic behaviour amplifies misinformation and contributes to the radicalisation of viewers by steering them towards more extreme viewpoints. For example, a report by the non-profit organisation Mozilla found that YouTube's recommendations frequently pushed users towards conspiracy theories, regardless of their initial search queries (Mozilla, 2021). From a utilitarian perspective, this outcome suggests a failure to achieve the greatest good, as the algorithm's focus on engagement undermines the well-being of users and society by spreading harmful content. Furthermore, the lack of transparency in how YouTube's algorithm operates complicates efforts to hold the platform accountable, as users and regulators are often left in the dark about the specific mechanisms driving these recommendations (Zuboff, 2019).

Another illustrative case is using facial recognition technology by social media platforms and law enforcement agencies, which has raised significant ethical concerns about privacy, bias, and accountability. Facial recognition algorithms are often trained on datasets not representative of the broader population, leading to higher error rates for specific demographic groups, particularly women and people of colour (Buolamwini

& Gebru, 2018). This bias has real-world consequences, as it can result in misidentifications that disproportionately impact marginalised communities. For instance, wrongful arrests based on faulty facial recognition matches have highlighted the dangers of deploying biased algorithms in high-stakes contexts (Garvie, 2019). From a deontological standpoint, these outcomes violate the ethical duty to treat all individuals fairly and with respect, as the technology's biased errors effectively discriminate against vulnerable groups. Moreover, deploying such technologies often occurs without adequate public oversight or consent, raising further ethical concerns about the erosion of privacy and autonomy (Solove, 2006).

A third case study involves Facebook's role in the spread of hate speech and incitement to violence, particularly in regions with ongoing conflicts or political instability. In Myanmar, for example, Facebook's algorithms played a significant role in amplifying hate speech against the Rohingya Muslim minority, contributing to real-world violence and human rights abuses (Stecklow, 2018). The platform's reliance on engagement metrics led to the prioritisation of divisive content that stoked ethnic tensions, illustrating how algorithmic decisions can have dire consequences in volatile contexts. From a virtue ethics perspective, the failure to moderate harmful content reflects a lack of ethical foresight and a disregard for the moral virtues of prudence and empathy. Despite Facebook's eventual acknowledgement of its role in the crisis, the delayed response and insufficient measures to curb the spread of hate speech point to broader accountability and moral responsibility issues in digital media governance (Mozur, 2018).

These case studies underscore the complex ethical landscape of algorithmic decision-making in digital media, highlighting the need for robust strategies to address the multifaceted challenges posed by these technologies. They illustrate how biases embedded within algorithms can perpetuate social injustices, how the lack of transparency and accountability can exacerbate harm, and how prioritising engagement metrics can undermine the integrity of public discourse. In response to these challenges, digital platforms must implement the mitigation strategies discussed earlier, including fairness-aware algorithms, enhanced transparency, organisational reforms, and regulatory oversight. Moreover, ongoing research, cross-sector collaboration, and public engagement are essential to developing a more ethical and inclusive digital media environment that respects the rights and well-being of all users. Case studies such as YouTube's recommendation algorithm, facial recognition technology, and Facebook's role in spreading hate speech provide concrete examples of the ethical challenges associated with algorithmic decision-making in digital media. These examples highlight the need for comprehensive and proactive approaches to ensure that digital media algorithms are developed and deployed in ways that align with ethical standards of fairness, transparency, and accountability. By learning from these cases, stakeholders can better navigate the moral complexities of digital media and work towards a future where algorithms contribute positively to society.

Policy Recommendations for Ethical Algorithmic Governance in Digital Media

Given the pervasive influence of algorithms in shaping digital media experiences and the significant ethical challenges they pose, developing robust policy frameworks is crucial for ensuring that these technologies align with societal values. This section outlines key policy recommendations to promote ethical algorithmic governance in digital media. These recommendations draw from the theoretical insights and case studies discussed earlier, focusing on enhancing transparency, accountability, fairness, and user empowerment. By implementing these policies, stakeholders can work towards creating a digital environment that respects individual rights, promotes equitable outcomes, and mitigates the negative externalities of algorithmic decision-making (Floridi et al., 2018).

One of the primary policy recommendations is the implementation of stricter transparency requirements for digital platforms that use algorithms to curate content

and make recommendations. Transparency is fundamental to accountability, allowing users, researchers, and regulators to scrutinise algorithmic processes and understand how decisions are made (Pasquale, 2015). Policies should mandate that platforms provide clear and accessible information about the criteria and data used in their algorithms and the specific goals these algorithms are designed to achieve. For instance, platforms could be required to disclose how they balance engagement, accuracy, and diversity in their content recommendations (Rader et al., 2018). Additionally, transparency reports that detail the impacts of algorithms on user experiences, such as the prevalence of misinformation or biased outcomes, should be regularly published and made available to the public (European Commission, 2020). These measures would enhance public trust in digital platforms and provide essential data for ongoing research and policy development to improve algorithmic fairness and accountability (Diakopoulos, 2016).

Another key recommendation is the establishment of independent oversight bodies tasked with auditing algorithms for ethical compliance. These bodies should be able to conduct regular assessments of algorithms used by major digital platforms, evaluating them against established ethical standards, such as fairness, non-discrimination, and respect for user autonomy (Gorwa, 2019). Independent audits can help identify biases, unintended consequences, and areas where algorithms may not be aligned with ethical or legal expectations (Raji et al., 2020). In addition to technical audits, these oversight bodies should engage with diverse stakeholders, including civil society organisations, to incorporate various perspectives into their evaluations. This approach ensures that industry interests do not solely drive algorithmic governance but reflect broader societal concerns, including those of marginalised communities who may be disproportionately affected by algorithmic biases (Noble, 2018). By holding platforms accountable through independent oversight, policymakers can help ensure that digital media algorithms operate in ways consistent with public values and ethical norms (Whittaker et al., 2018).

Another crucial policy recommendation is empowering users with greater control over their algorithmic interactions. Digital platforms should be required to provide users with options to customise their algorithmic experiences, such as choosing the types of content they wish to see or opting out of personalised recommendations altogether (Eslami et al., 2019). This aligns with deontological principles emphasising respect for individual autonomy and informed consent. Policies should also promote digital literacy initiatives that educate users about how algorithms work, the potential biases they may encounter, and how to engage with digital content (Schafer, 2020) critically. By enhancing users' understanding of algorithmic processes, digital literacy programs can empower individuals to make more informed decisions about their interactions with digital media, thereby reducing the asymmetry of power between platforms and users (Gran et al., 2020). In addition, platforms could be encouraged to develop user-friendly tools that explain how specific recommendations are generated, allowing users to understand and influence the factors driving their algorithmic experiences (Poursabzi-Sangdeh et al., 2021).

To further address the ethical challenges of algorithmic decision-making, policies should also promote adopting ethical design principles in the development of algorithms. This includes integrating fairness-aware design techniques, conducting impact assessments to evaluate potential biases, and involving ethicists and diverse user groups in the design process (Binns, 2018). Ethical design principles can guide developers to consider the broader implications of their algorithms beyond just technical performance or commercial outcomes. For example, implementing fairness-aware algorithms that correct for biased data and provide balanced recommendations can help reduce the amplification of harmful content and promote a more inclusive digital media environment (Mehrabi et al., 2021). Policymakers can support these efforts by establishing guidelines and best practices for ethical algorithm design, as well as by providing funding and resources for research into new methods of bias detection and mitigation (Mitchell et al., 2019).

Fostering international cooperation and harmonisation of standards is essential for addressing digital media's global nature and algorithms' cross-border impact. As digital platforms operate across multiple jurisdictions, inconsistencies in national regulations can create challenges for effective algorithmic governance (Floridi et al., 2018). International cooperation can help establish common ethical standards and regulatory frameworks that apply universally, ensuring that platforms are held to the same standards regardless of where they operate (Binns et al., 2018). Organisations such as the European Union, the United Nations, and other international bodies can lead in coordinating these efforts, facilitating dialogue among countries, and promoting the adoption of shared principles for ethical algorithmic governance (European Commission, 2020). By working together, countries can create a more cohesive approach to regulating digital media algorithms, protecting users worldwide from the adverse effects of biased or unethical algorithmic practices. The ethical challenges of algorithmic decision-making in digital media necessitate comprehensive policy interventions prioritising transparency, accountability, user empowerment, and fairness. By implementing stricter transparency requirements, establishing independent oversight bodies, empowering users, promoting ethical design principles, and fostering international cooperation, policymakers can create a robust framework for ethical algorithmic governance. These recommendations aim to ensure that digital media algorithms contribute positively to society, respecting individual rights and promoting equitable outcomes while minimising the risks associated with biased or opaque algorithmic processes. Through collaborative efforts and proactive policy-making, stakeholders can work towards a digital media landscape that aligns with ethical standards and serves the diverse needs of all users (Diakopoulos, 2016; Noble, 2018; Gorwa, 2019).

Conclusion

The growing influence of algorithms in digital media has transformed the landscape of information dissemination, user engagement, and public discourse. However, this transformation is accompanied by significant ethical challenges, particularly concerning algorithmic bias, the diffusion of moral responsibility, and the erosion of privacy and autonomy. This paper has critically examined the ethical implications of digital media algorithms through various theoretical frameworks, including utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics, offering a comprehensive understanding of how these technologies impact ethical decision-making. The paper has proposed multiple strategies to address these challenges, including developing fairness-aware algorithms, enhancing transparency and accountability, and implementing robust policy frameworks. These measures aim to ensure that digital media algorithms operate in ways that respect individual rights, promote equity, and contribute positively to society.

The key findings of this paper highlight that algorithmic biases are not merely technical flaws but are reflective of more profound societal inequalities. Algorithms trained on biased data or shaped by commercial incentives that prioritise engagement can perpetuate harmful stereotypes, amplify misinformation, and marginalise underrepresented groups. This underscores the need for fairness-aware algorithms and ethical design principles prioritising inclusivity and accountability. Furthermore, the opacity of algorithmic processes presents significant challenges for transparency and accountability, as users and regulators often lack the information necessary to understand or challenge algorithmic decisions. Enhancing explainability and establishing independent oversight bodies are critical to addressing these transparency gaps. Additionally, the paper finds that moral responsibility within algorithmic systems is diffuse, necessitating a rethinking of accountability frameworks to accommodate the complex interplay of human and technological actors involved in digital media governance.

This paper contributes to the growing literature on digital media ethics by providing a multi-disciplinary analysis of algorithmic decision-making through established ethical theories. By bridging philosophical perspectives with practical case studies and policy recommendations, the paper offers a holistic approach to understanding and addressing the moral challenges of digital media algorithms. It highlights the importance of integrating ethical considerations into algorithm design and governance, advocating for a balanced approach that considers individual rights and societal impacts. The paper's policy recommendations provide actionable insights for regulators, developers, and platform operators, emphasising the need for collaborative efforts to create a more ethical and accountable digital media ecosystem. Moreover, by examining the diffusion of moral responsibility, the paper contributes to the discourse on how accountability can be redefined in complex sociotechnical systems.

While this paper provides a comprehensive overview of the ethical challenges associated with digital media algorithms, it is not without limitations. The analysis is primarily theoretical and relies on existing literature and case studies, which may not capture the full diversity of algorithmic practices across different platforms and cultural contexts. Additionally, the rapidly evolving nature of digital media technologies means that the ethical issues identified in this paper may change as new technologies and regulatory frameworks emerge. While broadly applicable, the policy recommendations may need to be tailored to specific legal and cultural contexts to be fully effective. Furthermore, the paper does not extensively explore the technical aspects of implementing fairness-aware algorithms, which could be a focus for future research. Finally, while the paper advocates for independent oversight and transparency, it does not delve deeply into the practical challenges of establishing and maintaining frameworks, such as resource constraints, political will, and industry resistance. This paper underscores the urgent need for ethical governance of digital media algorithms and provides a roadmap for navigating the complex moral landscape of algorithmic decision-making. By integrating theoretical insights with practical recommendations, the paper aims to foster a more responsible and inclusive digital media environment that respects the diverse needs of all users. Future research and policy development should continue to build on these foundations, addressing the evolving challenges of digital media algorithms to ensure that these technologies contribute to a just and equitable society.

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Framing ethno-religious crises: An examination of studies on media and conflict dynamics in Jos, Nigeria

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Abstract

This literature review reveals the relationship between media and ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Nigeria, identifying gaps and suggesting directions for future research. It examines media outlets' framing mechanisms, revealing their influence on public perception and the escalation or mitigation of conflicts. The study underscores the media's performative role in shaping narratives yet indicates a gap in comprehensive analysis, particularly concerning the diverse linguistic and visual framing techniques and their effects on conflict dynamics. The examination extends to the impact of media on conflict escalation, with research indicating that sensationalism and the omission of underlying causes contribute significantly to exacerbating tensions. The review also examines the challenges posed by misinformation and hate speech, spotlighting the role of media in perpetuating stereotypes and amplifying conflicts yet acknowledging differences in intent and regional affiliations that influence media narratives. This aspect calls for further research into the socio-cognitive elements of media influence. Additionally, the discourse on victim narratives reveals selective framing practices that shape readers' perceptions, emphasising the need for longitudinal analyses to capture the evolving nature of such narratives. The critique of methodologies across reviewed studies highlights the diversity of approaches yet points out limitations in capturing the multifaceted nature of media framing and its implications on ethnoreligious conflicts, especially the direct effects model. This research explored qualitative research and calls for future research to adopt mixed-methods approaches and theoretical frameworks that can offer deeper insights into the motivations behind media framing decisions and their implications on conflict dynamics. Finally, the review underscores the importance of ethical considerations in media reporting and the potential of policy interventions to mitigate the negative impacts of media on conflict dynamics, thereby contributing to peacebuilding efforts in the region.

Keywords: Ethno-Religious Conflict in Jos, Nigeria. Media Framing and Conflict, Escalation, Peace Journalism and Conflict Resolution, Identity Politics and Ethnic Violence

Introduction

Ethno-religious crises, particularly prevalent in Jos, Nigeria, have been recurrent challenges that shape the socio-political landscape of the region (Madueke, 2018; Osaretin & Akov, 2013). These conflicts often involve deep-rooted tensions between various ethnic and religious groups, creating a volatile environment that poses significant threats to peace and stability (Uhunmwuangho & Epelle, 2011). The role of the media in such conflict-ridden scenarios cannot be overstated. As witnessed globally, including in Nigeria, media outlets play a crucial role in framing, shaping, and sometimes exacerbating ethno-religious conflicts (Cottle, 2006; Mohammed & Dalib, 2017). In the specific context of Jos, media narratives have been instrumental in constructing, perpetuating, or mitigating the dynamics of these crises (Ibrahim & Nguru, 2020; Vinson & Rudloff, 2021).

This literature review examines existing studies on the relationship between media and conflict dynamics in Jos, Nigeria. Understanding the media's framing mechanisms is imperative for comprehending how ethno-religious crises are perpetuated or mitigated within this region (Thaut et al., 2021). The objective is to illuminate the complexities of media influence on conflict narratives and to identify gaps and challenges in the current body of research. This review aims to synthesise and analyse the findings of previous studies, exploring how media representations contribute to the understanding, escalation, or resolution of ethno-religious crises in Jos. By critically examining the existing literature, this paper aims to provide insights that contribute to understanding the media's role in shaping the conflict dynamics in Jos, Nigeria.

The complexity of the Jos crisis, often labelled as a straightforward ethno-religious conflict, reveals a reality of overlapping identities. Vinson and Rudloff's work emphasises categorising such conflicts simply as 'ethnic' or 'religious' and overlooks critical socio-political issues, including indigene-settler tensions and political actors' manipulation of local grievances. Therefore, this study repositions the Jos conflict within this overlapping framework, suggesting that addressing tribal and religious identities in peacebuilding is essential to sustainable solutions.

Framing Techniques in Ethno-Religious Crises Coverage

Studies investigating framing techniques utilised by the media in covering ethno-religious crises in Jos present a spectrum of strategies that wield considerable influence over public perception. Cottle (2006) accentuates the performative aspect of media, highlighting how news outlets actively shape narratives that contribute to the construction of conflicts. Vinson and Rudloff's (2021) analysis of media narratives in Jos further asserts that framing plays a pivotal role in shaping the public's understanding of the root causes and involved actors in these conflicts.

However, despite the valuable insights offered by these studies, there remains a notable gap in the methodologies employed. Many existing approaches lack a comprehensive analysis of the diverse linguistic and visual framing techniques media outlets employ during ethno-religious crises in Jos. The complexity of framing goes beyond mere textual content, extending into the visual realm, where images and symbols can carry significant meaning. A more holistic examination of these techniques is crucial for understanding how media narratives contribute to regional conflict dynamics.

Moreover, a call for research emerges, urging scholars to apply theoretical frameworks to capture the multifaceted nature of media framing during ethno-religious crises in Jos. The existing studies provide valuable empirical data, yet theoretical underpinnings explain why specific framing techniques are chosen over others and remain underexplored. A theoretical lens could offer a more profound comprehension

of the motivations and influences shaping media framing decisions, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics involved in ethno-religious conflict coverage.

Media's Impact on Conflict Escalation.

Research exploring the influence of media on the escalation of ethno-religious conflicts in Jos underscores the role media outlets play in shaping public opinion and, at times, exacerbating tensions. Tsado (2016) argues that media representations tend to glamorise violence, contributing significantly to the escalation of conflicts by sensationalising and propagating violent narratives. This emphasis on conflict and violence can create a cycle that perpetuates hostilities among different ethnic and religious groups within Jos. Tsado's research equally critiques the Nigerian press for adopting a 'war journalism' approach, which has historically escalated tensions by reinforcing stereotypes and fostering divisive narratives. In the context of the Jos crisis, this study will apply Tsado's findings to examine how media framing has shaped public perceptions, potentially aggravating ethno-religious divides by depicting conflicts through a partisan lens rather than focusing on reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts.

Contrastingly, Demarest and Langer's (2018) content analysis suggests that media often overlook underlying structural causes when reporting on ethno-religious conflicts. While this perspective challenges the notion of media solely contributing to escalation, it raises questions about the responsibility and ethical considerations involved in media reporting. The studies collectively highlight the need for an understanding of the impact of media on conflict escalation, acknowledging that media influence is complex and multifaceted. Despite providing valuable insights, the methodologies employed in these studies tend to be predominantly quantitative, often lacking in-depth qualitative analysis to comprehend the complexities of media influence. A more comprehensive approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods could provide a richer understanding of how media contributes to conflict escalation in Jos. Additionally, theoretical frameworks, such as peace journalism, offer a valuable lens through which to comprehend the potential of media to contribute positively to conflict resolution. Exploring these frameworks in future research could unveil strategies for responsible and constructive media practices in conflict zones.

Misinformation and Hate Speech

Studies investigating the role of media in spreading misinformation and hate speech during ethnoreligious crises in Jos underscore the significant challenges posed by irresponsible reporting. Musa and Ferguson (2013) shed light on newspapers' creation of enemy images and stereotypes, emphasising how these contribute to the demonisation and amplification of conflicts. This highlights the media's potential to shape public perceptions negatively, further fueling tensions among different religious and ethnic groups in Jos.

Contrary to this perspective, research by Ibrahim and Nguru (2020) suggests that media narratives might sometimes arise from regional and ethnic affiliations rather than an explicit intent to spread misinformation or promote hate speech. This nuance in understanding media dynamics during crises challenges the notion of a uniform or intentional dissemination of harmful content. It also draws attention to the complexity of media influences, where unintentional biases and affiliations can significantly shape narratives.

While these studies contribute to understanding the negative impacts of media, there remains a notable gap in research addressing the root causes of misinformation and the mechanisms through which it spreads. Investigating the socio-cognitive aspects of media influence, including the psychological processes involved in the reception and dissemination of information, is crucial for a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. Future research should consider adopting theoretical frameworks that delve into these socio-cognitive aspects, providing insights into the underlying factors influencing media behaviour during ethno-religious crises.

Victim Narratives in Media Coverage

Explorations into victim narratives in media coverage of ethno-religious crises in Jos illuminate the complexities surrounding the portrayal of victims and the consequential impact on conflict dynamics. Akinro and Zeng's (2013) comparative analysis of three leading Nigerian newspapers underscores the selective use of visuals and narratives, suggesting a deliberate effort to shape readers' perceptions of victims. This selective framing not only reflects the media's influence on public opinion but also raises questions about the potential biases embedded in victim portrayals. Thaut Vinson and Rudloff (2021) further contribute to this discourse by arguing that victim narratives often play a role in reinforcing established themes within official discourse. This implies that, intentionally or unintentionally, the media may align victim narratives with broader political or social agendas. Understanding these dynamics is essential for unravelling the intricate relationship between media representation and the perpetuation or resolution of ethno-religious conflicts.

However, it is crucial to note that while these studies offer valuable perspectives, their methodologies often lack a longitudinal analysis to capture the evolving nature of victim narratives. Ethno-religious conflicts are dynamic, and the portrayal of victims can evolve, influencing public perceptions and responses. Future research should employ longitudinal approaches to track how victim narratives shift during different phases of crises, providing a more nuanced understanding of media dynamics. Theoretical frameworks, particularly those rooted in identity politics, offer a valuable lens to explore how victimhood is constructed and instrumentalised in media narratives. Understanding the intersectionality of identities and how media selectively portrays victimhood based on ethnic, religious, or political affiliations can provide deeper insights into the power dynamics at play. Future research endeavours should leverage these frameworks to delve deeper into the complexities of victim narratives and their implications for ethno-religious conflict dynamics in Jos.

Reliance on 'victim narratives' in war journalism often influences public perception by assigning blame and amplifying group identities. By selectively showcasing the suffering of specific ethnic or religious groups, the media risks solidifying an 'us versus them' mentality. This study critiques existing literature for not addressing how these narratives influence long-term prejudices and community divides, highlighting the need for a balanced and integrative approach that prioritises the portrayal of cross-community impacts.

Critical Appraisal of Methodologies

The methodologies employed across the reviewed studies offer a spectrum of approaches to understanding the complex relationship between media and ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Nigeria. Cottle (2006) emphasises the performative nature of media, which utilises qualitative analysis to uncover the nuances of framing techniques. Vinson and Rudloff (2021) complement this with a content analysis of media narratives, providing a quantitative perspective. This diversity enhances the

comprehensiveness of the insights gained. However, a lack of comprehensive analysis of linguistic and visual framing techniques is a recurring limitation. The methodologies often fail to capture how media outlets construct narratives during ethno-religious crises. Future research could benefit from adopting a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative analyses to provide a holistic understanding of framing techniques.

Tsado's (2016) research on media's impact on conflict escalation leans heavily on quantitative approaches, emphasising the glamorisation of violence in media representations. Demarest and Langer (2018), in their content analysis, highlight the oversight of underlying structural causes. While these studies offer valuable insights, a more balanced approach could involve qualitative assessments to explore the underlying motivations behind media choices, thus providing a richer understanding of the dynamics involved. Musa and Ferguson's (2013) exploration of misinformation and hate speech utilises interpretative phenomenological analysis and critical discourse analysis, offering an in-depth understanding of the creation of enemy images. However, the studies lack a comprehensive examination of the root causes of misinformation. Future research could incorporate socio-cognitive perspectives to investigate the motivations and cognitive processes driving misinformation during ethno-religious conflicts.

In the realm of victim narratives, Akinro and Zeng (2013) conducted a comparative analysis using content analysis, revealing the selective use of visuals and narratives in media coverage. Thaut Vinson and Rudloff (2021) contribute by emphasising thematic reinforcement within victim narratives. Nevertheless, a limitation arises in the lack of a longitudinal analysis capturing the evolution of victim narratives over time. Future research could benefit from longitudinal studies that track changes in victim narratives and their impact on public perceptions throughout ethno-religious conflicts. In sum, while the methodologies employed in the reviewed studies provide valuable insights, there is room for improvement. Future research should consider adopting mixed-methods approaches, incorporating qualitative assessments, and delving deeper into the root causes of media dynamics during ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Nigeria.

Previous studies often simplify the Jos crisis as an 'ethnic' or 'religious' conflict, overlooking the role of locally rooted grievances. As Vinson notes, such broad classifications fail to capture the subtleties of identity politics and economic motivations, which play significant roles in conflict escalation. This study critiques prior literature for its reliance on these generalisations, advocating instead for a framework that acknowledges how overlapping identities—both tribal and religious—shape perceptions and conflict dynamics in Jos.

Traditional methodologies in studying the Jos crisis have often leaned towards aggregate data, potentially missing the importance of micro-level, identity-driven analyses. Vinson's focus on individual perceptions in ethno-religious conflicts highlights the need for methodologies that assess identity framing on an interpersonal scale. This approach reveals how different ethnic identities uniquely influence attitudes towards violence, underscoring the need for studies incorporating qualitative, field-based data alongside quantitative data for a fuller picture of local perceptions.

Recurring Themes, Patterns, and Inconsistencies

Across the spectrum of reviewed studies, a tapestry of recurring themes and patterns unfolds, providing insights into the intricate relationship between media and ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Nigeria. The pervasive influence of framing techniques emerges as a consistent theme, underscoring the performative nature of media in constructing narratives that significantly influence public perception. However, within this theme, inconsistencies surface in evaluating the impact of these framing

techniques, highlighting the need for an understanding of their diverse effects. While some studies emphasise the potential for constructive influence, others suggest a more detrimental role, indicating the complexity inherent in media framing during ethno-religious crises.

Another theme centres around the media's role in conflict escalation, with a consensus that news outlets can exacerbate regional tensions. Nevertheless, divergences arise concerning how much media outlets emphasise underlying structural causes versus perpetuating divisive narratives. This points to a crucial need for further exploration into how media influences the dynamics of ethno-religious conflicts. Explorations into misinformation and hate speech reveal a shared concern regarding irresponsible reporting, which can contribute to the demonisation and amplification of conflicts. However, inconsistencies emerge regarding the intent behind such reporting, emphasising the importance of distinguishing between explicit intent and inadvertent consequences in media narratives. These discrepancies underscore the necessity for a more comprehensive examination of the motivations and consequences of media-driven misinformation during ethno-religious crises.

Victim narratives, as portrayed in media coverage, exhibit discernible patterns of selectivity and thematic reinforcement across the reviewed studies. While there is agreement on the role of victim narratives in shaping public perceptions, inconsistencies arise in assessing their overall impact on conflict dynamics. This suggests that the influence of victim narratives is context-dependent and varies across different ethno-religious crises, urging a more nuanced understanding of how media constructs and reinforces victimhood in this specific socio-political landscape. The emergence and widespread adoption of social media platforms have reshaped the communication landscape, profoundly impacting various facets of society, including conflict dynamics in regions such as Jos, Nigeria. In recent years, social media has become a potent tool for disseminating information, mobilising communities, and shaping public discourse, particularly during ethno-religious conflicts. Understanding the impact of social media on conflict dynamics in Jos requires an exploration of its multifaceted roles and implications.

Comparative Analysis of Media Coverage

Media coverage of ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Nigeria, and similar conflicts elsewhere presents a fascinating area of study, offering insights into the role of media in shaping perceptions, influencing public opinion, and potentially exacerbating or mitigating tensions. A comparative analysis of media coverage across different contexts can provide valuable lessons and highlight similarities and differences in journalistic practices, framing techniques, and the impact of media on conflict dynamics. In Jos, Nigeria, ethno-religious conflicts have been recurrent challenges characterised by deep-rooted tensions between various ethnic and religious groups (Madueke, 2018). Media coverage of these conflicts often reflects the complex socio-political landscape of the region, with narratives influenced by historical grievances, political interests, and cultural dynamics (Osaretin & Akov, 2013). Studies such as those by Ibrahim and Nguru (2020) and Vinson and Rudloff (2021) have explored how media narratives in Jos construct, perpetuate, or mitigate the dynamics of these conflicts, shedding light on the framing techniques employed by journalists.

Comparatively, media coverage of ethno-religious conflicts in other regions, such as the Middle East or South Asia, presents similar themes but with distinct nuances. In the Middle East, conflicts between ethnic and religious groups, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, often garner international media attention and are subject to intense scrutiny from various perspectives (Jones, 2017). Studies analysing media coverage of these conflicts highlight the role of international media outlets in framing narratives and shaping global perceptions (Said, 2016). Similarly, in South Asia,

conflicts such as those between Hindus and Muslims in India or Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar receive extensive media coverage both domestically and internationally (Ahmed, 2019). Media narratives in these contexts are influenced by complex historical, cultural, and political factors, with journalists often navigating sensitive issues of identity, religion, and nationalism (Kumar, 2018). Comparative studies of media coverage in South Asia and Nigeria could reveal commonalities in framing techniques, such as the portrayal of victims or the emphasis on political narratives.

While there may be similarities in the themes and framing techniques employed across different contexts, there are also significant differences shaped by the unique socio-political dynamics of each region. For example, media coverage in Nigeria may be influenced by post-colonial legacies, ethnic diversity, and the legacy of military rule. In contrast, media coverage in the Middle East may be shaped by geopolitical rivalries, state censorship, and the influence of international actors (Sreberny & Khiabany, 2010). Overall, a comparative analysis of media coverage of ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Nigeria, and beyond offers valuable insights into the role of media in shaping conflict narratives, influencing public perceptions, and potentially impacting peacebuilding efforts. By examining similarities and differences across different contexts, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of media representation and its implications for conflict dynamics and resolution.

The Impact of Social Media on Conflict Dynamics in Jos.

The emergence and widespread adoption of social media platforms have reshaped the communication landscape, profoundly impacting various facets of society, including conflict dynamics in regions such as Jos, Nigeria (Smith, 2019). In recent years, social media has become a potent tool for disseminating information, mobilising communities, and shaping public discourse, particularly during ethno-religious conflicts (Jones & Brown, 2017). Understanding the impact of social media on conflict dynamics in Jos requires a nuanced exploration of its multifaceted roles and implications. Firstly, social media platforms serve as powerful information amplifiers, rapidly disseminating news, opinions, and narratives (Johnson, 2020). During ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp significantly spread accurate information and misinformation (Abubakar et al., 2018). While this rapid dissemination can foster awareness and mobilise support for peacebuilding efforts, it also creates a fertile ground for the spread of rumours, hate speech, and incendiary content, exacerbating tensions and fueling violence (Taylor, 2016).

Moreover, social media platforms allow diverse voices to be heard, allowing marginalised communities to share their experiences and perspectives (Khan, 2019). In Jos, where ethno-religious tensions often stem from historical grievances and socio-economic disparities, social media can amplify the voices of minority groups, shedding light on their struggles and aspirations (Olsen, 2017). However, this democratisation of discourse also opens the door to polarisation and the proliferation of echo chambers, where individuals are exposed only to perspectives that align with their own, further deepening societal divides (Brown & Smith, 2018). Furthermore, social media facilitates real-time communication and coordination among various actors involved in ethno-religious conflicts, including community leaders, activists, and security forces (Garcia & Martinez, 2020). This instantaneous communication can enable swift responses to emerging crises, facilitate dialogue and conflict resolution efforts, and mobilise resources for humanitarian assistance (Ahmed et al., 2018). However, it also poses challenges for authorities tasked with managing conflicts, as the decentralised nature of social media makes it difficult to control the flow of information and monitor potential sources of incitement and violence (Chen & Li, 2019).

Additionally, social media platforms serve as platforms for documenting and bearing witness to human rights abuses and atrocities committed during ethno-religious conflicts (Rahman & Ali, 2021). Citizen journalists and eyewitnesses often use social media to share photos, videos, and firsthand accounts of violence, providing valuable documentation for advocacy, accountability, and justice (Wang & Liu, 2018). However, the proliferation of graphic content on social media can also have adverse psychological effects on users, desensitising them to the human suffering depicted and perpetuating cycles of trauma and violence (Nguyen & Tran, 2020). In essence, the impact of social media on conflict dynamics in Jos, Nigeria, is complex and multifaceted. While social media platforms offer opportunities for information sharing, community mobilisation, and advocacy, they also pose significant challenges regarding misinformation, polarisation, and the amplification of violence. To harness the potential of social media for peacebuilding in Jos, stakeholders must develop strategies to promote responsible digital citizenship, combat hate speech and misinformation, and leverage social media as a tool for dialogue, reconciliation, and positive social change (Gupta & Sharma, 2019).

Impact of Media on Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in Jos.

The impact of media on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Jos, Nigeria, is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that warrants careful examination. Media outlets have the potential to both exacerbate and mitigate ethno-religious conflicts through their coverage, framing, and dissemination of information. Understanding the role of media in conflict resolution and peacebuilding is essential for developing strategies to harness its potential for positive change while mitigating its adverse effects.

The media can play a crucial role in conflict resolution by fostering dialogue, promoting understanding between conflicting parties, and facilitating the dissemination of peacebuilding initiatives (Galtung, 1998). Through responsible reporting and balanced coverage, media outlets can build trust, reduce hostility, and promote reconciliation among communities (McQuail, 2010). Additionally, the media can serve as a platform for marginalised voices and alternative narratives, amplifying calls for peace and reconciliation (Lederach, 1997).

However, the impact of the media on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Jos, Nigeria, is not always positive. Irresponsible reporting, sensationalism, and the propagation of hate speech can exacerbate tensions, fuel violence, and deepen divisions within communities (Demarest & Langer, 2018). Biased or inflammatory media coverage can reinforce stereotypes, perpetuate mistrust, and undermine efforts towards peace and reconciliation (Tsado, 2016). Moreover, media manipulation by political actors or extremist groups can further polarise communities and hinder peacebuilding efforts (Musa & Ferguson, 2013).

Several strategies can be employed to maximise the positive impact of media on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Jos, Nigeria. Media practitioners should adhere to ethical and professional standards, ensuring balanced, accurate, and responsible reporting (Hanitzsch, 2017). Journalists should strive to provide context, amplify voices of moderation, and promote dialogue between conflicting parties (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). Additionally, media literacy programs can empower citizens to critically engage with media content, identify misinformation, and resist divisive narratives (Oliver & Ramasubramanian, 2017).

Policymakers and civil society organisations also play a crucial role in harnessing the media's positive potential for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. They can support initiatives that promote media diversity, pluralism, and independence, fostering an environment conducive to constructive dialogue and reconciliation (Davenport, 2010).

Furthermore, investing in conflict-sensitive journalism training and capacity-building programs can enhance media practitioners' professionalism and ethical standards, strengthening their role as agents of peace and social change (Galtung, 1998).

Evaluation of Overall Quality and Contribution.

The amalgamation of reviewed studies significantly contributes to understanding media and conflict dynamics in Jos, Nigeria. The multifaceted insights into framing techniques, the impact of media on conflict escalation, misinformation and hate speech, and victim narratives collectively construct a comprehensive view of the intricate relationships shaping ethno-religious conflicts in the region. The diversity of methodologies, ranging from content analysis to qualitative assessments and survey experiments, adds depth and richness to the existing body of literature.

However, the overall quality across the reviewed studies is not uniform. While many studies offer valuable insights, some lack in-depth analyses or overlook crucial aspects, highlighting potential gaps in knowledge. A notable improvement could be achieved by adopting comprehensive longitudinal approaches that address the evolving nature of media influence in ethno-religious conflicts. Understanding the temporal dimensions of media impact is vital for capturing the dynamic nature of conflicts, as media dynamics can change over time, shaping and being shaped by the evolving socio-political landscape.

While the existing studies provide a robust foundation for comprehending the complex interplay between media and conflict dynamics in Jos, there is room for refinement and expansion. Future research endeavours should strive for methodological diversity, depth, and a keen awareness of the evolving nature of media influence in ethno-religious crises. This approach ensures a more holistic understanding, laying the groundwork for more effective interventions and policies aimed at mitigating the impact of media on conflict escalation in the region.

Comparison and Contrast of Findings on Media and Ethno-Religious Conflicts.

The comparison and contrast of findings on media and ethno-religious conflicts offer valuable insights into the complexities of how media narratives shape perceptions and influence conflict dynamics. Across various studies, similarities and differences emerge, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of this relationship. In exploring framing techniques, Cottle (2006) and Vinson and Rudloff (2021) both underscore the pivotal role of media framing in shaping public perceptions during ethno-religious conflicts. However, while Cottle emphasises the performative nature of framing, Vinson and Rudloff introduce inconsistencies, suggesting diverse effects (Cottle, 2006; Vinson & Rudloff, 2021).

Regarding media's impact on conflict escalation, Tsado (2016) and Demarest and Langer (2018) converge on the idea that media representations contribute to exacerbating tensions (Tsado, 2016; Demarest & Langer, 2018). However, Tsado contends that media glamorises violence, whereas Demarest and Langer suggest that media often overlook underlying structural causes (Tsado, 2016; Demarest & Langer, 2018). In the realm of misinformation and hate speech, Musa and Ferguson (2013) and Ibrahim and Nguru (2020) align on the concern about irresponsible reporting contributing to demonisation and conflict amplification (Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Ibrahim & Nguru, 2020). However, discrepancies arise regarding the intent behind such reporting, with Musa and Ferguson emphasising deliberate enemy image creation. Ibrahim and Nguru suggest that media narratives may arise from regional biases (Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Ibrahim & Nguru, 2020).

When exploring victim narratives, Akinro and Zeng (2013) and Thaut Vinson and Rudloff (2021) converge on the selective use of narratives in media coverage, shaping readers' perceptions (Akinro & Zeng, 2013; Vinson & Rudloff, 2021). However, the discrepancy lies in the overall impact of victim narratives on conflict dynamics, with Thaut Vinson and Rudloff suggesting a reinforcing role, while Akinro and Zeng emphasise the complexity of portraying multifaceted conflicts (Akinro & Zeng, 2013; Vinson & Rudloff, 2021).

Variations in research methodologies, ranging from content analysis to qualitative assessments and survey experiments, contribute to differing perspectives. The choice of methods significantly influences the depth and scope of findings, emphasising the need for a multifaceted approach to capture the complexity of media influence. Discrepancies may stem from regional and contextual peculiarities unique to Jos, Nigeria. Media influence during ethno-religious conflicts is intricately tied to historical, cultural, and political factors specific to the region, emphasising the need for context-specific analyses.

Disagreements in studies exploring misinformation and hate speech may arise from different interpretations of media intent. Understanding whether misinformation results from negligence or deliberate manipulation is crucial for comprehending its impact on conflict dynamics. Differences in the effects of victim narratives might be attributed to variations in editorial decision-making processes. Intentionally highlighting certain narratives over others, driven by editorial choices, presents a challenge in comprehensively portraying complex conflicts. By acknowledging these discrepancies and exploring their reasons, scholars can refine their methodologies, consider regional nuances, and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between media and ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Nigeria.

Limitations of Existing Frameworks and Future Research Directions

While existing frameworks have demonstrated effectiveness in specific contexts, they exhibit inherent limitations in comprehensively capturing media influence's dynamic and multifaceted nature in ethno-religious conflicts. These frameworks often fail to address the intricacies of individual interpretations of media narratives, overlooking the socio-cognitive dimensions that shape how people perceive and respond to information. Future research directions should, therefore, explore alternative frameworks that integrate social-cognitive perspectives. Understanding the cognitive processes involved in interpreting media messages is crucial for unravelling the complexities of how individuals make sense of ethno-religious conflicts as portrayed by the media. Such frameworks should go beyond merely examining media content and delve into the psychological mechanisms through which media narratives influence perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours.

Moreover, longitudinal studies are imperative for capturing the evolving nature of media influence over time. The temporal dimension is essential in recognising how media dynamics change, adapting to and shaping the evolving socio-political landscape. By conducting research across extended periods, scholars can gain an understanding of the media's sustained or shifting impact on ethno-religious conflicts. Additionally, future research should embrace comparative analyses across different regions and conflicts. Such analyses can offer a broader understanding of media's role in ethno-religious dynamics by uncovering patterns, variations, and context-specific factors. This comparative approach allows researchers to identify commonalities and distinctions, contributing to a more comprehensive and contextually sensitive understanding of the intricate relationship between media and ethno-religious conflicts.

Application of Theoretical Frameworks in Media and Conflict Studies in Jos

Peace journalism theory offers a valuable lens for analysing the media's role in ethno-religious conflicts in Jos. Emphasising constructive conflict reporting, it promotes narratives that facilitate understanding, dialogue, and peacebuilding (Demarest & Langer, 2018). Its strengths are tied to providing a normative framework for responsible journalism, encouraging media outlets to focus on underlying structural causes rather than perpetuating divisive narratives. Critics, however, argue that achieving a purely peace-oriented journalism stance might oversimplify complex conflicts, potentially neglecting critical issues.

Framing theory is central to understanding how media constructs and influences public perceptions during ethno-religious crises (Cottle, 2006; Vinson & Rudloff, 2021). It explores the linguistic and visual techniques employed in media narratives. It enables a nuanced analysis of framing techniques, shedding light on how media shapes narratives, influences interpretations, and contributes to conflict dynamics. However, the theory may lack specificity regarding the diverse effects of framing. It highlights the importance of framing but may not provide detailed insights into the varied impacts.

Social identity theory can be applied to explore how media narratives contribute to the construction of identities during conflicts (Musa & Ferguson, 2013; Akinro & Zeng, 2013). It helps understand how individuals identify with certain groups, influencing perceptions. It provides insights into the psychological processes shaping group dynamics, helping comprehend why certain narratives resonate with audiences. However, the theory might not fully capture the intricacies of media influence, especially in contexts where multiple identities intersect, as is often the case in Jos.

Combining peace journalism, framing, and social identity theories allows for a more holistic analysis. Peace journalism guides ethical reporting, framing theory dissects narrative construction, and social identity theory unveils the psychological impact on audiences. A comprehensive approach recognises that media practices are multifaceted and acknowledges the symbiotic relationship between theory application and contextual nuances. Future research can explore the synergies and tensions between these theoretical frameworks, exploring how they complement or contradict each other. Adapting existing theories or developing hybrid frameworks tailored to the specific socio-political context of Jos can enhance the precision of media and conflict studies. Longitudinal studies applying these frameworks over time could reveal evolving patterns in media influence during ethno-religious conflicts in Jos. By critically applying and adapting these theoretical frameworks, researchers can navigate the complexities of media influence and contribute to understanding conflict dynamics in Jos, Nigeria.

Critical Engagement with Reviewed Findings.

Engaging critically with the findings of the reviewed studies unveils some perspectives on the complex interplay between media and ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Nigeria. While Cottle (2006) emphasises the performative nature of media in constructing conflict narratives, alternative interpretations could question whether the media merely reflects existing tensions or actively contributes to their escalation. This divergence in interpretation underscores the need for further research to unravel the intricacies of media influence during ethno-religious crises. Vinson and Rudloff's (2021) quantitative analysis of media narratives provides valuable insights into framing techniques. However, a critical examination may explore whether the identified framing elements contribute uniformly to public perception or if certain elements have divergent effects. Additionally, understanding the socio-cognitive processes that influence how audiences interpret these framing techniques could shed light on the varied impacts on different population segments.

Tsado's (2016) contention that media representations tend to glamorise violence is pivotal, but alternative interpretations might delve into the motivations behind this tendency. Is it a deliberate choice by media outlets, or does it stem from broader societal expectations and preferences? Further research could explore the underlying motivations and the role of audience reception in shaping media representations of violence during ethno-religious conflicts.

Musa and Ferguson's (2013) emphasis on enemy images and stereotypes contributing to demonisation and conflict amplification raises ethical concerns. A critical perspective may inquire whether media outlets intentionally create these images or if they emerge inadvertently. Future research could investigate the ethical considerations of media reporting during conflicts, focusing on distinguishing explicit intent from unintentional consequences. Akinro and Zeng's (2013) comparative analysis of victim narratives provides insights into media selectivity. However, a critical examination could explore whether this selectivity results from editorial decisions, audience preferences, or external pressures. Understanding the factors influencing the portrayal of victims in media coverage could guide further research into the dynamics shaping these narratives. Critical engagement with the findings necessitates exploring alternative interpretations and questioning the underlying mechanisms that drive media influence during ethno-religious conflicts. Future research should focus on understanding the motivations, audience reception, and ethical considerations contributing to the complex relationship between media and conflict dynamics in Jos, Nigeria.

Ethical considerations in media reporting on ethno-religious conflicts emerge as a crucial aspect, as evidenced by the challenges highlighted in the reviewed studies. Irresponsible reporting and the spread of misinformation in the media have been identified as factors with the potential to exacerbate tensions and escalate conflicts. Future research should undertake a more in-depth exploration of ethical guidelines for media practitioners operating in regions prone to ethno-religious conflicts. This exploration is imperative for striking a balance between the fundamental right to freedom of expression and the ethical responsibility of media outlets to engage in responsible reporting. Understanding how media practitioners navigate this delicate balance during conflict can provide valuable insights into mitigating harm and promoting a more constructive role for the media in conflict zones.

Moreover, the research should investigate the ethical implications of various framing techniques employed by the media. Different framing choices may have disparate impacts on the affected communities, and understanding these implications is essential for guiding media professionals toward more ethically informed decision-making. This exploration could involve engaging media practitioners, ethicists, and scholars in a collaborative effort to develop and refine ethical guidelines tailored to the unique challenges posed by ethno-religious conflicts. Thus, ethical considerations should be at the forefront of discussions surrounding media reporting on ethno-religious conflicts. Future research endeavours should provide practical insights and recommendations for media practitioners, ensuring that their reporting aligns with ethical standards, promotes responsible journalism, and contributes positively to conflict resolution and community understanding.

Policy Implications for Mitigating Media Impact on Conflict and Promoting Peacebuilding in Jos

Addressing the impact of media on conflict and promoting peacebuilding in Jos, Nigeria, requires a multifaceted approach involving policymakers, media practitioners, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders. By implementing targeted policies and initiatives, stakeholders can mitigate the adverse effects of media on conflict and harness its potential for peacebuilding. One key policy implication is the need for

robust media regulation and enforcement mechanisms to ensure responsible and ethical journalism (Hanitzsch, 2017). Policymakers should establish clear guidelines and standards for media content, including provisions to combat hate speech, misinformation, and incitement to violence (McQuail, 2010). Additionally, independent regulatory bodies should be empowered to monitor media outlets, investigate complaints, and enforce sanctions for violations of ethical standards (Davenport, 2010).

Media literacy programs represent another crucial policy intervention for mitigating the negative impact of media on conflict in Jos, Nigeria (Oliver & Ramasubramanian, 2017). By promoting critical thinking skills and media literacy among citizens, these programs can empower individuals to discern biased or misleading information, resist divisive narratives, and engage constructively with media content (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005). Policymakers should invest in media literacy initiatives targeting diverse communities, including schools, universities, and community organisations. Furthermore, policymakers should promote media diversity, pluralism, and independence in Jos, Nigeria (Galtung, 1998). By supporting initiatives that foster a vibrant and competitive media landscape, policymakers can ensure that diverse voices are represented and that media outlets are less susceptible to manipulation or control by political actors or extremist groups (Davenport, 2010). This may involve providing financial support to independent media outlets, promoting community media initiatives, and fostering partnerships between media organisations and civil society groups.

Collaboration between government agencies, media practitioners, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders is essential for effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Jos, Nigeria (Hanitzsch, 2017). Policymakers should facilitate dialogue and cooperation among these stakeholders to develop joint initiatives, share best practices, and coordinate efforts to promote responsible media reporting and constructive dialogue (McQuail, 2010). By fostering collaboration and partnership, policymakers can leverage stakeholders' collective expertise and resources to address the root causes of conflict and promote sustainable peace in Jos, Nigeria. In conclusion, addressing the impact of media on conflict and promoting peacebuilding in Jos, Nigeria, requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach involving policymakers, media practitioners, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders. By implementing targeted policies and initiatives to regulate the media, promote media literacy, support media diversity, and facilitate collaboration among stakeholders, policymakers can mitigate the adverse effects of media on conflict and harness its potential for peacebuilding in Jos, Nigeria, and beyond.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the critical examination of existing media and conflict dynamics studies in Jos, Nigeria, reveals a relationship that significantly impacts the ethno-religious landscape. The synthesis of diverse perspectives and findings contributes to our understanding of this region's complex interplay between media, framing techniques, and conflict dynamics. This paper highlighted the pervasive influence of media framing techniques in constructing narratives that shape public perception. The role of media in conflict escalation, the challenges posed by misinformation and hate speech, and the thematic reinforcement of victim narratives emerged as recurring themes. Despite these insights, the literature exhibited some inconsistencies, underscoring the need for a comprehensive understanding of media influence in ethno-religious conflicts. Understanding the dynamics between media, framing, and conflict in Jos, Nigeria, is crucial for navigating the intricate challenges faced by the region. The review underscores the impact of media narratives on public perception, contributing to the shaping of ethno-religious tensions. Recognising the media's role in exacerbating and mitigating conflicts provides a foundation for informed interventions and policy decisions.

Building on Tsado's advocacy for peace journalism, this study critiques previous analyses that have overlooked the media's potential as a tool for reconciliation. By adopting peace journalism practices, the Nigerian press could shift away from exacerbating conflict and toward facilitating dialogue and mutual understanding. This study emphasises the need for media frameworks that encourage ethical reporting, reduce sensationalism, and frame conflict coverage with a bias toward resolution and reconciliation rather than division.

Future research on the Jos crisis should incorporate mixed-method approaches to capture the multifaceted nature of identity and perception in conflict zones. By combining quantitative survey data with qualitative analyses, researchers can gain deeper insights into how individual identity factors interact with media portrayals and political narratives. Such approaches are essential for developing peacebuilding strategies that address conflict's socio-economic and cultural underpinnings.

Moving forward, future research should prioritise the development of alternative frameworks that capture the dynamic nature of media influence in ethno-religious conflicts. Longitudinal studies, comparative analyses across regions, and exploring socio-cognitive perspectives can enhance our understanding of evolving patterns over time. Moreover, ethical considerations in media reporting demand attention, necessitating the formulation and implementation of guidelines that balance freedom of expression with responsible reporting. Policy interventions should focus on media literacy programs, fostering responsible journalism, and promoting dialogue among diverse communities. Collaborative efforts between media practitioners, policymakers, and researchers are imperative to address the challenges this review identified comprehensively. In conclusion, this critical examination is a foundation for advancing research agendas and shaping policies that foster responsible and constructive media engagement in Jos, Nigeria. The intricate interplay between media, framing, and conflict dynamics requires ongoing scholarly attention and collaborative efforts to contribute to sustainable peace and understanding in the region.

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Digital storytelling and cultural identity: The role of social media in contemporary narratives

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Abstract

In the digital age, storytelling transcends traditional forms, incorporating multimedia elements to forge a new narrative style: digital storytelling. This study explores the connection between digital storytelling and cultural identity, underscoring the role of social media in shaping contemporary narratives. Through an examination of storytelling's evolution from oral and written traditions to digital forms, this study reveals how platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok foster the development and dissemination of cultural narratives. Using theoretical frameworks such as Media Ecology Theory, which analyses the media's impact on human perception and social structure, and Cultural Identity Theory, which explores how identity is constructed and negotiated, the research examines how digital storytelling promotes cultural preservation, representation, and visibility while addressing issues such as cultural appropriation and misrepresentation. Additionally, Participatory Culture Theory provides insight into the collaborative nature of social media, illustrating how users collectively shape narratives. Through case studies, this study delves into the ethical implications and technological advancements influencing digital storytelling, offering a comprehensive view of the opportunities and challenges facing content creators and communities alike. The study contributes to a broader understanding of digital storytelling's impact on cultural identity, shedding light on how individuals and communities negotiate and redefine their cultural narratives within the digital space. The conclusion highlights the ongoing influence of social media on cultural identity. It proposes avenues for future research, advocating for interdisciplinary approaches to fully capture the complexities of digital storytelling and its cultural consequences. The study is a resource for examining the interplay between technology and cultural expression, offering insights into the future of storytelling in an increasingly globalised digital world.

Keywords: Digital Storytelling, Cultural Identity, Social Media, Contemporary Narratives, Cultural Preservation.

Introduction

Digital Storytelling is a new approach to narrating stories using various digital media platforms, integrating classic storytelling approaches with multimedia elements such as photos, audio, video, and interactive features (Alexander, B., 2011). This technology provides more dynamic and exciting storytelling that can be widely and quickly shared via the internet. Digital Storytelling enables individuals and groups to share their experiences while conserving personal and cultural histories in novel ways. Using technology, storytellers can reach a worldwide audience, promoting a sense of connection and understanding across cultures (Walters *et al.*, 2018). The accessibility and variety of digital tools have transformed storytelling, allowing people from many backgrounds to create and spread their stories without requiring considerable resources. This method of storytelling also allows for the use of numerous media, increasing the emotional and sensory impact of narratives. The potential for more interactive and immersive narrative experiences grows with the advancement of digital platforms, creating new opportunities for expression and creativity (Bakhtiary *et al.*, 2023). In cultural identification, digital storytelling becomes an effective tool for investigating and validating personal and community identities, questioning prevailing narratives, and fostering diversity (Rodriguez L. *et al.*, 2021). This method has transformed how stories are told and consumed, making it an indispensable tool in modern narrative building.

Cultural identity in the digital era is shaped and expressed via the internet's broad and interconnected terrain. The rise of digital platforms and social media has given people and communities new avenues to discover, validate, and share their cultural heritage and personal identities (Wibowo A. *et al.*, 2023). These platforms allow for portraying a wide range of voices and ideas, allowing cultural traditions to be preserved and reinvented in an increasingly dynamic world. Digital spaces enable online communities where people with similar cultural backgrounds or interests may communicate, share ideas, and support one another. The digital age also calls into question traditional concepts of cultural identity, introducing new kinds of hybridisation and intersectionality (Radwan, M., 2022). Digital Storytelling allows people to document their experiences, challenge preconceptions, and contribute to a better understanding of cultural diversity (Jati, R., 2023). This dynamic interaction between technology and culture emphasises the need for digital literacy and inclusive digital environments that accept and promote cultural differences.

This paper explores how digital storytelling on social media platforms influences the construction and expression of cultural identity in contemporary narratives. It examines how individuals and communities use digital tools to preserve, adapt, and share their cultural stories. The scope encompasses various social media platforms, diverse cultural groups, and multiple forms of digital content, including text, images, videos, and interactive media, to comprehensively understand the intersection between digital technology and cultural identity. This paper argues that digital storytelling on social media significantly shapes cultural identity by providing new avenues for cultural expression and preservation. Analysing various digital narratives demonstrates how social media platforms are powerful tools for individuals and communities to navigate, negotiate, and articulate their cultural identities in a globalised digital world.

Evolution of Storytelling Mediums

Storytelling has changed dramatically, responding to technical improvements and societal shifts. Originally, storytelling was primarily oral, with traditions passed down from generation to generation. These oral histories were frequently collaborative, with active participation and shared cultural experiences (Choo B. *et al.*, 2020). As societies established writing systems, stories began to be written down, allowing for the preservation and transmission of narratives over time and distance (Bietti, L. M.,

2018). The introduction of the printing press in the fifteenth century changed the narrative, making written works broadly accessible and encouraging the spread of literature (James, D., 1998). With the advent of visual storytelling in movies and television during the 20th century, narrative strategies gained additional depth as text, image, and sound were combined to create immersive experiences. Every media has added to the diverse fabric of storytelling, reflecting the evolving way people interact and communicate (Mirkovski *et al.*, 2019).

The creation, dissemination, and consumption of narratives have substantially developed with the shift to digital storytelling. Digital Storytelling is mixed with oral, textual, and visual storytelling elements to produce a more instantaneous and engaging experience. Geographical barriers are eliminated by the instantaneous and global sharing of stories via social media platforms, blogs, and digital archives (Choo B. *et al.*, 2020). The possibilities for expressing stories have increased with digital tools, including interactive multimedia, graphic design software, and video editing software. Storytelling has become more democratic due to this change, offering a voice to underrepresented and varied cultures. Because viewers and readers may now connect with tales and even change their course, it has also revolutionised audience engagement.

Digital Storytelling

In the digital age, digital storytelling combines a variety of components to produce captivating stories. The fundamental component of digital storytelling is a narrative structure with a distinct beginning, middle, and finish designed to captivate viewers by combining text, graphics, audio, and video (Bakhtiary *et al.*, 2023). One essential component is the visual and auditory design, including using pictures, sound effects, music, and voiceovers to elicit feelings and improve the story's atmosphere. The interactive element is another crucial component that allows viewers to participate in the material using features like likes, shares, and comments, promoting a two-way dialogue between content providers and users (Salselas *et al.*, 2019). Since digital stories aim to establish a personal connection with their audience, emotional resonance is also crucial. Digital storytellers frequently use character development and visual aesthetics to strengthen this emotional bond to create environments and people that viewers may identify with or aspire to (Zhao *et al.*, 2011). In addition, story arcs, plot twists, and character development are among the narrative approaches used (Boyd R. L. *et al.*, 2020). These are taken from old storytelling techniques and reworked for current audiences through digital formats.

Digital stories are created and shared with the help of numerous platforms and resources. Storytellers can create exceptional visual and audio experiences using multimedia editing software (Bernard, R., 2016), such as Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Premiere Pro, After Effects), Final Cut Pro, and others to edit movies, photos, and audio. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok provide chances for content sharing with a large audience, allowing creators to create immersive and interactive experiences. Furthermore, web design platforms like WordPress and Wix assist authors in creating exciting and user-friendly websites for their narratives. Social media platforms facilitate content dissemination and audience interaction, a crucial aspect of digital Storytelling (Lund *et al.*, 2018). Written narratives and multimedia blogs can also be easily created with the help of content management systems (CMS) and blogging platforms. Emerging techniques for immersive narrative experiences that let people engage and explore digital surroundings in new ways are virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR).

Narrative structures are crucial in determining how stories are displayed and interacted with on digital storytelling platforms (Molnar *et al.*, 2015). Digital tales, in contrast to traditional storytelling, frequently use non-linear frameworks that let listeners explore

the story in a variety of ways. This strategy incorporates interactive storytelling, in which the decisions made by the user alter the plot and produce varying results and experiences (Merabti *et al.*, 2008). A popular storytelling technique is branching narratives, in which a main plot can take several different turns depending on how the user interacts with it, resulting in a personalised storytelling experience (Bernard, O., 2023). Furthermore, transmedia storytelling expands the narrative universe across several platforms by utilising diverse media formats, including websites, social media, and videos (Gürel, Emet & Tığlı, Öykü., 2014). Another narrative structure employed in digital storytelling is episodic storytelling, in which the story is divided into chapters or episodes that add to the broader story arc (David, M., 2004). This technique creates suspense and holds audiences' attention for long periods. To create complex, multi-layered storytelling experiences, digital storytellers also use mixed-media tales, which combine text, photos, and video with other types of content (Robin, B. R., 2016). With the help of these frameworks, authors can test out interactive components like games and quizzes, including the audience directly in the storytelling process.

A critical digital storytelling component is multimedia integration, which improves the story by fusing text, audio, video, and images (Indira, M., 2021). Every medium has a distinct function in telling a coherent and captivating story. The text supports the storyline, giving the tale intricate descriptions and dialogue. Using cinematography, video elements set scenarios, capture action sequences, and add dynamic visual information. Voiceovers, sound effects, and background music are audio elements that enhance the storytelling process by adding layers of sound that go well with the text and images. In addition to adding to the story's aesthetic appeal, graphics and visual features like infographics, animations, and illustrations can make complex information more accessible (Harrisson *et al.*, 2015). Infographics, for instance, can simplify complex story points or character interactions, while animations can help explain ideas that are hard to convey through text or still pictures alone. Digital storytellers build immersive worlds where viewers can interact with the story in several senses by incorporating these multimedia components (Anderson *et al.*, 2010). This method strengthens the narrative's overall effect and encourages deeper emotional connections. For example, a digital story could utilise graphic overlays to give background information on characters and locales or interactive films to allow visitors to explore various plot outcomes.

Case Studies of Successful Digital Storytelling Projects

1. "The Lonely Island: The Unauthorised Bash Brothers Experience" (2019)

The Lonely Island's "The Unauthorised Bash Brothers Experience" is a brilliant example of digital storytelling that combines humour and music video styles. This project is a mockumentary-style film that offers a humorous perspective on the sports culture of the 1980s (Holmaas. L., 2022). It weaves humorous skits, music videos, and interviews to form a seamless story. The project explores the imaginary lives of baseball players José Canseco and Mark McGwire through retro aesthetics and ironic humour (Holmaas. L., 2022). Its creative use of multimedia components, such as custom-made rap songs and styled visual effects, is a prime example of how digital storytelling can combine several media types to provide an immersive story. Its key elements are Multimedia Integration (Music videos, comedy sketches, and mockumentary interviews), Narrative Structure (Satirical look at 1980s baseball culture) and Impact (Merges comedy with historical parody to engage audiences).

2. "The New York Times: "The Truth Is Worth It" Campaign (2018)

The New York Times' "The Truth Is Worth It" campaign effectively illustrates how digital storytelling may be applied to journalism. This project highlights journalists' unseen work when covering significant news stories (Lions, C., 2019). The campaign

includes short films, behind-the-scenes videos, and journalist interviews. It emphasises how complex investigative reporting can be and how committed journalists are to discovering the truth. By utilising visual storytelling, documentary-style interviews, and video essays, the campaign successfully emphasises the value of high-calibre journalism in the digital era (Lions, C., 2019). Its key elements are Multimedia Integration (Short films, behind-the-scenes footage, and interviews.), Narrative Structure (Focus on the journalistic process behind significant news stories) and Impact (Highlights the importance of investigative journalism).

3. "StoryCorps: "StoryCorps App" (2008 - Present)

An ongoing digital storytelling initiative called StoryCorps gathers and preserves personal narratives from people nationwide. Users can record and upload their stories to a national repository with the StoryCorps app (StoryCorps. n.d.). The project uses a combination of community-based storytelling, in-person interviews, and audio recordings to capture a range of viewpoints and experiences. By building a digital archive of human experiences, this initiative has broadened the definition of storytelling and established a valuable resource for preserving historical and cultural narratives (StoryCorps. n.d.). Its key elements are Multimedia Integration (Audio recordings and personal interviews), Narrative Structure (Personal and community-based Storytelling) and Impact (Preserves personal and historical narratives through a digital archive).

"The Unauthorised Bash Brothers Experience" focuses on humour and parody, using music and video to engage audiences through a fictional narrative. Its success lies in its creative multimedia approach and cultural references. At the same time, "The Truth Is Worth It" emphasises journalistic integrity and the process of news reporting, using documentary-style content to shed light on behind-the-scenes efforts, appealing to viewers' appreciation for in-depth journalism and "StoryCorps" offers a platform for personal storytelling and cultural preservation, focusing on audio interviews to capture real-life experiences and foster a sense of shared history.

Cultural Identity

A group or individual's shared values, beliefs, customs, and practices constitute their cultural identity, a nuanced concept. It includes components that collectively shape a person's sense of self and belonging, such as language, race, religion, and historical events (Héléna, K., 2020). Language is the primary means of articulating cultural norms and values, whereas ethnicity provides the framework for cultural activities and communal history. Moral codes, customs, and holidays are frequently influenced by religion, which preserves cultural continuity (Souad, H., 2023). The lived experiences and historical narratives that form the basis of cultural heritage are embodied in traditions and customs. Cultural identity is a dynamic concept that changes with time and social interactions, yet it is a vital link between people and their history and community. Cultural identity can be communicated through blogs, social media sites, and online communities where people exchange customs, cultural practices, and anecdotes (Badini *et al.*, 2023). Cultural identity is dynamic and changeable, emphasising how digital platforms offer new channels to express and negotiate cultural narratives.

Many elements impact the development and manifestation of cultural identity, each vital in determining how people relate to their ancestry (Edensor, Tim & NetLibrary, & Inc., 2002). A sense of common heritage and shared history is provided by ethnicity, which frequently shows up in customs, holidays, and ties to the community. Language is an essential instrument for cultural expression since it makes it easier for successive generations to share cultural values, myths, and customs (Souad, H., 2023). Customs and traditions transmit cultural information and behaviours, from everyday routines to

holidays and ceremonies (Perry B. *et al.*, 2019). Religion also significantly impacts cultural identity, shaping social norms, moral convictions, and community get-togethers (Beyers, J., 2017). Geographical location and historical occurrences also have a role in developing cultural identity and adapting cultural practices to new environments (Tovbych *et al.*, 2020). These elements are presented and discussed in the digital age on websites where users interact with contemporary and classic forms of culture.

Digital and traditional media depict cultural identity, but their approaches and effects differ. Cultural identity is frequently portrayed in traditional media—television, radio, print—through news articles, documentaries, and staged tales that mirror the prevailing cultural norms and values. Traditional media tells stories about communities and cultural heritage using pre-existing channels and production techniques (Jati, R., 2023). Digital media, on the other hand, provides a more dynamic and interactive medium for representing cultural identity. People produce and distribute content representing their individual and collective cultural experiences via social media, blogs, and video-sharing websites (Wibowo A. *et al.*, 2023). A greater variety of viewpoints and experiences can be expressed through digital media, which promotes a more diversified and decentralised portrayal of cultural identities.

CCultural views are shaped and influenced by media on both individual and communal levels (Zaw, H., 2018). Traditional media, such as print, film, and television, frequently promotes a selective and perhaps stereotyped image of many cultures, supporting prevailing narratives and influencing public opinion (Jati, R., 2023). Conversely, digital media provides a forum for various voices and viewpoints. Users can participate in cross-cultural conversations, share alternative cultural narratives, and refute popular narratives (Wibowo A. *et al.*, 2023). Increased accessibility to media may contribute to a more complex comprehension of cultural identities. However, there is also a chance that false information will spread widely and that preconceptions will be strengthened. Cultural identities are seen and portrayed differently due to the interaction between traditional and digital media, underscoring the importance of critical media literacy and various media consumption habits.

Social media platforms have revolutionised digital storytelling, offering unique features shaping how stories are shared and experienced (Ameer *et al.*, 2022). Instagram provides visual storytelling through photos, short videos, and Stories, emphasising aesthetics and immediacy. Twitter is great for breaking news and in-the-moment conversations since it allows for succinct, effective communications and real-time updates. Facebook supports diverse content types, from status updates and photos to live videos, fostering community building and long-form storytelling. YouTube is a dominant platform for video content, offering tools for creating and sharing vlogs, documentaries, and series, which cater to varied interests and allow for in-depth storytelling. TikTok focuses on short-form, creative videos, utilising trends, music, and challenges to engage users. These platforms enable individuals and communities to craft and disseminate their cultural narratives, engage audiences through interactive features like comments and shares, and adapt their storytelling techniques to fit each platform's strengths. Each platform's features—such as Instagram's visual focus, Twitter's brevity, and YouTube's video depth—contribute to a rich, diverse landscape of digital Storytelling.

Social media platforms facilitate substantial user engagement and interaction by offering a range of tools that actively incentivise users to participate (Shahbaznezhad H. et al., 2021). Users can interact with and share content through likes, comments, shares, and retweets. Hashtags bring people together to debate particular subjects, forming communities and making it easier to find related content. Real-time audience connection is made possible via live streaming, and features like chat, Q&A sessions, and live reactions increase viewer engagement. Additionally, user-generated material is supported by platforms, allowing people to tell their tales, contribute to ongoing discussions, and shape cultural narratives (Mukesh, A., 2020). Through the sharing of

personal stories, comments, and connections with artists and other community members, this dynamic setting fosters collaborative storytelling.

A crucial tool for the promotion and protection of cultural heritage is digital Storytelling (Podara *et al.*, 2021). Individuals and communities can communicate historical tales, customs, and stories that could otherwise be lost using social media sites like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. Documenting traditional artworks, historical events, and cultural practices is possible through virtual tours, online exhibitions, and video documentaries (Ryszard, K., 2022). To promote a better understanding and appreciation of traditional activities, YouTube channels featuring dances, crafts, and languages, for example, enable these forms of expression to reach a worldwide audience. Social media creates online communities where users interact and celebrate their cultural identities, which helps fund cultural festivals and heritage months. This digital archiving promotes cultural diversity and guarantees the preservation of cultural knowledge for future generations (Vidaurre-Rojas P. *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, it gives cultural communities a forum to tell their tales, which changes the narrative from being formed by outsiders to being conveyed by people who have lived the experiences. Cultural legacy in the digital era is supported in its continuity and evolution by democratising content creation.

Digital Storytelling enhances the visibility and representation of diverse cultural identities through various online platforms (Gail, B., 2012). Social media gives previously underrepresented populations and voices a platform to tell their stories and express their opinions to a global audience (Tara, K., 2024). For instance, people and organisations use Instagram and Twitter to promote cultural events and draw attention to topics of cultural significance. Hashtags such as #IndigenousStories and #BlackHistoryMonth contribute to the global discourse on cultural issues by amplifying these voices. Users can also contribute their stories and document cultural practices on Facebook pages and YouTube channels devoted to specific cultural events or heritage places. Along with challenging preconceptions and promoting a more inclusive representation of ethnic identities, this increased visibility also encourages a greater appreciation of other cultures.

While digital storytelling offers numerous benefits, it raises concerns about cultural appropriation and misrepresentation. When another utilises components of one culture without due respect or acknowledgement, this is known as cultural appropriation (Sadaba *et al.*, 2020). For instance, popular fashion styles or symbols from minority or Indigenous cultures may be appropriated in ways that distort the original meanings or reinforce prejudices. Social media platforms provide a means for marginalised groups to report instances of appropriation and provide narratives that rectify them, which can both facilitate and combat this issue (Mohamed *et al.*, 2024). On the other hand, if content creators use cultural components for profit without really appreciating their value, they might also continue to spread false information. This dynamic makes it clear that ethical storytelling techniques are required to ensure that digital platforms support genuine representation and avoid cultural exploitation. These techniques must respect and acknowledge the origins and meanings of cultural aspects.

Also, Digital Storytelling can potentially homogenise cultural identities by condensing a variety of cultural manifestations into a single, frequently marketed story. Local cultures may be portrayed in ways that appeal to a worldwide audience due to the global reach of digital media, sometimes at the expense of their authenticity (Nicoli *et al.*, 2021). Viral challenges and memes are popular social media trends that can dilute cultural traditions and result in a one-size-fits-all depiction of cultures. Although this can boost exposure to cater to a broader, more generic clientele, it frequently diminishes the richness and diversity of cultural identities. Traditional cultural celebrations, for instance, could be portrayed in a way that prioritises amusement above their underlying cultural importance. By prioritising commercial appeal over cultural integrity, this homogenisation process risks destroying the subtleties and

complexity of cultural identities. It is critical to encourage sincere, polite storytelling that celebrates the range of cultural diversity to buck this trend.

Challenges, Emerging Technologies and Future Trends In Digital Storytelling

In digital storytelling, ownership and authenticity are significant obstacles. Questions regarding who has the authority to tell these stories and whether they are accurately portrayed emerge as various voices exchange cultural narratives online. (Tarigan, *et al.*, 2024). Respecting local customs and accurately presenting cultural components are necessary for authentic storytelling. On the other hand, deception and exploitation may result from the commercialisation of cultural traditions for the sake of creating content. Authenticity must be preserved by ensuring that stories are portrayed with cultural sensitivity and by respecting the rights of the original creators (Audrezet *et al.*, 2018). There are chances to establish cooperative projects in which storytellers and cultural specialists cooperate to preserve authenticity and ownership.

Also, in digital storytelling, representation and consent are crucial concerns. When communities are asked to share their tales, getting informed consent guarantees that their voices and cultural customs are honoured (Briant, K. J., *et al.*, 2016). This entails working with locals and giving credit to their opinions throughout the storytelling journey. Aside from avoiding stereotypes, proper representation ensures that stories capture cultural events' genuine spirit. There are opportunities to improve cultural identity's respectful and accurate representation by developing ethical norms and encouraging communication between content creators and cultural representatives.

Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), two new emerging technologies, provide new avenues for immersive digital Storytelling (Edwin, F., 2024). Augmented Reality (AR) enhances user interaction with cultural artefacts and heritage places by superimposing digital components on the actual environment. Virtual reality (VR) offers immersive experiences that let users investigate historical occurrences or cultural customs in a virtual setting (Dieck T. *et al.*, 2021). With the use of these technologies, cultural engagement and education can be improved through creative storytelling techniques. However, they also bring difficulties related to technological adoption, accessibility, and ensuring these tools are used appropriately to uphold and protect cultural narratives.

Future developments in digital storytelling will probably concentrate on enhancing customisation, interaction, and the incorporation of cutting-edge technologies. The future of storytelling will be shaped by innovations like interactive tales, artificial intelligence (AI)-driven content creation, and real-time feedback mechanisms. These developments present chances to develop dynamic, captivating experiences sensitive to users' tastes and cultural settings. It will take constant research into new technology and narrative approaches to stay up to date with these advancements, in addition to a dedication to leveraging these resources to improve cultural representation and preservation.

Conclusion

Digital storytelling has become a potent instrument for forming and disseminating cultural identities in the modern media landscape. This investigation has shown how digital platforms, by providing communities with venues to record and publish their customs, aid in preserving and promoting cultural heritage. The capacity of social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok to amplify a range of voices highlights their significance in augmenting visibility and representation, enabling underrepresented communities to showcase their cultural narratives to a worldwide

viewership. However, this potential creates specific difficulties, such as questions regarding cultural appropriation, misrepresentation, and problems with authenticity and ownership of cultural stories. Utilising cutting-edge technologies like augmented and virtual reality presents novel opportunities for immersive experiences and possible hazards of cultural uniformity. Future studies should investigate how digital storytelling affects cultural memory over the long term and create guidelines for morally responsible online behaviour to allay these worries. Future studies should examine the multidisciplinary approaches that integrate cultural studies, technology, media practices, and the socio-political ramifications of digital media. The results of this investigation can guide the development of ethical and innovative storytelling techniques that embrace technical breakthroughs and respect and preserve cultural identities.

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Exploring the role of digital media in internal organisational communication

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Abstract

The rapid evolution of digital media has reshaped internal organisational communication, facilitating real-time interactions, enhancing engagement, and fostering a more connected workforce. This study evaluates digital media's influence on internal organisational communication, focusing on preferences, perceived barriers, and communication efficacy. Framed by technological determinism and actor-network theory, it examines how organisations adapt digital tools, such as emails, intranets, social media, and collaborative platforms, to enhance efficiency and employee engagement. Secondary data were synthesised, revealing that digital media is pivotal in transmitting information, improving employee morale, and promoting a cohesive organisational culture. Despite these benefits, challenges such as security risks, information overload, and the digital divide persist. While digital platforms enable immediate feedback and promote collaboration, they may also lead to communication inefficiencies, distractions, and misinterpretations due to the absence of non-verbal cues. Moreover, disparities in digital literacy and access can hinder inclusive engagement, reinforcing the need for organisations to adopt blended communication strategies that balance digital and conventional methods. As findings suggest, organisations must leverage the unique capacities of digital media to enhance their communication processes while proactively addressing associated challenges. Understanding these dynamics provides a foundation for practical strategies that optimise digital media use in fostering a productive work environment. By enhancing internal communication through tailored digital platforms, organisations can facilitate adequate information flow, bolster employee involvement, and contribute to overall organisational success. Thus, this study underscores the importance of ongoing adaptation and evaluation in digital media utilisation to address evolving organisational needs and challenges in the digital age.

Keywords: Digital Media, Organisational Communication, Employee Engagement, Internal Communication Barriers

Introduction

Effective communication is the fulcrum of any successful organisation. All types of communication, whether formal or informal, written or oral, formal or informal, internal or external, rely on a communication medium to pass the message. In the contemporary business landscape, the rapid evolution of digital media has significantly transformed how organisations communicate internally. (Kencana & Meisyanti, 2021). Digital media, including platforms such as email, intranet, collaboration tools, and social media, has become integral to the functioning of modern enterprises. As organisations continue embracing digital technologies in communication, understanding their dynamic role becomes imperative for sustaining effective and efficient operations. Digital media offers various features and types that can be used according to an organisation's needs and communication systems. Ferdiansyah et al. (2021) posited that with the revolution and development in digital technology, the role of digital media in supporting communication strategies and building organisational identity cannot be ignored by any organisation. The rapid growth of digital technologies has led to complex changes in corporate communication as firms seek to enhance their competitive advantage (Waititu, 2020).

The digital age has brought forth a plethora of communication channels, enabling real-time interactions and fostering a more connected workforce. These platforms are not only seen as channels for broadcasting messages but also as tools that provide an opportunity to reach a wider audience (Henninger et al., 2017). Furthermore, digital media, including social media, has been identified as a critical tool for the public to communicate with organisations. (Oliveira & Capriotti, 2014). However, the adoption and integration of digital media in internal communication practices vary across industries and organisations. The complexity of this landscape necessitates a comprehensive investigation into the role of digital media in internal organisational communication to identify patterns, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.

This study aims to explore and review existing literature on the interplay between digital media and internal organisational communication. It addresses questions surrounding the role of digital media in transmitting information and promoting organisational communication and employee engagement. Additionally, the research explores potential barriers or challenges organisations encounter in optimising digital media for internal communication. Understanding the role of digital media in internal organisational communication is crucial not only for academic discourse but also for guiding practical strategies that organisations can employ to harness the full potential of these tools. By studying the role of digital media, organisations can identify ways to enhance communication processes, leading to improved collaboration, quicker decision-making, and increased productivity. In addition, understanding barriers to effective digital communication allows organisations to address challenges proactively. The section that follows reviews relevant concepts, theories, and related studies.

Internal Organisational Communication

Effective internal communication is crucial for the smooth functioning of an organisation and plays a vital role in achieving its goals. Generally, internal organisational communication refers to exchanging information, messages, and ideas. It encompasses all the channels, processes, and systems through which information flows among employees at various levels within the company (Oso et al., 2020). According to Özdemir (2015), it varies between organisations regarding content, structure, and management and is essential for organisational functionality and employee engagement. Internal organisational communication can take various forms, including face-to-face meetings and other mediated or digital forms such as emails, memos, newsletters, intranet platforms, and social collaboration tools. Internal

organisational communication is critical to any business or organisation and acts as the lifeblood that controls and coordinates all activities within an organisation, binding together various units and functions (Waititu, 2020). Effective internal communication ensures that information is disseminated efficiently, goals and objectives are clearly understood, and employees feel connected to the organisation's mission and values.

Internal communication fosters a positive work environment and promotes employee unity. It facilitates the sharing of information, ideas, and feedback, which are crucial for decision-making processes and problem-solving within the organisation. Welch (2011) stated that internal organisational communication is a critical resource influencing individual, team, and organisational levels. Effective internal communication encourages employees and other internal stakeholders to give maximum support and a positive attitude toward an organisation (Ridder, 2004). A recent study by Oso et al. (2020) has shown that internal communication positively correlates with organisational outputs such as commitment, performance, citizenship behaviours, and job satisfaction. It also enhances employee motivation, affecting employee performance (Dhone & Sarwoko, 2022). Furthermore, internal communication contributes to the organisation's performance level by identifying employees' tools for internal communication (Salim, 2022). Moreover, effective internal communication can enhance employee morale, job satisfaction, and organisational culture. Research by Robbins and Judge (2019) highlights that organisations with open and transparent communication channels experience higher employee engagement and lower turnover rates.

Organisations must prioritise clarity, consistency, and transparency to ensure effective internal communication. Clear and concise messaging helps avoid misunderstandings, while consistency in communication fosters trust and reliability. Transparency in sharing information about organisational changes, performance metrics, and strategic goals promotes a culture of openness and accountability. Additionally, active listening and feedback mechanisms are crucial for creating a two-way organisational communication flow. Internal communication using direct contacts or digital media is fundamental to organisational success. By understanding its importance, utilising various communication methods, and implementing best practices, organisations can create a cohesive and informed workforce, leading to improved performance and overall success. In this study, internal communication tools are limited to digital media and its role in organisational communication.

Digital Media

Digital media refers to any content that is stored in a digital format and can be transmitted electronically. Technological advancements have necessitated a growing, dynamic paradigm in media usage, signifying a gradual shift away from the use of conventional media (Rahim & Jalaladeen, 2016). According to Frayret and Robert (2015), digital media are mass communication channels that emerged with the advent of computers and the internet in the digital age. They stated that the foundation of digital media is digital technologies and encompasses many facets of digital media, including technology, application, content, producers, and consumers. Digital media formats include text, images, audio, video, and interactive content. The hardware tools for digital media include digital technologies, such as computers, smartphones, tablets, and other electronic devices.

Unlike conventional media, the new media can filter and segment audiences based on their language, sex, age, lifestyle, and preferences, as well as design content and targeted messages with direct impact (Zhang & Skoric, 2018). Examples of digital media platforms include social media sites, streaming services, online news websites, and e-commerce platforms. Digital media has profoundly impacted communication, entertainment, education, and other aspects of modern life. Digital media plays a

crucial role in organisational communication, transforming how information is created, distributed, and consumed within and outside organisations (Alzubi, 2022). Though various forms of digital media are used in organisational communication, the choice of digital media depends on the organisation's goals, the nature of the message, and the employees' preferences. Sheikh et al. (2019) argue that the growing adoption of digital media in the workplace has shifted work activities and interactions to various digital tools and collaborative platforms within organisations.

Some digital media used in organisational communication include (1) Email- a potent tool for formal communication, sharing documents, and coordinating activities. (2) The intranet serves as a platform for internal communication. (3) Instant messaging platforms, such as Slack and Microsoft Teams, enable real-time communication, fostering quick exchanges between team members. (4) Document-sharing platforms such as Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, or Dropbox facilitate the sharing and collaboration of documents and other files. (5) Video conferencing platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet facilitate virtual face-to-face meetings, allowing teams to connect and collaborate, especially when working remotely. (6) Social Media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram have revolutionised the digital space in networking, public relations, employee engagement, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. (7) Internal blogs help share updates, insights, and knowledge within the organisation. (8) Podcasts are becoming relevant in sharing content and updates for employees. (9) Interactive webinars are effective for training sessions, presentations, and disseminating information. (10) Regular e-newsletters delivered provide updates, highlights, and essential information to employees in a structured format. (11) Instant messaging platforms such as WhatsApp, WeChat, Telegram, and Messenger have recently become a veritable tool for providing easy access to information and resources. (12) Employee Portals are centralised online platforms where employees can access important information, policies, and resources. (13) SMS and text messaging are helpful for urgent and instant updates. (15) Collaborative platforms like Microsoft SharePoint or Confluence promote collaboration by allowing teams to create, share, and edit documents in real-time.

Digital media has fundamentally transformed internal organisational communication. It has reshaped communication ecologies, work activities, and interactions within organisations, highlighting the need to adapt to the ongoing wave of digital transformation (McCosker, 2017). Digital media plays a multifaceted role in improving internal organisational communication by providing diverse channels and tools that enhance the workforce's connectivity, collaboration, and information flow. Effective implementation of these tools can lead to increased productivity, employee engagement, and a more cohesive organisational culture.

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical framework of this study is built on the technological determinism theory and Actor-network theory (ANT). Technological determinism is a theory that suggests that technology is the driving force behind social and cultural change. The theory is often attributed to the work of scholars such as Thorstein Veblen and Marshall McLuhan. In his influential work, "Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man" (1964), McLuhan argued that media technologies shape and control human experience and social organisation. It argues that technological advancements drive social change, and these changes are often inevitable once a particular technology is introduced.

The technological determinism theory plays a crucial role in understanding the relationship between technology and organisational communication. Technological

determinism is a concept that has been subject to various interpretations and positions, according to Oliver (2011). Adopting new communication technologies within an organisation can significantly impact how individuals communicate and collaborate. The theory highlights that as organisations become more dependent on certain communication technologies, their practices and structures may evolve accordingly. Hubert et al., 2019 stated that it is essential to recognise the influence of acceptance and adoption drivers on technology usage, as technological determinism theory provides unique insights into technology acceptance and its interrelated constructs. Technological determinism theory and its implications for organisational communication are crucial for understanding the impact of technology on communication processes within organisations and the broader societal context. The Technological Determinism Theory is essential in this study because it helps us understand how introducing and adopting new communication technologies can shape how organisations function, communicate, and evolve. However, it is crucial to note that while technology can drive change, the response of individuals and organisations to these changes is also a critical factor in determining the ultimate impact of technology on organisational communication.

Actor-network theory (ANT) is another significant theoretical framework for understanding digital media in organisational communication. ANT was developed by sociologists Bruno Latour and Michel Callon, along with other contributors, in the 1980s and has since been applied to various disciplines, including organisational communication. Altabaibeh et al. (2020) stated that it provides a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics of network emergence, the interplay between human and non-human entities, and the technological shaping of social processes. ANT challenges traditional sociological perspectives by emphasising the importance of non-human actors, such as technologies and objects, in shaping social networks and interactions. ANT extends the concept of agency beyond human actors to include non-human entities such as technologies, documents, and physical spaces. According to Twum-Darko & Harker (2015), ANT allows for the consideration and study of technical, organisational, and social aspects of an actor network together, making it an appropriate theoretical lens for exploring the factors influencing knowledge sharing, understanding entrepreneurial processes, and facilitating the introduction of new knowledge processes in organisations. This perspective is crucial in understanding how human and non-human elements influence organisational communication. For example, communication technologies, like email systems or collaboration tools, are considered active participants in shaping communication practices. ANT is important in organisational communication as it offers a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics of network emergence, the interplay between human and non-human entities, and the shaping of social processes by technology (Twum-Darko & Harker, 2015). The theory is helpful in this study because it provides a unique lens for analysing and understanding organisational communication's complex and interconnected nature. It encourages research beyond traditional hierarchical models within and across organisations, making it a significant theoretical framework for understanding and analysing organisational communication.

Role of Digital Media in Internal Communication

The employees are the most critical stakeholders in an organisation. It is generally argued that a well-informed employee is a productive employee. Gustafsson et al. (2018) argued that a digitised workplace creates new opportunities for organisations to manage their internal communication effectively. The impact of digital media on internal communication has been extensively researched. Digital media, including social platforms, blogs, messaging, and networking sites, has transformed internal communication processes (Barykin et al., 2020). Several studies have highlighted the significance of digital media in facilitating internal communication within organisations. Digital media allows instant communication, enabling employees to share information

quickly and efficiently. This has dramatically accelerated decision-making processes and response times. Employees can work together seamlessly, regardless of physical location, fostering a more connected and productive work environment. Organisations with a global presence benefit from digital media by connecting employees across different geographical locations. Men et al. (2020) emphasised the suitability of internal digital channels for two-way symmetrical communication, enabling dialogue between organisational leaders and employees.

Additionally, digital media has led to a dispersion of communication involving more people and an increase in internal complexity within organisations, reflecting the profound effects of digital media on organisational communication (Frandsen, 2016). A study by Muniroh et al. (2022) stated that the use of digital media, including social media, networking capabilities, and digital communication technologies, is changing the nature of work and organisational behaviour. It has been found that digital media can significantly influence organisational performance through intellectual capital and perceived quality in micro, small, and medium enterprises (Islami et al., 2020). It enables individuals to see conversations occurring between others in the organisation, distinguishing social and work-related connections (Leonardi et al., 2013). Digital platforms, such as project management tools, collaborative software, and communication apps, facilitate teamwork and collaboration among teams across diverse locations. Digital media provides a centralised platform for storing and accessing information. Furthermore, Cardon et al. (2019) stressed the contribution of internal communication on digital platforms, networked employee communication, and an innovation culture to moral, instrumental, and relational legitimacy. Employees can easily retrieve documents, data, and announcements, reducing the time spent searching for information and promoting knowledge sharing. Social media, internal communication platforms, and other digital tools contribute to increased employee engagement. These platforms provide spaces for employees to share ideas, celebrate achievements, and foster community within the organisation. Moreover, Wiwin et al. (2020) emphasised the need for organisational leaders to utilise various internal communication media, including social networking media, to convey messages effectively.

Digital media offers a variety of communication channels, including email, chat, video conferencing, and collaboration platforms. This flexibility allows employees to choose the most appropriate channel for their communication needs, improving overall communication effectiveness. Digital media facilitates real-time feedback loops. Employees can provide instant comments on projects, share opinions, and engage in discussions, promoting a more dynamic and responsive organisational culture. The influence of new digital media on conventional media and visual communication has been significant, leading to a shift in interactions between customers and companies (Alzubi, 2022). In the context of health activism, digital media has shaped organizationally enabled networks, where constituent organisations adopt personalising engagement with the public, showcasing the impact of digital media on health activism and organisational networks (Vicari & Cappai, 2016). Additionally, the use of digital media in marketing communication has provided a different perspective on the digital marketing process, emphasising the evolving nature of marketing strategies (Lye & Santoso, 2021). These findings underscore the pivotal role of digital media in fostering transparent and legitimate internal communication processes. Digital media impacts organisational identity, performance, and communication efficacy, according to an investigation by Ferdiansyah et al. (2021).

Additionally, the impact of digital media on employee engagement has garnered significant attention, and various aspects of this dynamic have been explored. Ruck et al. (2017) found that employee voice significantly predicts emotional and organisational engagement, emphasising the importance of communication in driving engagement. Moreover, Chan et al. (2021) explored the moderating effect of digital literacies on the relationship between workplace digitalisation/innovative culture and

employee engagement, providing insights into the role of digital skills in shaping engagement. In the context of social media, Zhou et al. (2023) focused on the impact of personal social media platforms on employee engagement, while Nienaber & Martins (2020) examined the impact of online/social media communication on employee engagement, highlighting the significance of communication channels in driving engagement. Similarly, Zhao et al. (2021) proposed a model illustrating the mechanisms through which work-based social media use affects job performance, emphasising the dual impact of social media on work engagement and work interruptions.

Digital Media Preferences and Usage for Internal Communication

The reliance on digital communication technologies continues to grow across organisations of all sizes, indicating the increasing significance of digital media in organisational communication (Darics & Gatti, 2019). Most significantly, digital media tools and platforms for internal organisational communication have become increasingly prevalent in today's digital age. Organisations leverage digital platforms such as intranet, blogs, bulletin boards, instant messaging, and social networking sites to enhance internal communication and employee engagement (Barykin et al., 2020; Men, 2015). Kencana and Meisyanti (2020) stated that these platforms have not only transformed the nature of internal communications but have also provided new low-cost communication and enabled two-way communication for maintaining relationships with internal and external stakeholders. It has facilitated continuous interaction between management, employees and stakeholders, gathering information, fostering trust and building long-term relationships (Krings et al., 2022). Most importantly, the preference and use of any digital media tool will depend on the communication strategy, organisation type, context, and goal. Oliveira and Capriotti (2014) posited that organisations must understand the dynamics of digital media usage among different groups to develop more accurate and effective communication strategies. Scholars agree that a mix of all digital tools should be adopted to meet specific communication needs.

One of the prominent adoptions and use of digital media in organisational communication is social media. The use of social media in internal organisational communication has become increasingly prevalent in recent years as organisations are leveraging social media platforms to enhance internal communication, improve employee engagement, and facilitate knowledge sharing. Research has shown that social media can have profound implications for internal communication, allowing for multiple voices, targeted communication, wider reach, and combined consumption and content production (AlShawabkeh et al., 2018). Men et al. (2020) discussed the relationship between organisations' administration of internal social media and social media engagement, emphasising the encouragement of employees' use of internal social media for fostering organisational transparency and quality relationships. Murthy (2018) also emphasised the integral role of social media in organisational communication processes, highlighting its potential to alter socialisation, knowledge sharing, and power processes within organisations.

Furthermore, Schau et al., 2009 highlighted that social media plays a vital role in creating value through brand community practices, emphasising social networking and community engagement. This underscores the importance of social media in fostering a sense of community and belonging within organisations. Moreover, the literature emphasises the need for organisations to consider an integrated social media communication approach (Swart et al., 2021). According to Swart et al., this approach involves sourcing content, considering stakeholders' needs, using planning tools, and recognising employees as internal ambassadors. Additionally, the potential of social media for enhancing internal communication is underscored by the fact that it allows for improved internal and external communication (Nchabeleng et al., 2018). Overall,

digital media has multiple impacts on internal organisational communication, including its role in fostering transparent communication, building organisational identity, enhancing employee engagement, encouraging social interactions and improving organisational performance, as highlighted above.

Challenges of Digital Media in Internal Communication

While digital media offers numerous benefits for internal organisational communication, it also presents challenges that can impact communication effectiveness. Digital channels can be susceptible to security breaches, risking the confidentiality of sensitive organisational information and reputation risks (Maskuri et al., 2023). Furthermore, the ease of digital communication can lead to information overload, making it difficult for employees to prioritise and absorb essential messages. In addition, relevant information may get lost in the abundance of messages, leading to confusion and decreased engagement. Additionally, Waititu (2020) maintained that the potential for employees to abuse digital communication tools for private endeavours while on duty threatens organisational performance.

Furthermore, digital communication often needs more personal touch than face-to-face interactions, potentially leading to misunderstandings and a sense of isolation among employees. Shan et al. (2015) stated that social media's impersonal nature and use lack human social and interactive capabilities, hindering effective two-way human interaction and dialogue. This lack of human touch may result in reduced employee morale, decreased team cohesion, and potential misunderstandings, which may hinder effective collaboration. Not all employees may have access to or be comfortable using digital communication tools, leading to a digital divide within the organisation. On the other hand, digital communication often relies heavily on written messages, neglecting the benefits of visual and verbal communication.

Similarly, digital media can be a source of distractions, with employees multitasking or becoming easily diverted during online meetings or while reading digital messages. Reduced focus, comprehension, and retention of critical information can affect the overall effectiveness of communication efforts. Employee output may also drop as more people spend time on official social media platforms than in actual work. Yunus et al. (2019) asserted that the shift in media consumption patterns, with younger people being more exposed to smartphones and social media, poses a challenge for companies that rely on digital media for communication. The absence of non-verbal cues in digital communication can lead to misinterpretation of tone, potentially causing misunderstandings and conflicts. A study by Rasheed and Saba (2023) indicated that social media addiction may negatively affect employee engagement, highlighting the need to address the potential adverse effects of digital media on engagement.

Additionally, due to low digital literacy and poor infrastructure, the use of digital media may also lead to limited participation, unequal access to information, and decreased engagement among certain employee groups. In complex or sensitive situations, vital differences may be lost, leading to misunderstandings and ineffective communication. The challenge of disinformation, misinformation and fake news has been identified as barriers. Schubert and Seyffert (2017) have argued that lack of control over messages posted on social media, concerns over the credibility and reliability of the information, and difficulties in identifying facts online are also significant challenges associated with using social media in internal organisational communication. Scholars have argued that addressing these challenges requires a thoughtful approach, incorporating a mix of communication channels, providing training on digital tools, fostering a culture of open communication, and continually evaluating and adapting communication strategies to meet the evolving needs of the organisation and its workforce (Waititu, 2020).

Discussion of findings

The study's first objective was to investigate the role of digital media on the efficiency and effectiveness of internal communication within the organisation. Available literature indicates that digital media allows instant communication, enabling employees to share information quickly and efficiently. This view is supported by Gustafsson et al. (2018) argument that a digitised workplace creates new opportunities for organisations to manage their internal communication effectively. Similarly, Men et al. (2020) emphasised the suitability of internal digital channels for two-way symmetrical communication, enabling dialogue between organisational leaders and employees. Additionally, digital media has led to a dispersion of communication involving more people and an increase in internal complexity within organisations, reflecting the profound effects of digital media on organisational communication (Frandsen, 2016). Furthermore, Digital media impacts organisational identity, performance, and communication efficacy, according to an investigation by Ferdiansyah et al. (2021).

The study also explored employees' preferences and usage patterns regarding various digital media channels for internal communication. The available literature reviewed that one of the prominent adoptions and uses of digital media in organisational communication is social media. The use of social media in internal organisational communication has become increasingly prevalent in recent years as organisations are leveraging social media platforms to enhance internal communication, improve employee engagement, and facilitate knowledge sharing. Research has shown that social media can have profound implications for internal communication, allowing for multiple voices, targeted communication, wider reach, and combined consumption and content production (AlShawabkeh et al., 2018). Men et al. (2020) discussed the relationship between organisations' administration of internal social media and social media engagement, emphasising the encouragement of employees' use of internal social media for fostering organisational transparency and quality relationships. Murthy (2018) also emphasised the integral role of social media in organisational communication processes, highlighting its potential to alter socialisation, knowledge sharing, and power processes within organisations.

Finally, the study evaluates the potential barriers or challenges associated with using digital media in internal communication. The literature reviewed indicates that digital media presents several challenges that can impact communication effectiveness. Digital channels can be susceptible to security breaches, risking the confidentiality of sensitive organisational information and reputation risks (Maskuri et al., 2023). In addition, relevant information may get lost in the abundance of messages, leading to confusion and decreased engagement. Employees also abuse digital communication tools for private endeavours while on duty, threatening organisational performance. Furthermore, digital communication often lacks the personal touch of face-to-face interactions, potentially leading to misunderstandings and a sense of isolation among employees. Similarly, digital media can be a source of distractions, with employees multitasking or becoming easily diverted during online meetings or while reading digital messages. Reduced focus, comprehension, and retention of critical information can affect the overall effectiveness of communication efforts. Employee output may also drop as more people spend time on official social media platforms than in actual work. Again, low digital literacy and poor infrastructure, using digital media may also lead to limited participation, unequal access to information, and decreased engagement among certain employee groups.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, digital media has emerged as a transformative force in internal organisational communication, enabling more dynamic, efficient, and responsive organisational exchanges. By providing diverse communication channels and tools, digital media fosters real-time information sharing, supports collaboration, and enhances employee engagement across all organisational levels. This transformation aligns with technological determinism and actor-network theory, highlighting how technological advancements and the interaction between human and non-human actors reshape organisational communication practices. Digital platforms such as social media, intranets, and messaging tools have effectively bridged communication gaps and facilitated a connected workforce, contributing to improved decision-making, employee morale, and organisational productivity. However, challenges such as security risks, information overload, the digital divide, and potential misinterpretations due to the absence of non-verbal cues underscore the limitations of relying solely on digital media for internal communication. Therefore, a strategic balance between digital and conventional communication methods remains essential. By implementing the following recommendations, organisations can effectively harness the benefits of digital media while mitigating its challenges, ultimately fostering a more cohesive, resilient, and responsive communication environment:

1. Organisations should combine digital and conventional communication channels. While digital tools enhance accessibility and immediacy, traditional face-to-face interactions can address subtleties often lost in digital exchanges. This hybrid approach will provide a comprehensive communication system that caters to diverse employee needs and preferences.

2. Organisations should invest in digital literacy training and infrastructure improvements to address the digital divide and ensure equitable access to digital tools. Organisations can foster inclusivity and enable full participation in internal communication by equipping employees with the necessary skills to navigate digital platforms.

3. As digital media usage increases, so do risks associated with data breaches and information leaks. Organisations must establish effective security protocols to protect sensitive information. This could include regular cybersecurity training, secure login processes, and policies regulating information sharing within digital platforms.

4. Organisations should establish message frequency and relevance. Using filters, summaries, or categorised content can help employees focus on pertinent information, reducing distractions and enhancing comprehension.

5. Digital media enables real-time feedback, but structured and accessible channels should ensure that employees' voices are genuinely heard. Regular surveys, discussion forums, and feedback loops can foster a two-way communication flow, contributing to a more engaged and motivated workforce.

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Coverage of the eight months strike of Academic Staff Union of Universities in *Leadership* and *The Nation* newspapers

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Abstract

This study investigates the media's role in covering the 2022 eight months strike of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in Nigeria, focusing on *Leadership* and *The Nation* newspapers. Using a content analysis design, data collection involved a code sheet which analysed 276 stories. Of these, 53% were published by *The Nation* and 47% by *Leadership*. Results reveal a reliance on official sources for news, with minimal attention to non-official perspectives such as students and parents, thereby limiting the scope of coverage. Furthermore, most stories were medium in length, indicating a moderate volume of coverage that failed to treat the strike as an urgent issue. The study found a dominance of straight news reports, with fewer feature and opinion pieces. This lack of in-depth analysis or diverse perspectives reduced the opportunity for the public to grasp the underlying complexities of the strike. Notably, both newspapers rarely proposed solutions to the crisis, reflecting a limited role in promoting dialogue or industrial harmony. By not setting a clear agenda for resolving the strike, the media missed an opportunity to fulfil their social responsibility to advocate for constructive outcomes. Grounded in agenda-setting and social responsibility theories, this study highlights the media's potential yet underutilised role in influencing public discourse and policymaking during crises. The findings extend prior studies on strike coverage by providing empirical evidence on the content, style, and scope of media reporting in Nigeria's education sector. The study concludes that newspapers should expand their sources, allocate more space for diverse content types, and actively suggest solutions to such industrial disputes to contribute meaningfully to societal progress.

Keywords: ASUU Strike, Newspaper Coverage, Media Responsibility, Industrial Disputes in Nigeria

Introduction

Industrial harmony is an essential requirement for peace and progress in the workforce. This is because a workforce in crisis will be unable to meet its mandates effectively. For this reason, industrial harmony is often promoted as a fundamental requirement for orderliness and progress in the workforce. Wobodo (2019) says that industrial harmony is an essential ingredient for motivating workers and ensuring that they achieve the aim of their organisation. According to Barinem and Porbari (2021), industrial harmony exists when an organisation's workers, employers and management enjoy fair play on issues that can affect the performance of employees

and, eventually, the growth of an organisation, industry, or institution. When there is a breakdown in industrial harmony, it leads to industrial disharmony.

Industrial disharmony is the disagreement that erupts between the workers and management or their employers. Dankara (2021) defines industrial disharmony as a state of unrest characterised by the inability of parties to reach a consensus about issues concerning jobs and service conditions. One of the industrial disharmonies that has continuously surfaced in Nigeria involves the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the government of Nigeria. Although local ASUU branches have also had issues with their state governments, the concern of the current study is the industrial crisis involving ASUU and the Federal government.

Usually, industrial disputes involving ASUU and the federal government negatively impact Nigeria's university system. The crisis stops academic activities and prolongs students' stay in school such that programmes meant for four years last for six years and those for five years later for seven years, respectively. The media in Nigeria are responsible for reporting issues related to the strike to set a proper agenda on the crisis and suggest ways of addressing it. This is important because of the negative impact of the crisis on the Nigerian university system. For example, Ibrahim (2015) conducted a study to determine the effect of ASUU strikes on the Nigerian university system. He reported that strikes by the academic union negatively impact Nigerian university graduates' quality. Also, during strike actions, students stay at home and are vulnerable to different anti-social behaviour. Some of them do not return to school when the school eventually reopens. For example, *The Guardian* newspaper of 8th March 2022 carried a story of a student of the University of Jos who committed suicide as a result of the strike (Ahovi, 2022).

University workers are equally negatively affected by ASUU strikes. For example, during the 2022 eight-month strikes, university staff were not paid their monthly salaries. This posed a severe challenge to their survival because most were family members with responsibilities, so withholding their salaries for eight months was a considerable challenge. Some lecturers died during the strike, while others sold their properties to stay alive. For example, the *Punch* newspaper reported that ten lecturers from the University of Calabar died during the strike because they did not have money for treatment. In a study, Okeke et al. (2021) found that ASUU strikes also hurt the psycho-social composition of university staff because they lead to a drop in self-esteem, the development of a negative self-concept, deviant behaviour, frustration, aggression and withdrawn behaviour. The implication is that ASUU strikes affect both staff and students negatively. The media in Nigeria have a social responsibility to promote positive development and discourage issues that retard development. Through its reports, the media can highlight the labour crisis in ways that draw the attention of the main actors of the crisis, advocate for an end to constant strikes, and promote industrial harmony for the overall interest of the Nigerian educational system. Based on the above background, the researcher examined newspaper coverage of the 2022 eight-month strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU).

The 2022 eight-month strike by ASUU significantly negatively impacted university staff, students and the university system. Although the strike is over, issues that led to the declaration of the strike are still subject to legal disputes. Limited studies, if any, have been conducted regarding newspaper coverage of the eight-month-long strike. Issues that are of particular attention but are yet to be examined in the literature are how newspapers covered the strike with particular attention to the type of stories used; the sources cited, and the availability of solutions suggested to address the strike. These issues are important because they will provide information for understanding the contribution of the Nigerian media in addressing industrial disputes in Nigeria's educational system. This is the problem that this study sought to address, and the scope was to understand the newspaper coverage of the 2022 ASUU eight-month strike. The study in the area of content was limited to sources of stories, volume, story

type and solution highlighted. Regarding duration, the study was limited to 14th February to 14th October 2022. This is the duration of the strike. Regarding newspapers, the study examined *Leadership* and *national* newspapers. This study is significant because it could be helpful in theory, journalism studies, and policy advocacy. In the area of theory, the result of this study has offered information that could be beneficial in interpreting the agenda-setting and social responsibility theories. The information in this study could help test these theories and suggest new stories related to media coverage of issues.

This study offers valuable insights into professional journalism practices, particularly in assessing how Nigerian journalists perform during crises, such as industrial disputes. It provides critical information to guide policy formulation and advocacy efforts in addressing such challenges. The study's primary objective was to evaluate how newspapers covered the 2022 eight-month Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) strike. To achieve this, the research focused on four specific objectives: 1. Sources of Information: Identifying the most frequently cited sources in newspaper coverage of the strike. 2. Volume of Coverage: Examining the extent to which newspapers covered the 2022 ASUU strike in frequency and depth. 3. Story Types: Categorising the types of stories published, such as straight news, feature stories, opinion pieces, and others, to understand the narrative styles employed in reporting the strike. 4. Solutions Highlighted: Determining whether newspaper stories included proposed solutions to address and resolve the strike action. These objectives provide a framework for analysing media performance during industrial disharmony, highlighting areas of strength and opportunities for improvement in journalistic practice.

Historical Context and Literature Review

The 2022 strike is not the first strike action that ASUU has embarked on, and it may not be the last. The strike is also linked to an agreement signed between the union and the government in 2009. In those years, lecturers in public universities across the country embarked on an industrial action that lasted four months. The strike started in June and was called off in October 2009. Before the strike was called off, the Federal Government and the union had an agreement, the 2009 ASUU/FG agreement, which later became the reason for subsequent industrial action. After that strike, several other strike actions took place in 2011, 2013, 2017, and 2018, respectively (Bayo,2018).

Introducing the Integrated Personnel Payment and Information System (IPPIS) as a compulsory platform for paying lecturers' salaries has caused disagreement between lecturers and the federal government. When neither party reached an agreement on the issue of enrollment on the IPPIS platform, the withdrawal of services occurred in 2020. While the Federal government insisted that all workers under her payroll must enrol as a condition to receive their salaries, ASUU insisted that enrolment into the platform is a violation of University autonomy, which is backed by extant laws. ASUU, however, embarked on a two-week warning strike to show their disapproval of the government's move; before the end of the warning strike, the February 2020 salaries of other University workers were paid, leaving ASUU members who did not enrol on IPPIS. This resulted in a full-blown conflict when ASUU members without enrollment had their salaries withheld (Emejo, 2020).

The union reacted by embarking on a two-week warning strike and an indefinite strike on Monday, 23rd March 2020. The withholding of the lecturers' salaries impacted their income, limiting their purchasing power. Such a situation provides an excellent example of the impact of labour-union conflict on the workers and their families. It is essential to note that although members of ASUU resisted IPPIS, their counterparts from NAAT, NASUU, and SANU accepted and enrolled. The 2022 ASUU strike was based on the following demands: improved funding of the university system, payment

of areas of academic allowance, setting up a committee to renegotiate the wages of university lecturers, the use of University Accountability Solution (UTAS) to replace Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) as a payment platform, and the setting up of university visitation panels. Also, among the reasons for the strike action was a need to address the growing problem of increased proliferation of universities, the release of the withheld check-off dues and an increase in the budgetary allocation to education (Onyedinefu, 2022). Based on the above, the strike lingered for eight months, and at the time of this study, issues involving the strike were still with the National Court of Arbitration. The unions' eight-month salaries were not paid. The strike was suspended because of a court order, and the issues were still being addressed in court.

Martin (2005) conducted a study to determine media coverage of strikes in the New York Times and the *Daily Labor Report*. The researcher used content analysis and collected data using a code sheet. The researcher found that both newspapers covered strikes in manners that were similar to other forms of protests. The result showed that the New York Times reported strikes in industries that impacted the public, but the same was not valid *with the Daily Labor Report.* This study is related to the current one because it examined media coverage of strikes. However, it was not a strike involving university workers. Kariithi and Kareithi (2007) did a study to examine newspaper coverage of anti-privatisation strikes in South Africa. The researchers used critical discourse analysis and Stuart Hall's concepts of signification and ideological theory of the media as a framework for the study. The researchers examined four daily newspapers: Sowetan*, The Star, Business Day and Citizen.* And four weekly newspapers, namely *Sunday Independent, Mail & Guardian, Sunday Times* and *City Press.* The study result showed that all the newspapers examined sufficiently covered the strike and supported it through a legitimation approach. The newspapers presented the strike as a legitimate right for the citizens. This study is related to the current one because it examined how newspapers reported the industrial crisis. However, this was not a crisis for university workers. as a legitimate right for the citizens. This study is related to the current one because it examined how newspapers reported the industrial crisis. However, this was not a crisis for university workers.

Kart (2017) studied newspaper coverage of The British Miners' Strike of 1984–1985. The researchers applied the discourse analysis approach to conduct the study. The researcher sampled eight national newspapers: *Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Mail, The Daily Express*, *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Morning Star, The Sun,* and *The Times.* The study showed that newspapers constructed the strike as a war between the state and the National Union of Miners. Such metaphor was expressed in linguistic, multimodal and visual forms. While it is good that the study has examined strike action, the researchers did not investigate strikes by university lecturers. Ugwuona (2016) conducted a study examining the discourse of the ASUU strike in Nigerian newspapers. The researcher focused on the 2013 ASUU strike and collected data from *The Punch* newspaper. The researcher found that ideological differences between the ASUU and the Federal government play a huge role in the lingering dispute. Although the researchers examined the ASUU strike, it was not the 2022 strike. In addition, the study did not examine newspaper coverage of the crisis but focused on the online comments of newspaper readers. Abimbola et al. (2015) did a study to examine newspaper coverage of the 2013 strike by the Academic Staff Union of Universities. The researchers applied content analysis and studied three newspapers: The *Punch, Nigerian Tribune and The Nation.* The researchers examined 60 editions of each newspaper and found that The *Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Nation* newspapers frequently covered and reported the July to December 2013 ASUU strike. The researchers noted that the newspapers did not attach enough importance to the strike coverage. The researchers then concluded that the newspapers did not sufficiently set an agenda for the labour crisis. Although this study examined the ASUU strike, it did not discuss the 2022 strike, which was longer than in 2013.

The researcher used two theories in this study. They are the agenda-setting theory and the social responsibility theories. Agenda-setting theory is attributed to Walter Lippmann's 1922 classic, *Public Opinion*, which opened with a chapter captioned "The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads (Lippmann, 1922, p.29). According to Lippmann, the agenda of issues or other objects presented by the news media influences what the pictures in our heads are about. The theory was proposed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. McCombs and Shaw, in a famous study called Chapel Hill, reported that the editors, in choosing and displaying news and pictures, play an essential role in shaping public reality. McCombs and Shaw conducted a study wherein they studied 100 voters in Chapel Hill, United States and found that when news editors make decisions related to news content, they play a role in determining which issues to consider essential. According to the theory, the media shapes public views about issues. This is done through strategies like frequency of reportage, contents of reportage and placements. Gever (2015) tested agenda-setting theory using a sample of 400 respondents and found that their media play substantial roles in influencing public views of issues. This theory is relevant to the current study because it indicates that the media can draw attention to issues related to the ASUU strike. The media plays a critical role in setting the public agenda and must exercise this power responsibly, avoiding actions that could incite violence or create unrest. Mass media must set agendas thoughtfully and constructively, especially in critical moments like strikes or societal conflicts. This principle aligns with the social responsibility theory, which emerged from the Hutchins Commission of Inquiry in 1947. This commission established that media freedom is inseparable from its corresponding responsibility. Journalistic integrity and ethical standards are at the heart of this theory, emphasising that the press should prioritise societal well-being while maintaining professional accountability.

As Asemah (2011) outlines, the social responsibility theory is built on key principles. Firstly, the media has a fundamental obligation to serve society by ensuring the dissemination of accurate, truthful, and objective information. Secondly, while media freedom is essential, it must be accompanied by self-regulation through established codes of ethics and conduct. Additionally, the theory underscores the media's pluralistic nature, which involves representing the diversity of society, fostering various viewpoints, and providing a forum for public ideas and discourse. Moreover, media ownership is regarded as a public trust, implying that journalists and media entities are accountable to their audiences and readers, not solely to corporate interests. In essence, the social responsibility theory reminds the media of its profound impact on shaping public opinion and societal dynamics. It calls for a balanced approach that upholds journalistic integrity while serving as a responsible information steward for the greater good. This theory is relevant to the current study because the media promotes positive societal developments. The ASUU strike was an issue that negatively affected the Nigerian educational system, and the media are responsible for presenting the issue positively so that stakeholders will be drawn to it. The media needs to show in a manner that will engineer solutions. The media's focus during such a crisis should be to provide solutions to bring the issue to attention. Therefore, these two theories were helpful for the current study because they serve as barometers for evaluating how the media played its role during labour crises in a developing country like Nigeria.

Methodology and Findings

The researcher applied content analysis in this study. Content analysis is suitable for studies examining written content, such as newspapers or books. Therefore, through content analysis, the researcher examined how Nigerian newspapers reported the ASUU strike of 2022. This study's population was all the editions of the *Leadership* and *The Nation* newspapers for the eight months of the strike. This population was

considered appropriate for the study because it contained newspaper stories on the 2022 ASUU strike. This study's sample size was 276 stories on the ASUU strike from the Leadership and *The Nation* newspapers. A breakdown showed that *The Nation* newspaper had 145 stories, while the Leadership newspaper had 131. The researcher used a motif search technique to select the editions for this study. This approach is used by searching keywords and selecting stories that match the aim of the study. The keywords that were used in the study included "ASUU strike", "University strike", "University lecturers indefinite strike", and "ASUU/FG agreement." The researcher continued to modify the search until a reasonable number of stories were selected. It is important to note that after the search results, the researcher used purposively sampling to select only the newspaper stories on the 2022 eight-month ASUU strike.

The unit of analysis for this study was articles from the two newspapers selected. The news items were evaluated based on the following: Official sources: These are sources from people speaking in an official capacity, like government and ASUU officials. *Non-Official sources:* These are sources from people who spoke in their capacities, such as students and parents. Only the first cited source was counted in stories with multiple sources. *Volume of coverage*: Here, the attention was dedicated to the strike coverage. Therefore, the following were used: *Long stories* and stories above 500 words. *Medium stories*:   Stories that were within 300-499 words. *Short stories*: Stories that were between 1-299 words. It is important to clarify here that the rationale for using this scale is that it was observed that stories across media outlets mostly stay within 1000 words.

Story Type: This category was designed to classify the stories used to report the strike. The categories are as follows: Straight News: These stories provided factual reports on the strike without including background information. Feature Stories: These stories offered in-depth coverage, including detailed background information on the strike. Opinion Pieces: These included individual opinions, such as those from columnists and newspaper editorials. Others: Stories that did not fit the above categories were grouped here. Solutions to the Strike: This section assessed whether newspaper stories proposed ways to resolve the strike. The categories are as follows: Solution Included: These stories presented potential solutions or steps to address and resolve the strike action. No Solution: These stories reported on the strike without offering suggestions or solutions to end the action.

The researcher used the code sheet to collect data for the study. The researcher developed the code sheet for the study. The code sheet was in two sections. The first section contained information on instructions to the coders on how to code the data. The second section contained the actual code sheet with columns. The researcher measured the reliability of the study with the use of two coders who were randomly selected to do the coding. In the view of Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (2005), a random sampling of content samples for inter-coder reliability testing is helpful. Wimmer and Dominick (2013) suggested that 10 – 25% of the content should be tested. Consequently, the inter-coder reliability for this study was carried out by randomly selecting 10% of the news items with the use of Holsti's formula (cited in Wimmer & Dominick, 2006), as illustrated below:

$$R = \frac{2M}{N1 + N2}$$

Where:

M = The number of coding decisions on which two coders agree.

N1 & N2 – The number of coding decisions the first and second coders make, respectively. The calculation yielded an inter-coder reliability of 0.82, indicating high reliability. The researcher used percentages and frequency to analyse the data for the study. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyse the study data. The researcher presented the results in chats for graphical illustration.

The researcher examined all the newspaper editions of both *Leadership* and *The Nation* within the time frame of the strike, which yielded 276 stories on the ASUU strike from the Leadership *The Nation* newspapers. A breakdown showed that *The Nation* newspaper had 145 (53%) stories while the *Leadership* newspaper had 131(47%) stories. Therefore, it can be said that *The Nation* newspaper had more stories on the strike than *Leadership*. The result of the study is further presented below:
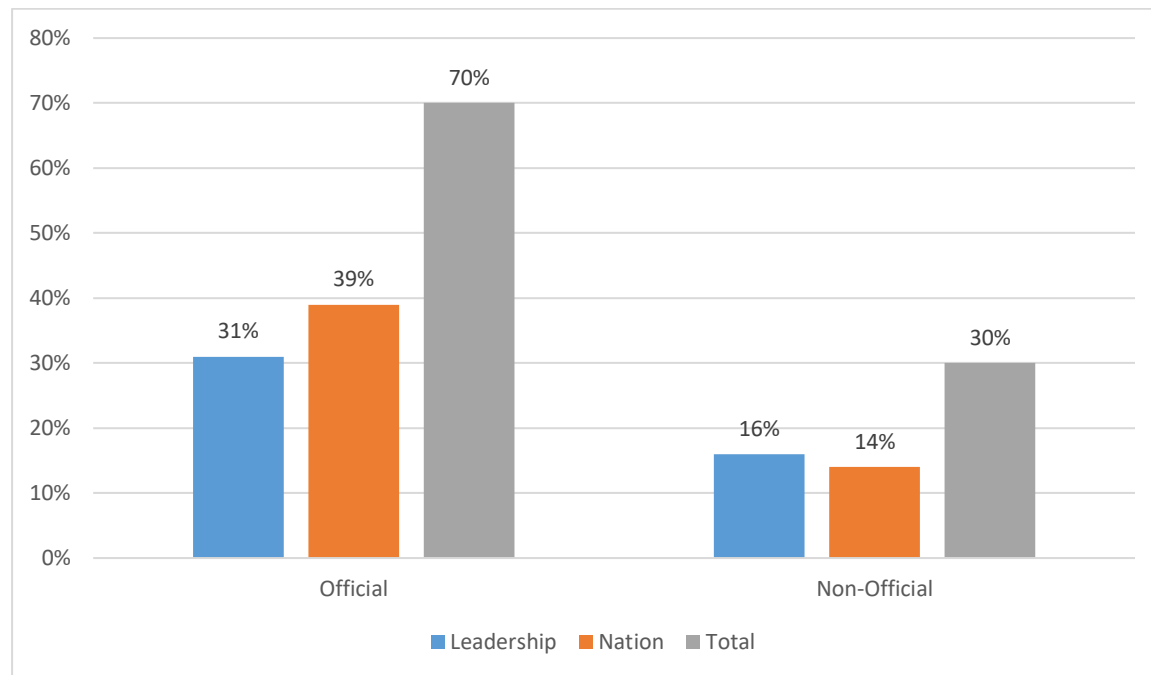
Figure 1: Sources of stories

In the chat above, the researcher determined the sources of stories cited in newspaper coverage of the 2022 ASUU eight months strike. The study revealed that the newspapers cited official primary sources. Few non-official sources indicated that the newspapers did not allow the ventilation of sources from the general public, including students and parents.
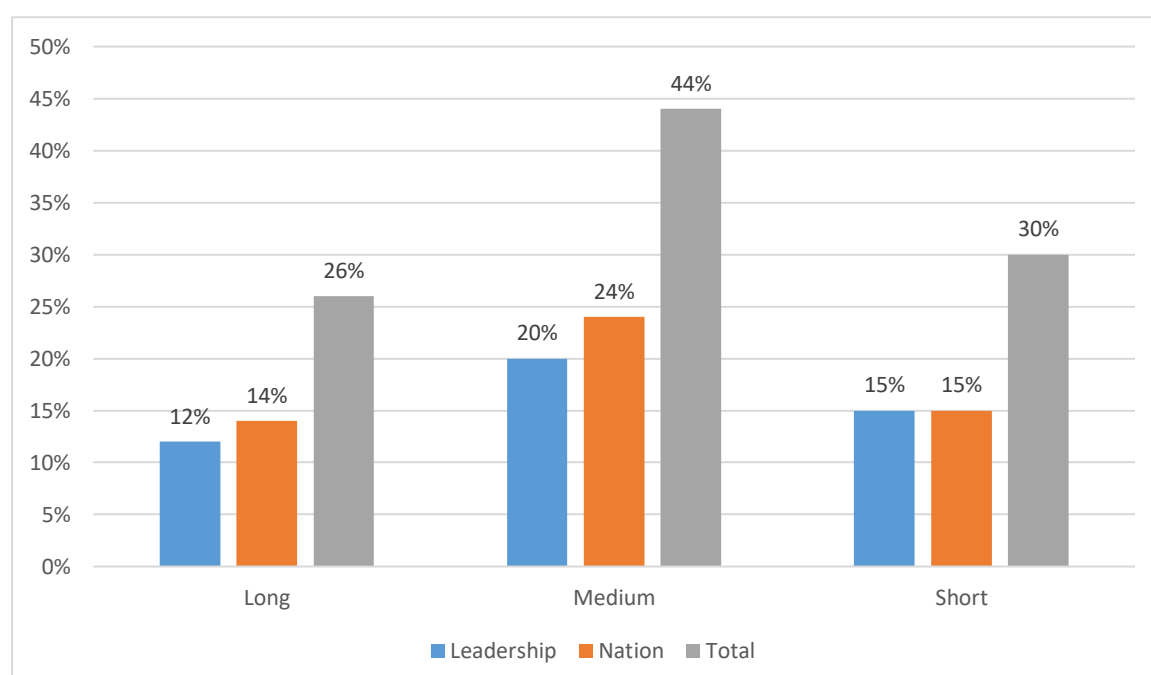
Figure 2: Volume of newspaper coverage

In Figure 2, the researcher examined the volume of newspaper coverage of the 2022 eight-month ASUU strike. The researcher found that most of the stories were medium, and few were long. The implication is that the newspapers did not dedicate sufficient

space to the strike. The researcher further examined the type of stories that were used to report the strike, and the result is presented below:
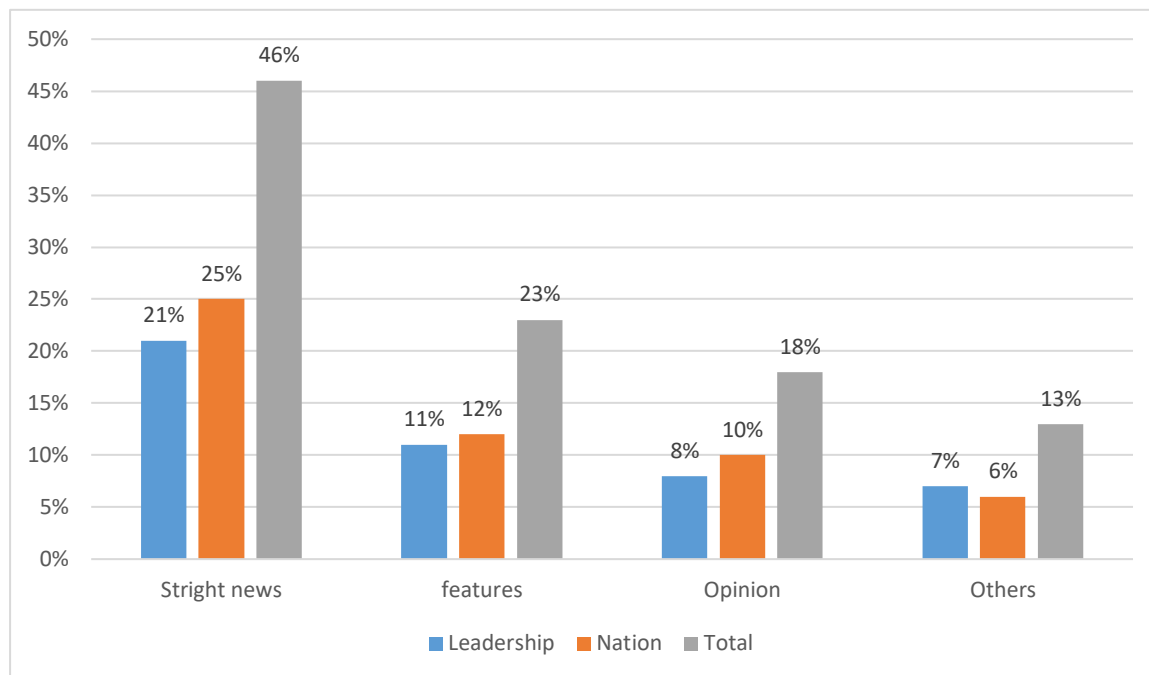
Figure 3: Story format on the strike

In the chart above, the researcher ascertained the newspaper story format for reporting the strike. The study revealed that most stories were in a straight news format, with less attention to features and opinions. This implies that the newspapers did not analyse the strike in-depth. The researcher further examined whether the newspapers suggested solutions to the strike. The results are presented in Figure 4.
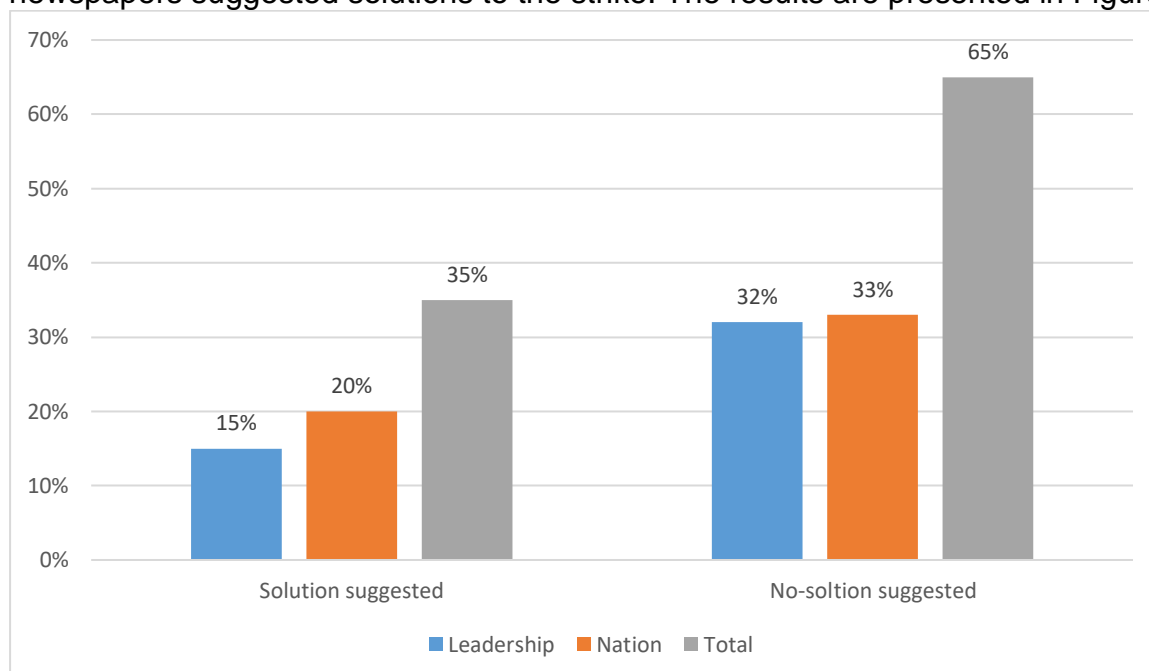
Figure 4: Suggestions for the strike

The researcher plotted the chart above to determine whether the newspapers suggested solutions to the strike. The study's results revealed that most stories did not suggest ways of ending the strike. This means that the newspapers merely reported events regarding the strike with less attention to how to bring it to an end.

This study aimed to ascertain newspaper coverage of the 2022 ASUU strike that lasted eight months. The researcher's content analysed stories from *Leadership* and *The Nation* newspapers. The result of the study revealed that there were 276 stories on the strike from both newspapers. *The* newspaper contributed 53% of the stories,

while the *Leadership* contributed 47%. Further results revealed that both newspapers cited mainly official sources, with less attention paid to non-official sources. This means the newspapers did not allow sufficient space for non-official sources to vent their views on the crisis. This denied the general public the opportunity to understand different aspects of the crisis. Such one-sided sourcing of stories could affect media content, as a study by Gever (2018) has shown that the sources of stories significantly affect media content. When officials provide information to the media, they do so from the perspective of the official position and may not present a broad perspective on the issue involved. It is left for the newspapers to broaden their scope and source for information from a variety of sources.

The researcher found that the newspapers essentially gave moderate volume to the strike as most of the stories were medium in length. The implication is that the newspapers gave limited attention to the strike and did not consider it a pressing issue that should occupy much space on their pages. This aspect of the study has extended the studies of Kariithi and Kareithi (2007) and Kart (2017), who examined newspaper coverage of strike actions but did not focus on strikes organised by the academic staff union. By providing information on the volume of coverage of the ASUU strike, the current study has provided empirical data for understanding the contributing role of newspapers in promoting industrial harmony in the university. The researcher further found that the newspapers examined used mainly straight news format in reporting the strike. There were fewer instances of feature and opinion stories. This suggests that the newspapers examined did not provide sufficient background information on the strike; instead, the issues were reported with less reference to the background of such problems. This type of reporting could deny the public the opportunity to understand issues related to the strike. This result has extended the study of Ugwuona (2016), who examined newspaper coverage of the ASUU strike but did not focus on the type of stories used in reporting the industrial action. Finally, the results of this study show that newspapers reported the strike without addressing the crisis's solutions. The newspapers did not suggest solutions to the situation or ways of addressing it and promoting industrial harmony. This study extended the study of Abimbola et al. (2015), who investigated newspaper coverage of the ASUU strike without considering whether the newspapers suggested solutions. This addition could be a reference point for other researchers examining newspaper coverage of labour crises.

Conclusion

Based on this, the researcher concludes that the *Leadership* and *The Nation* newspapers used mainly official sources to report the ASUU strike in 2022. The researcher also concludes that the newspapers used mainly straight news format, and the stories were medium in length. The researcher also concludes that the newspapers did not suggest solutions to the ASUU strike. This study has implications for agenda-setting and social responsibility theory by showing how the newspaper reported the 2022 ASUU strike. Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made:
1. Newspapers should improve the sources cited by including non-official sources to allow diverse opinions on ASUU strike issues.
2. News outlets need to do more in feature stories for detailed reporting of the ASUU strike.
3. Newspapers should also increase the space allotted to stories on the ASUU strike to communicate more information on the issue to the general public.
4. Finally, newspapers should consider recommending solutions to the ASUU strike in their coverage.

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Nigeria, a hawks-public: Diran Ademiju-Bepo's No More the Taming Hawks

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Abstract

This paper analyses Diran Ademiju-Bepo's *No More the Taming Hawks. This play* metaphorically critiques Nigeria's political leadership as a "Hawks-Public," characterised by predatory governance and systemic corruption. Through vivid metaphors such as "Hawks-Cellency" and "Supreme-Hawks-in-Council," the play portrays a leadership class prioritising self-interest and exploitation over people-centric governance. Employing prioritising qualitative methodology, the study dissects the symbolic and narrative elements of the play, revealing the parallels between its fictional Hawks and the realities of Nigeria's political elite. Drawing from the Realist Theory of Conflict and Reader-Response Theory, this research interprets the cyclical nature of leadership failures and broken promises, framing Nigeria as a nation ruled by Hawks who thrive on chaos and power struggles. The paper further examines the play's thematic critique of dictatorial tendencies, coup-driven power shifts, and the erosion of traditional values. By exploring the symbolic clash between Hawks and Doves, the study highlights the need for unity and collective action among Nigeria's "Doves"—the peaceful and virtuous citizens—to restore the ideals of democracy. The findings underscore the play's success as a satirical mirror of Nigeria's political absurdities, challenging the audience to confront societal flaws and advocate for transformative leadership. Ultimately, the paper posits that *No More the Taming Hawks* serves as an artistic and political call to action, urging Nigerians to transcend divisive self-interest and forge a unified front for national renewal.

Keywords: Political Satire, Nigerian Leadership Critique, Realist Conflict Theory, Drama and Governance Analysis

Introduction

The dramatist uses his work to make commentary on issues surrounding him. Through his work, the dramatist can advocate and persuade others to take actionable steps towards bettering their societies. The dramatist can do this successfully through his works because he is "a member of society, so naturally, his artistic sensibilities are shaped and sharpened by the socio-economic contradictions and political happenings of his time" (Dandaura, 2002,p. 179). The dramatist sometimes uses satire to make caustic statements about society. This is because satirical works aim at "hurting us so that we can amend." (Bamidele, 2001, p. 40) The aim of adopting satire in his work is often so that the dramatist can prick the consciences of his readers/audience. Bamidele (2001, p. 40) states, "Even when we laugh, we see through the glen and reflect on our inadequacies." Like other dramatists, Diran Ademiju uses his play *No More the Taming Hawks* to make a vital commentary depicting the "Achille's Heel" of the Nigerian political space. A political space that is only a vicious cycle of failed and aborted promises by failed republics masquerading as change catalysts. The play accurately lampoons the Nigerian leadership and governance system, describing its actors as preying Hawks with a high thirst for corruption. This paper aims to analyse the Nigerian political system that is turning the country into a 'Hawsk-Public', not worthy of a republic. Diran depicts a timely and thought-provoking picture of a republic adrift in tumultuous oceans.

As a post-Osofisan generation playwright, 'Diran Ademiju-Bepo, in his play *No More the Taming Hawks*, sparks a revolution against the series of failed Republics thrown up by the political system in our country, Nigeria. Using the African total theatre tradition of ritual and storytelling narratives, he passionately conveys his message(s) to the nation. He painted the metaphor of Flights on the canvas to depict Nigeria; in doing this, he believes that we had a Take-Off moment in history as a nation. This is likened to the military take-over of power, especially the January 15, 1966 coup led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu, to redeem the nation's image since the country had been run aground for him and his team. To wake up and discover that the military intervention was only but a worse narrative. In describing the spine of incidents in the play, the playwright whets the reader's appetite thus, on the blurb of the attractive 79-page book, divided into ten parts: the take-off and the flights that follow. This paper adds to various political commentaries on Nigeria's failed leadership system. It pricks the consciences of the ruling elite to repent from Hawks syndrome and the Nigerians with patriotic spirit to emulate the unity of the doves in the play.

Literature Review

This study adopts dual theories of play analysis. It employs the theory of Realist Conflict and the Reader-Response theory, which originated from hermeneutics. According to Olu (2012), "theory is a set of ideals of varying status and origin which may interpret or explain some phenomena". The realist theory of conflict shares both theological and biological doctrines and traces the roots of disputes to an apparent weakness and flaw in human nature. A human nature seen as selfish and desperate to pursue individualised interests is defined as power. In the words of Kegley and Wittkopt (1981), " …politics is essentially and unchangeably a struggle among self-interested states for power and position under anarchy, with each competing state pursuing its national interests. By implication, thus, it is a struggle among individuals (politicians) for power and position of authority. The founding father of the realist theory of conflict is the Greek historian Thucydides, who wrote the seminal account of the war between Athens and Sparta. The core and crux of this theory is that people are naturally narrowly selfish and ethically flawed. People would exude insatiable lust

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for power and strive to gratify against all odds, including staging coups and giving false and unrealistic promises (Olu, 2012, p. 87).

This theory is suitable for this study after considering the insatiable lust for power by politicians or failed republics at the detriment of others, as it almost always results in failed, unrealistic and aborted promises. Often, they climb the dizzy heights of political power for selfish gains, as demonstrated by the hawks in Diran's *No More the Taming Hawks*. The realist theory of conflict is used to weave and analyse the central conflict in the play introduced by the playwright as a result of the struggle for political power amongst the characters in the play. We will be seeing this in detail in the play analysis. On the other hand, the Reader-Response theory is adopted to accommodate the researcher's response to the text *No More the Taming Hawks* by Diran Ademiju-Bepo as a direct mirror of the society and the researcher's invention of the term "Hawks-Public" inferred from behaviours of the hawks in the play and the interpretation of the country Nigeria as a "Hawks-Public", not worthy of a republic. Reader response theory, or reception theory, emerged as a reaction against the New Critical insistence that all meaning was contained entirely within the text without regard for external factors. "Reader-response theorists argue that reading, making meaning, is an active process, not a passive one; readers engage with texts and form interpretations based on subjective experiences and what the text says. Some branches of reader-response theory examine individual reader's responses, often from a psychological or psychoanalytic perspective; others look for the social parameters within which interpretation takes place, arguing that "interpretive communities" establish particular reading modes. Theorists associated with reader-response theory include Wolfgang Iser, Stanley Fish, E. D. Hirsch, and David Bleich" (Awuawuer, 2020, p. 32). The relationship between reader-response theory and the play understudy is critically analysed in the analysis of the play.

Biodun Jeyifo (1985), commenting on the critical cardinal aim of drama, posited thus: "… drama deals at a highly concentrated … intense level with the contradictions of social existence. A dramatic piece which does not, in one form or another, deploy as its organising structural criteria a physical or emotional conflict, a moral or spiritual contest of wills, or a confrontation between contending principles is almost inconceivable. Equally important is the fact that drama does not merely subsume conflict merely as its organising structural motif; beyond this, drama also axiomatically attempts a resolution of sorts, a provisional synthesis in the conflicting pulls within its constitutive action …" Lending his voice on the role and function of literature, Ngugi (1981, p.5-6) stated "Literature results from conscious acts of men in society. At the level of the individual artist, the very act of writing implies a social relationship: one is writing about somebody for somebody. At the collective level, literature, as a product of men's intellectual and imaginative activity, embodies in words and images the tension, conflicts, contrast, and contradictions at the heart of a community's being and process of becoming. It reflects on the aesthetic and imaginative planes of a community's wrestling with its total environment to produce the basic means of life …." As Wilson (1988, p. 48) stated, "Art may question society's view or reaffirm them, but it cannot escape them". Drama is an art, and as such, it mirrors or reflects life. It does not try to encompass the whole of life at one time. Instead, it selects and focuses on a specific part of the total picture. Throughout history, drama has concentrated or focused on one subject: human beings. To confirm

Barranger (1995, p. 3) states, "Drama is a way of seeing men and women in action, of observing what they do and why they do it… because human beings are both drama's subject and its means of expression, drama is one of the most immediate ways of experiencing another concept of life: of what it means to be human."
Throughout history, some playwrights have written primarily to entertain their audience, and others have written with a serious purpose: to call attention to injustice, make a statement against war, and raise moral or philosophical questions. To corroborate this, Barranger (1995, p. 3) writes, "Some playwrights write to expose

truths about realities of social injustice, some write to make political statements about people, economies and political system. Playwright Wright a play to express some aspect of reality, emotions, and feelings connected with all of humanity, some measure of experience, vision, or conviction about the world." This is evident in many works of art, such as *No More the Taming Hawks*, where the playwright exposes Nigeria's sad political realities using the metaphor of the Hawks and Doves.

Kobina Sekyi in Ghana, Soyinka and Clark in Nigeria exemplify these trends on the West Coast of Africa. Disillusionment, political power tussles, alienation, and betrayal were the essential outcomes of independence-generated plays exploring anti-neo-colonialist, anti-neo-imperialist issues all over Africa. Blacks have struggled to create a dramatic culture to "articulate problems, ideas, beliefs, experiences, in propounding paths of change and illuminating the most profound aspects of the human being (Obafemi, 2012, pp. 29-30). In this same vein, the plays The Angel by Ahmed Yerima, Obanla, The Travails of our Heroes by Abiodun Macaulay and many others expose the truth about the realities of social imbalances. These imbalances include corruption, political assassination, abuse of power, godfatherism, coup and lust for power, which *No More the Taming Hawks* strongly detest in the actions of hawks in the play, especially in the character of Ajagunla's Hawkscellence. These imbalances have destroyed the fabric and essence of our nationhood and eroded confidence and trust between the Nigerian politicians and the masses they claim to lead. And to arrest these menaces, drama stands tall. The role of art in addressing political issues dates back to the very origin of art itself. For instance, according to (Augusto Boal 1979, p.1), "Those who try to separate theatre from politics try to lead us into error- and this is a political attitude… The argument about the relationship between theatre and politics is as old as theatre and as politics". Boal believes this is because theatre is politics, and politics is theatre. Political theatre/drama is a term that has been used to refer to three different phenomena: theatre, in this case, a drama that comments on political issues; political action or protest that has a dramatic quality to it; and any action by politicians that is intended to make a point rather than accomplish something substantive. In the history of drama, therefore, there is a long tradition of performances addressing topical issues, especially those germane to the society itself.

This encourages consciousness and social change. The political satire performed by the comic poets at the theatre greatly influenced public opinion in the Athenian democracy. Those earlier Western dramas, arising out of the politics or democratic city-state of Greek society, had a ritualistic and social significance that enhanced the relevance of the political issues being examined by drama. Drama challenges an audience member's beliefs and encourages them to assess their moral values critically. Indeed, the essential functional independence of drama and politics can be illustrated by specific Indigenous performances that have remained unchanged for many years under various political parties, systems, and orders. Although government and politics may be helpful to man as a social animal, they are partially inevitable or always necessary. Drama is political if it concerns the state or takes sides in politics. According to Kirby (1979, p. 9), "It is an art that is intentionally concerned with government that is intentionally engaged in or consciously takes sides in politics". Drama is an intellectual drama as it deals with political ideas and concepts, usually in an attempt to attack or support a particular political position. Political commentary in the form of drama often explicitly points out the institutions and aspects of government that should change; it usually describes and supports the exact nature of these changes.

John McGrath observed, as documented by Kritzer (2008, p.121) in his essay, "There is no such thing as a depoliticised world", "While drama is not the only art with political dimensions, it offers a unique forum for the political by involving audiences in a perceptible if not fleeting, social reality through the operation of its conventions. Evidence of the close and perhaps intrinsic relationship between politics and drama can be found in the long history of governmental regulation of drama in degrees and

forms that have not been applied to music, visual art, or written fiction. Drama's most basic political potential lies in its paradigmatic relationship to the polis: within theatre's space, assembled citizens view and consider representations of their world enacted for them in the immediacy of live performance." Additionally, Nadine Gordimer (2013, pp. 115, 121) has described fiction's relationship with works and those of other writers served legitimately the politics they believe in, it is "because the imaginative transformations of fiction … help people understand their natures and know that they are not powerless." In the course of interpreting Roberto Bolano's novel, 2666, Paul Martins (2016, p. 87) summarises the function of a political commentary as a response to texts that "thematically represent ethical and political issues" that "intersect with the interests of the academy (the critics, literary scholars, or the entire enlightened community)"

Schechner (1993 quoted in Kritzer (2008, p. 121) said, "Art's subject, structure, and action is a social process". Michael Kustow (1987) cited in Kritzer, 2008, xv) similarly describes theatre as both "an art and … a model of living together". Writing of political processes, the philosopher Hannah Arendt (1965), quoted in Kritzer (2008, p.25), argues that "a necessary constituent of political freedom is a space in which freedom can be exercised- "a place where people could come together". Political artists embrace the opportunity to lend their voices and call attention to social and political problems. They embody talent, optimism, and a sense of admirable personal responsibility. Therefore, drama and politics are inseparable.
It is also germane to state that art, drama in particular, and democracy have a twin existence. Politics and drama derive from the same source: people and the community, playing roles and finding expressions and solutions to life-threatening issues. In this regard, we must always take more than a cursory and superficial view of Shakespeare's characterisation of the world as a stage." On this same stage, Diran, in *No More the Taming Hawks*, engages the audiences and readers, tackling the political issues in the country via the symbolic choice of Hawks and Doves.

In the Nigerian situation, politics and issues of a "fundamentally political nature', as democracy, as Amuta (1989, p. 56) argues, "has always occupied a central position in African literature". In the case of Nigeria, be it the Yoruba Travelling Theatre, the exotic arena of modern drama, Or even the participatory squares and circles of popular, community, and development drama demonstrate political sensibility and a robust engagement in politics. Incessant changes in government are expected under the pretence of falsehood and fake promises. From inception to date, political drama has been a viable form of drama, even the most practised today, as seen in many Nigerian dramatist plays. As stated earlier, drama interrogates many political misgivings in the society. One Nigerian play that addresses these issues is Obanla by Abiodun Macaulay. As it is seen in Obanla, a play about political tussles and assassinations in Nigeria, when Oba Fiwasaye is dethroned by his chiefs and replaced with Balogun Arobiojo, a warlord, their motive was clearly expressed in the opening scene. The chiefs and Arobiojo, with his soldiers, invaded the palace. It is a bloody coup. The palace soldiers were called, and King Fiwasaye and his wife were incarcerated. The chiefs advocated for removing Fiwasaye because he did not listen to them. He did not cooperate with them. This underscores the reality of the rotten underbellies of Nigeria's political system, in which only crooks survive, and those who stand on the truth are often ousted brutally. This is also reflected in Diran's *No More the Taming Hawks*, where the politics of enthronement and dethronement for selfish reasons via coups within the Hawks-in-Council reign supreme.

Arobiojoin Obanla was a warrior and a soldier whose ambition was to sit on the throne and rule his town perpetually. This is also found in the character of Ajagunla in *No More the Taming Hawks*, who enthrones himself forcefully to reign over the Royal Hawks with no intention to give way to any democratic process, a typical behaviour often exhibited by Nigerian dictators. Arobiojo, his wife, and the chiefs in Obanla and the Hawks-in-Council in Diran's No More the Taming Hawk's reasons for wanting

power differ from why Nigerian leaders eagerly crave power. Nigeria experienced her first coup in 1966, led by Colonel Kaduna Nzeogwu. It was a bloody coup that led to the assassination of many leaders like Oladoke Akintola, Ahmadu Bello, Tafawa Balewa and many others. The country experienced many coups after that, with each leading figure in the coup convincing Nigerians of his pure intentions and reasons for seizing power, to turn into monsters like Ajagunla in *No More the Taming Hawks*, which, after seizing power through a coup, transforms himself into His 'Hawks-Cellency'. Nigeria is not alone in this coup experience, as similar occurrences are common in other African countries, such as Ghana, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Libya, Egypt, Ivory Coast, etc. Coups brought in Rawlings of Ghana, Samuel Doe of Liberia, and Gaddafi of Libya, to mention a few (Obafemi 2012, p. 86). And recently, Africa has witnessed the rebirth of military coups since August 2020 in Niger, Burkina-Faso, Mali, Guinea, etc, all with the promises of good fortunes. Indeed, the reverse is often the case after taking overpower, just as experienced in *No More the Taming Hawks*.

Dramatists such as Femi Osofisan have also questioned dubious politics in his plays, such as *Who is Afraid of Solarin*, a battle of political titans, then the plights of the rich and the poor in *Morountodun.* Tor Iorapuu's *April 1421* is also a condemnation of sit-tight leadership in Africa and Nigeria, specifically as attempted by Olusegun Obasanjo in 2007, also condemning electoral malpractices, election rigging, maiming, and assassinations of political opponents in the quest for power. Therefore, over the years, drama has been concerned about society's politics and its negative and positive impact on the citizens. Ahmed Yerima has also lampooned the Nigerian political leadership in many of his plays, addressing serious and worrisome sociopolitical issues in Nigerian society. Julius Adeoye (2013, p. 7) states, "Most of Ahmed Yerima's plays can be discussed as socio-political realities because their thematic preoccupations are current societal issues. Even when the play is not overtly speaking the language of politics, it is covertly aligning itself with the struggle of the generality of the people. For Adeoye, "Yerima discusses actual events, people, professions, and politics in *Kaffir's Last Game*. Ubong Nda (2016 p. 17) stated that Yerima's *Kaffir's Last Game* "is an artistic exercise in political note-sharing between two African nations. Because man by nature is a political animal, politics largely dominates arts discussions and themes the world over, and *No More the Taming Hawks* is not an exception, as the play is woven together by episodes of political conflicts between the 'Royal Doves' and 'Hawsk-in-Council'.

Another politically relevant play of Yerima is *The Sisters*, described by the playwright as "about battle with bitter truth and painful reality", which reveals the vanity and deceit characterising the lives of the high and mighty in society. The play also stresses the vagaries of political power and social status. The fact that the play deals with the life and sudden death of a president of an African nation is, in itself, political. The president has ruled for twenty years and is preparing for another term of five years. This is after he has served four continuous terms of five years each in office. The play can be seen as an allegorical statement on the life of General Sani Abacha, Nigeria's late head of state. Similarly to The Sisters by Yerima, *No More the Taming Hawks* presents the greed of seat-tight syndrome in Nigeria in the character of Hawks-in-Chief. Though, in reality, Abacha ruled for five years (August 1993-June 10, 1998) as a military head of state, he was preparing to transform himself into a civilian president before his untimely death. *The Sisters*, which discusses the sudden death of a serving Nigerian president, presents a "tortuous movement of shocking revelations" about the lives of the characters. The play reveals a shocking reality that the sisters are afraid to face. No doubt, dramatists worldwide are concerned with the socio-political intrigues underpinning their societies. "The belief of New Critics that "literature is metaphorical and symbolical" (Frank J. D'Angelo, 1978, p. 32) is hardly contestable. The dramatist often finds himself using tropes as part of his/her creative tools, which, in fact, according to D'Angelo (1978, p. 34), "represent the power of the imagination in its effort to grasp the world figuratively". "Political power therefore, its misuse, covetousness and the fierce tussle for it are the recurring motifs underlying dramatic

actions" In contemporary plays such as Johnson's *The Fight Has Just Begun*, Okafor's *The Lion and the Iroko,* Idegu's *Beloved Odolu Kingdom* etc., politics takes centre stage.

Drama focuses on the affairs of men as they interact with their fellow men and their societies. According to (Awuawuer, 2020, p. 33), "authenticates why Ola Rotimi, as a dramatist, was committed and concerned with issues of survival of the society. These can be seen in all his dramatic creations, beginning from his classic, *The Gods are Not to Blame* (1971) through *Hopes of the Living Dead* (1988) to *If a Tragedy of the Ruled* (1983) and *Holding Talks* (1979). Indeed, Nigerian theatre artists see themselves as waging a war on behalf of society. They see themselves as performing a function of social responsibility towards their fellow citizens." Diran, in his *No More the Taming Hawks*, has joined the troop of social and political crusaders in the country. *No More the Taming Hawks*, like other Nigerian political dramas, hold facts, opinions, and strategies on the state of political leadership in Nigeria. This social and political crusade of the dramatist is rooted in the spirit of love, harmony and collective will as the dramatist believes no cock, no hen, no goat, no keg of palm oil is demanded…for sacrifice… (for the joy, peace, and stability of the world) but love (p. 16). The text is optimistic despite years and seasons of gory tales through the cultural and socio-political history of the country. The play text fights against hatred, anger, terrorism, nepotism, sectionalism, godfatherism, violence, and self-centred politics, among other vices that retards national development.

Analysis and Discussion

Engaging in Diran's *No More the Taming Hawks* critically, one can sense the chaos and uncertainty in the land. A sense of hopelessness darkens the crest of a new dawn in search of hope and the quest for power preoccupying mortal beings' minds. With a thought-proving silent question of where lies the solution? The playwright's symbolic representation of the characters as 'Hawks' and 'Royal Doves' is apt and commendable. Hawks are, by nature, fierce and top predators in the animal kingdom who prey on their targets. A deeper probe of this symbolic representation sees hawks in their usual chaotic character, as a perfect representation of Nigeria's detractors and usurpers whose bellies are filled with disorder, conflict and violence, and constantly preying on those they seek to lead, while the 'Royal Doves' representing the few good men and women in the country that seek nothing but peace as it is typical in the God-given character of doves, as symbols of peace, love, and hope. Considering the hawks' grip on the doves in the play, one will not be out of place to deduce that Nigeria is better described as a 'Hawsk-Public ' (Republic of Hawks), practising a government of the Hawks by the Hawks and for the Hawks. As a global parable relevant for us as a nation, the playwright pricks our consciences and thinking faculties never to forget in a hurry. The litanies of empty, vague, broken, unfulfilled, and rotten promises we have been made by a series of usurpers masquerading as leaders continue to live in our memories. The actions and inactions of the characters mirror the rotten political episodes in our country, Nigeria.

As a symbolic colony populated by doves (the peaceful) and hawks (the chaotic) who have co-habited for seasons, conflict sets in, disrupting the peaceful atmosphere immediately after the death of the king dove. The dead of the king dove throws open the race for the throne. Especially among the heirs, Tomide, Maderin and Rohunfade (the heiress and their only sister), to wear the beaded crown of their father for an interim period. The colony at first echoes with joy, having escaped the wrath of the gods. However, as Rohunfade is about to sit on the throne, a predator fowl flies into the midst of the celebration, causing commotion and scattering the doves and the entire colony, perching on the throne, to the amazement of all. The intrusion by the hawk birthed a burning conflict that would later become the reason for the chaos in the

play. The realist theory of conflict becomes the researcher's suitable theory for critically analysing the conflict set in by the intruding hawk.

When the hawk intrudes, to their surprise, they declare that the hawk is a bushfowl that should not have any reason to be among the domestic fowl. Interestingly, not only does the hawk intrude on the gathering of the domestic fowl, but it also breathes fire and invites intense conflict by suspending customs and traditions. It disbands the Council of Elders, transforms himself into His Hawkcellency and Commander-in-Chief of the Hawks Forces, Ajagunla Asagbade and invites his friends to join him, making it a 'Hawks-Public'. After that, the colony knew there was no peace, but episodes of one conflict led to another. What brought the doves and hawks into a head-on collision is political power. And if two or more people want the same political power, conflict must set in. This perfectly applies the realist conflict theory to interrogate the nature of political conflicts between political animals. In this case, the political disputes between the Hawks themselves and between the Hawks and the Royal Doves should be interrogated. Using this theory, the researcher discovers a motif that unites all the hawks and doves in the play, which is 'self-interest'. In pursuing this self-interest, the hawks fight the doves and even end up fighting themselves and staging coups against each other. For instance, Asarinle, a close friend of Ajagunla, also dethrones Ajagunla in a coup. And Asarinle, too, gets dethroned by another hawk, Adaboaye. The coups and counter-coups have one underlying reason: the quest for political power, resulting in conflict.

The twist in the drama unfolds when the intimate relationship between Wande/Asagbade and Rohunfade is revealed during an affair, a relationship which he wants to revive at all costs while still a usurper of her throne. The conflict heightens when Rohunfade challenges the intruding hawk to reclaim her legacy with His Hawkcellency, vowing to resist at all costs. Again, interestingly, a deeper probe into the series of conflicts in the play, with a critical interpretation of the symbolic representation of the dove and the hawks one finds the doves, led by the disbanded Council of Elders, the heirs, and Regent-designate; forgetting their intrigues and insincerity. Now strengthened by their unity of purpose, they constitute a severe opposition to the intruding Hawk. After seasons of promises and cancellations, eventually, His Hawkcellency fixes a date for a return of the people's inheritance. However, the climax comes when, on the threshold of glory for the land, the chief hawk of the right hand, Asarinle, stages a 'palace coup', forcing him to surrender, only for him to also preside over another season of fake promises. The people's dreams and hopes flee into oblivion as Rohunfade, the symbol of the struggle, joins the Hawks colony. With the Hawks having a firm grip and total control of the colony, including recruiting the likes of Rohunfade, who is seen as the symbol of genuine struggle, to join the Hawks, thereby throwing hope to the wind, the researcher stands on the shoulders of readers-response theory to declare the colony which is a reflection of Nigeria, a 'Hawks-Public'. Using the realist theory of conflict, the researcher understands the cause and effect of the conflict in the play, informed mainly by greed, selfishness, and the hunger for political power. Thus, this justifies the realist theory of conflict, which states that all humans are inherently selfish and always pursue selfish interests (s).

The play *No More the Taming Hawks* argues that the endless failed promises by Nigerian politicians have made the country suffer from political epilepsy and trust deficits, turning the country into a colony of bearing hawks who destroy people's livelihoods and take life at will, which again, aptly justifies the researcher's interpretation of the republic as a 'Hawks-Public'. The reader-response theory gives the researcher the latitude to interpret the characters' behaviours vis-à- vis the behaviours of Nigerian politicians and qualify the country as truly a 'Hawks-Public'. The brutal invasion of the bush hawk, known as His Hawkcellency, its disorderliness and blatant disregard for the norms, custom, and tradition of the Royal-Doves,

discarding them and transforming himself into an untouchable and unquestionable Hawkcellency, is a stark reality and a perfect description of the typical Nigerian dictatorial characters who rudely snatch elections or rig themselves into leadership positions. Another reality of the Nigerian political system displayed by the hawks is the disrespect for the rule of law, dispersing all the doves (good men and women), then transforming themselves into the mightiest and the untouchables in society. But, since their whims and caprices are often what reigns just as the whims and caprices of his Hawkscellency reign supreme with such impunity in the play, the republic, therefore, is once again interpreted against the backdrop of readers-response theory as a ' Hawks-Public ' .

Also significant is the staging of the coup by Asarinle against his trusted friend, His Hawkscellency Ajagunla Asagbade, making him abscond from the throne and Asarinle presiding over the Hawks-Public to perfect another season of failed promises. It is typical of a Nigerian dictator/politician to betray his close ally with the deceptive assurance to bring change and or hope, then get into the office to execute and display the same thing his predecessor was doing, sometimes even worse than the predecessor. A system of hawks ousting hawks – ' Hawks- Public ' . The Hawks' continuous taming of the doves depicts Nigeria, where the worst amongst us continue to tame the doves, the good men and women in society. In the play, three moons later, another Hawk, Adabaoye, rides in on the crest of the chaos and bungled dreams. Is he a hybrid as Surroa Gate? Will the Hawks continue to tame the Doves when the latter are supposed to tame the former? The question in the audience's minds is how will the stolen heirloom be retrieved… and fortified against future hijacks. As long as it is not jealously guarded and fortified against future hijacks by hawks, the republic will continue as a Hawks-Public, which will be the continuous justification of the researcher ' s interpretation.

One can see the playwright ' s creative prowess in dramatising the existing relationship between the ruler and the ruled, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak. And the recognition and eventual enthronement of the people ' s regent, the people ' s choice. It is like the determination to make our vote count in Nigeria. This hope given by the playwright is needed to transform Nigeria from a ' Hawks-Public ' to a Republic. The play takes extra courage to save and serve the land in the face of oppressive and predatory forces, taming the civil forces and complex challenges of nationhood. Aside from failed promises by Nigerian predators, many burning issues of national concern are raised in the play: the constant clamour for restructuring, the threats of secession, farmers-herders clashes, high-profile looting on an industrial scale, terrorism and evil insurgency that threatens the peaceful coexistence of the nation etc. For the playwright, the fake promise of change and renewed hope by the government of the day is nothing even to mention, for there is never any change, nor is there any hope being renewed. Sadly, we are only faced daily with episodes of stack hopelessness. Through Awoyale, priest of the Oracle in the play, we read: "… It is only those in the world who are beating a new melody; a new rhythm, which you mistake for a shift… The regency will be until the contamination is purified." (p.13). In the above lines, the playwright casts a strong shadow of doubt if there is any positive shift or improvement in the lives of the commoner.

Despite these static and tragic moments in the country, we seem to be a people who never learn from our history things today, repeat the same tomorrow and expect a new and better result. Lamenting, Lameto, the human rights activist in the play, says: "We are,e a cursed people, a forgotten race. Never knowing their rights, never learning, never being willing to learn from their past. Like a people without a conscience… (p. 23). Just like the symbolic reigns of the hawks in the play is a movie of failed promises, the playwright presents the present political dispensation in Nigeria as a sham upon promises made. Our major roads are now littered with children begging for daily living,

people dying of hunger and starvation, etc. The playwright believes that we need the wisdom of the broom. Coincidentally, the deceptive symbol of the present 'All Progressives Congress, APC administration must be swept off the political stage as the next generation struggles for the coveted throne. The ancestral curse of electing our past afflictions into the dizzy heights of the highest seat in the land and expecting a Messianic miracle is a redundant way of thinking. OBANLA: ⋯ My people, the wisdom of the broom. That is what the Oracle was talking about. Let us sweep away all unwanted deposits the Hawks through Asagbade may have left in our land. TOMIDE: And even the hawks themselves must be swept off forever.

This, the playwright believes, must be done to avoid sit-tight-syndrome as the country has been Bedevilled with the numerous attempts by our political leaders to promise one term in office but, after testing the corridors of power, will want to remain on the throne forever, irrespective of their poor performances and rotten governance styles. Upon ascending power, they do promise not to stay 'one day longer than necessary, but no sooner than later, those promises will be swept under the carpet, and fake, unconvincing reasons will be given for why they need a second chance to serve. Lamenting the rather unfortunate situation the nation finds itself in at present, the playwright puts to us the tragedy of how our innocent farmers are being butchered daily and their source of livelihood being destroyed. In Lameto's words: "⋯ Our land has now been turned into a den, surrounded by arms-bearing hawks, who destroy people's livelihood in the name offending for their animals. They take life with such impunity never known in our history, leaving a trail of carnage, destruction, death, poverty, division, and evil in its wake. And you still say you will⋯ "(p. 59). This is not unconnected with the realities the nation is faced with these days: villages waking up to inhumane attacks claiming millions of lives and properties worth millions.

Yet the problem seems to have a sacred and royal backing that even cows have become senior citizens of the country and tagged 'Untouchable" for the life of a cow is now worth the ransom of the destruction of an entire village. Lawlessness and violence reign supreme like a country of hawks where survival control is by the strongest and fiercest. The play also condemns the undeserved detention of individuals who clamour for restructuring and secession. Meanwhile, Diran Ademiju-Bepo proffers a solution that he believes will end all forms of taming by the leaders, like hawks in doves' skin. The solution to him is a collective will and effort in the form of a revolution just as the doves, led by the elders and heirs, do away with their intrigues and differences and unite against the taming hawks. He calls on traders, farmers, market men and women, students, teachers, religious leaders, etc., to join hands in one accord and fight against all enemies of the state to salvage the nation from political hawks. To achieve this harmony, the playwright suffices that "no cock, no hen, no goat, no keg of palm oil is demanded⋯for sacrifice (for the joy, peace, and stability of the world) ⋯but love" (p. 6). The play thus disbands hatred, anger, terrorism, nepotism, and insurgency, among other vices that negate national progress and rhetorically asserts, " How can we find harmony in the mouth of a fun?" (16). It also disbands regionalism, godfatherism and violence, which negates/destroys the cultural and socio-political structures in the country with the rise in self-centredness, tribalism, sectionalism and "democratic coup d'état" evident in election malpractices.

The playwright raises a few questions: is it plausible that the playwright believes, just like Asagbade, that our politicians, who have a phobia for truth and lust for power, will be willing to abdicate their seats no matter how poorly they govern? Aside from that fact, considering our political history, is it possible for a leader to abdicate by some conviction, as depicted by Asagbade, the antagonist in the play? Does the power transition between him and Asarinle not appear contrived, like the Greek Deu s ex machina, too rapid that one could hardly see the connection? A not-too-circumspect reader or spectator would wonder why Asarinle has to die before Rohunfade takes

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over power, and we are told the gods of the land intervene. It could be more commonsensical for a leader, too, i.e. for another to emerge. That may be the moral of this whole narrative. Unfortunately, moral lessons are expected in Nigeria; simple lessons are dismissed. Behaving like Hawks in No More the Taming Hawks, Nigeria, could best be described as Hawks-Public. A system of government where Hawks-Cellencies (The worst amongst us) reign supreme over The Doves (The best amongst us) instead of it being called a Republic where only philosophers, the purified, the good at hearts and the pure in intentions should co-habit, as posited in Plato＇s The Republic.

Conclusion

In conclusion, 'Diran Ademiju-Bepo has come to prove the classical critic, Longinus, wrong, who once gave the verdict of no more masterpieces here. *No More the Taming Hawks* is a masterpiece for all senses of judgement and adjudication, written on the model of the past, addressing the burning challenges of the present Nigerian society and its contemporary challenges. It pictures the nation in flight, offering us a solution to our unfortunate situation as a country. It is a timely and apt drama for the issues raised, and a must-read for this nation's patriotic sons and daughters, for the nation's rescue is in the hands of a long lineage of taming hawks. The ultimate moral of the play is that it takes extraordinary courage to serve a land such as Nigeria, where predatory, preying, and "vulture-RIC" forces tend to tame civil forces and voices of conscience.) As the playwright's muse and predictions seek to win the day, Diran Ademiju-Bepo, in his evocative drama of power play and political control, *No More the Taming Hawks*, wears the emblem and crown of a nationalist, inspiring many and lots. In this critical analysis, the researcher answers whether the country is a republic or a Hawks-Public. The study resolves, based on the chaotic, fierce and disruptive nature of hawks as evident in the play, that the nation of Nigeria is a hawks-public that needs the unity of the doves, who are naturally peaceful and loving, to transform the country from a hawks-public to a republic.

Through adopting the realist conflict theory, this study has interrogated Diran's choice of hawks and doves as characters in the play *No More the Taming Hawks*. The researcher finds this symbolic representation apt and a timely reminder of the character of an atypical Nigerian politician who is by nature disruptive, dictatorial and disorderly, as reflected in the actions and behaviours of the Hawks-in-Council, namely, Ajangula, Asarinle, and Adaoboye. As a worthy voice in the literary space, Diran has contributed to the political advocacy in Nigeria in his *No More the Taming Hawks* indeed, for Nigeria to experience meaningful development and take back its pride of place in the world as 'The Giant of Africa', the doves who represent the excellent men and women, must collectively be united in uprooting the hawks who have for long, being preying on the nation's national patrimony.

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The aftermath of women's oppression, subjugation and emancipation in the patriarchal society of Ben Binebai's *Karina's Cross*

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Abstract

Drama often captures the complexities of liberation struggles, particularly women's emancipation from patriarchal oppression. This paper examines the aftermath of women's emancipation, focusing on its societal impact as explored in Ben Binebai's *Karena's Cross.* The study investigates women's experiences of oppression, subjugation, and subsequent liberation within the framework of patriarchal Nigerian and African cultures. Employing qualitative methodologies rooted in literary and sociological analysis, it interprets *Karena's Cross* as a primary source and integrates historical perspectives to contextualise the findings. The research reveals that challenging patriarchal norms empowers individuals and fosters communal progress by promoting education, equality, and social enlightenment. However, the path to emancipation is fraught with entrenched cultural practices, economic inequalities, and systemic injustices that perpetuate gender-based violence and discrimination. The study underscores that addressing these barriers requires individual resilience and systemic accountability, including challenging harmful traditions, bridging gender-based economic disparities, and prosecuting acts of discrimination. Moreover, the findings highlight that the success of any struggle against oppression extends beyond individual victories, benefiting society by encouraging a shift toward justice and equity. The paper concludes that women's emancipation can potentially dismantle oppressive structures, reshape cultural narratives, and catalyse societal development. However, these outcomes are contingent upon sustained advocacy and the active dismantling of patriarchal systems. By interrogating the transformative impact of women's liberation, this study contributes to the discourse on gender equality and the role of drama as a vehicle for social change in Africa.

Keywords: Women's Emancipation, Patriarchy, Cultural Transformation, Gender-based Violence

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Introduction

One of the most prevalent forms of women's subjugation and oppression in Nigeria and Africa is gender-based violence. Gender refers to socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a particular society considers appropriate for men and women. These roles are learned through socialisation and are reinforced by cultural norms and institutions. Women's subjugation and oppression refer to the systematic discrimination, marginalisation, and mistreatment of women based on gender. One of the most critical factors contributing to women's subjugation and oppression in Nigeria and West Africa is the patriarchal nature of many societies in the region. In these societies, women are often seen as inferior to men and are expected to fulfil traditional roles such as wife and mother. These subjugations and oppression are principally to restrict women's freedom and limit their ability to participate fully in society. They are manifested in multiple spheres of existence, including social, economic, political, and cultural, which include but are not limited to, inequality, lack of access to education, domestic violence, rape, not allowing the girl child to marry her choice of husband, female genital mutilation, and child marriages. Oppression and subjugation, in any form manifested, put the victims under physical, psychological, and emotional torment, sometimes leading to tragic consequences.

Johnson notes that oppression arises from an environment characterised by existing institutions of dominance and subordination, as well as established ideologies that discriminate between superiority and inferiority. The concept of oppression refers to social forces that push down on people, limiting their ability to pursue a good life (39). Charlton, on the other hand, states that "oppression occurs when individuals are systematically subjected to political, economic, cultural, or social degradation because they belong to a social group" (8). The victim of oppression could be an individual, a group or an entire community; there is no limit to whom or what becomes a victim of oppression. However, within the limits of this study, the human victim is regarded as the oppressed. In the Social Work Dictionary, Barker explains that the oppressed are placed under severe restrictions, "devalued, exploited, and deprived of privileges by individual or group which has more power" (2003).

In many African societies, the forces of oppression flourish without interruption within social structures founded on patriarchy. Patriarchy is a social system in which men possess primary power and control over women. It operates through various mechanisms, including cultural norms, legal frameworks, institutional structures, and individual behaviours, upholding and sustaining male dominance and superiority. The mechanisms, especially cultural norms, play a significant role in perpetuating patriarchy by prescribing specific behaviours and attributes for men and women. These norms often reinforce traditional gender stereotypes, such as the notion that men should be strong, assertive, and competitive while women should be nurturing, submissive, and focused on domestic responsibilities. Patriarchy justifies the marginalisation of women in education, the economy, the labour market, politics, business, family, domestic matters, and inheritance. The oppression of women through the instrument of patriarchy has attracted cases of resistance, targeted at emancipating the victim and causing a reform. This rebellion against patriarchal dominance by addressing the oppression and subjugation of the female gender emerged from the feminist movement, which advocates social, political, economic, and intellectual equality between women and men. The feminist movement, known as feminism, tends to change society, especially how women are treated. Ibeku's definition of feminism, as cited by Houndjo and Allagbe, states that:

> […] feminism is women-oriented and concentrates on issues that concern women. It is a literary movement that tends to change society, especially in how

women are treated; it tries to discourage discrimination and humiliation of women; it focuses its attention on the emancipation of women. Much emphasis has been placed on feminism and its stand in the African novel (20).

Feminism literarily centres on the need for equality and a level playing ground for men and women in all areas of life. Ihekweme and Obah stated, "Feminist opinion in literature is centred on the need for a level playing ground between the genders and women's empowerment in all life… Marxist Feminists see the collective struggle as a tool to fight for women's rights and enhance relations where they are being dehumanised" (292).

Despite efforts to promote gender equality and challenge patriarchal norms, the reality remains that women are often expected to fulfil traditional roles within the household, such as cooking, cleaning, and raising children. These expectations are further reinforced by societal attitudes and beliefs, which view women as objects to be possessed and controlled by men. This mindset can manifest in various forms of gender-based violence and discrimination, which continue to plague the African continent. One of the most significant aspects of patriarchy in Nigeria and Africa is the notion that women are expected to be submissive and silent, with their opinions and desires being secondary to those of men. This attitude stems from the belief that women's primary purpose is to serve men and fulfil their needs rather than being independent and self-sufficient individuals with their aspirations and goals. Chukwuma, in his article "The Legacy of Women Empowerment in Nigeria", lends credence to this when he notes that;

> Men naturally do not participate in domestic chores, such as cooking, rearing children, and the rest. These are considered to be the exclusive preserve of the women, who traditionally are meant to be housewives, but this does not in any way exclude them from the farm work, which is the source of income and feeding for the African man. Men are grouped as strong, courageous, self-confident, and able to withstand external attack or aggression on the family, while the women, whom the bible calls the weaker sex, are seen and considered to be the opposite of what the men are (289).

The oppression of women has had a profound and detrimental impact on societies across the world. This form of oppression has led to significant harm, not only for women themselves but also for the overall fabric of society. Women have been historically treated as enslaved people and have been considered morally, socially, and intellectually inferior by men. This has resulted in a lack of sensitivity towards the needs and rights of women. Women need to be treated with love, respect, trust, consideration, and insight due to their crucial roles in the home and society. In Nigerian culture, there is a famous saying, "Men are the head while the women are the neck." this proverb highlights the interdependence between men and women in the household. The head cannot function without the neck, and vice versa. This implies that the success and well-being of the family unit rely on the cooperation and collaboration between both partners. In this way, the saying serves as a reminder of the importance of mutual respect and understanding between men and women and the need for open communication and support within the family and society. Aina, in his view on the domination and subjugation of women, as cited in Chukwuma, posits that "It is a system of social stratification and differentiation based on sex, which provides material advantages to males while simultaneously placing severe constraints on the roles and activities of females. There are clearly defined sex roles, while various taboos ensure conformity with specified gender roles" (289-290).

One of the veritable instruments employed by feminist theorists in advocating for women's emancipation has been drama. The fact that drama has been an essential weapon for the feminist struggle to restore women's rights dates to the days of Classical Greece. Several Greek plays can be interpreted as defending women's

rights, although it is essential to note that the concept of women's rights as understood today did not exist in ancient Greece. Nonetheless, these plays feature strong female characters who challenge societal norms and assert their agency. One is Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (411BC), which focuses on women who unite to end the Peloponnesian War by withholding sex from their husbands until they make peace. The play highlights female solidarity, intelligence, and the power of women's sexuality. Another is Euripides *Medea* (431BC), which portrays the revenge of Medea, a woman who is betrayed by her husband, Jason. Medea challenges traditional gender roles and exposes society's mistreatment of women. She takes control of her fate, defying expectations and gaining agency. Sophocles' *Antigone* (442-441BC), which revolves around Antigone's defiance of King Creon's order not to bury her brother Polyneices, is also an example. Antigone places her familial duty above the king's decree, emphasising her determination and sense of justice. While the play does not explicitly address women's rights, Antigone's actions challenge male authority. Euripides's *Trojan Women* (415BC) can also be considered within this context. Set after the fall of Troy, this play explores the suffering of the women who become enslaved after the war. It portrays women's emotional depth and resilience amidst the horrors of war, shedding light on the plight of female victims. While these plays may not overtly defend women's rights in the modern sense, they provide glimpses of women's strength, bravery, and challenges in ancient Greece.

The feminist movement in Nigeria is diverse, and countless plays explore various aspects of gender equality and women's rights. The following examples show the range of feminist plays produced in Nigeria. J.P. Clark's *The Wives' Revolt* (1991) stands out. This play explores the struggles of a group of women in a Niger Delta village who challenge the authority of men over them and demand to enjoy an equal portion of the economic benefits of the community. They collectively assert the principle of non-discrimination and proclaim that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and right and that everyone is entitled to all rights without any distinction as to sex. Also prominent with a solid feminist presence is Julie Okoh, who, through her *Edewede* (2015) and *In the Fullness of Time* (2000), fights against female circumcision, patriarchy, and female oppression. Okoh's interest in the two plays is in defining the place of the African woman in her family and society at large in a patriarchal society where the men determine the tenets of existence.

In Africa, particularly Nigeria, tribal communities controlled by the will and authority of men are known to regulate how women participate in public affairs and how they relate with other members of the community. Women in some of these male-dominated societies are entangled with diverse restrictions and subjected to the dictates of ancient cultural prohibitions constructed by men to perpetuate their inferior status. Dramatists have reflected, in several ways, how women suffer different forms of oppression in such patriarchally established societies where men wield a voice of finality in all matters. Each isolated case of oppression is treated as either a social, political, or cultural phenomenon that ends in a glorious victory, endless suffering, or a sad consequence of death, depending on the underlying circumstances and the approach the victim deploys to confront the oppression. Despite the many dimensions of thought the subject has attracted, critics and theatre scholars still need to unveil how the aftermath of oppression-inspired conflicts benefits society sufficiently. The literature needs to be more comprehensive in the discourse on how the outcome of any case of women's subjugation destroys or advances a given society. This work examines the transformations a character's emancipation or destruction brings upon society, as envisioned in *Karena's Cross*. In addition, the study pursues the following objectives: 1. to identify the type of oppression experienced by the victim in the play; 2. to examine the people's cultural worldview and how it influences the traditions; 3. to appraise the author's view of patriarchy, women's subjugation, and approaches to freedom; and 4. to examine the extent of the reception given to the new order.

Methodology

The qualitative study focuses on interpreting phenomena that relate to or involve quality. There are several types of qualitative research, but in this study, the literary/analytical and historical paradigms were adopted as methodologies. Obah, citing Ukala, explains that:

> Literary methodology, also called Analytical methodology, focuses on written and printed library and archival sources, especially books, journals, theses, reports, and literary works such as plays, novels, and poems. Data are collected from these and analysed with the research questions and objectives (9-10).

This methodology is suitable because the study deals with a literary piece. This play is the primary source used to examine the causes and effects of women's subjugation and oppression in Nigeria and Africa in general. Writing on the historical methodology, Obah further cites Ukala asserting that:

> This entails investigating documented sources, such as books, journals, reports, films, video and audio tapes, archival material, archaeological excavations, artefacts (such as carvings, drawings, sculptures, paintings, and textile prints), and oral sources. The function of this methodology is to trace the beginnings and development of people, institutions, and things (10).

According to Whitney, cited by Osuagwu, "Historical Research interprets past trends of attitude, event and fact". (162) This is in line with Nwabueze's opinion, which is that "Historical Research involves the description of past events or facts written in the spirit of critical inquiry" (55). This methodology is relevant to the study because documented sources like journals and books are used to gain insight into what critics and scholars have written about the subject under study. The consequences of women's subjugation and oppression in West Africa are far-reaching and devastating, affecting not only women and girls but also their families, communities, and the entire nation. This work, therefore, interrogates women's oppression and subjugation and the aftermath in traditional African society, using Ben Binebai's *Karena's Cross* (2022) as the basis for the analysis.

Women's Oppression and Subjugation in Karena's *Cross*

Karena's Cross is a monodrama by Ben Binebai, first published in 2018. The latest edition, published in 2022, will be used in this work. Karena, a thirteen-year-old girl, finds herself living in a society where women are subjected to systematic oppression and subjugation. This patriarchal society, dominated by males, leaves little room for women to express their thoughts, opinions, or desires. Karena's life is deeply affected by the constraints and expectations placed upon her as a female in this environment. This is reaffirmed in Karena's statement when she said that:

Karena: Yes! I was born and brought up
In a village called Owei-ama,
Into a polygamous family
A village in which law was culture,
Culture was law and the makers
And custodians of culture
And law was the men.
It is a village where women
Lived at the mercy of men.
Many women could not go

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To school because it was believed
In Owei-ama culture that
Women were possessions of men. (21)

Karena's experiences within a patriarchal society are portrayed as gender roles which are strictly defined, and women are expected to adhere to societal expectations. One of the challenges Karena and other women face in the village is the pressure to conform to traditional gender roles. This often means that women are expected to prioritise their family's needs and the care of their children over their ambitions and desires. As a result, women feel trapped in a cycle of domestic duties and child-rearing, with little opportunity for self-actualisation or career advancement. As Karena navigates through this oppressive environment, she encounters numerous challenges and obstacles. Through her narration, she shares the experiences of the women in the village of Owei-ama and the hardships they face in their daily lives.

Karena: It was a village in which men freely
And physically inflict injuries
On the body of women for little mistakes;
A village where men were the only
Lords and voices of the land.
It was such a village in which women
Only go into marriage;
Where women were culturally
Prepared to take care of
The husband and the children.
While they toiled all day
In the rain and in the sun sweating
To produce food on the table, men
Only sat to taste and reject food not
Palatable and even mercilessly
Beat up their wives for
Cooking an unsavoury food.
The woman who appreciates
Western education and makes any
Attempt to give it a trial is handed
Over to the gods for punishment.
When men beat the drum of doom
Its dancers are the women. (22)

It is in line with the above that Odi asserts that:

> Over the ages, the African woman has been subdued by male dominance in virtually all aspects of her life. In traditional African societies, there is no easy space for the voice of the African woman, either as a young and single girl or as a married woman. This is because her views and opinions on what is best for her, her family, and her society are subject to male control (118).

Karena's father, Nemughan, explains the custom of circumcising the girl child or woman, which is often referred to as female genital mutilation (FGM) or female circumcision. According to him, "… As our customs demand, you will soon be circumcised. We shall celebrate your circumcision ceremony to make some money for the family, and you will after that be given out in marriage "(23). The girl child is seen as a money-making machine for the family and cannot think about actualising her dreams.

Karena: Father, what about my education?
I am just thirteen; how can I
Get married at this age when

I know nothing about men?

Karena as Nemughan: Your education is not important.
All your sisters were given out
In marriage less than thirteen years
They are in their husbands' houses
Taking care of their husbands and children

Karena: Father, why do you want me
To sacrifice my education for marriage?

Karena as Nemughan: You women are empty possessions
Training you is a waste of money and time.
When you get married, no one
Will know you are still my daughter.
My name will be lost. So, why must
I waste my money training you?

Karena: Father, what you are telling
Me now makes me bleed,
I don't think I can obey you.
I am not interested.*
I want to complete my school.
I want to become a woman of substance.

Karena as Nemughan: What insolence?
What nonsense? Karena!
A deaf ear is followed by death.
An ear that listens
Is followed by blessings.
Don't invite the bite of a
Snake with your stubbornness.
Karena, you cannot light fire
Without inhaling its smoke
I am the head of this house.
What I want and what I say are
What matter, and which is final.
Prepare your body and mind for
The circumcision and marriage. (23-24)

Karena's refusal to be circumcised means nothing because her father has decreed it, and there is nothing anyone can do to change the decision. Karena expresses her frustrations thus: "My father has decreed it, and my mother cannot help. My sisters have all passed through this tortuous tunnel. The world of Owei-ama was insensitive … a land of conspiracy against women's education" (25). Ekpochi-Olise, citing El Sadaawe, assert that "This damaging inhuman cultural practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) is fortified by economic, social, moral and ideological factors as a result of the patriarchal mentality to dominate women and consolidate the patriarchal image of women as sex objects (95).

To actualise her dreams of acquiring a formal education, Karena tries to escape from the Owei-ama community one faithful evening after her father had gone "to a nearby village to pay the dowry of his new wife" (26) but was unsuccessful as she was captured and brought back to the village by her father's security guards. When her father returned and found out that she tried to escape, he merely laughed aloud and said to her, "… As a father, I am wiser than you… I am happy you did not escape successfully. Since education is what you want, I won't give out in marriage again… Get prepared to go back to school in three days" (27). Karena is happy to hear that her

father has decided to let her go back to school, but this is not to be, as it was just a ploy to keep her around until he carries out his plans of getting her circumcised. On the day that she was to go back to school, some women came to their house singing and dancing, and when she enquired what the occasion was, her father told her that it was her circumcision. He does not want her "To get pregnant in school" because he believes that "The circumcision will deactivate the sexual urge in Karena and prevent her from promiscuity" (29). She was then taken into the bathroom by the older woman and was circumcised. She narrates her ordeals, "A woman with big buttocks …sat on my chest. Two other women held my two hands backwards and pressed them down. The woman who did the circumcision sat on my lower abdomen… I shouted madly. I bled and fainted many times. It was the cruellest breed of genital cutting …" (29). The aftermath of the circumcision was a two-week admission to the hospital to save her life as a result of the excessive bleeding. Three out of the four other girls in her age grade died because of the complications arising from their circumcision (30). To compound the issues for Karena, she is prepared to be married to an old man as soon as she is discharged from the hospital. She captures it as "from circumcision I found myself in the village clinic…, I returned home to be married to a man old enough to be my father. Love, pride and dignity of womanhood collapse for the triumph of greed empowered by culture (31).

The patriarchal society in the play is characterised by a set of rigid rules and expectations that dictate the roles and responsibilities of women. These societal norms often lead to the marginalisation and oppression of women, limiting their opportunities for personal growth and self-expression. Karena's experiences highlight women's difficulties when attempting to break free from these constraints and challenge the status quo. On the day that Karena is supposed to be married, she escapes a second time "in search for freedom" (32), only to be kidnapped by three men and raped by their leader while the others watched in excitement. And that was how, according to Karena, "I lost my virginity… and bled like a castrated bull… I sustained injuries and dislocations, mental, physical, and psychological dislocations from the rape (33). Although Karena resolved not to marry the man that raped her, some "African spiritual power" (34) was used on her through the food that was given to her, and she lost the strength to resist, and that was how she ended up marrying Daubri, the man that raped her and became his 8th wife.

Karena: I became a full-time housewife
After my father had collected a dowry
From emissaries sent to
Him by my abductor husband.
What came as a surprise to me
Was that I was an *Ayoro*
The latest bride in the
Company of seven older wives.
I was forced into a polygamous home.
A home where the husband is the Lord
And wives, voiceless creatures…
It was such a home where I was abused
As a child, as a woman and
As a wife and as marital colleague.
My life was a voluminous book of tragedy
Every day was a page of that book
That punished my soul…
I became a helpless
 Puppet dancing to the strings of destiny.
I lived in constant fear, frustration
Humiliation and hardly remembered
My dream of life before marriage (35-37).

Evwierhoma, a foremost feminist, writes about the playtext: "*Karena's Cross* is a monodrama drenched in many themes about women of all ages, classes, and other social categories. It also has references to the different forms of domination women face in society, or specifically, the burden the girl child faces in underdeveloped nations" (Karena…vi).

Another significant issue faced by women in the play is the prevalence of gender-based violence and abuse. The patriarchal society often perpetuates a culture of violence against women, with little to no accountability for the perpetrators. This further limits women's freedom and autonomy as they must navigate a world of potential threats and dangers. Karena narrates one such occasion where her husband, Daubri, physically abused her. Evwierhoma notes that "the deep monodrama focuses on concerns that are not confined to the Niger Delta Region, but any community in which there is injustice and inequitable treatment meted out to its girl child or female folk" (vi). She further notes that in "Karena's environment, resources, be they human, material, or spiritual, are exploited to benefit the male folk. There too, the few privileged males enjoy these resources to the cost of the many, subjugated individuals, especially women" (Karena's…vi).

Karena: I didn't mean to offend you my lovely husband
(She kneels down to beg Daubri)
Daubri opened his wide palms and slapped
Me thunderously. I was punched,
Brutally headed and brushed down
With ferocious and electrocuting kicks…
I was beaten mercilessly with
Demonic detestation.
I groaned and fainted.
Neither my mother in-law nor people living
Around us came to my rescue.
I became a punching bag
In the marital ring of Daubri.
The whole world was in a state
Of scornful silence. (39)

According to Odi, "Karena's Cross chronicles the cultural practices that strengthen female subordination. These practices include Child Marriage, Marriage by abduction, Marriage by Inheritance, Boy Child Preference, Female Genital Mutilation, Isolating Women in Menstrual Sheds, Obnoxious Widowhood Rites, and Commercial Sexual Exploitation" (123). Menstruation is often enveloped by cultural taboos and stigmas in some societies, and this results in the stigmatisation of women who are menstruating. This stigmatisation is a result of the people's perception or cultures that see menstruation as impure, and this gives rise to restrictions on women's participation in various activities, including their marital duties when menstruating. In the case of the people of Owei-ama, Karena was forced to sleep outside the house during her menstrual flow, which almost led to her being raped a second time. She narrates her experience,

Karena: … One disgusting and
Dangerous experience
I had was that each time
I had my menstrual shed…
I was regarded as unclean,
Forbidden from cooking for my husband,
Forbidden from staying anywhere near him
And asked to sleep outside
My husband's house…
Where I was exposed to constant cold

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And terrors of the night.
One fateful night when I was sleeping
A strange hand touched me…
I realised that
I was about to be raped by two men.
I shouted so they ran away while
I ran into my husband's abode
Instead of sympathising with me
I was accused of pretence
That it was a calculated attempt
To despoil the tradition of
Observing the monthly flow
Outside my husband's abode.
So I was asked to do
The ritual of cleansing
The desecrated house… (37-38)

After her husband's death, she was accused of killing him and then forced to drink the water used to wash his dead body to prove her innocence. This not only violated Karena's dignity but also caused her severe emotional and psychological trauma. Such practices perpetuate the cycle of dehumanisation and suffering as experienced by widows in some cultural contexts to which Owei-ama belongs. To prove my innocence, Karena narrates, "I must drink the water with which my husband's body was washed… that was another challenging moment of my life… to reject the barbaric demand of the elders would mean I killed my husband… it was a hard choice in a hard circle, but I managed to drink the water" (42-43). In addition to drinking water from her deceased husband's body, Karena was not given any share of his property despite having built it together with him. Instead, she was forced to marry her late husband's elder brother, who, along with his mother, accused Karena of killing her son. To Odi, "these cultural practices still hold sway in many traditional African settings, and they are dangerous because they infringe on the dignity and humanity of women on the continent. As with Karena's Cross, the exposition of these practices through the dramatic medium is a valiant effort to give voice to the African woman" (123).

Karena: ...On the day my husband's asset
Were shared nothing was given to me.
His new block building which
He completed with the sweat of
Our hard labour was taken
By his elder brother.
I was also shared like a property to
This elder brother of
His who was in union
With his mother to accuse
Me of killing Daubri.
I lost my marital sovereignty
And self-determination
My glow as a woman of
Self-respect fades very
Fast and did. I became an
Object of ridicule,
Powerless and voiceless,
Emotionally traumatised…
As a widow I experienced
Deprivation, subjugation
And humiliation…
I rejected the family decision
To marry me over to

My husband's elder brother.
I am a woman of dreams
Dreams can light my world
So I was not in a hurry to run away.
The hen that has children does not run fast. (43-45).

A series of hardships and struggles marked Karena's life. Following the passing of her husband and all that she had been through, she found herself grappling with grief and uncertainty. However, amidst this challenging period, a glimmer of hope emerged when her late husband's sister, Timi-Ebi, arrived in the village from the city. She extended a helping hand to Karena, offering to bring her to Benin for a respite period and pledged support for her educational pursuits once the necessary funds were secured. Timi-Ebi says, "As soon as my finances improve, I will ensure you complete your education" (47). This offer represented a pivotal moment in Karena's journey, presenting a ray of hope amid her trials.

Karena: O my in-law, you have just
Mentioned the burning desire in my heart.
You talk as if you can read my mind.
You are a godsend.
I can't wait to go to Benin with you
My life has been a well written
Drama of sorrow and tribulation
I must leave Owei-ama and
Keep the dark clouds of the past behind me…
The stars have also approved of it.
So, I went with my sister-in-law to Benin. (47)

Karena believed that her life was finally heading in the right direction. However, her world was shattered when she discovered that her husband's sister was an international sex contractor who trafficked girls to Italy for sexual exploitation. Karena made the difficult decision to escape on the day that Karena's husband's sister was preparing to send her and five other girls to Italy. She hid in a nearby supermarket, waiting until the plane took off before stepping out of her hiding place, crying and in fear. On that very day, Karena crossed paths with Dr. Daniels, who had just arrived at the supermarket. Seeing her distress, he approached her and asked why she was crying. Initially hesitant to trust anyone, Karena eventually shared her story with Dr. Daniels, who was moved by her plight. After listening to Karena's heartbreaking story, Dr. Daniels offered her his support and assistance. He took her in, providing her with a safe place to stay and the emotional support she needed to begin healing from her traumatic experiences. Dr. Daniels encouraged Karena to pursue her education, and together, they worked towards her goals. Eventually, they married, with Dr. Daniels vowing to stand by her side and support her throughout her journey. With Dr. Daniels' support, Karena could attend school to pursue her dream and finally become a lawyer.

Women's Emancipation in Karena's Cross

Throughout the play, Karena encounters various challenges and obstacles as she navigates through this oppressive environment. She faces societal disapproval, discrimination, and even physical violence for her attempts to break free from traditional gender roles. Despite these setbacks, Karena's resilience and determination to challenge the patriarchal system did not waver.

Karena: I was determined to fight against
Owei-ama culture even with
The last strength in me believing that
The cruel barriers of life would be cut down

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For me to realise my dreams (26)

Karena fought for liberation because she believed that "…the wounds inflicted by opposing dreams are deep and delicate. And when dreams run away from the reaches of human desire, life becomes dark and frustrating "(37). Odi, citing Oby H. Okolocha and Sophia I. Akhuemokhan, hold that "Women's human rights are perpetually compromised and violated by the laws and cultures of human societies, making it exigent for women to cry out against socio-cultural practices militating against them (118)

Karena: … life is full of many kinds of storms:
Storms of doom, storms of glory
Storms of failure,
Storms of success
And many more.
Each of these storms
Runs along the coast of human destiny.
My life was like a desert displaced by
Evil forests, but my personal
Irrepressible desires manifested as
The magic cutlass with which
I cleared the forest of evil trees
To grow in their stead
My pillars of destiny. (49)

The play highlights the struggles faced by women in a patriarchal society, where gender roles are strictly defined and enforced. Through Karena's experiences and narration, the play brings attention to women's daily challenges and the importance of standing up against societal norms perpetuating oppression and marginalisation, which benefits Karena and society. Odi summarises the lessons in Karena's cross as she avers that "the dramatic piece identifies with even as it speaks to and for all women who are subsumed under male authority and ways. It is also a response to marginalisation, a dissent to obligatory silence, and an expression of the need to create a new African woman recognised, respected and accepted in the continental space (123-124).

Karena: The Owei-ama culture
Left a deadly blow on me
It truncated my educational aspiration
It turned my father against me,
Made my mother wordless;
Gave men the power to beat me,
To rape me, forced me into an
Unholy marriage …
Packaged me as a prostitute
For exportation abroad….
It was such a loathsome culture which
Underdeveloped women for generations-
A culture manipulated by male dominance,
A tradition in which women's right and dignity
Got constantly abused. A barbaric culture
Which needed a storm to uproot
From the face of the earth.
I have taken so much of its tempest
And now I am determined to take
The tempest of my
Own creation to Owei-ama.(49-50)

Despite facing numerous challenges, Karena persevered and continued to strive for change. Her fortunes turned when she met and married Dr. Daniels, who provided unwavering support. With his help, Karena found fulfilment in both her career and marriage.

Karena: I now work in a famous legal chamber
And have given birth to two lovely
Children, a boy and a girl-
Daniel and Karena junior.
My husband came into my life
Like a virtuous prince and made
Me feel complete. I met a man,
Whose love for me was deep,
His gentle words snapped my heart-
Like a spark of light and illuminated my soul. (53)

Dr Daniels was invited to give a sensitisation talk in a village about the dangers of female circumcision. He asked his wife, Karena, to accompany him without knowing that it was the village of Owei-ama, Karena's village. Dr. Daniels introduced his wife, Mrs. Karena Nemughan Daniels, as Barrister when they arrived. Karena's father was shocked to see that the pretty young lady was his daughter and that his name was not lost, as he had previously believed that there was no point in training the girl child because she would answer another man's name once married.

Karena as Nemughan: Karena!
My daughter is this you?
Is this your husband?
A medical doctor
And you are a lawyer.
Despite all that I did to you
You still mention my name
In public gatherings like this
Before your husband's name?
Oh Nemughan!
So this is possible? A girl-child
Can bear her father's name
In her husband's house? (55)

Amid challenges and difficulties, we must remain resolute in pursuing justice and righteousness. Despite encountering opposition, it is essential to stand firm in our convictions, just as Karena exemplified. By doing so, we can achieve victory, and even those who opposed us will come to appreciate the accomplishments we have attained

Karena as Nemughan: My little daughter has taught Owei-ama
A big lesson. We have been wasting
The destiny of the girl-child from
Generation to generation.
This is incredible!
My daughter, Karena, is
The first lawyer of this village!
This calls for celebration
But I am sad for
What I did to you.
Forgive me
I pronounce this day
As a father and the Amananaowei
Of Owei-ama that there shall be no more
Disempowerment and marginalisation

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Of any girl child again.
Owei-ama! The wind has changed,
Karena and her husband
Have set the new track. We
All must fly along that path
Rise up, woman, woman, woman
And claim your place
As mother of Africa
The mother of everyman
You are mother of all. (55-56)

In times of adversity, it is crucial to maintain perseverance and determination. Trials and tribulations are inevitable, but how we respond to them matters. Refusing to give up in the face of challenges demonstrates our commitment to what is right and just. This unwavering resolve can lead to triumph and garner respect from those who initially opposed us. Karena's unwavering determination is a powerful example of resilience in adversity. Her steadfast commitment, despite facing opposition, led to her triumph. Her story underscores the significance of perseverance and staying true to one's convictions, even when confronted with daunting obstacles.

Karena: Histories are not made and told
Without human experiences.
Stars do not shine
Without great achievements.
No song is sung without its lyrics.
When a king's palace burns down,
The re-built palace
Becomes more beautiful.
You have heard my story.
The story of women disempowerment,
Marginalisation and oppression.
But do you just sit there and allow
Culture and law instituted by
Men and women destroy you?
Disadvantage is not disability.
It is only socially constructed.
I realised my strength when
I was thrown into the hot pool of water.
Hope does not kill;
I struggled to live to get
What I wanted despite the obstacles.
The tide will turn if women
Stand in opposition to it
My father and my former husband's cruelty
Taught me wisdom and
Offered me great strength.
I refused to be defined by the narrow
Sensitivity of Owei-ama about women...
My story is a story of struggle
Against the mortal flood of oppression;
It is a story of vision and mission
A story in which I, a thirteen- year-old girl,
Struggled through the storm to
Develop and own a voice.
I fought against a war of
Inferiority because I was
Never born to be inferior
I fought to illuminate my world

Because I was not born to be in the dark.
I have come to realise that failing to
Fight for what you want is
The worst form of suicide
And self destruction.
Patience puts a golden crown on the head…
Let's rise and stand and fight
Women!
Let's wake up
Let's stand up
And fight for our right. (56-58)

Karena's resilience is an example for women and individuals seeking to overcome opposition and achieve victory. By emulating her resilience, women and individuals can draw inspiration from her ability to persevere in adversity. This can empower them to navigate challenges, benefiting not just them but also society.

Conclusion

Karena's Cross exposes the psychological impact of living in an oppressive society, the constant subjugation, humiliation and devaluation and its effect on Karena's mental well-being. It delves into her emotional journey as she grapples with frustration, anger, and despair. It also sheds light on the resilience and determination required to maintain hope and strive for a better future and highlights the importance of resistance, emancipation, and empowerment.

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The management styles of Rasaki Ojo-Bakare at the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Tourism, Ekiti State (2018-2022)

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Abstract

This study examines cultural stewardship within the Ekiti State Ministry of Arts, Culture, and Tourism, focusing on the tenure of Professor Rasaki Ojo-Bakare as Commissioner from 2018 to 2022. Employing the Contingency Theory of Management, the research highlights the significance of adaptive leadership in navigating the complexities of cultural institutions. Through a qualitative approach involving interviews, focus group discussions, and observations, the study identifies critical elements of effective cultural stewardship, including professionalism, innovation, teamwork, and situational adaptability. These attributes enabled the ministry to address financial constraints, government interference, and staffing inadequacies while promoting cultural preservation and artistic excellence. The findings emphasise the role of adaptive management strategies in fostering cooperation, integration, and synergy within the ministry. Transparency and open communication were instrumental in creating a collaborative work environment, while professionalism and innovation drove operational efficiency and creativity. The study also underscores the importance of aligning recruitment processes and resource allocation with the unique demands of the cultural sector. By situating the analysis within the context of cultural stewardship and management theory, the research contributes to understanding how leadership and organisational strategies can sustain and enhance cultural heritage. It reaffirms the relevance of Contingency Theory in cultural institutions, demonstrating that situational adaptability is essential for addressing diverse challenges. The study concludes that fostering a culture of professionalism, innovation, and collaboration is vital for the success and sustainability of arts and cultural organisations.

Keywords: Cultural Stewardship, Adaptive Management, Contingency Theory, Arts and Cultural Institutions

Introduction

Cultural stewardship involves preserving, managing, and transferring cultural heritage and values across generations. It focuses on safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural assets to ensure their ongoing significance and contribution to society. Researchers and practitioners across disciplines have highlighted its crucial role in sustaining cultural identity, promoting inclusivity, and advancing sustainability. Fitz Gibbon describes cultural stewardship as the responsible care and management of cultural resources to ensure they are preserved and accessible (23). This perspective aligns with Karp and Lavine's emphasis on the role of museums and cultural institutions as guardians of heritage. They assert that cultural stewardship goes beyond preservation, involving the contextualisation and interpreting artefacts to make them relevant and meaningful for contemporary audiences (15–17). Some scholars emphasise the fluid nature of cultural stewardship. For instance, Smith critiques traditional preservationist approaches, advocating for a "living heritage" model that acknowledges the changing nature of artistic practices over time (44). This approach supports communities in evolving their traditions while preserving core values.

Applications of cultural stewardship are evident in areas such as heritage management, education, and community involvement. Meskell highlights UNESCO's World Heritage programmes as examples of global efforts to protect cultural assets, though he notes potential biases in imposing Western-centric values on non-Western cultures (67). Similarly, Brown explores indigenous approaches to stewardship, particularly how Native American communities in the United States blend traditional knowledge with modern management practices (256). Brown stresses the importance of empowering local communities to preserve their cultural heritage rather than relying solely on external agencies (260–262). A significant issue in cultural stewardship is balancing preservation with accessibility. Harrison points out that safeguarding delicate cultural resources often conflicts with ensuring public access to them (81). This tension is especially relevant in digital cultural stewardship, where technological advancements increase accessibility but pose challenges such as intellectual property concerns and data security (85–87).

The literature portrays cultural stewardship as a complex, evolving field encompassing preservation, interpretation, and active community participation. While traditional approaches have focused on protecting cultural assets, modern perspectives emphasise adaptability, inclusivity, and ethical considerations. As global challenges evolve, cultural stewardship must innovate to ensure that heritage remains valuable for current and future generations with suitable management style(s). The role of management is paramount; effective management brings about positive outcomes such as improved employee performance and overall organisational success (Paliszkiewicz, Gołuchowski, and Koohang, 15). Team efficacy, an essential element of management, correlates with team performance (Srivastava, Bartol, and Locke, 24). According to Srivastava, Bartol, and Locke (26), trust, knowledge, and organisational performance indicate effective managerial style, reflecting how an institution is managed. Therefore, organisations must consider her management style.

This study investigates the cultural stewardship practices of Professor Rasaki Ojo-Bakare, former Commissioner for Arts, Culture, and Tourism in Ekiti State, Nigeria, from 2018–2022. Drawing on Contingency Theory, it examines how adaptive management styles and leadership strategies influenced his decision-making processes in the ministry. The study highlights the role of professionalism, innovation, teamwork, and strategic adaptability in fostering cultural stewardship within arts and cultural institutions. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of aligning management practices with the dynamic challenges and opportunities in the cultural

sector, such as financial constraints, organisational structures, and audience dynamics.

This study uses a qualitative approach involving interviews, observations, and focus group discussions to provide insights into how cultural institutions can thrive by adopting context-sensitive management strategies. By situating this exploration within the discourse on cultural stewardship and management, the study contributes to understanding how leadership and organisational strategies can enhance the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage.

Literature Review

Understanding the historical evolution of any subject is fundamental to comprehending its origin, current state, and future trajectory. While establishing new agencies, institutions, organisations, and schools is not the primary issue, the critical concern lies in their effective maintenance and management through effective stewardship strides. Poor management and ineffective management styles have led to the redundancy of several government establishments, leaving their intended services unattended or prompting the creation of duplicative organisations, especially in Nigeria. This proliferation of government agencies handling identical matters often yields minimal or no tangible results in wasteful expenditure of resources. Therefore, prioritising proper management practices is crucial for any institution's mandatory operation.

Management is a multifaceted activity comprising various tasks to achieve an organisation's objectives. There is no one-size-fits-all style for effective management; managers in their respective positions must take responsibility for the outcomes they achieve. In any organisation, the credit or blame ultimately rests with the manager. The organisation's output reflects its managers' vision, dedication, and integrity. It is the tangible result of their decisions and actions, underscoring the significance of sound management practices. The manager overseeing an establishment's day-to-day activities plays a crucial role. The manager coordinates all aspects of the organisation and ensures that organisational goals and ethics are observed. The manager is key in any establishment, as having a bad manager spells doom, while a good manager is an advantage to any thriving organisation. Ogunsawo states, "The manager in a management position then becomes two-dimensional in 'skill and performance' and propels management to denote 'work-study' or 'task study'" (3). Langley opines that "an ideal manager should not only have an idea but also embody technical know-how" (283). A good business manager is interested in the organisation's work and is willing and able to pay attention to the myriad details that make things run smoothly, establish financial soundness, and ensure everybody's job is easier and more secure.

Art holds a central position in the cultural identity of any society, representing its self-expression through various mediums such as painting, sculpture, ceramics, dance, or music. At the core of preserving and nurturing this artistic heritage lies the discipline of arts management, which encompasses the administration of artistic organisations like museums, galleries, theatres, studios, and other cultural institutions. Arts management operates as the engine that brings to life the policies and plans set forth by the administration. Traditionally, arts management has been defined from an instrumental perspective, involving essential functions such as planning, organising, staffing, supervising, and controlling artistic productions. Peter Drucker's perspective on leadership and management is apt; leadership involves doing the right thing, while management focuses on doing things right (37). Drucker explores the intricate relationship between management and leadership through the prism of organisational governance principles. Effectiveness in management lies in the ability to create organisations that foster a high spirit of performance. To realise this potential,

managers must possess various attributes, including unwavering integrity, a result-oriented approach, the capacity to leverage their strengths and those of others, and the ability to meet stakeholders' requirements, which leads to the style employed in the organisation.

Management style is crucial in influencing an organisation's optimal performance based on its ideology, goals, and objectives. In essence, it is an approach that encompasses motivating employees, handling issues, and nurturing relationships within a business environment. Managers deploy this method in administering the organisation through planning, directing, and controlling. Different situations may call for different approaches, aptly capturing the essence of "different strokes for different folks". Management practices have existed since the inception of human societies, as individuals have always tried to direct and organise others. However, the development of management as a formal and structured discipline is relatively modern. Simply put, management is a process of planning, decision-making, organising, leading, motivating and controlling an organisation's human resources, financial, physical, and information resources to reach its goals efficiently and effectively. According to Asen:

> The concept of management connotes different things to different people. This is occasioned by the fact that the term is used, and other people use it to mean different things in their daily activities. This explains why it is expected to hear people say they are managing an organisation, a business centre, a hospital or a school, etc … (3)

Many scholars have given various definitions of management. To Stoner, Freeman, and Gilbert in Asen, management is "the process of planning, organising, leading and controlling the work of organisational members using all available organisational resources to attain stated organisational goals" (3). Asen further defines management as "the utilisation of human and material resources by a person or group of persons to achieve the set goals, aims and objectives of the organisation" (4).

From the preceding, it is clear that management involves harnessing human resources (employees, skills, talents) and material resources (technology, equipment, finances) to accomplish organisational objectives. Effectively allocating and optimising these resources are crucial for attaining desired outcomes. To stress the relationship between management and leadership, Adil Namiq submits, "Management style is best portrayed as a strategy of leadership utilised by supervisors" (Namiq 404). Namiq's assertion recognises that management style is critical to organisational leadership. It acknowledges that managers play a central role in determining their management style and do so strategically to achieve their leadership goals. Effective management style enables supervisors to create a positive work environment, foster team collaboration, and enhance employee performance and job satisfaction. Therefore, by portraying management style as a leadership strategy, he acknowledges that supervisors can choose how they lead their teams. It aligns with the understanding that there is no one-size-fits-all management style, and supervisors must adapt their approach based on the unique needs of their teams and the organisation's objectives.

Adil Namiq's perspective on the relationship between management and leadership delves into how managers approach their roles, portraying management style as a carefully crafted strategy within the broader context of leadership. By characterising management style as a deliberate strategy, Namiq suggests that it is not a passive or default aspect of a manager's role but a conscious choice made by supervisors. This view places significant agency in the hands of managers, implying that they actively decide how to lead their teams based on their strategic goals and the unique context of their organisations.

The recognition of managers as critical decision-makers in determining their management style underscores the importance of managerial autonomy and the idea

that influential leaders are intentional in their approach to management. It implies that managers play a proactive role in shaping the dynamics of their teams, using their chosen style to achieve broader leadership objectives. Furthermore, the strategic approach to management style, as highlighted by Namiq, implies that managers align their desired style with specific leadership goals. This alignment is crucial for managers seeking to navigate the complexities of organisational dynamics, adapt to changing circumstances, and contribute to the overall success of the enterprise.

The impact of effective management style on the work environment, team collaboration, and employee satisfaction emphasises the practical implications of a well-thought-out strategy. A positive work environment and collaborative team dynamics contribute to employee satisfaction and enhanced performance and productivity. This suggests that the chosen management style is not merely a reflection of the manager's personal preferences but a tool that directly influences the organisational culture and the well-being of its workforce. Moreover, Namiq's recognition that there is no universal or one-size-fits-all management style underscores the need for adaptability in leadership. Managers must be attuned to their teams' unique needs and the organisation's specific goals. This adaptability reflects a nuanced understanding of leadership that goes beyond rigid, predefined management approaches. Effective management in arts and culture organisations is crucial for success and sustainability. These organisations' management practices encompass leadership, strategic planning, financial management, audience engagement, and more. Effective management involves balancing artistic vision with operational efficiency. It requires leaders who understand the unique challenges of the cultural sector and can navigate funding constraints, audience diversification, community engagement, and technological advancements while preserving the organisation's artistic integrity.

Scholars often highlight the importance of adaptive management styles that allow flexibility and responsiveness to the changing landscape of arts and culture. This involves managing finances, fostering collaborations, nurturing talent, and leveraging technology to reach wider audiences. For instance, Lidia Varbanova highlights key management strategies needed in managing cultural and arts organisations; these include environmental analysis, audience development and engagement, collaboration and partnership. To Varbonova, cultural organisations must understand their external environment, including economic, social, technological, and political factors, to adapt their strategies accordingly. Also, leveraging marketing techniques, community outreach, and innovative programming to attract and retain audiences are some of the needed strategies for enhancing audience engagement and development. Furthermore, Varbanova emphasises the importance of collaborations and partnerships within the arts sector. Strategic alliances with other organisations, businesses, or communities can expand resources, networks, and opportunities for cultural institutions (Varbanova 233).

Similarly, Patricia Dewey recognised the imperative and dynamism of culture and arts organisation; she observes that the cultural sector is a diverse collective of individuals and entities involved in crafting, producing, showcasing, disseminating, and safeguarding artistic, cultural, and entertainment endeavours, goods, and cultural relics. Thus, due to changes affecting the sector, change management has become a nuanced approach to be deployed. According to Dewey, rapid technological advances, globalisation, shifts in general population demographics, and a generational turnover in critical professions and leadership have caused a systemic change in the cultural sector. Therefore, change management strategy must feature in arts and cultural administration by representing cultural identity, promoting innovative methods of audience development, exercising effective strategic leadership, managing cultural interactions and fostering a sustainable mixed funding system (Dewey 12; Wyszomirski 20).

John Reh in Asen submits that "a manager is a person who is responsible for planning and directing the work of a group of individuals, monitoring their work and taking corrective action when necessary." (Asen 4; Yacim 20). This means the manager is that unique individual amongst the group vested with the responsibility of managing himself and others and the material resources of an organisation to achieve the desired results. Management plays a vital role in strengthening the bond among the employees and making them work together as a single unit. The management is responsible for ensuring employees are satisfied with their job responsibilities and eventually deliver at their best. Management style and its concomitant relationship with leadership is imperative because of unique employee handling styles. In simple terms, therefore, the management style refers to the various ways of dealing with subordinates in the workplace.

The relationship between management style and organisational performance is symbiotic. The adoption of a particular style determines the output of the organisation due to the policies, strategies, and operations of the organisation, which depend on the structure of the organisation. Luthans (199) posits that managers are either human-oriented or organisation-oriented in the style adopted for organisational operation. Human-oriented managers in an organisation direct their maximum attention to the organisation's members, and organisation-oriented managers put the goals and missions of an organisation above those of its members (Yacim 5). Against this backdrop, Vahedi and Asadi allude that,

The style that a manager uses as his dominant style for coordinating the affairs in performing the activities of an organisation and how he performs his tasks have the highest effect on the execution process of tasks and the cooperation level of his colleagues. This means that the behaviour style of the manager, the way he interacts, and the style he adopts in this relationship guarantee him the highest percentage of success (Vahedi and Asadi 2976). Thus, the adopted leadership style in an organisation significantly affects the organisation's efficiency. However, every style of leadership is unique. Scholars are attempting to fashion a style that suits most organisations in unison. These attempts have met a dead end as the idea itself has proven impractical, not to mention its ineffectiveness. Adopting an effective management process makes organisations more future-oriented, able to improve their organisational competencies, provide strong support, strengthen trust, promote employee wellbeing at the workplace, and enhance organisational performance. Most organisations are bided to use different strokes for different folks; that is, adopting different styles to suit the working conditions of employees.

This study adopts the Contingency theory of management. The rationale for the adoption hinges on the subject matter 'management' and the variables it affects in organisational structure, given the complexities of arts and cultural institutions. This is predicated on the fact that a plethora of literature has identified factors that improve and hinder growth in these areas of subjects to human and management frailties. As propounded by Fred Fiedler in 1967, the contingency management theory expressed that rather than a "one takes" methodology of leading, a "thumb in the wind" approach should be identified as a critical management style and structure in managing organisation and enhancing organisational performance. According to the theory, effective management is contingent upon adopting different styles. To Fiedler, the contingency theory of management states that effective management depends not only on the style of leading but also on the control over a situation" (Fiedler 23). To explain further, what Fiedler means is that a style of management results in some complex problem in an organisation that may require another style of leadership to control and abate the situation. Hence, it is not about the style but also the control. This is because the 'raison d'etre' for this theory is the anxiety over the effects of management in certain situations, which could not be explained by the previously adopted leadership theory (Ary and Rizky 483).

Given the scope and nature of this paper, this theory is in sync with the study because the Contingency Theory of Management has proven to be one of the most valid and reliable measures of individual leadership potential (Waters 13). Also, some studies, such as Vroom and Jago Hernandez et al. (15), admit that the context of the situation affects the effectiveness of management, especially in this case as it relates to complex institutions that deal with diverse artistic and creative individuals, arts, performances and the likes that demand management activities to be borne of a myriad of situational complexities. In summary, contingency theory provides a flexible and pragmatic approach to management, recognising that organisations operate in diverse and ever-changing environments. By understanding and aligning with the situational factors, managers can develop strategies better suited to their organisations' unique challenges and opportunities, ultimately contributing to improved performance and effectiveness.

The theory asserts that when managers make a decision, they must consider all the aspects of the current situation and act on those key to the problem. It is the situation that determines the approach. One cardinal characteristic of this theory is that it abhors hasty and impulsive decisions, which may be tantamount to reversal. Here, decisions are taken after meticulously assessing the situation by looking at the pros and the cons. This theory is significant and can effectively help managers. This theory of management is in sync with the thrust of this study as the Ekiti State Ministry of Arts, Culture and Tourism is managed generally on a variety of performances ranging from dances, drama, music/ songs, storytelling, masquerade performances, mime and puppetry which demands diverse employee relations, arts and artists' management in overseeing the success, growth and development of the cultural institution.

Many studies have discussed the imperatives of management, management style and its role in organisational leadership. Rajesh, Bharati Makhijani, Amitabh Mishra, Habibulla Palagiri and Priti Verma, in the article titled Effective Management Styles for a Modern Workplace to Deal with Older Employees: An Empirical Review, unearths that to be an effective manager, striking a balance between strictness and calmness is essential. Creating a workplace culture that values diversity and inclusion contributes to employees' happiness and satisfaction in their daily work lives. For employees to feel confident in their abilities and perform at their best, the workplace must navigate a middle ground between these two contrasting forces. The study, which adopted qualitative research methodology, reveals that various management styles, such as autocratic, authoritative, persuasive, paternalistic, consultative, participative, collaborative, transformational, coaching, and democratic, are interrelated and may influence one another positively. Thus, given that each management approach has its strengths and weaknesses and is optimal in different contexts, adopting just one style may prove challenging. In modern businesses, managers often find situational or adaptable leadership most effective when leading their teams. The study finds that workers are likelier to go the extra mile for their employer if their supervisor demonstrates fairness and maintains strictness and transparency about company matters. An open-door policy that allows employees to access their managers easily and receive prompt feedback also fosters positive working relationships. Managers who are approachable and effective communicators tend to be highly regarded by their teams (Rajesh, Makhijani and Mishra 44).

Concomitantly, this study agrees with Namiq's research on the most effective management style to adopt for a workplace in this modern era, alluding that in the realm of management, each style comes with its unique set of positives and negatives. Many effective managers employ a combination of different styles to achieve progress and success within their teams. Ultimately, the most successful managers are those who prioritise the growth and development of each team member. Striking a balance between being strict and gentle is crucial, creating a work environment where inclusivity is not just an option but a necessity. This balance empowers employees from diverse backgrounds to feel confident in their potential and excel in their roles. A

workplace that values inclusivity and diversity fosters employees' sense of belonging and self-esteem. Embracing a range of abilities, experiences, and perspectives, individuals from different backgrounds contribute valuable insights and enhance overall organisational performance. Recognising and appreciating this diversity is key to maximising employee potential (Namiq 402).

In this survey research conducted by Namiq, it becomes evident that the contemporary workplace demands diverse management skills. With increased diversity in the workforce, attention must be given to the needs of the new generation. This younger workforce encompasses individuals from various cultural, religious, and social backgrounds. They may reach high positions at a young age, which can be beneficial if they are qualified and capable of handling the responsibility. However, managing different generations can pose challenges. Older employees may possess years of experience but could need more technology skills or help communicating effectively with the younger generation. On the other hand, the newer generation tends to be more demanding, seeking high salaries with limited experience, greater flexibility in work arrangements, and a faster implementation of their ideas. This dynamic often creates conflicts between the two generations. Religion, culture, language, and gender biases are crucial in determining the appropriate management style in the modern workplace. A one-size-fits-all approach is no longer practical, and managers must adapt their styles to suit their teams' unique needs and dynamics (Namiq 409).

Consequently, within policy and managerial circles, there has been a growing recognition of arts and cultural organisations as significant and influential contributors to development, both on an industrial and societal scale. As a result, the focus has shifted towards understanding how these organisations can effectively manage and innovate their business models. By doing so, they can shape strategies and operations that lead to greater sustainability and impact. The newfound acknowledgement of arts and cultural organisations as potential players in development highlights their transformative potential. This shift in perspective emphasises the need for these organisations to adapt their business models to align with their mission and goals. By embracing innovation and strategic management, they can position themselves for sustainable growth and increased societal influence. Understanding how arts and cultural organisations can effectively manage their business models becomes critical in unleashing their full potential. A well-crafted business model can serve as a roadmap for achieving their objectives, ensuring financial stability, and fostering a more significant societal impact. By continuously exploring new approaches and embracing innovative practices, these organisations can navigate the ever-changing landscape and respond to emerging challenges and opportunities (Schiuma and Lerro 11).

From the preceding, it is evident that managing arts organisations has been debated due to their complexities. Since these, managing cultural institutions is similar to managing other sectors. In this vein, David Cray, Loretta Inglis, and Susan Freeman's study unveils the two-rationality imperative to managing the arts. These are leadership and decision-making. The argument put forth by the scholars suggests that while leadership and decision-making styles in the arts share similarities with other industries, the arts sector's unique factors influence their implementation. The presence of diverse arts stakeholders often creates tensions with more business-oriented or managerial management styles, thereby complicating leadership and decision-making processes. To address this complexity, the study proposes four leadership styles charismatic, transformational, participatory, and transactional—to be flexibly applied by arts organisations, depending on the situation (Cray, Inglis and Freeman's 302). Given the dynamic nature of the art environment, leaders may need to adapt their styles more frequently than leaders in other types of organisations. This adaptability implies that leaders capable of seamlessly transitioning between different styles are likely better suited for leadership roles in the arts than those wedded to a single approach. As the challenges in leading and making critical and strategic

decisions for arts institutions increase, there arises a need for a more systematic approach, one that leverages existing concepts and models to gain a comprehensive understanding of how arts organisations operate (Cray, Inglis and Freeman's 312). By exploring how well current theories align with the practical realities of arts management, a more coherent research agenda can be proposed to support effective management practices in the arts.

The studies above have shed light on the gap this research fills. One of these gaps is the imperatives of practising contingency management in art institutions and councils. The arts sector's distinct dynamics require a thoughtful approach to leadership and decision-making styles. Recognising the conflicting demands of arts stakeholders, the study suggests a blend of leadership styles that can be interchangeably practised. Given the ever-changing arts environment, the ability to adapt and shift between styles is essential for leaders in this field. By systematically aligning existing concepts with the practicalities of arts management, a more effective research agenda can be developed to bolster management practices within the arts sector. This approach will undoubtedly contribute to the sustained success and growth of arts organisations in the face of evolving challenges and opportunities.

There is no gainsaying that arts and culture are imperative indicators of national development socially, politically, culturally and economically. Culture, be it material or intangible, such as language, visual and performing arts, and a host of the like, are more significant sources of tourist attraction across the globe. Hence, they serve as reminiscent of historical education for generations and, by extension, place the host nation or community on the world map for recognition (Abdumalikovna 2). Similarly, cultural institutions such as arts and cultural councils, theatre houses, film archives, museums, cinemas and several others hold central figures in society and contribute to its growth and development through its various artistic and cultural presentations.

However, Abdumalikovna (3) believes that the role and significance of culture and art in society's development profoundly influence the continued advancement of art, transcending its mere display or exhibition. Instead, art serves a higher purpose to foster spiritual maturity in individuals. Consequently, as the importance of art and culture is acknowledged, there will be a rise in the population's engagement with artistic events, leading to an increase in the cultural and aesthetic awareness of society. This means that when individuals recognise the intrinsic value of art, they are more inclined to participate in cultural activities, such as concerts, exhibitions, or performances. This increased engagement with art events leads to increased cultural and aesthetic awareness among the population. People become more appreciative of artistic expressions and develop a deeper understanding of cultural heritage and creative endeavours. Thus, as society evolves to prioritise culture and art, the demand for artistic excellence and self-improvement from artists also increases. Artists recognise their pivotal role in elevating society's cultural landscape, and the pressure to continually enhance their craft grows. This demand for self-improvement and personal growth drives artists to refine their skills, explore new techniques, and produce thought-provoking works that resonate with the audience. This prepared the personality of this study for stewardship in the ministry.

Rasaki Ojo-Bakare, a Professor of Choreography and Performance Aesthetics, made immense contributions to the Arts and Culture industry within and outside the shores of Nigeria. He started as an apprentice under Chief Jimoh Aliu and Hubert Ogunde, both recognised artists in the Nigerian Theatre space. After this stint, he studied Theatre Arts and later became a professor in the field, with several other practical national and international contributions to the entertainment industry. As an Artist-Scholar in Residence at the University of West Indies, a Carnival Research Round Table member, Trinidad and Tobago and several other countries. On several occasions, he had represented Nigeria in international competitions, carting home several laurels for the country. This made him adequately positioned as a

commissioner in understanding the cultural policy of Nigeria and the international community and accounted for his stewardship in the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Tourism, Ekiti State.

Cultural Policy for Nigeria was launched by the then Military Government in 1988 due to the increasing awareness and realisation of the role of arts and culture in National Development. Cultural Policy covers all spectrums of Nigeria's cultural life, including education, mass media, architecture, industrialisation, and technology. The Ekiti State Ministry of Arts, Culture and Tourism structure is a solid administrative and professional core comprising departments and units headed by directors. The Ministry promotes, presents, propagates and preserves the culture of Ekiti State through festivals, exhibitions, trade fairs, training, seminars and workshops. Other activities include but are not limited to the production of the following: (i) Tie/Dye (ii) Batik Print (iii) Wall Mural (iv) Sculptural Items (v) Interior Designs and Decorations (vi) Personalised Cards and Portraits, (vii) Ready-made wares etc. The Ministry also presents educative cultural entertainments, drama sketches, and dances at social events, workshops, seminars, Annual General Meetings and Corporate Meetings; cultural workshops, seminars and conferences are part of the Agency's regular activities. The Ekiti State Ministry of Arts, Culture and Tourism is at the Secretariat, Bank Road, Ado-Ekiti.

Methodology and Findings

This study's primary data was obtained through interviews with key stakeholders, including the honourable commissioner for culture and tourism, the staff members, and focus group discussions with the artists. To analyse this valuable information effectively, the manual transcription method was employed. The manual transcription method involves listening to the audio recordings of the interviews and accurately transcribing the spoken content into written form. This process ensures that all the details and nuances of the conversations are captured faithfully. The transcribed data was then thoroughly reviewed to identify the themes for further processing.

Once the transcriptions were completed, the researcher carefully reviewed and examined the content. During this review, relevant facts and insights about the research questions were identified and noted down. These relevant facts served as the basis for further analysis and interpretation. Using the manual transcription method, the researcher could comprehensively understand the responses and perspectives shared during the interviews. This method allows for a detailed examination of the data and facilitates the identification of key themes and patterns that emerged from the discussions:

The interviews revealed an adaptable management style within the Ekiti State Ministry of Arts, Culture, and Tourism. The eclectic approach emphasises flexibility, varying from assertiveness to empathy based on situational demands. Transparency and openness emerged as crucial elements fostering cooperation within the ministry. This finding underscores the importance of adaptive leadership and open communication in promoting collaboration and unity among staff members. The findings reveal a comprehensive view of the council's challenges and present targeted strategies to address these issues. The interplay between managenent styles fostering cooperation, the state's role in cultural promotion and peace maintenance, and the identified challenges underscore the complexity of managing an organisation focused on arts, culture, and tourism. Integration of adaptive management, state support, and strategic planning emerges as key to the council's growth and success.

Furthermore, the analysis of findings highlights the critical significance of professionalism and innovation in the context of organisational excellence, among

other identified themes. These themes are not mutually exclusive but interconnected facets of a holistic approach to success. Organisations that prioritise professionalism in their management and embrace innovation as a core value are better positioned to thrive in dynamic and competitive environments. This position is in line with Lidia Varbanova's study. Varbanova highlights key management strategies needed in managing cultural and arts organisations: environmental analysis, audience development and engagement, collaboration and partnership. To Varbonova, cultural organisations must understand their external environment, including economic, social, technological, and political factors, to adapt their strategies accordingly. Moreover, the synergy between management and the workforce, coupled with a commitment to fiduciary duties and loyalties, amplifies the impact of these attributes. Professor Bakare's leadership within the ministry exemplifies the positive outcomes that can be achieved through the fusion of professionalism and innovation. Therefore, it is incumbent upon organisations to recognise and prioritise these themes as indispensable drivers of sustained success and progress. Furthermore, these findings align with Korejan on the imperative of contingencies theory, given that addressing decisions does not have a singular formula. Contingencies emerge from diverse environmental factors, necessitating managers to consider these variables when making impactful organisational decisions. Contingency theory extends from established System Theory principles, acknowledging an organisation as an open system composed of interconnected sub-units (Korejan and Shahbhazi).

The responses and findings show that effective management of any Arts and Culture Ministry necessitates a harmonised commitment from all stakeholders. This includes the management team, comprising the Commissioner, experienced directors overseeing various units within the council, select sub-unit directors, and the council's dedicated staff. Each individual must exhibit proactive and innovative qualities to ensure the council's continuous advancement. This entails aligning skills and responsibilities appropriately, exemplifying teamwork, embracing effective leadership and followership, upholding accountability, and adhering to sound directorial strategies. These elements collectively contribute to the meticulous administration of the Arts and Culture Ministry and underscore the significance of establishing a robust organisational framework within the ministry.

Managing the Ministry of Arts and Culture presents many challenges; government interference and inadequate funding are significant impediments. Recognising that the Ministry of Arts and Culture management demands a distinct approach, divergent from conventional government ministries, is imperative. A notable distinction arises in recruiting personnel, where creative prowess and artistic ingenuity are paramount. While most government ministries do not employ auditions as part of their staffing processes, the Ministry of Arts and Culture must emphasise artistic talent assessment. Government interference in this delicate process poses a significant challenge, jeopardising the council's ability to harness artistic excellence.

Inadequate funding also emerges as a critical hurdle. A need for more financial resources hampers the council's capacity to secure hosting rights for national and international festivals, hindering its pivotal role in cultural promotion. Furthermore, the commission grapples with staffing inadequacy and appointing individuals needing more professional qualifications. A shortage of skilled personnel or the presence of unqualified individuals within the managerial hierarchy poses a substantial threat to the ministry's progress and its long-term prospects. Resolving these challenges demands a concerted effort. The Ekiti State Ministry of Arts, Culture and Tourism has exemplified the power of teamwork, harnessing collective contributions to overcome obstacles. Additionally, including professionals within the council's ranks, particularly in leadership roles, significantly bolsters its efficacy.

Properly managing the Ministries of Arts and Culture is essential in advancing the domains of arts, culture, and tourism within a nation. Art serves as a societal mirror; its

capacity to authentically reflect the multifaceted facets of society underscores the critical role played by artists who should be integral members of the Ministry of Arts and Culture. Effective ministry management is a prerequisite for achieving this goal, necessitating precise and unwavering leadership. Progress is not a solitary endeavour in managing artistic organisations but rather a collective endeavour. In pursuing progress, individualism must give way to collectivism, underscoring the truth that no one person operates in isolation, and success hinges on the combined efforts and commitment of all stakeholders.

Several challenges were identified within the council, primarily financial constraints, staffing issues, and staff members' need for more skills and creativity. However, these challenges present opportunities for improvement. Addressing financial limitations through securing adequate funding, strategic allocation, and seeking external partnerships emerges as an opportunity for growth. Staffing issues demand a shift towards specialised recruitment processes targeting skilled professionals to enhance creativity and expertise within the council. Fostering a culture of innovation and implementing training programs are recommended to combat the absence of skills and creativity. The discussion of findings from the various interview data sheds light on several critical aspects within the management of arts and cultural organisations, particularly the Ekiti State Council for Arts, Culture, and Tourism.

1. Professionalism, Innovation, and Stakeholder Commitment: The council's emphasis on professionalism and innovation aligns with the essence of Contingency Theory. This theory asserts that effective management strategies depend on an organisation's context and situations. The findings emphasise that professionalism and innovation are crucial for success, reinforcing the theory's stance that management practices should adapt to the unique demands of the situation. The fusion of these elements represents a flexible approach, resonating with the adaptive nature of contingency theory.

2. Challenges and Collaborative Solutions: Challenges such as government interference and inadequate funding present nuanced scenarios where applying management theories becomes vital. The Contingency Theory, which suggests that only some approaches work universally, finds support here. It emphasises that management strategies must adapt to various environmental factors, precisely what's evident in handling government interference and financial constraints. Collaborative efforts within the ministry, seen in overcoming hurdles through collective contributions, align with the theory's emphasis on adaptable solutions based on the specific context.

3. Unique Recruitment Processes and Resource Allocation: The challenge of recruitment processes specific to artistic talent assessment contradicts conventional government staffing procedures, indicating a need for specialised approaches in the arts and culture sector. This challenges traditional bureaucratic norms, reinforcing the Contingency Theory's assertion that management practices should not adhere rigidly to standardised procedures but adapt to the unique demands of each situation. Similarly, the issue of resource allocation highlights the need for flexible budgeting strategies, aligning with the theory's emphasis on adapting practices to the prevailing circumstances.

4. Relationship with Contingency Theory: The findings closely resonate with the Theory of Management. The theory's premise that management practices should adapt to the specific situation finds robust support in the study's emphasis on flexibility, innovation, and the need for tailored approaches within arts and cultural organisations. The challenges encountered within the Ekiti State Council for Arts, Culture, and Tourism validate the theory's core tenet that managerial decisions must align with the diverse external factors influencing organisational contexts.

Conclusion

The complexities of cultural institutions and performing arts denote that sticking to one management style is impossible. Furthermore, the commissioner, Rasaki Ojo-Bakare's cultural stewardship and management style fall under the Contingency Theory as he maintains a high level of relationships with his staff and team members. His management approach is people-oriented, which has accounted for his recorded strides through the period under review. Here are recommendations to support cultural institutions in overcoming challenges, fostering innovation, and ensuring sustainable growth while preserving cultural heritage for future generations:

1. Cultural institutions should embrace the principles of Contingency Theory by adopting flexible management styles tailored to each situation's unique challenges. This approach ensures leaders respond effectively to diverse organisational needs, external pressures, and environmental contingencies.

2. Recruitment strategies should prioritise hiring professionals with artistic and managerial expertise. Including comprehensive evaluations, such as auditions for creative roles, will ensure that the organisation attracts and retains talent aligned with its artistic and cultural goals.

3. Cultural institutions should seek diversified funding sources to address financial constraints, including public-private partnerships, grants, and community-driven fundraising initiatives. Transparent budgeting practices and strategic resource allocation are essential for sustainability.

4. Training programs for staff and leadership should be implemented to foster innovation, improve creativity, and enhance managerial competencies. Workshops, certifications, and international collaborations can provide exposure to global best practices.

5. Institutions should actively engage local communities and stakeholders to ensure cultural programs resonate with their heritage and needs. This participatory approach strengthens cultural identity and fosters a sense of ownership and pride among community members.

6. Digital tools should be harnessed to expand accessibility, promote cultural heritage, and streamline operations. For instance, online platforms for virtual exhibits, performance streaming, and audience engagement can bridge gaps caused by geographic and financial constraints.

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Indigenous music broadcast: A case study of Okpan Arhibo's tracks on Delta Rainbow Television, Warri, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the broadcast of indigenous music on Delta Rainbow Television, Warri, Nigeria, focusing on the works of Okpan Arhibo. Indigenous music, a vital element of cultural heritage, has witnessed declining attention among the Urhobo youth, who increasingly gravitate towards Western music genres such as Hip Hop and Pop. The study aims to assess the frequency and impact of Okpan Arhibo's tracks on television viewers, recognising the potential of broadcast media to bridge cultural gaps and foster identity preservation. Using a Self-Respondent Interview Questionnaire, data were collected from 200 viewers via email correspondence. Data interpretation involved pictorial evidence analysis and mean score calculations to determine the popularity and resonance of five tracks by Okpan Arhibo: *Konojuvwe, No Basket for Rotten Mangoes, Oghene Mudia Kevwe, Erhovwo Me Guonoree,* and *Inoge Gbe.* Findings indicate that these tracks receive frequent broadcasts on Delta Rainbow Television and exert a significant cultural impact on viewers, promoting values embedded in Urhobo folklore, history, and aesthetics. The results further reveal that frequently airing these tracks enhances cultural appreciation, creating a platform for younger generations to reconnect with their heritage. As a medium with extensive reach, television emerges as a critical tool for preserving and disseminating indigenous culture. The study concludes that consistent broadcasting of Indigenous music fosters cultural sustainability and encourages societal cohesion. Recommendations include increased airtime for indigenous music on television, partnerships between musicians and broadcasting stations to expand reach, and government intervention to promote cultural preservation through media sponsorship. These measures are critical for ensuring that the richness of Indigenous music continues to influence and educate the Urhobo community while also creating avenues for the global recognition of Nigerian cultural heritage.

Keywords: Indigenous Music, Cultural Heritage, Delta Rainbow Television, Okpan Arhibo

Introduction

Okpan Arhibo stands out as a leading proponent of indigenous music, notably recognised for his dynamic genre known as Urhobo Discos. This vibrant style, marked by its energetic performances and captivating drumbeats, has notably impacted society, especially in Nigeria. His music is a central feature on television programs, most prominently at Delta Rainbow Television Station in Warri, which showcases a curated compilation of his tracks designed to entertain the Urhobo community and their neighbouring audiences. Television is an undeniable powerhouse for broadcasting music, effectively highlighting a variety of genres through engaging music videos and live performances. It serves as a primary entertainment source for countless Nigerian families, ensuring it reaches many audiences. As noted by researchers Chertknow and Feehan (2022), television is remarkably accessible, acting as a key instrument for connecting with the public, particularly in major urban centres where live music events thrive. Furthermore, as articulated by Sayles (2024), the structure of music tracks reveals that a song typically comprises multiple tracks, each playing a vital role in the overall album. This organisation simplifies the selection process for broadcasting. Consequently, television offers a powerful platform for talented musicians like Okpan Arhibo and enriches the cultural landscape, dramatically enhancing the accessibility of indigenous music for all.

The broadcast of indigenous music on television involves airing music tracks showcasing various communities' cultural heritage. One notable example is the music of Okpan Arhibo, whose work reflects the rich traditions of the Urhobo people in Delta State, Nigeria. Okpan Arhibo's music can be classified as indigenous because each track conveys elements of Urhobo folklore. Indigenous music is synonymous with traditional music, characterised by using local languages in the lyrics. Each song in the album is grounded in data derived from local source materials that contribute to the composition. These materials are collected through participatory observation and include age-old stories passed down orally, religious experiences, insights into family life, and reflections on the social, economic, and political systems of the indigenous communities in that region. The influence of Indigenous music on society is facilitated through its broadcast on television and various social media platforms. The frequency with which a musical track is aired often captivates viewers and attracts their attention. A piece of music's impact on a community is determined by how it is usually listened to and viewed. When a musical track is played frequently, it becomes easier for individuals and groups to learn, memorise, and engage with the song by singing, rehearsing the lyrics, and dancing to it. Indigenous music is characterised by its use of proverbial, idiomatic, comical, and satirical lyrics. These lyrics convey the oral history, cultural knowledge, and aesthetic values of specific communities and the educational messages embedded within each musical track. The rich heritage of the Urhobo people of Delta State is prominently featured in many soundtracks by Okpan Arhibo.

The challenges associated with broadcasting music tracks on television are unrelated to the appropriate selection of musical pieces by on-air personalities (OAPs). The choice of musical tracks is made by OAPs, who also consider the lyrics in each song. However, it is nearly impossible for OAPs to fully grasp the diverse preferences of the viewing audience regarding which musical tracks will resonate with all demographic groups. Consequently, meeting viewers' expectations for a musical broadcast becomes complex. Determining a programming schedule that aligns a particular musical track with the availability of all viewer categories is also quite challenging. As a result, a musical track of interest may air when a significant portion of its potential audience cannot tune in. These factors are especially pertinent when considering the broadcast of indigenous musical tracks, including the various pieces produced by Okpan Arhibo.

Music is regarded as indigenous when its tracks are composed traditionally. This context sets the stage for cultural musicians to perform indigenous music. Such music utilises the local community's language, with lyrics reflecting people's experiences, histories, and belief systems. This informs, educates, and connects the younger generation with the cultural practices their elders uphold. While listening to the music, the inherent cultural messages are conveyed to the audience. Indigenous music fosters audience participation, as listeners can easily relate to the language, rhythmic beats, and dance steps that accompany the performances. In light of this, this paper explores the broadcast of Okpan Arhibo's indigenous music tracks on Delta Rainbow Television Station in Warri.

Television serves as a well-established medium of mass communication, delivering diverse programming. It provides a platform for music videos, allowing numerous artists to gain popularity. The visibility of hip-hop and pop music videos on television has significantly contributed to promoting these genres within society. Unfortunately, this emphasis on contemporary music has drawn the attention of many young people away from indigenous music, which holds the key to cultural heritage. Engaging with indigenous music can enrich young audiences with valuable insights into their cultural history. Television is a helpful medium for gaining immediate insight into our surroundings. Delta Rainbow Television prioritises Western music's broadcast, often overlooking Indigenous music, particularly the works of Okpan Arhibo, during their weekly programming. There is uncertainty regarding the frequency with which the music of Okpan Arhibo is featured on Delta Rainbow Television in Warri. Therefore, this paper seeks to address the question of how often musical tracks by Okpan Arhibo are broadcast on Delta Rainbow Television Station, Warri, Nigeria.

Importance of Indigenous Music in Nigeria

Nigeria is home to over two hundred and fifty (250) ethnic groups, each with distinct languages and rich cultural heritage, totalling more than 500 languages. Music serves as a vital medium for expressing the diverse cultures of its people. Indigenous music is an integral part of every culture, including Nigeria. This genre of music has gained global recognition, acceptance, and respect. Moreover, indigenous Nigerian music is increasingly appreciated by many within the country, reflecting various cultural traditions. Indigenous music is characterised by its traditional performance style. However, some forms of indigenous Nigerian music have been influenced by Western or foreign cultures due to the impact of Western music on specific indigenous musicians. These adapted styles have contributed to the evolution of indigenous music in Nigeria. A notable example is the Urhobo Disco genre, created by Okpan Arhibo, which draws inspiration from hip-hop and pop music styles. Similarly, the Makoso genre features Urhobo interpretations in tracks by Okpan Arhibo.

Indigenous music holds excellent significance for numerous reasons. One primary aspect is its role as a source of enjoyment for the audiences it serves. Indigenous people often prefer their music to other cultures when seeking entertainment. Additionally, indigenous music is vital in various cultural contexts, including traditional marriages, funerals, child-naming ceremonies, housewarming celebrations, thanksgiving services, chieftaincy title ceremonies, and countless other rituals and rites organised within their communities. Moreover, indigenous music offers valuable lessons for the younger generation, imparting moral insights that foster wisdom, understanding, and knowledge about life. It plays a crucial role in cultural education and training, ensuring these traditions are passed down effectively.

McLeod (2024) discovered that culture and the community hold their music in high esteem. This significance stems from the inspiration it provides and the faith, hope, and aspirations evoked when individuals engage with the performances of Indigenous musicians. Their music often evokes memories of the past, especially when the songs

are crafted to honour past heroes' achievements or commemorate victories over adversaries and rival communities. Much of Indigenous music narrates the history of previous generations' triumphs, making it easier to connect the past with the present. This perspective aligns with the ideas presented in McLeod's study. The researcher notes, "The fact that Indigenous people are still here firstly needs to be recognised, and that music by the people is still at the heart of who they are, as it has been for millennia." The information presented above underscores African people's value and engagement with their music through a lens of responsibility and potential. It is essential to note that Indigenous music serves a vital function in preserving cultural heritage, which is why communities hold it in such high regard. Amplifying its influence among the population highlights television's crucial role in broadcasting Indigenous music, a function that cannot be overstated.

The Spread of Indigenous Music via Television

Television plays a crucial role in the dissemination of music. Artists produce music videos that are subsequently submitted to television stations for broadcast to the audience. The extensive reach of television broadcasts makes it an essential medium for promoting music, including indigenous genres. Idolor (2005), as referenced in Ojakovo's (2013) work, highlights that television facilitates the transmission of recorded music videos to audiences far beyond what artists might imagine in terms of reach. The researcher suggests that television enables audiences to engage with the creativity of the artist through participation in music broadcasts. The studios recognise that all music genres can effectively reach audiences through television broadcasting.

The relationship between the promotion of indigenous music and the influence of television is supported by the research conducted by Mari (2016). The study highlights that Nigerian cultures, including indigenous music, are being showcased through television as a medium of mass communication. The researcher proposes that broadcasting videos of indigenous music can significantly aid in spreading the people's cultural heritage. Television's capacity to combine sound and visuals allows for a far-reaching dissemination of content. Consequently, television broadcasts enable indigenous music to extend its reach beyond local boundaries. By airing programs that feature this music, television effectively disseminates information to the public. This communication channel promotes a broader awareness of music content, much like other information shared via television. Therefore, it is evident that there exists a direct correlation between the spread of indigenous music and its transmission through television.

Television is a powerful platform for advertorial programs, particularly for musicians seeking to promote their music. Advertising on television offers numerous advantages, primarily due to its ability to reach large audiences. This vast exposure benefits musicians by attracting a significant viewer base to their music. As audiences repeatedly engage with music content on television, their interest typically grows, positively influencing album sales and patronage. According to TEC Direct Media (2024), "TV is often the first medium we think of for reaching large amounts of people in a short time." This statement underscores television's efficacy as a prominent tool for advertising various products and content, including Nigerian music. The literature supports the notion that advertising music on television is compelling. Mock, the Agency (2023) found that television is particularly well-suited for promoting indigenous music, noting its high daily viewership. In light of this evidence, it is clear that television advertising will continue to drive engagement and patronage from musicians. For many years, TV has proven to be a significant medium for reaching a diverse range of consumers across major cities, towns, and villages throughout Nigeria.

Leveraging television to promote Indigenous music is an effective strategy, as its extensive reach allows Nigerian Indigenous musicians to connect with a diverse

audience. The synergy of audio and visual elements on television can captivate viewers and hold their attention. In contrast to other advertising mediums, where promotions are often overlooked, TV commercials are particularly impactful because they are seamlessly integrated into the programming that viewers are engaged with and cannot be skipped. Many viewers enjoy regularly tuning in to watch Indigenous music on television, especially when the station offers a dedicated programming schedule for Indigenous music broadcasts.

The popularity of an indigenous music track is often correlated with its frequency of broadcast on television and the level of viewer interest it generates. Emaeyak (2018), in his study of television music practices in Nigeria, found that indigenous music receives significantly less airtime than Western and popular music of Western origin. This limited airtime dedicated by TV stations to Indigenous music could negatively affect the interest of Indigenous people in engaging with music from their own culture, including works by artists such as Okpan Arhibo. Television is widely recognised as a vital instrument for cultural development in Nigeria. Folorunso (2015) posits that indigenous music reflects a way of life, encapsulating the attributes and values of a culture. Therefore, providing adequate airtime for its broadcast is essential. Indigenous music nurtures a sense of identity, allowing individuals to connect with the music of their heritage, and television plays a significant role in promoting this cultural identity through the presentation of indigenous music.

Data Analysis

Data generated for this study consists of both secondary and primary sources. Secondary data, which is the various documents in the literature, relate to the subject of Indigenous music and the role of television in the broadcast of music. On the other hand, primary data is collected through the entire field survey and phone calls, where the researcher interacts and interviews on aspects of the study. The researcher utilised information from Okpan Arhibo 's biodata and reports from the Delta Rainbow television station Warri. The following research questions guided the study in analysing the data.

Research question 1: Who is Okpan Arhibo? This question seeks to provide brief biographical information about the composer of the numerous Indigenous Nigerian musical tracks using the pictorial evidence approach shown in Figure 1.1

Fig. 1.1: Picture of Okpan Arhibo

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Okpan Arhibo is celebrated as one of the foremost maestros of Urhobo music. His exceptional skill and mastery of indigenous Nigerian sounds earned him widespread acclaim, leading to his title as the "King of Urhobo Music." One of his standout tracks, 'Konojuvwe,' catapulted him to fame during his early career. Hailing from the Agbarho Kingdom in the Ughelli North council area of Delta State, Nigeria, Arhibo may have produced over 200 songs throughout his lifetime, spanning from 1947 to 2022. He was a legendary figure in Urhobo music, renowned for inventing the "Urhobo Makoso." By incorporating Disco and Makoso dance styles into his work, he created a distinctive musical experience that was captivating, inspiring, and compelling.

Research Question Two: What is the frequency of broadcast of indigenous Nigerian music by Okpan Arhibo on Delta Rainbow Television Station in Warri? The researcher collected data from two hundred (200) viewers via email to address this research question. These viewers are knowledgeable about the interpretation of indigenous music presented on television. A self-administered interview questionnaire focused on the indigenous Nigerian music broadcast on Delta Rainbow Television in Warri, Nigeria, served as the primary research instrument for data collection. Responses from the 200 viewers were analysed using mean score statistics, applying a benchmark of 2.5 mean scores to determine the acceptance or rejection of the ten items in the research instrument. This analysis aimed to ascertain the frequency level of indigenous music broadcasts on Delta Rainbow Television and to evaluate the impact of these broadcasts on the 200 viewers with access to this content.

The viewers were asked to rate the frequency at which the following indigenous Nigerian music tracks by Okpan Arhibo were broadcast on Delta Rainbow Television Station, Warri, Nigeria. The responses were categorised as follows: Highly Frequent (HF) = 4; Moderately Frequent (MF) = 3; Not Frequent (NF) = 2; Highly Not Frequent (HNF) = 1. The results derived from the responses of the 200 viewers are presented using mean score calculations in Table 1.1 as follows:

Table 1.1: Analysis of Frequency of Broadcast of Indigenous Nigerian Music by Okpan Arhibo on Delta Rainbow Television Station Warri

S/N	Questionnaire items	N	HF	MF	NF	HNF
1.	Konojuvwe	200	120	40	35	5
2.	Urhobo Me Jovwo	200	40	20	80	60
3.	Zabu Zabu	200	30	23	40	107
4.	Clear Conscience Fear No Accusation	200	24	16	70	90
5.	No Basket for Rotten Mangoes	200	130	40	20	10
6.	Who Will Bell the Cat	200	34	22	55	89
7.	Oghene Mudia Kevwe	200	131	34	12	23
8.	Erhovwo Me Guonoree	200	128	32	15	25
9.	U.P.U Liberia	200	32	30	58	80
10.	Inoge Gbe	200	132	40	18	10

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1.1 presents the frequency with which indigenous music tracks by Okpan Arhibo are broadcast on Delta Rainbow Television Station in Warri. The analysis revealed that the following tracks were frequently aired: "Konojuvwe," "No Basket for Rotten Mangoes," "Oghene Mudia Kevwe," "Erhovwo Me Guonoree," and "Inoge Gbe." Television viewers noted that these specific tracks were among the most frequently broadcast on Delta Rainbow Television. This suggests that Okpan Arhibo's music made a significant impression on viewers each time it was aired. Furthermore, these tracks had a notable impact on the 200 respondents who participated in the study, as they highlighted that, out of the ten musical tracks considered, indigenous music possesses the unique ability to influence viewers due to its inherent characteristics. Indigenous music catalyses social change by fostering community cohesion and serving as a unifying force in many African cultures. Peralta (2024) found that:

> At the core of our everyday experience with music, we use it to relax, express ourselves, come to terms with our emotions, and improve our well-being. It has evolved into a tool for healing and self-expression, often dictating how we, as individuals, take steps to impact society (p.1.).

The findings indicate that the broadcast of indigenous music significantly enhances its visibility and resonance. Therefore, television's importance in disseminating indigenous music cannot be overstated.

Conclusion

This study aimed to assess the frequency with which indigenous music tracks by Okpan Arhibo are aired on Delta Rainbow Television in Warri, Nigeria. Given its extensive reach, television plays a crucial role as a medium for spreading music content. A symbiotic relationship exists between music and its televised broadcast. Through television, artists are introduced to audiences, leading many musicians to achieve considerable fame, including Okpan Arhibo, who produced over 200 tracks, many of which are regularly featured on Delta Rainbow Television. Participants in the study identified five tracks by Okpan Arhibo as being broadcast most frequently, profoundly impacting viewers. Consequently, this paper concludes that the broadcast of music, particularly the indigenous tracks by Okpan Arhibo on Delta Rainbow Television, has had a significant influence due to their regular airing. The paper makes the following recommendations:

1. Television stations should prioritise the broadcast of indigenous music tracks to promote the cultural heritage, especially that of the Urhobo in Delta State.

2. Indigenous musicians should seek opportunities to have their music aired on broadcasting television stations, which will facilitate reaching a wider audience.

3. The government should support the growth of indigenous music by providing sponsorship for its broadcast on television.

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Television and social development: A study of *Your View* on Television Continental (TVC)

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Abstract

Social development entails the acquisition of appropriate societal behaviours, the rejection of harmful practices, and the restructuring of outdated norms. It challenges dehumanising traditions, promotes progressive values, and counters dysfunctional behaviours. Television fosters social development by disseminating narratives that drive constructive societal change. This study explores how *Your View*, a talk show on Television Continental (TVC), influences social development in Nigeria, using quantitative content analysis and responses from 300 participants in Abuja. Grounded in media dependency and cultivation theories, the study investigates how media messages are internalised by audiences and shape societal attitudes. The findings underscore television's ability to promote modern values, address harmful practices, and inspire long-term attitudinal shifts. Topics on *Your View* highlight television's capacity to frame societal issues within constructive narratives, demonstrating its role as a powerful agent of social change. The study reveals that the programme aids in reducing dysfunctional behaviours, aligning audiences with modernity, and promoting cognitive growth and societal advancement. This underscores television's critical role in informing, educating, and empowering audiences to adopt socially acceptable norms. The research recommends integrating educational programmes focused on social development, securing sponsorships to sustain such initiatives, and utilising diverse media platforms to amplify their reach. These measures can foster societal transformation by promoting positive behaviours and challenging outdated traditions. Ultimately, the study highlights television's unique ability to connect with audiences through its vivid imagery and narrative depth, making it an indispensable tool for advancing social progress and fostering a modernised society.

Keywords: Social Development, Television Influence, Modern Values, Behavioral Change

Introduction

The mass media in Nigeria has played quintessential roles in development and socialisation through the different mediums that facilitate and transmit developmental activities through media technologies. The mass media encapsulates newspapers, magazines, radio, television, videos, films, the internet, social media, etc., and they have become monumental in our lives and have had significant and eventful influences on human existence. The media offer various images and behavioural models for audiences to observe and potentially emulate. Through their content, they not only disseminate values of social development but also play a persuasive role in correcting deviant behaviours by promoting socially acceptable norms. The media actively promote social development by incorporating these values into their programmes. As powerful agents of change and significant influencers, their roles in driving social progress are impactful.

Midgley (2014) states that social development aims to offer a wide-ranging change, highlighting its crucial role in enhancing the well-being of individuals and communities across the globe. Midgley emphasises its contribution to addressing global challenges and improving quality of life by focusing on theoretical and practical aspects of social development. Social development in this context serves as a means for empowering people, forming positive attitudes, and fostering long-term social growth.
Social development has an affinity with modernity. Inhibition against social development is owing to the lack of knowledge and information. Therefore, people need information to change their aberrant attitudes and perceptions about life. Mass media brings about social development through the dissemination of information via various mediums, especially television, which significantly impacts the populace with its unique features. Social development attacks traditional attitudes that downplay development.

Television is a mass media platform that conveys and transmits moving images and sound for various purposes such as advertising, entertainment, news, live sports events, talk shows, documentaries, etc. It is an advanced communication technology that enables real-time interactivity involving digital media activities. Its advent in Nigeria was on October 31, 1959, when the Western Nigerian Government Broadcasting Corporation - Western Nigerian Television (WNTV) began broadcasting; hence, it is the first television station in Nigeria also the first terrestrial television broadcast signal in Nigeria making Nigeria the first African country to introduce television broadcasting.

Television's capacity, reach, and imagery register in one's ability to establish and assimilate social development. *Your View* on Television Continental (TVC) demonstrates how television programmes significantly reflect and promote social developmental goals. The programme's framing significantly contributes to constructive narratives surrounding issues of (societal progress) social development. Mirsoatova (2021) opines that,

> Television programs are spectacular, have a high degree of aesthetic expressiveness, clarity of forms, brightness of presentation, which serves as the high popularity of television among people of all ages. In the modern world with developed mass communications, television is turning into a significant and multifunctional socio-cultural institution (p.192).

Television programmes are visually captivating and possess a remarkable level of appealing communication attributes, with precise forms and vivid presentations

contributing to their immense admiration across all age groups. Television plays a crucial role in everyday life. Through its content, television becomes a force that influences character, socialisation, values, tastes, preferences, and worldviews while also shaping behavioural patterns and establishing frameworks for personal development.

Literature Review

The mass media may not always be successful in telling their audiences what to do, but they are successful in telling them what to think about. The media have the power to construct meaning, and they also have the power to deconstruct the same. Mehraj et al. (2014) emphasise the impacts of media on society and that the mass media have immense potential as a vehicle for social change and could exercise a considerable influence and promote their integration into developmental processes. Social development entails gradually acquiring new attitudes and behaviours that enable one to function in society and devalue dysfunctional behaviour and personality disorder; social development focuses on changing behaviours, attitudes, character, perception, actions, bearing, conduct, human ideology about life, etc. Midgley (1995) postulates that social development is a process geared towards the promotion and sustenance of the well-being of the people within the society; critics believe that social development is manipulative and exploitative and champions its goals without regard to its means and lacks powers to downplay existing attitudes of its audiences, that social development focuses on the physical and the material neglecting other aspects of life. Consequently, socialisation is developing oneself through learning and integrating values, beliefs, and norms of sociable and acceptable patterns. Mirsoatova (2021) postulates that,

> Socialization is the development of a person throughout his life in interaction with the environmental, presupposing the assimilation and reproduction of social norms and cultural values, as well as the self-development and self-realization of the individual in the society to which he belongs (p.193).

Socialisation aligns with the process through which an individual develops, involving the absorption and reproduction of social norms and acceptable values. It also encompasses the individual's self-development and self-realisation within the society to which they belong. This dynamic process allows people to integrate into their communities, shaping their identity and behaviour following societal developmental norms while also growing and learning to live in a way acceptable to one's society. It aids us to learn to perform specific acceptable roles as citizens in society while living in socially appropriate and acceptable ways.

Accordingly, Evans *et al.* (2020) opine that in discussions about the role of media in development, the information and education functions of mass media are consistently highlighted as essential. A critical component of this role is the creation of awareness, which serves as the bedrock leading to the adoption of innovations initiating developmental change, as it introduces individuals to novel ideas and practices. It is a powerful facilitator for the widespread adoption of innovative ideas, influencing public attitudes and behaviours that promote societal advancement. Evwierhoma (2002) opines that,

> Development, whether rapid or gradual, has become the focus of theorists who are concerned with the pace of development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Development is better appreciated when it is sustained and people-based, yet home-

> grown…Development has no rigid denotation but it connotes certain norms and values to different categories of people. It involves modernization (p.102).

Every development activity embodies viable values of modernity capable of reflecting contemporary values and norms that enable us to act and live appropriately, reflecting the new habit of developmental norms we have acquired. Social development is constantly opposing dysfunctional behaviour and personality disorder, obsolete traditional norms, sociopaths, low self-esteem, innovation resistance, anti-social and anti-developmental activities and advocates and places emphasis on influencing behavioural/attitudinal change in which the populace reinforce by reflecting the acquired knowledge as a resultant effect. Therefore, social development preoccupies humans with the disposition of change. The practice of social development is essential for promoting universal social growth, justice, and well-being. Pawar and Cox (2010) emphasise the importance of social development in terms of self-reliance, capacity building, and equitable and empowering partnerships. These concepts are viewed as key to driving sustainable development. Additionally, they explore previously overlooked dimensions of social development, such as preparing skilled personnel for social work, addressing ethical imperatives, and adopting a new inclusive social development paradigm.

Despite the vital roles of social development, progress has been hindered by the lack of comprehensive social development planning and implementation at local, national, and global levels. Pawar and Cox (2010) opine that these issues persist partly because existing frameworks often fail to fully embrace social development's holistic nature. However, by applying social development principles, participation leads to empowerment and evolution, and there is an optimistic belief that human well-being can be significantly improved. This approach can potentially create a world where most people experience enhanced quality of life, social reasonableness, and gainful empowerment.

Television has explicit roles in socialising the populace. Development and socialisation embody the act and process of change into marketable growth of human perception of life through internalising the learned values or norms. This teaches us to socialise and tailor ourselves to be socially developed and acceptable. The mass media, through television, has become the broker between man and development, leading to a modern way of living. Television has the potential to advance narratives that influence the cognitive development of a society. Alvarado et al. (2014), in their studies of television, postulate that its purpose includes explicitly enabling the dissemination of information. Ibagere (2009) opines that television has also been the vanguard of social mobilisation. The primary aim of television is to provide an engaging experience for the audience by making the consumption of television content an active, memorable, and passionate experience**.**

This study benefited from media dependency theory and cultivation theory. Media dependency theory, developed by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976), posits that the degree of dependence an individual has on a specific type of media correlates with the importance that media subset holds in their lives. According to the theory, the more frequently we engage with media platforms, the more likely we rely on them for information, entertainment, and social connections. This dependency can influence our perceptions, behaviours, and even decision-making processes, making media the central and powerful force in shaping individual and societal dynamics. Equally, Gerbner et al. (1973) developed the cultivation theory, which asserts that heavy television consumption can impact an individual's beliefs and attitudes towards society**.** In propounding this theory, they discover that heavy television viewers have had remarkably different views of reality than light viewers. The theory asserts that the

media, especially television, exert tremendous influence on people by altering individuals' perceptions of reality.

The theories suggest that people begin to accept the representations shown by the media as a social reality and thus act according to the information they have received. If the content they cultivate is socially developmental, they will accept it as a social reality and reflect it. Therefore, Mosharafa (2015) opines that,

> Cultivation theory suggests that the entire value system made of ideologies, assumptions, beliefs, images and perspectives is formulated, to a great extent, by television. TV portrays hidden and pervasive values, rules, and moral for what is right, what is important, and what is appropriate in a social discourse (p.24)

Mosharafa's (2015) assertion resonates with the study's focus on the role of television in social development. This role promotes modernity values aided by the incorporation of cultivated ideas through media enablement.

Many researchers on television attest that its benefits and advantages can promote change and social developmental benefits, Alexander and Hanson (2003). Television's visualised images control humans and threaten existing behaviour; hence, television can make its audiences imbibe new behaviour. They maintained that images and audiences have a causal relationship, where already existing attitudes are subject to change due to the watched images. Television has become a wide medium that extends to a greater distance, given its base for extending broad audiences. Ibagere (2009) opines that,

> …Television has a wide reach by virtue of its combination of sight and sound, and also because it delivers its messages straight to the sitting room of its audience… It is the greatest carrier of images partly because it can reach the people in their homes simultaneously which other media cannot achieve. This capacity to reach many people at the same time is one advantage the medium has in its function to establish a new social order (p.65).

Indeed, there is a wide dependency on television as the most effective medium of social development because of its ability to be easily understood, seen, heard, memorable, remembrance, captivating, attractive, and impacting. Each of the above functions helps its audiences to act accordingly because of the impacted norm. Also, Alexander and Hanson (2003) opine that,

> television, on the other hand, is seen as powerful, coercive, and sinister. The medium is not a servant but a tyrant. It rules rather than pleases. It is omnipotent; it cannot be regulated, switched, modulated, interpreted, belittled, welcome, or ignored (p.52).

There is a relationship between television and social development, and this relationship is seen to be symbiotic. Alexander and Hanson's claim above shows the versatility of television. Ibagere (2009), in citing Church and Geller (1989), listed the various advantages of television which are pivotal to this discourse: that television is the most suitable medium of mass media to transfer values to the public based on its attributes and advantages; these advantages/attributes are enumerated as follows –

Television is a powerful medium with unparalleled attributes, making it an effective social influence and development tool. Its foremost qualities are its ability to command attention, captivate audiences and influence their thoughts and behaviours. Television programmes often portray behavioural patterns that align with social development goals by reflecting societal dynamics. One of television's key strengths lies in its

acceptability. Audiences tend to trust and embrace genuine, factual messages, making it a reliable source of information. Its influential nature ensures that the narratives it conveys can shape societal decisions and norms effectively. The medium is inherently attractive, drawing viewers in, often effortlessly, whether intentionally or not.

Television also entertains, making the process of learning and internalising messages enjoyable. Through its engaging content, it promotes social development seamlessly. As an educator, television imparts valuable knowledge, enabling audiences to gain insights that foster personal and societal growth. Moreover, it moves its viewers emotionally, evoking feelings and inspirations that lead to positive social change. Finally, television is an exemplary medium, offering representations and patterns that audiences can emulate. This distinct feature positions it as a model for behaviour, encouraging the adoption of socially acceptable norms and values. Television's unique combination of attributes makes it a significant agent for driving societal transformation and progress.

Symbols and images, visuals, language gestures, motion, signal, and sound are features synonymous with television that make it memorable and a suitable tool for spreading societal progress; through it, many societies have their citizens adopt social development. From the preceding, it is imperative to note that the media and culture have a connecting relationship that results in the social development of humans, which helps the integration of new developments into our understanding of socialisation and motivates society to assimilate new values of social development by influence and learning derived from the media – television.

People need to be updated with themselves and their environment (society); hence, there is no society where communication and information are lacking. For a formidable change and development, there is a vehicle to accelerate this, which is information. How can people change or develop if they have no knowledge of it? How can they get the knowledge if they are not informed, and what or how does the information get to them and stick? This is done by a more suitable and attractive media subset - television, which informs and drives home the messages. Invariably, television is a media technology that causes social development to happen. The medium performs and acts as a change agent, helping its audiences to execute the acceptable influence of social and transforming attitudes/ideas.

Your View is a famous talk show airing on Television Continental (TVC), widely recognised as one of the leading breakfast programmes in Nigeria. It is a dynamic, thought-provoking show that runs every weekday, from Monday to Friday, between 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM. It offers a two-hour window of engaging discussions and perspectives on topical issues. The programme is hosted by an all-female panel comprising six charismatic and diverse personalities. At the helm is Morayo Afolabi Brown, who serves as the main anchor, skilfully steering the conversations with her expertise and insight. She is supported by five co-anchors: Temitope Mark-Odige, Yeni Kuti, Nymat Akashat Zibiri, Miriam Longe, and Obiajulu Olabisi Ugboh. Together, they bring a rich tapestry of experiences, viewpoints, and styles to the show, making it a captivating platform for dialogue. *Your View* has become a staple for viewers seeking intellectual yet relatable discussions, blending seriousness with a touch of fun. The programme's format allows the hosts to delve deeply into various issues, from politics and social concerns to lifestyle topics, resonating with a broad and diverse audience. This unique approach has cemented its place as a flagship programme on TVC, offering viewers news and entertainment and a space for meaningful engagement.

The combination of the women on the show represents different social and cultural backgrounds, including the prevalent religious and socio-cultural differences in Nigeria. The Talk show is strategically framed with the formation reflecting the socio-cultural differences the anchor women reflect due to their different ethnicities. This demonstrates the convergence of cultures and highlights the diversity that abound in Nigeria. The women are given a platform to voice their opinions on various social issues and topics related to business, politics, governance, religion, economics, education, lifestyle, health, entertainment, etc. By fostering such inclusive dialogue, the show contributes to a deeper cultural understanding, promotes an appreciation of Nigeria's multifaceted heritage, and supports the dissemination of socially developmental teachings. It has thus become a medium for broadening viewers' horizons and enriching their perspectives on critical aspects of societal growth.

Viewers can actively participate during the programme by sending messages and comments, and their interactions are viewed and responded to in real time by the programme's anchors. '*Your View*' programme informs, inspires, and influences the women (anchors) to engage in intellectual talks ranging from motivational talk, empowerment, reorientation, and conversation about issues of the moment. The programme has aided in social development; the discussions on the programme improve lives in many areas passionately with life-converting topical/burning issues. A pattern is established through listening and visualising the programme's content, allowing host and audience participation with immediate feedback/responses. The programme keeps people abreast of issues of the moment and contributes to a better understanding of events. Their audiences look up to the programme's formation for guidance, and its interpersonal conversations involving the anchors and audiences where sending and receiving information through chat, text messages, calls, SMS, and WhatsApp mediums of communication help build people. The programme helps its audience to understand who they are. It influences them to understand issues better and develop meaningful, lasting socialisation patterns, self-confidence, and sensibility. Examples of topics on the programme are: 'The Effects of 'JAPA SYNDROME' on Relationships/Marriages' aired on Friday, May 12, 2023, and 'Unwholesome Widowhood Practices in Nigeria' aired on Tuesday, May 16, 2023.

The Effects of 'Japa Syndrome' on Relationships/Marriages: Japa Syndrome is a worrying issue that demands urgent attention and critical approaches considering its effect. Okunade and Awosusi (2023) opine that Japa syndrome and Nigerians' migration are due to unfavourable economic conditions, persistent security challenges, and other internal issues plaguing the country**.** Japa is a Yoruba word that means 'run' or 'flee', relocation (especially youths) to foreign countries in search of better means of livelihood - greener pastures because of the high unemployment rate, poor medical system, poor governance, harsh economic situation - inflation, insecurity, corruption, lack of basic infrastructures and essential amenities, youth exclusion and deprivation, living degradation, non-provision of palliatives etc. These have led to mental health issues, drug abuse, brain drain, etc. Regarding this topic, "Japa" has caused problems for spouses, leading to temporary separation and divorce. Audiences shared their experiences on the issue through calls, SMS, and WhatsApp. One caller revealed that the 'Japa' issue caused a close acquaintance to lose her spouse due to distance; she could not hear from him. Another audience expresses that most people who left Nigeria for other countries for better opportunities are struggling. Their expectation of making quick money was dashed when they realised the reality of paying bills and taxes, which affected their finances, and they did not have much to save. Therefore, they keep hoping for better days, leading to silence. The narrative was insightful for the audience. The study explores factors driving the "Japa syndrome" phenomenon in Nigeria. It argues that, beyond the unfavourable economic conditions, persistent

security challenges, and other internal issues plaguing the country, japa syndrome is becoming a welcomed development for people not minding its aftermath.

'Unwholesome Widowhood Practices in Nigeria': Nwogu (2015) claims that widowhood rites and practices are prevalent in many regions of Nigeria, particularly in the eastern part of Nigeria. These customs are often dehumanising, degrading, vicious, and deeply immoral, reflecting outdated and oppressive traditions. The death of a woman's husband frequently marks the beginning of severe hardship, as she is subjected to maltreatment and gross violations of her human rights by cultural enforcers within the community. These practices not only strip widows of their dignity but also perpetuate systemic injustice, reinforcing harmful gender norms.

The programme's anchors explored the cultural stigma that widowhood exposes women to. In some cultures, the woman is expected to sleep in the same room with her dead husband's body before his burial or drink water used in washing her dead husband's body to prove her innocence. Audiences from the Southeastern part of Nigeria confirmed through phone calls that the unwholesome widowhood practices are still prevalent in their communities. However, the callers condemned the acts and advised that Nigerians should move beyond such practices in this modern era. They described the practice as sociopathic and obsolete in comparison to modernity. The interpersonal conversations between the anchors and audiences through chat, text messages, calls, SMS, and WhatsApp meaningfully contribute to helpful narratives surrounding the issue and proffer ideas linked to social development to combat such unwholesome practices.

The discussions on these topics are comprehensive and emphasise the essence of social development, exposing dehumanising practices and critically addressing them. The female anchors effectively lead these discussions, breaking down complex societal issues into relatable and understandable segments, enhancing viewers' awareness and knowledge. Audience engagement, facilitated through interactive features such as phone calls, text messages, and WhatsApp, proves impactful and transformative. Furthermore, the programme is strategically designed to highlight and celebrate Nigeria's rich cultural heritage, promoting an appreciation of the country's socio-cultural dynamics. Fostering a sense of cultural pride encourages accepting and cultivating positive societal values. A defining feature of the programme is its provision of actionable takeaways, enabling audiences to adopt new developmental habits inspired by the media's influence. This transformative impact is evident in the audience's responses, demonstrating the programme's success in catalysing behavioural change. The programme Your View fosters progressive societal attitudes by reinforcing socially acceptable norms and behaviours, effectively contributing to Nigeria's cultural and social development landscape.

Methodology and Results

The methodology adopted for this study is quantitative content analysis. The survey was employed to garner respondents' opinions within the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria, FCT, Abuja. Riffe et al. (2023) postulate that quantitative content analysis is a research method that involves counting specific words, phrases, or themes within written data to provide statistical insights into questions such as "how many ", 'how often' etc. Assigning numerical values to these elements enables researchers to identify patterns and trends within the content. The core idea behind this method is to analyse text systematically and objectively, using quantitative data to uncover meaningful patterns, measure the prevalence of topics, and make inferences about the broader message or trends within the content. For the study, 300 respondents (female and male) from the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, were used to garner responses and opinions that aided the study's answer to the research questions.

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The following section presents data through a combination of tables and charts. Each table and chart are accompanied by its corresponding analysis, offering insights and interpretation of the data. This approach ensures a clear and systematic presentation of the findings, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of both the demographic characteristics and the core data.

Table 1. Gender distribution of respondents:

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Female	168	56%
2	Male	132	44%
Total		300	100%

Source: Field Work, 2023.
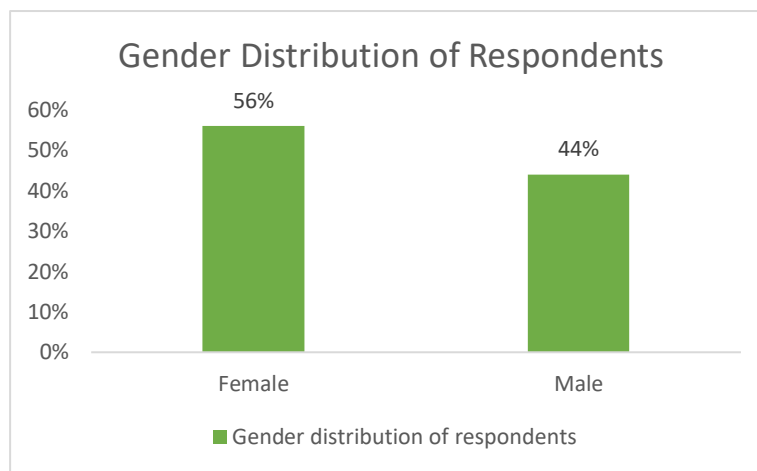
Chart representation of Table 1.

Table 1 shows the gender representations of respondents; 56% are female, and 44% are male. This indicates that both genders were represented in the study.

Table 2. Age distribution of respondents:

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	18-30 Years	120	40%
2	30-40 Years	102	34%
3	40 Years Above	78	26%
Total		300	100%

Source: Field Work, 2023.
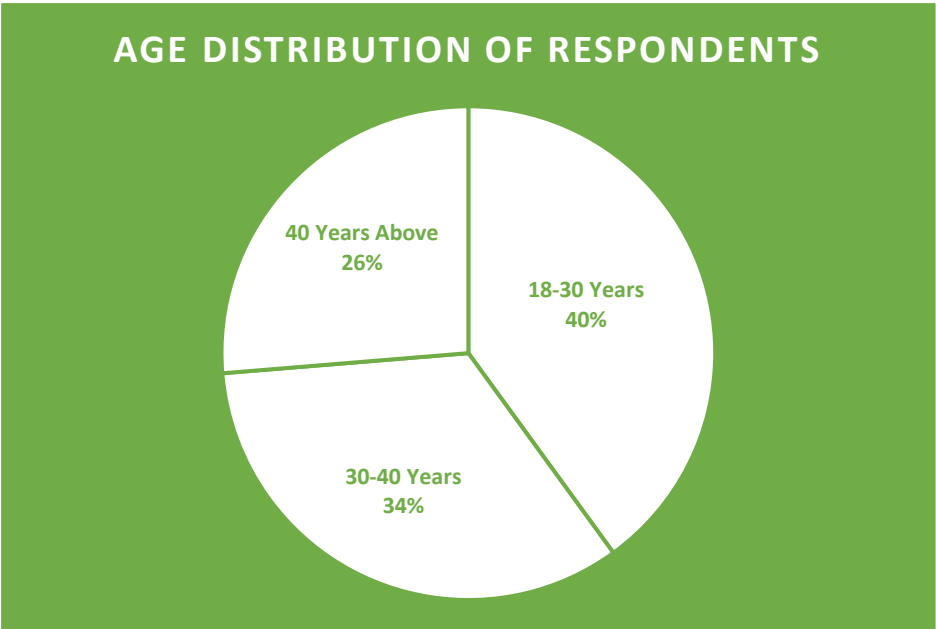
Chart representation of Table 2.

Table 2 presents the age distribution of respondents, with 40% of respondents between 18-30 years, those aged 30 – 40 years at 34%, and 40 years above having 26%. These figures suggest that most respondents are in their prime and active years.

Table 3. Distribution of educational qualifications of respondents

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	First School Leaving Certificate	12	4%
2	(FSLC)	96	32%
3	SSCE/WAEC/GCE	192	64%
Total	Tertiary	300	100%

Source: Field Work, 2023.

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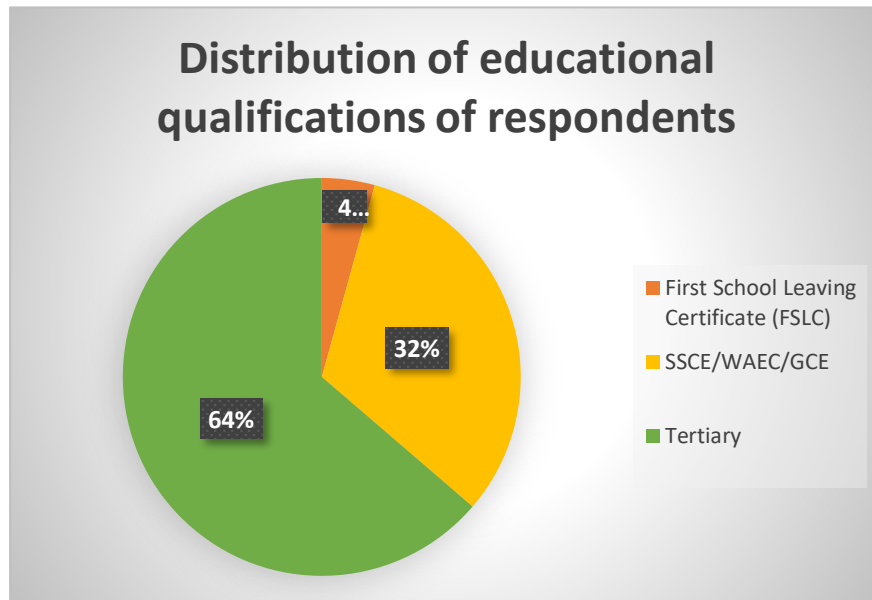
Chart representation of Table 3.

Table 3 presents the academic qualifications of respondents, with the majority holding tertiary qualifications (64%). This is followed by respondents with SSCE/WAEC/GCE (32%) and First School Leaving Certificates (FSLC) (4%). These figures indicate that all respondents are informed and educated to varying grades.

Table 4. Occupational status distribution of respondents:

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Students	66	22%
2	Public servants	87	29%
3	Business	81	27%
4	Retired	24	8%
5	Unemployed	42	14%
Total		300	100%

Source: Field Work, 2023.

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS
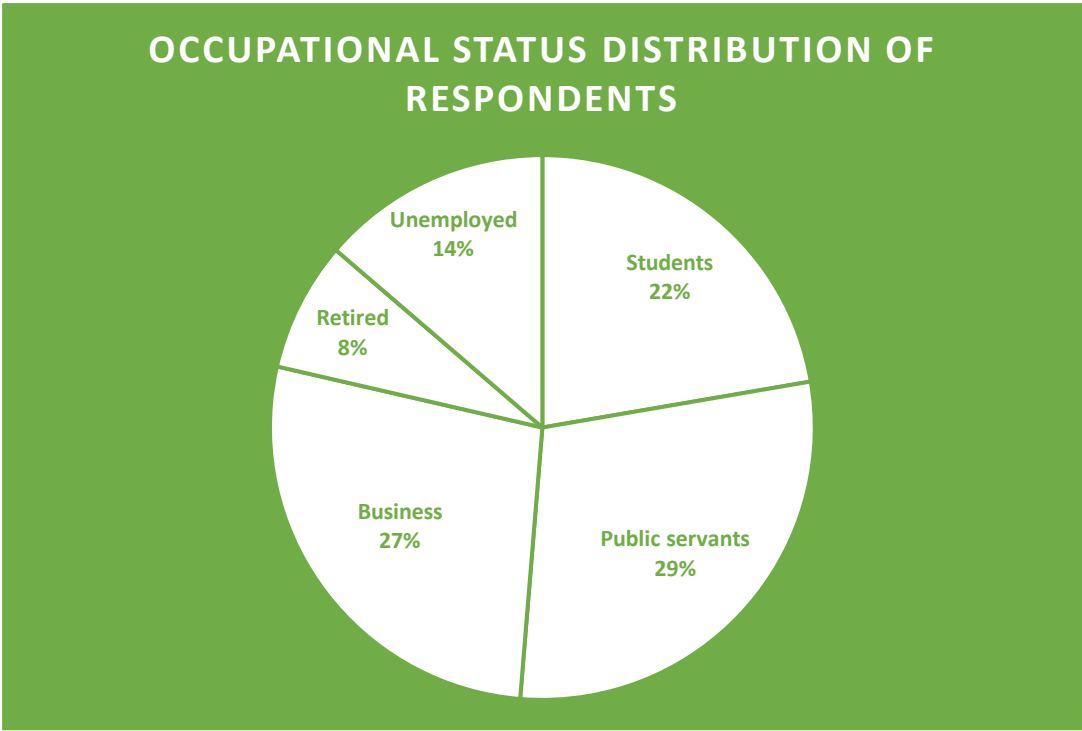
Chart representation of Table 4.

Table 4 displays the occupational status and categories of respondents, with the majority being public servants (29%). This is followed by respondents in the business sector (27%), students (22%), the unemployed (14%), and retirees (8%). As the table shows, these figures suggest that most respondents are gainfully employed or engaged in productive activities.

The following questions were tested, as outlined below, to demonstrate the rationale behind the findings and discuss the results.

Why do people in the Federal Capital Territory watch the TVC programme *Your View*?

S/N	Rationale of Outcome	Responses Frequency	Percentage
1	Informative Breakfast Show: Yes No Undecided Total	 270 26 4 300	 90%. 8.7% 1.3% 100%
2	Promotes values of modernity: Yes No Undecided Total	 279 19 2 300	 93% 6.3% 0.7% 100%
3	Devalues dysfunctional behaviour and personality disorder: Yes No Undecided Total	 277 14 9 300	 92.3% 4.7% 3% 100%
4	Opposing dehumanising obsolete traditional norms: Yes No	 285 11	 95% 3.7%

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	Undecided	4	1.3%
	Total	300	100%
5	Persuasive in matters of opinion and belief:		
	Yes	269	89.7%
	No	23	7.3%
	Undecided	9	3%
	Total	300	100%

Source: Field Work, 2023.

The survey question seeks to evaluate whether residents of the FCT watch *Your View* on Television Continental (TVC) and gauge its impact on them. The results show that 90% of respondents find the breakfast show informative, 8.7% disagree, and 1.3% remain unsure. This overwhelming majority highlight the programme's effectiveness in delivering valuable information. Moreover, 93% of respondents believe *Your View* promotes modern values, with only 6.3% dissenting and 0.7% uncertain. These results suggest that the programme is vital in fostering progressive societal ideals.

Regarding its influence on reducing dysfunctional behaviours and addressing personality disorders, 92.3% of respondents agree that the show has a positive impact, 4.7% disagree, and 3% are undecided. This strong affirmation reinforces the programme's role in promoting healthier mindsets and behaviours. Regarding challenging harmful, outdated traditional norms, 95% of respondents confirm the programme's opposition to such practices, while 3.7% disagree and 1.3% are uncertain. These outcomes highlight *Your View*'s programme's potential to inspire socially acceptable behaviour. Lastly, 89.7% of respondents believe the programme persuades opinions and beliefs, 7.3% disagree, and 3% are undecided. Overall, the data confirm that *Your View* is a powerful influencer of social development, compellingly influencing public attitudes and encouraging positivity.

How does the *Your View* programme significantly reflect and promote social development goals?

S/N	Rationale Of Outcome	Responses Frequency	Percentage
1	Its programme features are viewed as key towards driving sustainable development:		
	Strongly Agree	267	89%
	Disagree	22	7.3%
	Undecided	11	3.7%
	Total	300	100%
2	*Your View* programme is strategically framed to reflect and address our positive socio-cultural values and dynamics:		
	Strongly Agree	281	93.7%
	Disagree	16	5.3%
	Not Available (N/A)	3	1%
	Total	300	100%

3	Its interpersonal conversations involving the anchors and audiences help build people to be socially acceptable:		
	Strongly Agree	277	92.3%
	Disagree	14	4.7%
	Undecided	9	3%
	Total	300	100%
4	The programme helped advance the understanding and values of social development enlightenment: Strongly Agree		
	Disagree	284	94.7%
	Undecided	3	1%
	Total	13	4.3%
		300	100%
5	It has positively transformed lives, as evidenced by audiences' responses:		
	Strongly Agree	280	93.3%
	Disagree	9	3%
	Undecided	11	3.7%
	Total	100	100%

Source: Field Work, 2023.

The question seeks to gauge how respondents perceive the impact of *Your View* on sustainable development and social progress. According to the survey, 89% of respondents believe the programme's features are pivotal in driving sustainable development, 7.3% disagree, and 3.7% remain undecided. This overwhelming majority affirms the programme's significant role in promoting long-term societal growth. Additionally, *Your View* is recognised for its strategic framing to reflect and address positive socio-cultural values and dynamics; 93.7% of respondents strongly agree with this assessment, 5.3% disagree, and 1% are undecided. These results highlight the programme's effectiveness in advancing positive cultural values and appreciating Nigeria's rich cultural heritage. It is recognised for its strategic framing to reflect and address positive socio-cultural values and dynamics; 93.7% of respondents strongly agree with this assessment, 5.3% disagree, and 1% are undecided. These results highlight the programme's effectiveness in advancing positive cultural values and appreciating Nigeria's rich cultural heritage.

Regarding interpersonal conversations involving anchors and audiences to adopt socially acceptable behaviour, 92.3% of respondents affirm this impact, with 4.7% disagreeing and 3% uncertain. This reinforces the programme's capacity to shape constructive social interactions and values. Furthermore, 94.7% of respondents confirm that the programme has helped extend their understanding and values of social development enlightenment. Only 1% of respondents are indifferent, and 4.3% express indecisiveness. This indicates that *Your View* is an essential platform for social development education. Conclusively, when asked whether *Your View* has effectively changed lives by advancing social development, 93.3% of respondents agree, 3% disagree, and 3.7% are unsure. These findings suggest that the programme has had a meaningful impact on its audience by promoting and influencing positive societal change. Overall, the rationale provided by the data in the table is logical; the data strongly support the belief that the *Your View* programme on Television Continental (TVC) is a significant tool for encouraging social development and advancing positive societal values.

The findings of this paper underscore several critical aspects of social development. It highlights how social development fosters social acceptance, creating a more cohesive and inclusive society. Furthermore, it effectively diminishes the prevalence of sociopathic behaviours and harmful cultural practices, steering communities toward healthier norms. By aligning with modern values and progressive ideals, social development modernises societal perspectives and elevates and refines the citizenry, enhancing their overall quality of life. A point emphasised in the paper is the instrumental role of media—particularly television—in driving national development. Television is a powerful medium for promoting positive behaviour, as its engaging content and unique features effectively influence social change. By presenting relatable narratives and framing developmental issues, television becomes a catalyst for transformation, fostering attitudes that align with societal progress.

Based on these insights, the paper makes several recommendations. First, it advocates integrating educational programmes focusing on social development to address dysfunctional behaviours and personality disorders. Such initiatives would give individuals the tools to adapt to societal norms constructively. Additionally, the paper highlights the need for securing sponsorships to support and sustain these social development initiatives, ensuring their continuity and effectiveness over time. Finally, it recommends broadening the reach of social development content by utilising various media platforms. This approach would amplify the message, enabling a broader audience to benefit from these developmental narratives, ultimately fostering a more informed and progressive society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, television is an essential tool for the dissemination of information. This is typified by the *Your View* programme on Television Continental (TVC), which serves as a critical instrument for social development through its engaging content and features. Television is crucial in disseminating information influencing basic human activities, from political and economic matters to social and personal development. It connects people, shapes perceptions, and enables coordination for societal growth. The media, particularly television, can shape public opinion and influence decision-making, as the information we receive daily guides our choices. Television contributes significantly to social development by reflecting modern values, strengthening social cohesion, and promoting sensibility.

Television advances social development through programmes like Television Continental's (TVC) *Your View* by engaging audiences with relevant content that encourages positive behaviours and attitudes. The medium influences beliefs, setting agendas that align with the needs of societal growth. Television's capacity to reach and captivate its audience makes it essential to advance ideas that promote social development, foster national integration and positive social values, and devalue harmful behaviours and attitudes. With television, the promotion of social development and its influence on society are significantly disseminated, proving themselves an essential tool for evolving societal changes. Television's language and images distinguish social development as fit and appropriate for society; hence, dysfunctional behaviour and personality disorders are devalued.

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Impact of the Nigerian film industry (Nollywood) on job creation (2013-2023)

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Abstract

This study explores the Nigerian film industry's (Nollywood) influence on employment generation from 2013 to 2023. As the second-largest film industry globally, Nollywood has contributed significantly to Nigeria's economy by generating substantial job opportunities across various roles, from acting and directing to technical and production support. The study assesses both the industry's positive impact on job creation and the challenges it faces, including piracy, limited funding, and insufficient infrastructure. Using a survey research method supported by academic literature and stakeholder interviews, this paper offers insights into Nollywood's economic and cultural roles in job creation within Nigeria. Employing economic determinism as the theoretical framework, the paper examines how economic factors such as government policy, investments, and demand for Nollywood content have driven employment within the industry. Government support initiatives, including financing and anti-piracy laws, have contributed to employment growth. Nevertheless, Nollywood faces persistent hurdles, notably the threat of piracy, limited government support, and inadequate infrastructure. These issues restrict Nollywood's potential to sustain and expand job creation, impacting the industry's broader economic influence. The findings confirm that Nollywood has created direct and indirect employment, enhanced financial stability, and addressed unemployment, particularly among youth. It is one of Nigeria's largest employers, with ripple effects on related sectors like hospitality, marketing, and equipment rental. This study concludes by advocating increased support for Nollywood through targeted education, training, and infrastructure development investments. Addressing these needs will further boost Nollywood's job creation potential, sustaining its positive impact on Nigeria's economy.

Keywords: Nollywood, Job Creation, Economic Determinism, Nigerian Film Industry

Introduction

The Nigerian film industry, popularly known as Nollywood, has experienced a remarkable growth trajectory over the past few decades, making it the second-largest film industry in the world, ahead of Hollywood and second only to Bollywood (Faleye et al., 2019)). With an estimated annual revenue of US$590 million, Nollywood is the second-largest film industry in the world after Bollywood in India and ahead of Hollywood in the US (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2018). However, apart from its economic impact, Nollywood has not only come to the fore as a significant cultural driver and source of entertainment for Nigerians but also as a major contributor to employment in the country. In recent years, research and expert analyses have revealed that the film industry's employment impact goes beyond just actors and actresses on screen. The industry opens diverse employment opportunities for skilled Nigerians across diverse fields, from technical roles to creative positions. This diversity, which includes roles in production, direction, scriptwriting, cinematography, and editing, is a testament to the industry's potential and optimism for its future. According to a report by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, the film industry directly and indirectly employs over 1 million people, making it one of the largest employers in the country (National Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Furthermore, a report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) states that Nollywood created over 200,000 jobs between 2013 and 2023, with an average annual growth rate of 10% (IMF, 2023).

This includes actors, directors, producers, screenwriters, make-up artists, costume designers, audio engineers and other professionals involved in film production. In addition, the industry has created jobs in related sectors, such as marketing, distribution and exhibition, and the hospitality industry benefits from the influx of tourists, film sites and festivals. The growth of Nollywood has also led to the emergence of new businesses and services, such as film schools, equipment rental companies and post-production studios that provide training and job opportunities for young people interested in the film industry. This helps to address the youth unemployment rate in Nigeria, which is estimated at 5.76% in 2022, a 0.18% decline from 2021, according to Macrotrends.

Nollywood has become a job hub for people interested in acting, directing, screenwriting, casting, make-up, costumes, set design, film editing, sound production and other behind-the-scenes roles required to make a movie. Most of these jobs require or can only be carried out by those with vocational skills, and the industry provides a training and employment platform for them; according to Statistics, Nollywood employed over 1 million people directly and indirectly between 2013 and 2014 (Fabunmi, 2021). This figure is a significant contribution to unemployment in the country and has positively affected the living conditions of many Nigerians. In addition, Nollywood has played a significant role in startup incubation in Nigeria, with individuals taking on entrepreneurial roles such as film production and distribution. From this industry perspective, SMEs can provide supplementary products and services across the film industry, encompassing areas like film distribution, ticketing, sales, and film equipment rental, among other associated services. Emerging evidence suggests that some of the most critical inputs to entrepreneurial activity come from other tertiary sectors of the value chain, such as film export and distribution (Okoro, 2020). Despite these employment opportunities, Nollywood has made great strides in addressing social issues such as poverty and gender inequality through employment.

Nollywood promotes gender equality in Nigeria by producing and casting many women in leading roles and behind the scenes of writing, producing, and directing. This industry characteristic is well documented. In a recent interview with Sahara Reporter, filmmaker Tope Oshin stated that of the 2,000 films produced in Nollywood in the last two years, about 40% of the filmmakers and directors were women (Adedeji, 2021). This trend has raised expectations for gender mainstreaming in other industries to promote equality, diversity and inclusion. In addition, the movie industry has

contributed significantly to the cultural and economic development of Nigeria and is now deeply ingrained in the Nigerian cultural fabric and national identity; it has promoted Nigerian culture and traditions, sharing the country's rich cultural heritage with a global audience, preserved history and storytelling by documenting and retelling critical historical events, folklore, and cultural legends, keeping Nigeria's cultural memory alive.

Despite these achievements, Nollywood faces critical challenges, including inadequate funding, rampant piracy, and insufficient infrastructure. These challenges constrain the industry's ability to maximise its economic potential. By adopting economic determinism as a theoretical framework, this study examines the interplay of economic factors such as government policies, investments, and market demand in shaping job creation within Nollywood. Employing a survey research methodology supported by academic literature and stakeholder interviews, this study evaluates the industry's achievements, challenges, and future potential. This paper argues that targeted investments in infrastructure, education, and anti-piracy measures, coupled with supportive government policies, are essential for Nollywood to sustain and expand its employment-generating capacity. By addressing these systemic barriers, Nollywood can cement its role as a cornerstone of Nigeria's economy and serve as a model for leveraging cultural industries to drive economic development in Africa.

Unemployment Situation in Nigeria

As of the second quarter of 2023, Nigeria's labour force participation rate stood at 80.4% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The country's unemployment rate was 4.2% during this period, representing a 0.1% increase from the first quarter of 2023, which recorded an unemployment rate of 4.1% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). This trend indicates a rising unemployment rate in Nigeria, which peaked at 5.8% in 2022 (World Bank, 2022). Youth unemployment, specifically among individuals aged 15-24, was reported at 7.2% in the second quarter of 2023, up from 6.9% in the first quarter of 2023 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Underemployment also remained a significant concern, with a rate of 11.8% during the same period (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the unemployment situation in Nigeria, as many businesses have been forced to shut down or reduce their workforce due to the economic impact of the pandemic (Sasu, 2023). According to a report by Doris Dokua Sasu, "in 2023, an estimated 1.8 million full-time equivalent jobs were lost in Nigeria due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis, aggregated considering 40 hours per week of working time" (Sasu, 2023, p. 2). This represents a significant increase from 2022, when approximately 1.4 million full-time equivalent jobs were lost due to the pandemic, a decrease from over 3.4 million in the previous year (Sasu, 2023, p. 3). To address unemployment, the Nigerian government has implemented various policies and programs, such as the National Social Investment Program (NSIP), the Youth Empowerment and Development Initiative (YEDI), and the N-Power program, which provides job opportunities and skills training for young people. However, more concerted efforts are still needed to create an enabling environment for businesses to thrive and create more job opportunities. This includes improving infrastructure, providing access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises, and investing in education and skills development.

In their book, Nollywood: *The Creation of a Nigerian Film Genre,* Jonathan Haynes and Onookome Okome provide a detailed analysis of the Nigerian film industry, its history and its impact on Nigerian society. They argue that Nollywood has played a significant role in shaping Nigeria's culture and identity and has contributed to the economic development of the country through the creation of jobs and entrepreneurship (Haynes & Okome, 2016). "Nollywood and the Nigerian Economy"

by Oluwafemi O. Ogunkoya and Olufemi A. Ogunkoya highlighted the Nigerian film industry's economic impact, especially regarding job creation and poverty alleviation. They argue that Nollywood has the potential to contribute more to the Nigerian economy if the government provides the necessary support and infrastructure (Ogunkoya & Ogunkoya, 2018). Apart from its economic impact, the Nigerian film industry has a significant cultural impact. Nollywood films often address social and political issues such as corruption, poverty, and gender inequality, helping to raise awareness and stimulate discussion about these issues in Nigerian society. In addition, Nollywood has helped promote Nigerian culture and identity nationally and internationally. The use of local language and culture in Nollywood films helps preserve and promote Nigerian culture and counter the dominance of Western culture in the global film industry. Despite its success, the Nigerian movie industry still faces some challenges. One of the significant challenges is piracy, which causes filmmakers to lose enormous revenue and hinders the industry's growth. In addition, the lack of government support and infrastructure, such as funding for film schools and filmmakers, also impedes the growth and development of the industry. The Nigerian government has taken steps to support the film industry in addressing these issues, such as establishing the Film Corporation of Nigeria and the National Film and Video Censorship Board. In addition, the government finances the industry through the Industrial Bank and the Export-Import Bank of Nigeria.

Economic Determinism

Economic determinism, a theoretical framework positing that economic factors drive social and political phenomena (Marx, 1867), has been applied to various fields, including creative industries. This in-depth literature review examines the existing research on economic determinism and job creation in Nollywood, Nigeria's film industry, exploring the complex relationships between economic factors, government policies, investment, demand for films, education, and training. Economic determinism was selected as the theoretical framework for this study on job creation in Nollywood due to its relevance, applicability, empirical support, conceptual clarity, and policy implications.

Economic determinism is a theoretical framework relevant to Nollywood's job creation study. It highlights the role of economic factors in shaping social and political phenomena. The Nigerian film industry is a significant contributor to the country's economy, and understanding the economic factors that drive job creation is crucial for policy-making and development. Economic determinism is an applicable theory in this context because it helps to explain how economic factors such as government policies, investment, and demand for films influence job creation in Nollywood. The theory provides a framework for analysing the complex relationships between these economic factors and job creation in the industry. Empirical evidence supports the application of economic determinism in this study. Research has shown that economic factors such as government policies, investment, and demand for films significantly impact job creation in the creative industries (Adegoke, 2015; Eke, 2019; Nwosu, 2018). This empirical support provides a strong justification for choosing economic determinism as the theoretical framework for this study.

Economic determinism provides a clear and concise conceptual framework for understanding the relationships between economic factors and job creation in Nollywood. The theory helps to identify the key economic factors that drive job creation and provides a framework for analysing their impact on industry. The application of economic determinism in this study has important policy implications. By understanding the economic factors that drive job creation in Nollywood, policymakers can develop effective policies to support the industry's growth and create employment opportunities for Nigerians.

Economic determinism suggests that financial factors, such as government policies, investment, and demand for films, determine the availability of employment opportunities in Nollywood (Blaug, 1992). This macro-level theory focuses on structural and institutional factors shaping economic outcomes (Blaug, 1992). Economic determinism is rooted in Marxist theory, which emphasises the role of financial factors in shaping social and political relationships (Marx, 1867). Research has shown that government policies significantly impact Nollywood's growth and job creation (Adegoke, 2015; Eke, 2019). Tax incentives, subsidies, and other forms of government support have been identified as crucial drivers of employment opportunities in the industry (Olorunyomi, 2017). For instance, the Nigerian government's establishment of the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC) has supported film production and distribution, increasing job opportunities (Adesanya, 2000). Government policies promoting local content and reducing piracy have also contributed to the industry's growth (Eke, 2019).

Private and foreign investment has been a critical driver of Nollywood's growth and job creation (Adegoke, 2015; Nwosu, 2018). Investment in film production and distribution has increased employment opportunities, with many Nigerians finding work as actors, producers, and crew members (Okoroafo, 2020). Furthermore, investment in film infrastructure, such as studios and equipment, has improved film production quality, making Nollywood films more competitive globally (Nwosu, 2018). However, the demand for Nollywood films has been the ultimate catalyst for employment opportunities in the industry (Okoroafo, 2020). With a growing audience and increasing demand for films, producers and directors have created more employment opportunities for Nigerians (Adegoke, 2015). The demand for Nollywood films has also increased film production, distribution, and marketing, creating additional job opportunities in related fields (Okoroafo, 2020).

Education and training have been found to moderate the relationship between economic factors and job creation in Nollywood (Nwosu, 2018). Skills development and vocational training programs have given Nigerians the necessary skills to secure employment in the industry (Eke, 2019). Furthermore, education and training have enabled Nigerians to adapt to changing market conditions and technological advancements, making them more employable in the industry (Nwosu, 2018). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the Nigerian film industry created 10,000 jobs in 2010, 20,000 in 2015, and 30,000 in 2020 (NBS, 2020). This steady increase in job creation can be attributed to the industry's growth, government policies, investment, and demand for films. The synergy of economic and cultural theories unveils Nollywood's dual identity: an economic powerhouse and a cultural phenomenon. Understanding its complexities requires navigating through economic principles that shape its industry and cultural theories that define its societal impact. As Nollywood continues to evolve, its academic exploration promises rich insights into the interplay of economics and culture on a global stage.

Given the lack of rigorous academic research, this paper draws from various sources, including online statistics. It uses stratified sampling and survey design methods, with a population size of 1900 respondents. Using the questionnaire technique, three hundred fifty respondents were selected for this research in Lagos State, Nigeria. The survey lasted three months, from June 2023 to August 2023. The questionnaires were administered manually, and 210 questionnaires were completed. Data visualisation was applied to interpret the responses obtained from the questionnaire. This technique involves using graphs, charts, and other visual aids to represent data in a way that is easy to understand.

The impact of employment with Nollywood based on the year of respondent entry

Years of Employment	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent
2020-2023	67	31.9	31.9
2016-2019	54	25.7	25.7
2012-2015	36	17.1	17.1
2009-2011	24	11.4	11.4
2005-2008	18	8.6	8.6
2001-2004	11	5.2	5.2
TOTAL	210	100	100

Table 1 shows the increase in employment margin by year based on responses submitted. The representation above indicates that in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of people employed by the Nigerian Film Industry; compared to the years 2001-2004, there has been a cumulative 94.8% increase in employment from the responses submitted by our respondents.

The Nigerian film industry encounters challenges in the realm of employment.

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	123	58.5	58.5
Agree	52	24.7	24.7
Disagree	35	16.7	16.7
TOTAL	210	100	100

Table 2 shows the frequency of respondents who agree that the Nigerian industry is facing employment challenges. Of the responses submitted, 58.5% strongly agree that there are challenges, 24.7% agree to challenges, and 16.7% disagree.

	Adequate Funding	Piracy	Government Support	Infrastructure	Training	Economic environment	Distribution channels	Technology
S/A	89	98	102	91	104	123	90	112
A	62	87	67	93	83	76	86	76
D	59	25	41	26	23	11	34	22
TOTAL	210	2210	210	210	210	210	210	210

	Adequate Funding	Piracy	Government Support	Infrastructure	Training	Economic environment	Distribution channels	Technology
S/A	42.3	46.7	48.6	43.3	49.5	58.6	42.9	53.3
Agree	29.5	41.4	31.9	44.2	39.5	36.1	41	36.1
D	28	11.9	19.5	12.3	10.9	5.2	16.1	10.5
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Tables 3 and 4 Show the Challenges Facing the Nigerian Film Industry by Frequency. The graphical representation above shows that the Nollywood Film Industry is plagued with challenges that have limited its employment capacity. Many respondents agree that challenges have kept the film industry from reaching its full potential.

Reflections of respondents on Job creation in the Nigerian Film Industry

Statement	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)
Adequate job opportunities exist in Nollywood	25	60	15
Nollywood has created significant employment opportunities in Nigeria	30	55	20
The government has done enough to support job creation in Nollywood	20	65	15
There are sufficient training programs available to develop skills for job creation in Nollywood	25	60	20
The economic environment is conducive for job creation in Nollywood	25	60	15
Distribution channels are effective in supporting job creation in Nollywood	20	65	20
Technology has improved job creation opportunities in Nollywood	30	55	15
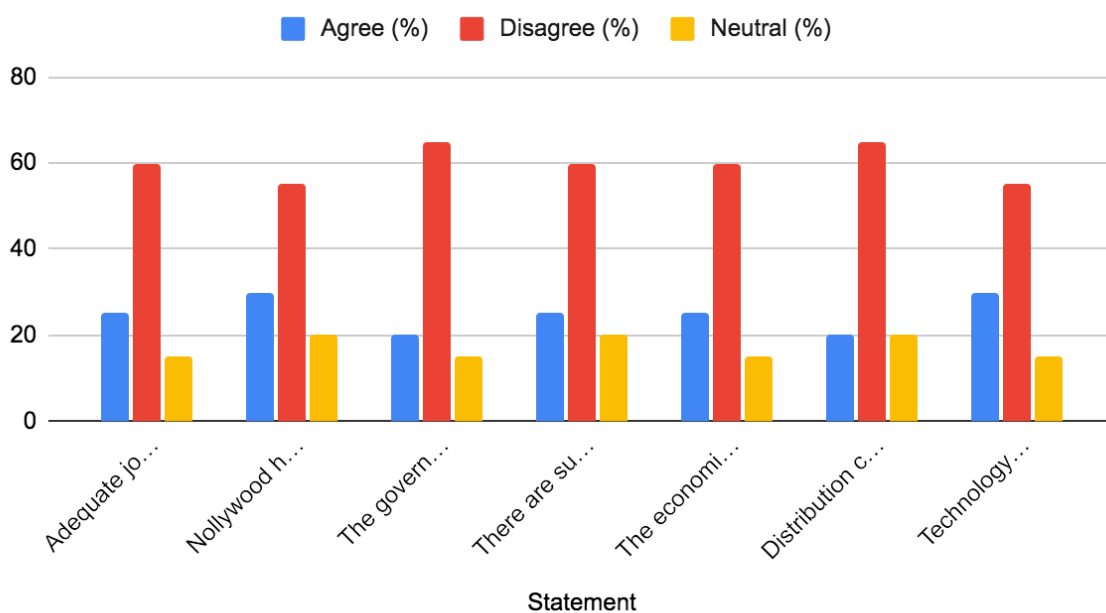
Impact of the Nigerian Film Industry on Economic Growth and Employment

Job Title	Number of Employees	Percentage of Total Employees
Actors/Actresses	31	14.76%
Directors	19	9.05%
Producers	23	10.95%
Screenwriters	13	6.19%
Cinematographers	17	8.10%
Sound Engineers	15	7.14%
Editors	21	10.00%
Make-up Artists	27	12.86%
Costume Designers	29	13.81%
Set Designers	11	5.24%
Lighting Technicians	25	11.90%
Marketing Executives	33	15.71%
Distribution Managers	35	16.67%
Exhibition Managers	37	17.62%
Equipment Rental Managers	39	18.57%
Post-production Specialists	41	19.52%
Other (Specify)	43	20.48%

Statistics of Nollywood employment from 2013 to 2023:

Year	Direct Jobs	Source
2013	40,000	National Bureau of Statistics
2014	50,000	Nigerian Film Corporation
2015	60,000	National Bureau of Statistics
2016	70,000	Nigerian Film Corporation
2017	80,000	National Bureau of Statistics
2018	100,000	Nigerian Film Corporation
2019	120,000	National Bureau of Statistics
2020	150,000	Nigerian Film Corporation
2021	180,000	National Bureau of Statistics
2022	200,000	Nigerian Film Corporation
2023	220,000	National Bureau of Statistics

Additionally, Nollywood creates indirect jobs in film distribution and marketing, cinematography and equipment rental, sound and music production, costume and set design, catering and hospitality, transportation and logistics. These indirect jobs are estimated to be around 500,000 to 700,000, bringing the total number of jobs created by Nollywood to around 700,000 to 900,000 (Oyero, 2022).

In an interview (personal communication, September 3, 2023), the Executive Director and CEO of the National Film and Video Censors Board noted that some of the impacts made by the Nigerian Film Industry include Economic Growth: Nollywood has risen from being the third-largest motion picture industry globally to the second, contributing significantly to Nigeria's economy. Employment: The film industry is

Nigeria's largest employer, with a growing GDP and a substantial impact on job creation. Multiplier Effect: The industry's influence goes beyond direct employment, considering its multiplier effect on related sectors and the overall economy. Government Policies: The enactment of supportive policies, such as those from the former president and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, has positively affected Nollywood's growth. Distribution Challenges: Despite growth, effective distribution remains challenging, requiring continuous adaptation to changing market dynamics and technological advancements. Regulatory Changes: Ongoing efforts to address distribution challenges, including policy changes to meet international standards and legislative processes, are underway.

While the statements highlight Nollywood's significant contributions to Nigeria's economy and employment, this research critiques his overly optimistic tone, which glosses over the industry's structural challenges, such as piracy, inadequate funding, and limited infrastructure. Moreover, his emphasis on government policies as a sole driver of growth overlooks the agency and resilience of Nollywood practitioners in the face of adversity. Nonetheless, his insights provide valuable context for understanding the industry's evolution and potential for future growth. Nollywood's impact on job creation extends beyond direct employment. It influences economic growth and faces challenges related to distribution that are being addressed through policy changes and adaptation to industry advancements.

A significant problem facing the Nigerian film industry is the lack of formal training and education. Lack of education affects production quality, resulting in low demand and fewer customers for the industry's products, ultimately affecting employment. The solution to this challenge is an investment by industry stakeholders in education and training programs that equip professionals with the necessary skills for high-quality manufacturing. Another industry challenge is talent management. Lack of structure and organisation in the leadership of actors, directors, and other industry professionals leads to conflict, exploitation, and low wages. One solution to this challenge is to create a regulatory body or guild to create a framework for managing industry talent. The agency could set standards and guidelines for dealing with talent that would improve professionalism and accountability.

In addition, the industry faces a lack of funds, making it difficult to produce high-quality films that can compete globally. Stakeholders should explore other funding sources, such as public-private partnerships, international collaborations and crowdfunding. The availability of funds will increase the production of quality films, increase employment opportunities and promote the industry's growth. Another challenge is the lack of infrastructure, such as cinemas and viewing centres. The lack of these opportunities makes it difficult for films to reach a wider audience, affecting employment opportunities. Industry stakeholders can address this issue by investing in theatres and screening centres in communities to increase demand for films and increase employment opportunities. The Nigerian film industry still faces significant employment challenges. However, with the joint efforts of stakeholders, these challenges can be addressed to improve production quality and increase employment opportunities in the industry. The need for investment in training, talent management structures, funding opportunities, and infrastructure cannot be overemphasised. The Nigerian film industry can reach its full potential and compete globally with these solutions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has demonstrated the significant impact of Nollywood on employment in Nigeria, both directly and indirectly. The industry has created many

jobs in various fields, contributing to social mobility and economic growth. However, challenges such as piracy and limited funding hinder the industry's potential for job creation. To address these issues, stakeholders must take proactive measures to ensure the growth and development of the film industry. This includes implementing effective anti-piracy laws, increasing funding for film production and distribution, and providing training and capacity-building programs for industry professionals. By doing so, Nollywood can continue to play a vital role in reducing unemployment in Nigeria and contributing to the country's economic development.

Furthermore, addressing these challenges will enable the industry to reach its full potential, creating even more job opportunities and driving economic growth. Therefore, stakeholders must take immediate action to support the growth and development of Nollywood, thereby harnessing its potential for job creation and economic development. The paper recommends that to enhance the Nigerian film industry, stakeholders should invest in formal education and training programs, improving production quality and increasing demand. Establishing a regulatory body for talent management can mitigate conflicts and enhance professionalism. Exploring diverse funding sources, including public-private partnerships and international collaborations, can alleviate financial constraints. Addressing the lack of infrastructure, such as community theatres, will broaden film accessibility and boost employment opportunities. Overall, a concerted effort in education, talent management, funding, and infrastructure investment can significantly improve the industry's growth and quality.

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Perception of Agbor youth towards the media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Governance Protest in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study explores the perceptions of Agbor youth regarding media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Governance protests in Nigeria. With a focus on the extent of media exposure, perceived representation, coverage accuracy, and the influence of media credibility on trust in news outlets, the research offers an understanding of the interplay between media narratives and youth engagement. Anchored in Social Identity Theory, the study employs a survey design, utilising a structured questionnaire as its primary data collection tool. A sample size of 97 participants was selected through random sampling, with 91 valid responses analysed to derive meaningful insights. The findings indicate substantial exposure of Agbor youth to media coverage of the protests, highlighting the media's significant role in shaping awareness. However, a notable segment of respondents reported feeling misrepresented or excluded in media narratives, reflecting broader concerns about inclusivity in media portrayals. Scepticism about media credibility emerged as a key theme, with many participants questioning the accuracy and fairness of coverage. This scepticism undermines trust in media outlets and, by extension, diminishes youth enthusiasm for civic participation essential for societal transformation. The study underscores the critical need for media organisations to prioritise diversity in reporting to capture a broader spectrum of voices within the protest movement. It also advocates for youth-oriented media literacy programmes to enhance critical engagement with media content and counter misinformation. By addressing these gaps, the research argues for a more responsible and inclusive media landscape, essential for fostering active citizenship and advancing democratic ideals in Nigeria.

Keywords: Media Representation, Youth Engagement, Social Identity Theory, End Bad Governance Protests

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Introduction

The relationship between governance and media coverage is a crucial aspect of any democratic society, and this is particularly true in Nigeria, where the media serves both as a watchdog and a conduit for public opinion. The End Bad Governance protests, which occurred from August 1 to August 10, 2024, illustrate the media's critical role during social unrest. Triggered by the soaring cost of living and widespread frustration with the government's inability to address pressing economic issues, these protests manifested the collective anger and aspiration for change among the Nigerian populace, particularly the youth. In Nigeria, bad governance has long been a source of discontent. Rampant corruption, lack of accountability, ineffective public services, and economic mismanagement have plagued the nation for decades. The youth, increasingly frustrated with these systemic failures, have become more vocal in demanding accountability and reform (Akpojivi, 2024). The End Bad Governance protests were not merely reactions to the immediate economic crisis but were also symbolic of a broader struggle against entrenched political malpractices (The Punch, 2024).

As the protests gained momentum, the media's role became increasingly significant. Various media outlets—from traditional newspapers and television stations to online platforms and social media—provided coverage that shaped public perception and understanding of the events. However, this coverage was not uniform. Different outlets presented varying narratives, with some focusing on the legitimate grievances of the protesters, while others emphasised incidents of violence, looting, and clashes with law enforcement. This divergence in reporting raises critical questions about the impact of media framing on public perception, particularly among the youth, who are avid consumers of both traditional and digital media. The protests were marked by reports of excessive force used by security agencies, leading to a complex interplay between the protesters and law enforcement. Accusations of police brutality and the militarisation of public spaces further fueled anger and mistrust among the youth, who were already sceptical of the government's intentions (This Day, 2024). In this context, the media's portrayal of the protests became a battleground for narratives, influencing how the events were perceived locally and internationally.

Understanding the perceptions of Agbor youth towards this media coverage offers valuable insights into the broader implications of media influence on social movements in Nigeria. How do they interpret the information presented to them? Do they trust the media outlets reporting on their struggles, or do they feel misrepresented? Addressing these questions is essential for comprehending how media narratives can empower or undermine collective action among young Nigerians. The perception of media coverage during the End Bad Governance protests in Nigeria poses a significant challenge that warrants a thorough investigation, especially among the youth in Agbor. As the country continues to struggle with persistent issues of bad governance—manifested through corruption, economic mismanagement, and social inequality—the role of the media becomes increasingly critical. Research indicates that media narratives can shape public understanding and engagement in social movements, as highlighted by Bassey (2024), who examined the influence of social media on youth involvement in the August 2024 protests. In this context, how media outlets portray the protests can mobilise support for the youth's demands or perpetuate negative stereotypes that undermine their legitimacy. Understanding these perceptions is essential for fostering effective civic engagement and accountability in governance.

Moreover, the rapid shift toward digital media consumption among youth complicates this landscape. As noted by Akpojivi (2024), the politicisation of social media in Nigeria has created opportunities and challenges for young activists, who often encounter a mix of credible information and sensationalised reporting. This raises critical questions about media literacy and the ability of young individuals to navigate complex

narratives. Chukwuemeka (2023) highlights the transformative potential of youth-led protests, yet the effectiveness of these movements can be jeopardised by misrepresentation in media coverage. Therefore, investigating how Agbor youth perceive the media's portrayal of the End Bad Governance protests is crucial for understanding their impact on public discourse and the future of political engagement in Nigeria. The objectives of this study are to: 1. Find out the extent to which Agbor youth were exposed to media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Government protests in Nigeria; 2. Examine the extent to which Agbor youth feel represented in media narratives about the protests; 3. Investigate how Agbor youth perceive the media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Governance protest in Nigeria; and 4. Investigate how perceptions of media credibility influence Agbor youth's trust in various media outlets during the protests.

Overview of Bad Governance

Bad governance refers to the failure of governmental institutions to meet the needs and expectations of the populace, leading to systemic issues that undermine political stability and social progress. Bad governance is characterised by a lack of accountability and transparency, resulting in widespread corruption and mismanagement of public resources. Moore (2001) argues that political underdevelopment, which encompasses the inability of governments to respond to citizens' needs effectively, often stems from entrenched corruption and a lack of institutional integrity. In such environments, public officials prioritise personal gain over the welfare of the populace, leading to a disconnection between the government and the citizens it is meant to serve. Another important aspect of bad governance is the erosion of the rule of law, which Combat, Dzango, Modeawi, Ngiala, Ridwan & Ngbolua (2021) highlight as a critical index in evaluating governance quality. In contexts where legal frameworks are weak or selectively enforced, citizens may find themselves without recourse for injustices, exacerbating feelings of insecurity and disenfranchisement. This lack of legal protection diminishes trust in governmental institutions and fosters an environment where human rights abuses can occur unchecked. The authors emphasise that in countries like the Central African Republic and Uganda, the absence of effective governance structures has led to pervasive human rights violations and social unrest. Okorie (2022) further elaborates on the implications of bad governance by linking it to broader security challenges. He describes bad governance as a catalyst for insecurity, particularly in Nigeria's South-East region, where citizens' grievances regarding inadequate governance have led to planned protests. The disconnect between government actions and public expectations fuels societal tensions, creating unrest that undermines security and development. This perspective highlights that bad governance is not merely a political issue; it has tangible consequences for the safety and well-being of citizens, making it a central concern for any society striving for stability and progress.

The 2024 End Bad Governance protests in Nigeria were a series of nationwide demonstrations from August 1 to August 10, 2024. These protests were sparked by the rising cost of living in the country, fueled by record inflation and economic hardship, particularly the removal of fuel subsidies and devaluation of the Naira. Some people tagged it the "End Hunger Protest". The protests began peacefully but turned violent after Nigerian security agencies attempted to quell them. On the first day of the demonstrations, scores were killed by the Army and Police in a bid to disperse the protesters across Nigeria. At least 14 protesters were killed, with four shot dead in Borno State and four in Niger State (This Day, 2024). The protests were decentralised, organised by various activist groups, and were met with force by security agencies, resulting in casualties, arrests, and reports of human rights abuses. The Nigerian government's response to the protests was criticised by international organisations,

such as Amnesty International, which condemned the excessive use of force against peaceful protesters (Amnesty International, 2024). Some notable events during the protests include protesters waving Russian flags. In Kano State, protesters waved Russian flags, calling for President Vladimir Putin's intervention and showing discontent with President Bola Tinubu's administration (Daily Trust, 2024). There were also arrests and detentions. Over 1,000 protesters were arrested, and several deaths were reported (This Day, 2024). A journalist, Jide Oyekunle, was also arrested and detained by police while reporting on the protests (The Punch, 2024). President Bola Tinubu addressed the protests, acknowledging the public's pain and frustration and urging protesters to suspend further action to allow for dialogue.

Mass Media and the Coverage of Protests in Nigeria

Mass media plays a vital role in covering protests in Nigeria, serving as a platform for citizens to express their grievances and bring attention to social and economic issues. The media's coverage of protests helps shape public opinion and influences government policies. Media coverage of protests in Nigeria is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it provides a voice for marginalised communities and helps amplify their concerns. Social media platforms, in particular, have become essential tools for mobilising protests and spreading awareness about social and economic issues (Bassey, 2024). Secondly, media coverage helps hold those in power accountable for their actions. By reporting on protests and the government's response, the media ensures that the public is informed and engaged in the democratic process (Chukwuemeka, 2023). The media's coverage of protests in Nigeria has led to several successes. For instance, the #EndSARS protests 2020, extensively covered by local and international media, led to the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) (Chukwuemeka, 2023). Similarly, the media's coverage of the 2024 #EndBadGovernance protests helped bring attention to the country's economic woes and the need for governance reforms (Hassan et al., 2024). Despite the successes, the media faces several challenges when covering protests in Nigeria. One major challenge is the risk of censorship and harassment by government authorities (Akpojivi, 2024). Additionally, the media often struggles to maintain objectivity and balance in their reporting, mainly when covering sensitive or controversial issues (Bassey, 2024).

The media plays a crucial role in shaping youth perceptions of social justice issues, acting as both a source of information and a platform for advocacy. In today's digital age, young people are increasingly exposed to various media narratives that can either empower them or perpetuate misconceptions. Research indicates that the media's portrayal of social justice issues significantly influences youth's understanding and engagement with these topics. For instance, Moore (2001) highlights that media representation can either highlight systemic injustices or obscure them, depending on the framing employed by journalists and content creators. When media outlets prioritise sensationalism over accuracy, they risk distorting young people's understanding of critical social issues, thus shaping their perceptions in ways that may not reflect reality. Moreover, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for youth engagement, allowing for direct participation in conversations surrounding social justice. As Kombeto et al. (2021) noted, platforms like Twitter and Instagram allow young activists to share their experiences and advocate for change. This democratisation of information can lead to increased awareness and mobilisation around issues like racial inequality, gender rights, and environmental justice. However, the challenge lies in the prevalence of misinformation and biased narratives that can dilute the effectiveness of these movements. Youth may encounter conflicting messages that can shape their perceptions in contradictory ways, complicating their understanding of social justice issues.

Okorie (2022) also emphasises that the media's role in framing social justice issues can have far-reaching implications for political engagement among youth. When media coverage aligns with the values and concerns of young people, it can foster a sense of solidarity and urgency regarding social justice movements. Conversely, when coverage is dismissive or trivialises these issues, it can lead to apathy or disengagement. This dynamic shows the importance of responsible and accurate media representation, as the way problems are presented can significantly influence youth activism and their perceptions of what constitutes social justice. Overall, the influence of media on youth perceptions of social justice issues is profound and multifaceted. As young people navigate an increasingly complex media landscape, understanding the implications of media narratives becomes essential for fostering informed and engaged citizens equipped to advocate for meaningful change.

Chigozie (2024) examined the perceived effects of the End Bad Governance protests on poverty alleviation among academic staff at public universities in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study used a descriptive survey research design to answer two research questions and test two null hypotheses at a 0.05 alpha level. A convenience sampling technique was used to select 150 participants, and data was gathered using a researcher-constructed questionnaire titled the End Bad Governance Protest and Poverty Alleviation Scale (EBGPPAS). Three research experts confirmed the validity of the EBGPPAS, and the reliability was established through a test-retest method, yielding a correlation coefficient of 0.80. The researcher and four assistants administered the questionnaires over three weeks. Data analysis involved calculating means and applying Chi-square tests for hypotheses. The findings indicated that the demands made during the protests have not significantly contributed to poverty reduction, and the Federal Government's responses have similarly failed to alleviate poverty. The demonstrations primarily reflected public discontent with ineffective governmental responses to widespread hardship in Nigeria rather than resulting in tangible improvements in poverty alleviation. A recommendation was made for the government to take actionable steps to address the populace's demands. This study aligns with the current research by highlighting the disconnect between protest actions and tangible outcomes, suggesting that both studies emphasise the need for effective governmental response in addressing public grievances.

Similarly, Asemah and Nwaoboli (2022) explored the influence of Folarin Falana's Twitter campaigns on youth participation in the 2020 EndSARS protests in Lagos. Using a survey research design, the study relied on questionnaires for data collection from 384 out of 10 million Lagos youth. The findings revealed that while exposure to celebrity social media campaigns can mobilise protest participation, other factors also play significant roles in influencing engagement. The researchers recommended that celebrities actively participate in social media discussions about governance issues, leveraging their platforms to advocate for the voiceless and demonstrate that even they are not immune to the consequences of bad governance. This study supports the current research by underscoring the importance of media and social influence in mobilising youth protest participation. Both studies highlight the critical role of representation and engagement in fostering active participation among youth, suggesting that effective communication strategies can enhance the impact of protest movements. The current study used a survey research design to investigate the perceptions of Agbor youth regarding media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Governance protests in Nigeria, similar to the Asemah and Nwaoboli (2022) research design. More so, the current study used the Social Identity Theory. This theoretical framework aligns with Chigozie and Asemah & Nwaoboli (2022) findings, as it emphasises the significance of group identity in shaping perceptions and responses to media narratives during protests.

More so, Adedokun (2022) examined the role of social networks in the #EndSARS agitation against police brutality and bad governance in Nigeria. The study highlights how recent protests have garnered global attention and sparked various interpretations regarding their underlying causes. While violence can occasionally erupt during protests, Adedokun suggests that such occurrences are typically driven by additional factors. Employing a Social Network Theory framework, the research focuses on the #EndSARS movement, which emerged as a response to extrajudicial police actions and a broader call for improved governance. Key motivations for this study include the increasing prominence of social media, the rise of social media activism worldwide, and the rapid dissemination of information by users. The analysis asserts that the longevity of movements like #EndSARS relies on specific characteristics of individuals within the network, such as their resistance to influence, responsiveness, and the emotional impact of the movement on them. Findings indicate that protesters utilise emotional dynamics, collective identities, symbolic artefacts, and shared values to maintain momentum in their demands, particularly when responses from authorities are delayed. This study aligns with the current research by emphasizing the crucial role of social media in mobilizing and sustaining youth protests, highlighting how collective identity influences engagement and participation.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT) originated from the work of Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s and 1980s. Tajfel, a British social psychologist, sought to understand group behaviour and intergroup relations and collaborated with Turner, an Australian social psychologist, to develop SIT as an extension of Tajfel's earlier work on intergroup conflict. The theory posits that individuals derive a sense of self from group memberships, categorising themselves and others into groups (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012). At its core, SIT suggests that individuals categorise themselves into groups, known as the in-group, and distinguish from others, referred to as the out-group. Group membership significantly influences self-concept and self-esteem, and individuals strive for positive distinctiveness, seeking to differentiate their in-group favourably (Hornsey, 2008). When group boundaries are threatened, individuals use strategies to maintain or restore positive distinctiveness. Despite its contributions, SIT has faced criticism. Some, such as Hornsey (2008) argue that the theory overemphasises group categorisation, neglecting individual differences. Others point out the lack of clear boundaries between social identity and other identity theories and insufficient attention to power dynamics and social context. Additionally, SIT has difficulty explaining intra-group conflicts. The theory applies to the current study as it involves understanding how Agbor youth categorise themselves about the protests and media coverage and analysing how group membership shapes their perceptions. SIT can also reveal how media representation affects Agbor youth's social identity and self-esteem.

Methodology and Results

This study employed a survey research design to investigate the perception of Agbor youth towards media coverage of the 2024 'end bad governance' in Nigeria. The study population is comprised of Agbor youth, which, according to the Nation Population Commission (2020), is estimated to be 43,000. To determine the sample size, Taro Yamane's formula was utilised with a 0.10 margin of error, resulting in a sample size of 97 participants. The formular for the calculation was $n = (N \times E^2) / ((N - 1) E^2 + d^2)$; computing the figures $n = (43,000 \times 0.10^2) / ((43,000 - 1)0.10^2 + 0.10^2)$ and thus, $n \approx 97$. Random sampling technique was adopted to select participants, ensuring that every A random sampling technique was adopted to select participants, ensuring

that every member of the population had an equal chance of being selected. This technique helped minimise bias and ensured the sample's representativeness. A questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection, allowing participants to express their perceptions and opinions on the media coverage. Out of the 100 copies of a questionnaire distributed, all were retrieved, but six copies were deemed unsuitable for analysis due to improper questionnaire filling. Using a questionnaire allowed for efficient data collection and enabled participants to provide thoughtful responses.

Table 1: How exposed Agbor youth are to media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Government protests

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage
Very Exposed	17	18.7%
Exposed	40	43.9%
Somewhat Exposed	22	24.2%
Rarely Exposed	12	13.2%
Not Exposed	0	0%
Total	91	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 1 shows that many Agbor youth were exposed to media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Government protests, suggesting that media plays a significant role in shaping their awareness and understanding of the events. However, a considerable number of youth are either rarely or somewhat exposed to this coverage, which suggests that the people either have no access to the media or that the media coverage was insufficient for them to be exposed to it.

Table 2: How well Agbor youth feel represented in media narratives about the protests

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage
Very Well Represented	10	11.0%
Well Represented	26	28.6%
Somewhat Represented	31	34.1%
Poorly Represented	14	15.4%
Not Represented at All	10	11.0%
Total	91	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 2 showed that while some Agbor youth feel adequately represented in media narratives about the protests, a notable portion (26.4%) feel overlooked or misrepresented. This divide could foster disconnection and dissatisfaction among those who believe their perspectives are not being reflected, potentially diminishing their engagement with the media and the protest movement.

Table 3: How Agbor youth perceive the media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Governance protests

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage
It accurately represents the voices of the protesters	18	19.8%
It provides a balanced view of the events	24	26.4%
It fails to capture the full	25	27.5%

scope of the protests		
It tends to exaggerate the situation	17	18.7%
It misrepresents the protesters' messages	7	7.7%
Total	91	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 revealed a sense of scepticism as the major perception of media coverage among the 2024 end bad governance protest among Agbor youth. While some believe that the media accurately represents the protests, many feel it fails to capture the full scope of the events or misrepresents the protesters' messages.

Table 4: Agbor youth perception of media credibility influence on the trust in various media outlets during the protests

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage
It has increased my confidence in the media	20	22.0%
I feel more informed about the protests	27	29.7%
It has not changed my opinion about the media	22	24.2%
It has discouraged me from participating in protests	15	16.5%
I do not trust any media outlets	7	7.7%
Total	**91**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 4 indicates a mixed level of trust in media coverage among Agbor youth. While some feel more informed and confident in the media, others express neutrality or a lack of trust, which may discourage participation in future protests. This complex relationship suggests that media credibility is critical in shaping youth perceptions and engagement, emphasising the importance of responsible and inclusive reporting.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide a detailed examination of how Agbor youth perceive media coverage surrounding the 2024 End Bad Governance protests in Nigeria. The data reveals a significant level of exposure to media coverage, which suggests that media plays a crucial role in shaping awareness and understanding of these protests among the youth. However, the varying degrees of exposure, particularly the presence of only somewhat or rarely exposed youth, indicate potential gaps in access to comprehensive media narratives. This aligns with Akpojivi (2024), who discusses the politicisation of social media in Nigeria and highlights how selective media access can influence youth perceptions and engagement. If segments of the youth population are inadequately informed, it may impede their ability to participate actively in civic discourse, thereby limiting the overall impact of the protests. Regarding representation, the findings reveal a divide among Agbor youth regarding how well they feel represented in media narratives. While a portion feels adequately represented, a notable number express feelings of being overlooked or misrepresented. This sentiment can foster disconnection and dissatisfaction, echoing Bassey's (2024) observations on the influence of social media in shaping youth engagement. When young people perceive their experiences and voices not reflected

in media coverage, their motivation to engage in protests may diminish. This situation underscores the importance of inclusive media narratives that accurately reflect the diverse perspectives within the protest movement.

The data also reveals a prevailing scepticism regarding the media's portrayal of the protests. Many Agbor youth feel that media coverage either fails to capture the full scope of the events or misrepresents the protesters' messages. This scepticism resonates with the findings of Chukwuemeka (2023), who notes that past protests in Nigeria have often been misrepresented in media narratives. Such misrepresentation can lead to a lack of trust in media outlets, further complicating the relationship between the youth and the information sources that shape their understanding of critical social movements. If youth perceive media coverage as biased or inadequate, their engagement with media and protest activities may be adversely affected. Furthermore, the findings from this study indicate a mixed level of trust in media coverage among Agbor youth. While some express increased confidence and feel better informed, others remain sceptical or outright distrustful of media outlets. This complex relationship suggests that media credibility is a vital factor influencing youth engagement in protests, as highlighted by Hassan et al. (2024). When media coverage is perceived as credible and informative, it can enhance youth participation; conversely, a lack of trust can discourage involvement. This underscores the need for responsible and accurate reporting and the importance of fostering a media landscape prioritising transparency and inclusivity. Overall, the implications of this study are significant. They point to media outlets' need to engage with young audiences more meaningfully, ensuring that diverse voices are heard and accurately represented. As Obadare (2021) argues in discussing the hashtag revolution in Nigeria, the power of media lies not just in its capacity to inform but also in its ability to empower citizens. Thus, addressing the gaps in media exposure and representation can enhance youth engagement in Nigeria's ongoing struggles for better governance, ultimately fostering a more informed and active citizenry.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that while Agbor youth are significantly exposed to media coverage of the 2024 End Bad Governance protests, there are notable gaps in representation and trust in media narratives. Many youths feel their voices are either misrepresented or overlooked, leading to scepticism about the media's role in accurately portraying the protests. This scepticism can hinder youth engagement and participation in civic activities crucial for driving change. It is therefore recommended that:

1. Media organisations should prioritise diverse voices and perspectives in their coverage of protests. This can be achieved by seeking input from youth activists and community representatives, ensuring that the narratives presented reflect the broader spectrum of experiences within the protest movement.

2. Youth organisations should develop programs to improve media literacy among young people. By educating them on critically engaging with media content, these programmes can empower youth to discern credible information, counter misinformation, and understand the media's role in shaping public perceptions.

3. Policymakers should promote regulations encouraging transparency and ethical practices in media reporting. This includes supporting initiatives that hold media outlets accountable for misrepresentation and bias, ultimately fostering a more trustworthy media environment.

4. Schools and universities should integrate civic education into their curricula, emphasising the importance of media engagement and participation in societal issues. Educational institutions can cultivate a generation of informed and active citizens by equipping students with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate media landscapes.

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Storytelling the environment through films: A reassessment of the representation of ecological degradation in Curtis Graham's O*lobiri*

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Abstract

Ecological degradation remains a critical developmental challenge in Nigeria, particularly within the Niger Delta, where decades of oil exploration have devastated the environment. Human activities, including deforestation, oil spills, and pipeline vandalism, have compounded the collapse of ecosystems. Since the discovery of crude oil in 1956, the Niger Delta has become a focal point of national and international environmental concerns. Despite global awareness, the crisis persists, leaving host communities to contend with pollution that threatens their livelihoods and health. Nigerian filmmakers have increasingly employed the medium of film to address these issues, offering social commentary and advocating for environmental reform. Curtis Graham's *Olobiri*, produced by Roger Ofime, exemplifies this trend by depicting the socio-ecological devastation caused by oil exploration. The film poignantly captures the struggles of the Olobiri community as they navigate the loss of their ecological space and its catastrophic impact on their lives. This paper reassesses the narrative techniques used in *Olobiri* to highlight environmental violations and the broader implications of ecological degradation. By exploring the film's characters, themes, and visual storytelling, it examines how cinema can be a persuasive tool for fostering environmental awareness and inspiring change. The analysis underscores the power of narrative persuasion in addressing human behaviour towards the environment, advocating for a shift towards sustainable practices. Through its depiction of the Niger Delta's realities, *Olobiri* not only portrays the plight of affected communities but also illustrates the potential of storytelling as a medium for social impact, environmental preservation, and ecosystem restoration.

Keywords: Environmental Degradation, Narrative Persuasion, Niger Delta Crisis, Social Impact Films

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has significantly influenced various industries and their operations around the world. One such sector profoundly affected by this digital revolution is the film industry. Digital platforms have made films accessible for global consumption, transforming how audiences engage with cinematic content. Moreover, films inherently possess the power to shape social behaviours and influence societal patterns. Eder (2023:102) explains that "every day, citizens of late modern societies watch hours of moving images, which contribute in many ways to their political thoughts and actions." Films can be used as visual storytelling to convey messages about the environment to a broader audience. This function of film is important in Nigeria. This is because human activities largely cause Nigeria's environmental degradation. Yahaya et al. (2017) identify that the increased human activities in Nigeria have continued to aggravate environmental degradation, which poses a significant threat to sustainable livelihood and causes major environmental hazards that can make life and survival unbearable.

One of the significant environmental abuses that have persisted in Nigeria for many decades is oil exploration in Nigeria. The Niger Delta area where oil is found has experienced environmental pollution ranging from oil spillage on their waters and farms, killing the aquatic animal and destroying their farms, to air pollution due to rampant illegal oil refinery operations in this region. Nwilo and Badejo (2005:567) think that "the main sources of oil spill on the Niger Delta are: vandalisation of the oil pipelines by the local inhabitants; ageing of the pipelines; oil blowouts from the flow stations; cleaning of oil tankers on the high sea and disposal of used oil into the drains by the roadside mechanics." This indicates that humans are at the forefront of environmental degradation, and social impact films can be used to address human behaviour towards the environment. To actualise this, environmental films often create a workable model that drives narratives that can show environmental outcomes that are connected to human activities with the sole aim of making a social impact via such narratives. For McCormack et al (2021), the impacts of environmental films on environmental behaviours and connection with nature are linked to insights from the narrative persuasion field with those of conservation psychology. They identify three promising pathways through which environmental films might influence their audiences: (a) reduced resistance to environmental messages, (b) interactions with audience identity and (c) meaningful media experiences. Like many other parts of the world, Nigeria has experienced massive estrangement from nature, resulting from human attitudes and behaviours, leading to the current global environmental crisis experienced in Nigeria and elsewhere (Pyle, 2003). Environmental films seek to make social impacts through visual storytelling that can bring about the social behaviour of people and the way they interact with the environment.

In the film *Olobiri*, the Nigerian Niger Delta region is represented through visual storytelling in such a way that the audience can feel the pains of the natives who, out of years of frustration, have taken to anarchy as a way of reclaiming back their ecological space. The agitations for a green environment seem to have lost their purpose, and the people of this region now join hands with oil explorers to degrade their environment further through pipeline vandalism and other related hazardous activities. The reassessment of significant characters and themes in the film *Oloiri* is aimed at showing how storytelling about the environment through motion pictures can help convey environmental messages, impact human behaviour towards the environment, and thus preserve and safeguard the environment.

Synopsis of the film *Olobiri*

The film *Olobiri* produced by Roger Ofime, tells the story of Oil discovery in the Olobiri community of the Niger Delta area of Nigeria in 1956 and the subsequent degradation of the ecosystem of the community due to oil spillage caused by exploration activities of the oil companies operating the community. The story is told from the prism of

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Timpire, a character played by Olu Jacobs. Timpire regrets his inability as an educated young man to encourage his people to demand a significant stake in oil exploration and ecology preservation. The people of Olobiri were satisfied with the minute and insignificant positions offered to them and the little monetary offers made to the community during the discovery of oil. Years have passed, and their lives are in shambles due to the oil company's activities. There is no river to fish, water to drink, or farmlands to cultivate, and the air they breathe is contaminated with oil fumes.

The complete collapse of the Olobiri community's ecosystem has led to anarchy and agitations. Boma, aka Gunpowder, played by Richard Mofe-Damijo, a geology graduate and former employee of LESH oil company, is the character through which the film drives the thematic concern of environmental degradation and its consequences in society. The film opens with Gunpowder conducting a public execution of his former partner, Dogo, whom he accuses of greed and sabotaging the struggle for the emancipation of the Oloibiri ecology. Gunpowder was triggered to anger the more with the news that there has been approval for Foreshaw to extract oil from Otuagbagi, a nearby community- a deal worth $300 million in revenue each year. In his resolution to protect his people and the environment, Gunpowder takes laws into his hands. He successfully infiltrated Forshaw Oil Company by planting a spy who worked as a personal assistant to the founder and director of the organisation, Mr. Powell. The spy's job is to dissuade Foreshaw from continuing the oil exploration plan. First, he sends pictures of malnourished Nigerian children and those affected by crude oil poisoning inside the envelope to Powell and other concerned persons. Still, the company's representative in Nigeria, Cyril Beke, encouraged the company to ignore it and go ahead with the oil exploration plan. This is when Powell decides to visit Nigeria to see things for himself.

Upon Powell's arrival in Nigeria, his convoy, including Cyril and a group of soldiers, was attacked by Gunpowder and his men. Powell escapes with the help of a soldier and is found by the community doctor Timipre's grandson's love interest. The doctor hides Powell to Timipre's house. Meanwhile, Azu and Dobra, who are Gunpowder's accomplices, have kidnapped Powell's family in the US. The story's twist comes when Gunpowder captures Timipre, his grandson, the doctor and Powell. The series of events paved the way for the cancellation of the oil exploration. Still, Gunpowder refuses to honour his agreement with Azu and Dobra to release Powel when it is cancelled, insisting that Powell and Cyril Beke must pay with their blood. Infuriated by Gunpowder's betrayal and blood lust, Azu reports himself to the police and reveals Gunpowder's hideout.

Impacts of Environmental Abuse

The film *Olobiri* through motion picture presentation, vividly depicts the complete environmental degradation in the Olobiri community of the Niger Delta region in Nigeria. The film can be classified as storytelling about the environment because the unfolding action inherent in the film revolves around environmental abuse due to human activities on Olobiri land. The film shows that this abuse has been ongoing and persistent since the discovery of oil in Olobiri in 1956. Ekpo and David (2018) observe that since the discovery of the first commercially viable oil wells in Oloibiri, in the Niger Delta, Nigeria, in 1956 to the present day, the issue of oil production and its effect on the environment has been the source of constant menace to the lives of people living in the community and also a significant source of friction between oil companies and their host communities. Through the cinematic presentation of the social realities inherent in the Olobiri, the film shows one of the lead characters, Timpire, rebuking a boy for drinking water from the river. Gunpowder also tells his mother that he has resulted in anarchy, mayhem, murder, maiming, and homicidal enterprise because that is the only way he can fight for the emancipation of his people and the restoration of the collapsed ecology of Olobiri. He reminds his mother that the blood which she

coughs out often is an insignia of the struggle and also a result of inhaling fumes from oil exploration and drinking from the river, which is already contaminated with petroleum jelly. Gunpowder rebukes his mother for suggesting he take a job offer with the same oil companies that have ruined their lives.

The film also depicts how oil companies' operations in Olobiri have been a significant source of environmental abuse and degradation. Like Ekpo and David (2018) rightly observe, the films show that oil exploration and activities have affected fishing activities in the host communities, which is a significant economic preoccupation among the indigenes of Olobiri. The primary sources of the oil spill in Olobiri are vandalisation of the oil pipelines by the local inhabitants due to neglect by the oil companies, ageing of the pipelines, oil blowouts from the flow stations, cleaning of oil tankers on the high sea, disposal of used oil into the drains by the roadside mechanics, tanker accidents, ballast water discharge, etc. Oil kills plants and animals in the estuarine zone. Oil settles on beaches and kills organisms that live there; it also settles on the ocean floor and kills benthic (bottom-dwelling) organisms such as crabs. Oil poisons algae disrupt significant food chains and decrease the yield of edible crustaceans. Initially, the people of Olobiri were farmers who lived by the trade of their fishing nets and the dignity of labour of farming on their rich vegetation. No wonder Nwaozuzu et al. (2021:2) state that in the film *Olobiri (Blood and Oil),*

> The apt portrayal of Niger Delta oil communities' extensively degraded and polluted environment validates the reality of anguish and victimhood because of the massively diminished fishing and farming prospects. Lastly, the implication of this scenario is increased unemployment, psychological distress, diseases, and violent restiveness, which have enormously reduced the well-being of Niger Delta inhabitants.

Curtis Graham, in this film, *Olobiri*, shows through his directorial approach and concept the cauldron of contradiction that characterises the fight for the emancipation of Olobiri. In the opening scene of the film, the director shows through motion pictures the gruesome murder and execution of Dogo, who has been accused of greed and betraying the course they pursue. Also, the Oil Company's representative in Nigeria, Cyril, is presented in such a way that his character does not care about the environmental abuse and the consequent effect on the lives of his people. Then Gunpowder, the anarchist, resorts to violence and the breakdown of law and order. The situations presented in the film appear to be typical of the social reality in Olobiri and the entire Niger Delta at large. (Agbiboa and Maiangwa 2012). The poor living conditions of the Niger Delta people as a result of corruption on the part of political leaders and many factors have prevented the cleaning of Olobiri land, this environmental degradation has displaced many people from their source of livelihood, and this is the course Gunpowder is fighting for in this film.

Tool for Environmental Change

Over the years, the world globally has experienced a pattern of unfriendliness from nature; even though this estrangement from nature, it is evident that attitudes and behaviours of human activities are implicated in the current environmental crisis (Pyle, 2003). This means that there is a need for humans to rethink and change their attitude towards nature. Recently, researchers have begun to share the notion that films have the potential to disseminate widely through motion picture narratives, stories and information that can impact human interaction with the environment (McCormack, 2021; Jones et al., 2019; Silk et al., 2018). Films with solid environmental themes are adjudged to have the ability to influence social behaviour regarding human interactions with the environment.

Olobiri has strong environmental themes and, hence, a social impact film that aspires to influence ecological change through cinematic narrative persuasion. First, the film shows the unjust indignation that thousands of people living on the riverine coast of

Olobiri daily endure due to human activities on the environment. By connecting to the suffering from the inception when oil was discovered in the Olobiri community in 1956, the film shows a long-standing battle of a complete collapse of the Olobiri ecosystem occasioned by oil exploration. The film is a social reality of the indigenes' day-to-day lives. Their livelihood is solely dependent on the ecosystem for survival, thus increasing the level of poverty and displaced persons. These people, who were originally farmers, could not harvest from the gullets of their rivers, which nature had reserved for them. They cannot access drinking water or cultivate their farmland due to oil pollution that has now contaminated their streams and rivers, causing forest destruction and biodiversity loss. In general, the area is an ecological wasteland. In the film, we see the people of Olobiri living in abject poverty, with no water to drink and no sound health system to treat them for the illnesses they bear due to environmental degradation. The scriptwriter Samantha Iwowo, in an interview with Nduka Otiono, states that:

> I was keen to write a story with a theme bearing an immediacy of resonance within the Niger Delta society. Based on this, I developed the characters; I wanted each to be an archetype of the sort of victims oil exploitations in the Delta continue to create. In Oloibiri town, even now, every inhabitant in some form continues to suffer the devastating effects consequent upon decades of mindless drilling of its land for oil. From the child to the aged, the youth and the middle-aged, hopelessness can be gleaned from conversations I had with them during my field research for the film. They exist – no aspirations! The town is a ghostly remnant of those who have not had the opportunity to leave. Only one rundown school exists there. A few youths engage in the bike-transportation business. Besides this, nothing! Farming is impossible. Access to pipe-borne water is impossible…

From the preceding, it is evident that the film depicts the ugly realities inherent in Olobiri land. Besides cinematic rounds, the film is widely distributed on SVOD online streaming platforms like Netflix and YouTube. This means that it reaches an audience across the globe. One of the ways social impact films, especially those on the environment, can effect changes is by triggering empathy (O'Bryhim & Parsons, 2015) by showing the inhuman treatment and suffering the people of Olobiri received. Empathy often generates global conversation and thus can deter those abusing the environment. In the film, the oil company suspended their planned exploration, which was estimated to accrue an interest of 300 million dollars. Visual storytelling has the potential to create dramatic experiences that are so vivid in such way that the experience can lead to catharsis. Catharsis can influence the audience's behaviour in their connection and interaction with nature. Here, *Olobiri* is conceived as an environmental film because it is set in the natural world among their primary subjects or themes, concerning plants, animals, landscapes or other natural phenomena like climate (McCormack, 2021). The film Olobiri is a non-fiction story that involves human and non-human protagonists.

As an environmental film aimed at making a social impact, the film *Olobiri*, in its storytelling format, has explored a certain degree of narrativity, having nature and human intersection with nature in view. Through narrative persuasions, the story depicts characters in contradictory conditions caused by human activities that have wholly degraded the environment. The causally linked sequence of events that present the crisis, conflict, and resolution shows the harmful impact of environmental violations on humans. Gunpowder and his men completely break down the law and order, taking the laws into their own hands. The collapsed ecology of Olobiri leaves the community, as presented in the film, in abject poverty and a varied array of developmental issues.

Conclusion

Through visual narratology, the film *Olobiri* shows a veritable persuasion pathway by identifying a degraded environment and how human activities play a significant role in

violating the ecosystem. *Olobiri*, as an environmental film, beyond its social impact function, shows its potential to influence viewers' identification of environmental violations from the purview and knowledge about the level of ecological abuse continually going on in the Niger Delta region area of Nigeria. For example, depictions of the environment as a character in the film and the violation of the environment by other characters, such as the oil companies' work' may allow viewers to draw social comparisons between themselves and those presented in the film through the purgation of emotions of pity and fear. This can reinforce a paradigm shift in behaviour on how the oil workers and the indigenes of Olobiri connect and interact with the environment. Environmental change can be achieved by storytelling the environment through narrative persuasion. The film Oloibiri is a good example.

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Mitigating Western media hegemony: Insights and pathways to African development

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Abstract

This study explores the pervasive hegemony of Western nations in global media and communication systems, with a specific focus on the role of International News Agencies (INAs) in perpetuating cultural imperialism against African countries. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research incorporates qualitative and quantitative analyses, utilising surveys, descriptive statistics, and inferential techniques such as variance analysis. Findings reveal that over 78% of global media infrastructure and content is controlled by Western countries, resulting in significant impediments to Africa's socioeconomic, cultural, and technological development. The study highlights the disproportionate representation and misrepresentation of African narratives, contributing to stereotypes and undermining the continent's developmental agenda. The research proposes strategic solutions, including establishing an African Continental Information Superhighway, Digital Africa, to facilitate modern broadcasting infrastructure, foster research collaboration, and enhance information exchange. The findings also emphasise the need for African nations to invest in indigenous media industries, strengthen policies promoting cultural autonomy, and counterbalance Western media dominance through collaborative efforts involving governments, financial institutions, and international networks. This paper contributes to the discourse on global media equity and development communication by presenting actionable pathways to mitigate the adverse effects of Western media hegemony and foster a self-reliant African media landscape.

Keywords: Media Hegemony, Cultural Imperialism, African Development, Global Media Equity

Introduction

The conclusion of the First and Second World Wars, followed by the onset of the Cold War era, marked the emergence of a distinctive epoch in the international system. This period witnessed the bipolar confrontation between the Western bloc, led by the United States and its NATO allies, and the Eastern bloc, represented by the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact countries (Kennedy, 1988). Decades after the Cold War, the global order has transitioned from a US-dominated unipolar system to a multifaceted "new world order," characterised by Western and European struggles for hegemonic control over international media, economic resources, and information and communication technology (ICT) (McPhail, 2010). Despite the evolving dynamics of global power, the dominance of the United States and its Western allies has inspired the rise of regional and medium powers, including China, Japan, Brazil, and Canada. These nations have amplified their socio-cultural, political, and economic influence internationally. However, their engagement with Africa and other Third World nations has often fallen short of the anticipated transformative roles (Ogunnubi & Akinola, 2017). Consequently, African countries have faced persistent socioeconomic, cultural, and political upheavals since achieving political independence, including leadership crises, civil conflicts, economic instability, religious tensions, hunger, and disease (Ayittey, 2005).

Among the challenges confronting Africa's development, Western powers' monopolistic control of ICT, global media industries, and information flow remain significant. Scholars such as Thussu (2000) argue that Western media hegemony entrenches Africa's marginalisation by perpetuating neo-colonialism, media imperialism, and exploitative capitalist frameworks, distorting African realities and suppressing indigenous narratives. Boyd-Barrett (2015) emphasises that Western-dominated international news agencies (INAs) contribute significantly to the skewed global information flow, further reinforcing inequalities in the distribution of mass communication resources between industrialised and developing nations. This study critically examines the nature and impact of Western media hegemony on Africa's development. It explores how international news agencies contribute to the skewed global information flow and the unequal distribution of mass communication resources. Additionally, it aims to identify strategies for mitigating these challenges and fostering the growth of African media industries to counterbalance Western dominance. The study seeks to achieve the following objectives: 1. To investigate the strategies employed by Western media organisations in shaping African cultural identity and development; 2. To identify measures that African governments and institutions can adopt to develop indigenous media industries and counter Western media dominance; and 3. To propose recommendations for mitigating the adverse effects of Western media hegemony and promoting sustainable African development.

Literature Review

Media hegemony refers to dominant nations' monopolistic control of global media hardware and software, which harms the values, norms, and cultures of less privileged countries. Boyd-Barrett (2015) posits that this hegemony is an extension of Western neo-colonialism, mobilising capitalist exploitation to sustain the underdevelopment of Third World nations. Thussu (2000) similarly highlights that the flow of global communication is disproportionately controlled by a few Western media conglomerates, perpetuating stereotypes and misrepresentations of African cultures. Scholars have argued that this hegemony not only entrenches global inequalities but also actively marginalises indigenous voices, thereby exacerbating cultural and developmental stagnation in African nations (Ayittey, 2005; McPhail, 2010). As Rodney (1972) conceptualised, development is an individual and collective phenomenon. Individually, it entails "increased skill, capacity, freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility, and material wellbeing" (p. 9). It represents a group's capacity

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to regulate internal and external relationships, often framed as a struggle against natural hazards and adversaries. Expanding on this, Todaro and Smith (2007) define development as a multidimensional process involving reorganising social and economic systems to sustain human advancement. They emphasise key variables, including improved income, institutional reforms, and societal norms and belief systems, as essential development components. These developmental benchmarks remain elusive for Africa due to systemic global inequalities and exploitative international practices (Rodney, 1972; Todaro & Smith, 2007).

Hegemony originates from the Greek term hegemony, meaning the dominance of one entity over others in a system. Yilmaz (2010) conceptualises it as the power to influence international norms and rules to align with one's interests. However, Destradi (2010) argues that hegemony often manifests as coercive power by advanced capitalist nations, such as the US and its allies, against developing countries, particularly in Africa. This "imperial leadership" is characterised by exploitative practices that undermine the developmental agenda of peripheral nations. Webb and Krasner (1989) posit that hegemonic stability theory explains international economic liberalisation as most viable under the dominance of a single power. Similarly, Ravenhill (2008) notes that hegemonic states, driven by their financial interests, leverage their dominance to promote a liberal global economy while exerting undue influence over weaker states. This dominance in the international media landscape translates to the monopolisation of communication channels and ICT infrastructure, perpetuating Africa's dependency and marginalisation (McPhail, 2010; Thussu, 2000).

Hegemonic stability theory is applied here to elucidate the monopolistic dominance of Western industrialised powers—primarily the US and its allies—over global media and communication systems. By integrating Gramscian perspectives on hegemony, the study examines how these powers mobilise ICT and international news agencies (INAs) to control the global flow of information. This dominance perpetuates cultural imperialism and impedes Africa's sociocultural and economic development. For instance, Boyd-Barrett (2015) and Thussu (2000) highlight how Western media corporations manipulate global narratives to marginalise Africa and reinforce dependency structures. The theory underscores how hegemonic powers destabilise African development through media propaganda, economic subjugation, and ICT monopolisation. This systematic examination aligns with Rodney's (1972) argument that external exploitative forces significantly hinder the progress of African nations.

Understanding the structure and dynamics of international news flow is crucial, as it directly impacts global development, politics, and diplomacy. At the core of this issue lies the imbalance in disseminating news and information between developed and developing nations, which has long been a contentious topic in international communication. Okigbo (1998) states that the call for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) echoes the demand for a New World Economic Order, highlighting grievances from Third World countries about the inequities in global news flow. These inequities are symptomatic of broader structural imbalances between developed and developing regions, where industrialised nations dominate the control of communication technologies and infrastructures. Okigbo (1998) argues that the monopolistic dominance of industrialised nations such as the USA, Britain, France, and Germany perpetuates the underdevelopment of Third World nations. This dominance is exercised through control over critical ICT infrastructure, international broadcasting, and the allocation of radio frequency spectrums, leaving Africa and much of the Global South unable to assert agency in the global communication landscape. Even when such facilities exist in developing nations like South Africa, ownership and control often remain under Western influence. As a result, media content predominantly reflects Western cultural values, including nudity, hip-hop music, and pornography, which may conflict with African cultural norms.

UNESCO statistics further illustrate this disparity: industrialised countries account for 87.1% of the world's computers, which are pivotal tools for data communication systems (Okigbo, 1998). Moreover, while developing nations comprise approximately 75% of the global population, they receive less than 30% of global news coverage. This disproportionate coverage not only marginalises Africa but also perpetuates stereotypes and misconceptions about the continent, impeding international cooperation and understanding. Okigbo also underscores the qualitative imbalance in news flow, noting that Western media's portrayal of the Global South overwhelmingly focuses on adverse events, such as coups, natural disasters, famine, and wars. This biased representation further alienates Africa from the global stage, fostering an environment unconducive to development.

The Role of International News Agencies

International news agencies like the Associated Press (AP), Reuters, and TASS dominate global news dissemination, accounting for over 80% of international news content (Okigbo, 1998). These agencies heavily influence how stories about Africa and the Global South are framed, often perpetuating stereotypes and limiting narratives to conflict, poverty, and instability. Furthermore, Western media outlets such as CNN, BBC, and Fox News flood African airwaves with anti-development content, overshadowing indigenous perspectives and developmental priorities. The dominance of Western cultural exports extends beyond news agencies to entertainment industries. The United States remains the largest distributor of motion pictures globally, with Hollywood influencing cultural narratives worldwide, followed by China and India. However, the emergence of Nigeria's Nollywood has provided a counter-narrative, offering African perspectives and cultural representation on the global stage. Despite this, the radio and television programming traffic imbalance remains heavily skewed in favour of Western content, perpetuating hegemonic control over global communication channels (McPhail, 2010). This systemic imbalance in global news flow marginalises Africa and hampers its ability to shape its narrative and developmental trajectory. Addressing this imbalance requires rethinking the structures and mechanisms of international communication to foster a more equitable distribution of resources, representation, and agency.

Shrivastava (2007) thoroughly examines International News Agencies (INAs), transnational corporations responsible for collecting, processing, and distributing news and images globally. Examples include the Associated Press (AP) in the USA, Reuters in Britain, TASS in Russia, and Agence France-Presse (AFP) in France. These agencies dominate global news dissemination, distributing content to various subscribing media organisations such as newspapers, television networks, and digital platforms. The global interdependence fostered by these agencies has significantly contributed to creating a "global village" through rapid information exchange. However, this dominance also perpetuates structural imbalances in the news flow, favouring Western industrialised nations' narratives. According to the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), the USA alone produces and distributes approximately 1.2 million films and videos annually, with Europe contributing an additional 2 million movies and thousands of television programmes (Variety, 2021). Platforms like YouTube, Netflix, and Amazon Prime amplify this disparity by hosting billions of hours of predominantly Western content. Critics argue that INAs propagate Western-centric narratives while under-reporting or misrepresenting developments in Africa, reinforcing stereotypes and marginalising African voices. Galtung (1979), as cited in Ndolo (2005), describes this dynamic as a "disguised form of cultural imperialism," creating a state of dependency that undermines Africa's cultural identity and fosters psychological subjugation.

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Effects of Western Media Hegemony

Western media hegemony significantly impacts African cultural identity, eroding traditional values and promoting cultural imperialism. Schiller (1992), Tomlinson (1991), and McQuail (2005) concur that Western media distort indigenous cultural content, undermining African sovereignty and autonomy. Dasylva (2006) emphasises that culture defines a people's civilisation and identity; thus, cultural institutions face extinction when external media influences erode societal values. This phenomenon has led to the dominance of Western norms, languages, and practices, marginalising indigenous cultures in Africa. The dominance of Western media also has profound economic implications for African development. Oshikoya (2008) argues that globalisation, underpinned by Western media dominance, perpetuates economic interdependency, often to the detriment of African nations. Devereux (2003) highlights how Western media giants localise products to secure market control, marginalising African businesses. This economic imbalance limits African entrepreneurs' ability to compete globally, as they lack the resources to effectively establish competitive media platforms for advertising and marketing their products.

Exposure to predominantly negative portrayals of Africa in Western media exacerbates feelings of inferiority among African audiences. Galtung (1979), as cited in Ndolo (2005), notes that persistent negative news about Africa—such as coups, conflicts, and famine—diminishes self-perception and fosters a psychological dependency on Western narratives. This skewed representation undermines efforts to build positive African identities and histories. One of the profound impacts of Western media hegemony on African development is the erosion of political sovereignty in many African states. McQuail (2005) emphasises the critical role of mass media in shaping contemporary politics, noting that:

> Whatever changes are underway, there is no doubting the significance of mass media in contemporary society, politics, culture, everyday social life and economics. In respect of politics, the mass media provide an arena of debate and a set of channels for making policies, candidates, relevant facts, and ideas more widely known, as well as providing politicians, interest groups and agents of government with a means of publicity and influence for distributing diverse information and opinion (p. 4).

Based on McQuail's views, it can be inferred that Western media's global dominance significantly influences the framing and reporting of political news about Africa. These media outlets often represent the views and interests of their owners, which frequently align with Western powers' political and economic goals. Consequently, Western media narratives usually stifle political development in Africa, promoting Western-centric perspectives while marginalising African agencies. The technological dimensions of Western media hegemony are equally significant. MacBride et al. (1980) observe that:

> New technologies have ambiguous consequences as they make communication systems more rigid and exaggerated in their functions and dysfunctions. (p. 32).

The proliferation of media technologies controlled by industrialised nations has led to a monopolisation of global news flow and the standardisation of media content. This standardisation fosters cultural dependency in African countries, as their media industries rely heavily on imported films, documentaries, and other media products. These dynamics limit the growth of indigenous media industries and perpetuate Western cultural dominance.

Several factors contribute to the perpetuation of imbalances in global news flow: 1. Third-world nations lack competitive advantages in communication technologies,

exacerbating their dependence on Western platforms. Limited access to global information further marginalises these countries. 2. The pervasive effects of globalisation and economic marginalisation have entrenched dependency on the West. This dependency is further compounded by debt burdens imposed by stringent conditions from international financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank. 3. Poor governance and corruption in many African states have hindered the development of robust media infrastructures. As a result, these nations struggle to counteract Western media hegemony effectively. 4. Africa's media landscape is characterised by small, fragile outlets with limited reach and inadequate internal networks for news dissemination. This fragmentation forces reliance on international news agencies such as Reuters and AP. 5. Rodney (1972), Ake (1996), and Fanon (1961) highlight the colonial and imperialistic exploitation of Africa, which established the foundation for its current underdevelopment. The European slave trade, as noted by Rodney, significantly disrupted Africa's economic and social systems, leaving long-lasting effects on its ability to compete in global media and financial systems.

Methodology and Results

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods to address the research problem. The quantitative method focused on the collection and analysis of empirical data. A total population of 3,000 media professionals—including journalists, advertising professionals, and PR practitioners—was studied in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. A proportionate allocation technique was used to derive a sample size of 300 respondents (10% of the total population). The qualitative component involved secondary data collection through literature reviews, interviews, and case studies. This approach facilitated understanding the research problem and informed sustainable solutions aligned with the study's objectives. The study was confined to the Federal Capital City (FCC), Abuja, due to its residents' demographic and psychographic diversity. This focus ensured the validity and reliability of the data, as respondents represented a range of professional and educational backgrounds.

The study revealed significant findings on the role of Western media hegemony in perpetuating imbalances in global news flow, particularly its impact on African political, economic, and cultural development. The quantitative data underscored a strong correlation between Western media dominance and Africa's dependency on external narratives. Meanwhile, the qualitative data highlighted the systemic challenges—such as technological gaps, governance issues, and historical exploitation—that hinder Africa's ability to challenge Western media hegemony. By triangulating data from both methodologies, the research provided an understanding of the problem and potential strategies for mitigating Western media hegemony in Africa. Table 1 below shows the distribution of the study population of 3000 people working in the various organisations in which the research instrument was proportionately distributed.

Table 1: Population of the Study Showing Characteristics of Respondents Comprising Workers in Various Organizations in which the Research Questionnaire were Administered

S/No.	Characteristics of the Respondents	Population Frequency	Proportionate Allocation Technique (10%)	Sample Size (Percentage)
1.	Journalists in Govt./Private Media Organizations	1500	150	50.00
2.	Politicians, government officials, communication aides, etc.	700	70	33.33

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3.	Media Practitioners in Embassies, UN Agencies, NGOs, etc.	500	50	16.67
4.	Professional Bodies, i.e., the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) and the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON).	300	30	10.00
	Total	3000	300	100.00

Source: Field survey data, Okafor, 2024.

A combination of purposive and convenience sampling techniques was employed to select the sample population to ensure fairness and objectivity. Respondents possessing the necessary characteristics to address the research objectives were deliberately chosen for the investigation. The purposive sampling ensured that participants met specific inclusion criteria relevant to the study, while the convenience sampling facilitated accessibility to respondents. This approach ensured that every individual in the target population had an equal chance of inclusion in the sample, enhancing the validity and reliability of the research findings. This methodology aligns with the postulations of Kerlinger and Babie (2013, p. 62) and Silverman (2001, p. 250), who advocate for structured sampling techniques to achieve fair representation and reliable outcomes. To ensure the reliability of the research instrument, the study employed Cronbach's Alpha reliability test alongside pre-test and test-retest methods. These techniques measured the consistency of results obtained from the questionnaire. According to Asika (2008, p. 105), "An instrument is reliable if it consistently gives the same or similar results." All questions were carefully designed to ensure clarity, conciseness, and simplicity, with stringent controls applied to eliminate ambiguities and extraneous variables that could compromise the validity of the findings.

The collected data, both primary and secondary, were systematically analysed and presented in tabular formats. Percentages were used to determine the frequency of responses to key questions related to the research problem, objectives, and hypotheses. The data were further analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Relevant qualitative data from interviews and secondary sources were edited, analysed, and interpreted to eliminate errors and inconsistencies, ensuring robust and comprehensive results. The total number of questionnaires printed and administered to the respondents was 325, while 300 questionnaires were returned for analysis, representing 90.23 per cent, whereas 25 questionnaires were not returned, representing 9.77 per cent. Section A of the questionnaire represents the respondents' demographic characteristics, while Section B represents the study's objectives and hypotheses.

Table 2: Questionnaire Distributed and Sample Size Determined

Groups	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Returned	Questionnaire Not Returned
1.	325 Questionnaire	300 (90.23%)	25 (9.77%)

Source: Field survey data, Okafor, 2024.

Table 3: Effects of Western Media Hegemony on African Development

Response Category	Level of Agreement	Frequency	Fx	Percentage

	(x)	(f)		
Strongly Agree	5	145	725	48.33
Agree	4	41	164	13.67
Strongly Disagree	2	45	90	15.00
Disagree	1	39	39	13.00
Undecided	3	30	90	10.00
Total	15	300	1,108	100.00

Source: Field survey data, Okafor, 2024.

In Table 3 above, the researcher sought to ascertain the effects of Western media hegemony on African development. The data interpretation reveals that 145 and 41 respondents of the population strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, in favour of the fact that Western media hegemony affects African development as it impedes the socio-economic and technological development of most African nations. The total number of respondents is 48.33 per cent and 13.67 per cent, respectively. However, 45 and 39 respondents, representing 15.00 per cent and 13.00 per cent, say they strongly disagree and disagree, respectively. However, 10 per cent of the respondents said they were undecided in their views. Therefore, the mean calculation of 3.69 signifies a dominant socioeconomic effect of Western media hegemony.

Findings and Contributions to Knowledge

The data collected from the field were analysed with the appropriate statistical tools, and the results show that over 78 per cent of respondents agree that there are specific measures African countries can adopt to develop their media industries and counter Western global media dominance. Drawing factual inferences from the preceding data analyses, extensive literature reviews, face-to-face interviews, and other empirical research pieces of evidence, it is apparent that Western media messages were so alarming that they created a preponderance of socioeconomic, technological and political effects on African development. Lastly, the third hypothesis attests to the fact that there are sustainable strategies that can be adopted to counter the negative influence of Western media propaganda messages. The study found the need for the media, political communicators, politicians, political gladiators and officeholders to be free to report all sides of events, but not to the detriment of national interest, reputation, security, public opinion and societal norms and values.

The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in international and development communication by providing strategic and sustainable solutions to the complex problems of Western media hegemony and African development. While providing the intellectual framework for interpreting and analysing certain concepts, principles, and theories, it is also expected to give a research guide for future researchers in related studies. It would serve as a policy framework for governments and other policymakers to draft development-oriented communication policies for functional national communication strategies for developing African nations. The study contributes to knowledge by serving as a strategic performance evaluation framework for media practitioners in discharging their social responsibility functions creditably. The research also provides an understanding of the ideological and philosophical leanings of Western media organisations and journalists and how these leanings and biases negatively affect human development. The study provides resource material for communication and development scholars, serving as a policy framework for governments and other policymakers in drafting development-oriented communication policies and strategies for African countries. Development partners and donor

agencies would find the research report a good peer review template for formulating African development policies and programmes. The study also provides more insights into emerging concepts, ideas, principles, and theories and an understanding of the current dynamics in global news and information order.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the study critically examined the pervasive influence of Western media hegemony on African development. From the research analysis and findings, it is evident that one of the major causes of African underdevelopment stems from the hegemonic influence of the Western media arising from absolute comparative scientific, technological and economic advantages enjoyed by the Western World and other industrialised nations over the developing countries. Arising from the findings, it is indisputable that Western media misrepresentations, misinformation and stereotypes about Africa often undermine the continent's socioeconomic transformation by reinforcing Eurocentrism and hindering the positive representation of African voices and narratives. This prevailing situation may not be reversed unless a comprehensive remedy is taken towards African development and general emancipation.

Though the clamour for a new World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) is not new, the study underscores the critical need for a paradigm shift in international and intercultural communication towards a more equitable global media landscape that fosters diversity, mutual understanding, cooperation and global interconnectedness. The study concludes that African leaders can foster a deeper understanding of their traditional identities, cultures, norms, and values through sustainable investment and promoting indigenous African media content, education, and media literacy. Exploring these factors will create more insights and pathways to Africa's technological and socioeconomic development. Finally, the aim and objectives of this study cannot be attained without proffering sustainable solutions to the problems posed by Western media hegemony on African development. Hence, the following recommendations have been proffered to achieve them:

1) African governments, media organisations, and scholars should collaborate and develop policies and strategies to check Western media hegemony and media content and promote African development. To mitigate the effects of Western media hegemony, African journalists should counterbalance adverse propagandist news reports on Western countries' issues to deter their journalists from being cautious in their investigations and reportage of Africa.

2) The African governments must collaborate with financial institutions and international media networks and mobilise resources to build an African Continental Information Superhighway called Digital Africa. It can help provide a continental broadcasting infrastructure network for development-oriented news and information in Africa.

3) There is a strong need to establish an Africa Media Development Bank (AMDB) exclusively devoted to financing and developing African media and ICT infrastructure in the broadcast industry. The AMDB would grant broadcast media organisations access to credit facilities to sponsor media projects to checkmate the Western press.

4) African countries must develop their global communications capabilities by combining their traditional rural communication channels with modern communication systems at their disposal and trained professionals worldwide.

5) Western media organisations, journalists, and other media practitioners must

strictly comply with the ethics, laws, rules, and regulations governing the global media and communication industry. At the same time, they must refrain from communicating falsehoods, non-evidence-based information, and propagandistic information dissemination.

6) African Heads of State and Governments and other Third World nations must collaborate with their Western allies to embark on aggressive mass media and cultural reforms in the African media and film industry to screen out the negative influences of foreign news and programmes.

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