

CYBER DIPLOMACY: THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN CHINA'S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Abstract

Cyber diplomacy has emerged as a critical frontier in international relations, with technology increasingly shaping the way states interact, negotiate, and assert influence on the global stage. This paper examines the role of technology in China's international relations, focusing on how cyber capabilities, digital infrastructure, and information control have become central to its diplomatic strategies. It explores China's approach to cyber sovereignty, its promotion of the Digital Silk Road, and its efforts to shape global norms on internet governance through bilateral and multilateral engagements. The study also analyses China's cybersecurity posture and its implications for geopolitical power dynamics, particularly in relation to the United States, the European Union, and emerging economies. Through a qualitative assessment of policy documents, official statements, and international responses, the paper highlights how cyber diplomacy not only serves China's strategic interests but also redefines traditional diplomacy in the digital age. The findings suggest that China's integration of technology into its foreign policy is both a tool of influence and a mechanism for safeguarding its national interests in an increasingly interconnected world.

Keywords: Cyber Diplomacy, China, Technology, China, Interest

Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed a transformative shift in international relations, driven largely by the rapid advancement of digital technologies (Segal, 2020). Among the key developments in this new diplomatic landscape is the rise of cyber diplomacy, a field where states leverage technological tools and cyber capabilities to shape foreign policy, secure national interests, and influence global norms. At the forefront of this evolution is China—a nation that has not only emerged as a global technological powerhouse but also as an assertive actor in cyberspace diplomacy (China State Council 2010).

China's growing integration of technology into its foreign policy is evident in its pursuit of cyber sovereignty, investment in global digital infrastructure through initiatives like the Digital Silk Road, and active participation in international forums on internet governance. These efforts reflect a strategic vision in which cyberspace is both a domain of competition and

cooperation. As China promotes its own model of digital development and governance, it challenges the traditionally Western-led frameworks of internet freedom, data privacy, and digital rights (Segal, 2020).

However, this strategic use of technology in diplomacy is not without controversy. Concerns over cybersecurity, digital surveillance, and cyber-enabled interference have heightened tensions between China and other global actors, particularly the United States and the European Union. As the line between technological advancement and geopolitical influence continues to blur, understanding the role of technology in China's international relations becomes critical (World Economic Forum, 2023).

This study explores the concept of cyber diplomacy within the context of China's foreign policy, analyzing how technological tools are being employed to expand diplomatic influence, shape global digital norms, and manage international relationships in an increasingly interconnected and contested cyberspace.

Statement of the Problem

In the rapidly evolving digital age, the intersection of technology and international relations has given rise to the concept of cyber diplomacy—a strategic domain where states utilize digital tools to pursue foreign policy goals, protect national interests, and influence global norms. China, as a rising global power, has increasingly integrated technology into its diplomatic strategies through initiatives such as the Digital Silk Road, cyber sovereignty advocacy, and its participation in global internet governance forums. However, this growing cyber influence presents complex challenges and raises concerns among the international community. There is a lack of consensus on the norms and rules governing state behavior in cyberspace, leading to tensions over issues like data security, digital surveillance, and cyber espionage. Despite China's expanding role in shaping the global digital order, scholarly understanding of how technology functions as a tool of diplomacy in its international relations remains limited and fragmented. This research seeks to address the problem by critically examining how China employs technology in its foreign policy, the implications for global cyber governance, and the broader impact on international diplomatic relations and geopolitical stability.

Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity is the practice of defending computers, servers, mobile devices, electronic systems, networks, and data from malicious attacks (Triolo, et-al. 2020). It's also known as information technology security or electronic information security.

Cyber diplomacy

Cyber diplomacy is the practice of using diplomatic tools and strategies to manage international relations in cyberspace. It involves nations, groups, and individuals engaging in diplomatic efforts to safeguard their interests, promote their political, economic, and cultural relations, and maintain peaceful relationships in the digital realm (Triolo, et al. 2020). Essentially, it's about

applying traditional diplomatic principles to the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the internet and digital technologies.

Historical Evolution of China’s Cyber Diplomacy

China’s approach to international technology engagement has long emphasized “cyber sovereignty” – the idea that states control their own internet space. This concept first appeared in China’s 2010 Internet White Paper and was later enshrined in the 2017 “International Strategy of Cooperation on Cyberspace,” which asserts each country’s right to choose its own cyber regulations (Segal, 2020). Over the 2010s, China built state institutions (e.g. the Cyberspace Administration of China) to coordinate internet policy and began hosting the annual World Internet Conference in Wuzhen, promoting its vision of norms for a controlled, state-centric internet. By the mid-2010s Beijing also began integrating technology into its Belt and Road Initiative, announcing a “Digital Silk Road” in 2015 to export Chinese telecom, surveillance and e-commerce technology abroad. In parallel, China engaged in state-level cyber dialogues (e.g. a 2015 U.S.–China cyber agreement committing both sides to refrain from cyber theft of economic secrets) even as it continued to emphasize bilateral and multilateral rule-making under UN and Shanghai Cooperation frameworks. This evolution set the stage for more recent tech-driven diplomacy.

Major Government Policies and Initiatives

Cybersecurity and Data Laws: China enacted a comprehensive Cybersecurity Law in 2017, requiring data localization and stricter controls on networks. In 2021 it implemented a Data Security Law and a Personal Information Protection Law, imposing broad new restrictions on cross-border data flows (Segal, 2020). Together, these domestic laws aim to tighten Beijing’s control over data while projecting Chinese standards globally (e.g. by demanding “secure development” and banning foreign data access.

Digital Silk Road (DSR): Launched in 2015 under the Belt and Road Initiative, the DSR finances overseas telecommunications, cloud, AI, e-commerce, smart city, and surveillance projects. China has signed DSR agreements with dozens of countries, using firms like Huawei, ZTE, Alibaba and others to build infrastructure. For example, China already provides more financing for African ICT projects than all Western donors combined (Zhang, 2022). The DSR explicitly supports Chinese exporters in strategic technology sectors.

Global Data Security Initiatives: In September 2020 President Xi proposed a Global Data Security Initiative (GDSI), a diplomatic framework of eight principles for “open, secure” data flows and mutual non-interference (Triolo, Et-al. 2020). The GDSI was widely seen as a response to the U.S. “Clean Network” campaign against Chinese tech, and China has courted partners (Russia, Pakistan, Tanzania, Ecuador, the Arab League and ASEAN states) to endorse it. More recently, China launched a broader Global Security Initiative in 2023–24, which includes a Global Initiative on Data Security and an AI Governance Initiative as key components (Boulanin, and Verbruggen, 2021). These initiatives reiterate China’s push for

multilateral (government-to-government) rule-making in cyberspace and foreign cooperation on “cybersecurity” under Chinese terms.

Other Tech Diplomacy Efforts: China’s foreign ministry and party think-tanks have also advanced projects like the Digital Economy Cooperation Initiative (proposed in G20/G20 Leaders’ messages) and joint cyber capacity-building programs with developing countries. It has promoted international data governance norms (e.g. at the UN and ITU) favoring state-led standards (Zhang, 2022). At global summits, Chinese leaders stress themes like “common, cooperative, and sustainable security,” pushing back against Western multistakeholder models.

Bilateral and Multilateral Cyber Engagements

China’s cyber diplomacy involves a patchwork of agreements and dialogues:

- **United States:** The two countries signed a landmark 2015 cyber MOU under Obama (committing both to not conduct cyber-enabled theft of intellectual property). Under Trump and Biden this dialogue stalled, but China remains a focus of U.S. policy – from the Trump-era “Clean Network” to Biden’s chip export controls. High-profile cybersecurity incidents (e.g. U.S. indictments of Chinese APT hackers) have increased tensions (Zhang, 2022).
- **Europe and NATO:** The EU conducts a cybersecurity dialogue with China (first high-level talks circa 2018) but has no binding pact. EU member states have assessed Chinese tech as a security risk: France, Sweden and others have restricted Huawei/ZTE from 5G networks in line with EU guidelines. The EU has launched digital regulatory initiatives (like the Data Act and Digital Services Act) that affect Chinese companies, and NATO’s 2022 Strategic Concept explicitly calls China a systemic security challenge.
- **Russia and Eurasia:** China and Russia describe their partnership as a “no limits” strategic coordination. They routinely coordinate on cyber issues through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which has agreed on joint counter-terrorism and cybersecurity conventions. In recent Xi-Putin communiqués, the two countries have reaffirmed cooperation on “network and data security” and Internet of Things security.
- **Asia-Pacific (ASEAN, India, etc.):** China engages ASEAN through regular ICT ministerial meetings and the ASEAN-China Information Superhighway project. At the SCO, China aligns with Central Asian partners on cyber norms. Relations with India have soured – in 2020 India banned dozens of Chinese apps (TikTok, WeChat, etc.) citing data security after border clashes. China also dialogues with Japan and South Korea on tech issues, though technical cooperation is limited by geopolitical competition.
- **Africa:** China has expanded cyber diplomacy in Africa via the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). It offers training centers, e-government projects, and standards cooperation under the Belt & Road framework. For instance, Chinese firms have built

national fiber-optic networks and satellite ground stations in many African countries. These projects are coupled with Beijing's call for countries to respect each other's cyber laws and to jointly fight cybercrime under Chinese leadership.

- **Middle East:** China and the Arab League signed a “Data Security Cooperation Initiative” in 2021 – the first time a regional bloc adopted China's GDSI principles. China also partners with Middle Eastern countries (e.g. UAE, Saudi Arabia) on AI, smart cities, and surveillance programs. In broader forums (e.g. G20, BRICS Summits), China promotes digital development goals with Middle Eastern participation.
- **Latin America & Others:** China holds digital economy dialogues with Latin American blocs (e.g. China-CELAC). Several Latin American countries have adopted Chinese 5G or broadband technology (some later restricted), and China offers financing through the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank and BRI for ICT projects (Zhang, 2022).
- **International Organizations:** China is active in UN cyber governance. It has participated in the UN Groups of Governmental Experts (UNGGEs) and the ongoing Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG, 2021–2025) on ICT security. China consistently argues for applying international law in cyberspace and is working to incorporate its data governance norms into UN resolutions (Triolo, Et-al. 2020). It also lobbies within the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for standard-setting influence. Domestically, China hosts the annual World Internet Conference (Wuzhen Summit), showcasing its vision of a state-led, multi-government internet order

Role of Chinese Tech Corporations in Foreign Policy

Chinese technology firms have become tools of Beijing's global strategy:

- **Huawei and ZTE:** These telecom giants spearhead China's overseas infrastructure push. They build 4G/5G networks, data centers, and undersea cables in BRI partner countries (e.g. Huawei Marine has completed dozens of cables in Asia). Despite bans in the U.S., UK, and elsewhere, Huawei still dominates networks in Africa, Asia and parts of Europe. The companies also co-finance tech projects with Chinese state banks. Their global footprint advances China's technical standards and gives Beijing leverage in foreign communications infrastructure (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2017).
- **Alibaba and Tencent:** These companies export e-commerce platforms, cloud services, and payment systems. For example, Alibaba owns Lazada (a leading e-commerce platform in Southeast Asia) and has invested in payment startups across Asia (Zhang, 2022). Tencent and Baidu back ventures in AI and digital services abroad (ride-hailing apps like Grab and Go-Jek, local AI research partnerships, etc.). By embedding Chinese apps and online services in other economies, they extend China's digital ecosystem globally (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. 2017).

- **ByteDance (TikTok):** China’s social media firms have become flashpoints. TikTok’s success worldwide drew scrutiny and bans (U.S. and others citing data/privacy concerns). These controversies have entered diplomatic arenas, with China arguing that tech rules should be fair and non-discriminatory (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. 2017).
- **Supply Chains & Standards:** Beyond products, Chinese companies drive standards-setting (e.g. Huawei’s role in 5G specifications, China’s promotion of a domestic OS). Beijing actively involves firms in setting international norms (e.g. in AI and “New Generation AI Governance Initiative”) (China State Council 2010). In sum, Chinese tech firms act as de facto ambassadors of China’s “cyber-sovereignty” model by exporting hardware/software and aligning them with Chinese regulations and norms.

International Organizations and Internet Governance

China actively engages in multilateral forums to promote its cyber agenda. In the United Nations, it has been a leading voice for consensus on cyber norms, participating in each UN cyber GGE and the current OEWG (China State Council 2010). It emphasizes non-interference and the role of states over non-state actors, seeking to enshrine its concepts (e.g. data sovereignty) in UN documents (Boulanin, and Verbruggen, 2021).

In telecommunications, China works through the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), advocating for standards that favor national control. Domestically, China’s Cyberspace Administration runs the World Internet Conference (Wuzhen Summit) each year, inviting global officials to endorse China’s model of internet governance. China also participates in global networks like BRICS and SCO, pushing for cyber capacity-building in the Global South. Through these channels, Beijing aims to shape the evolving rules of the internet so they align with its interests – promoting a state-centric, multipolar digital order as a counterpoint to Western-led multistakeholder governance (Segal, 2020).

Conclusion

China's cyber diplomacy has emerged as a pivotal pillar of its foreign policy, strategically combining technological exports, digital infrastructure investments, and normative agenda-setting to advance its global influence. From the Digital Silk Road to the Global Data Security Initiative, China has sought to reshape global internet governance by promoting a model centered on state sovereignty, data control, and multilateral rule-making (Segal, 2020). While this approach has won favor among many developing nations, particularly in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, it has also triggered growing friction with Western democracies concerned about surveillance, cybersecurity risks, and digital authoritarianism (Zhang, 2022). As technology becomes increasingly entangled with national security and global power dynamics, China's cyber diplomacy is redefining international relations and creating new alignments and divisions in global digital governance.

Recommendations

1. **Promote Transparent Multilateral Engagements:** China should increase participation in open, transparent dialogues with diverse international stakeholders (including civil society and private sector actors) to foster trust and reduce fears of cyber authoritarianism.
2. **Strengthen Cybersecurity Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs):** By cooperating with global partners on cyber incident response and threat mitigation, China can help defuse tensions and demonstrate its commitment to a stable cyberspace.
3. **Ensure Ethical Tech Deployment Abroad:** Chinese technology firms and government agencies should adhere to ethical standards and local laws in host countries, especially regarding surveillance, privacy, and digital rights.
4. **Enhance Collaboration with International Organizations:** China should continue active roles in the UN, ITU, and other forums to harmonize its cyber norms with broader international standards and bridge ideological gaps in internet governance.
5. **Encourage Domestic-Global Norm Alignment:** As Chinese data and cybersecurity laws evolve, alignment with global best practices on personal data protection and internet openness can enhance Beijing’s soft power and mitigate foreign pushback.

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THE 1967 ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY KINSHASA PEACE RESOLUTION ON THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR AND BRITISH REACTION

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Abstract

This paper discussed the British reaction to 1967 Kinshasa resolution of the Organization of African Unity during the Nigerian Civil War. The study adopted a historical narrative approach for data analysis, while it used primary sources such as archival materials from the British National Archives Kew London and secondary sources such as books and journal articles. In September 1967, at its meeting in Kinshasa the Organization of African Unity Thirty-four Member-states issued a resolution known as the Kinshasa Resolution which appealed to Nigeria and Biafra to negotiate peace and reconciliation of the civil war. This paper argues that, while Kinshasa resolution appeared as an African method of finding peaceful solution to the civil war, its condemnation of secession was a reflection of domestic political realities of the African countries that endorsed the resolution. The resolution strengthened anti-secessionist stance and one Nigerian policy of the British Government.

Keywords: British, Reaction, Organization of African Unity, Kinshasa, Resolution, Nigerian Civil War

Introduction

The Nigerian Civil War was a great challenge to post-independent African States, given that they were preoccupied with the task of nation-building after few years of colonization.¹ Seeing Nigeria internally divided and engulfed in conflict was not good for the rest of Africa.² This was the main reason peaceful approach was adopted by African leaders to reconcile Nigeria and Biafra during the civil war. However, it seemed that when the civil war broke out, the use of force was highly evident at the detriment of peace. The Federal side was never willing to accept secession as a precondition for peaceful settlement, while Biafra was never ready to settle for anything less than her outright recognition as an independent nation.³

In war, the prerequisite for peace settlement is that parties to a dispute must abandon military solutions, and embraced a negotiated solution. Even third parties wishing to see the conference successful must do all in their power to bring both parties to that persuasion.⁴ Though, Biafra had on several occasions expressed readiness for negotiations under suitable international organisations,⁵ but was not prepared to abandon the main principle anchored on military operations.⁶ The Federal Military Government of Nigeria resolved to defeat Biafra⁷

nonetheless was disposed to peace negotiations as revealed by the Federal Cabinet officials in Lagos.⁸

The stringent approach adopted by both sides of the conflict to peace settlement prompted African States under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity to work tirelessly in order to resolve the conflict amicably. The first peace moves engineered by African States appeared in East Africa soon after secession was announced by Colonel Ojukwu. Leading these efforts were President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. Both leaders felt that as Pan-Africanists with long-standing personal contacts among Nigerian leaders, many of whom later turned to Biafra, they were well-suited to provide good offices. Zambia had begun in June 1967 to assert publicly that Nigeria's internal difficulties were a legitimate concern to the rest of Africa, and should be immediately reviewed by the Heads of States of the East African Community with a view to arranging a just and peaceful solution.⁹

The essence of this paper is to discuss the Kinshasa resolution of the Organization of African Unity during the Nigerian Civil War. It specifically focuses on the British reaction to the Kinshasa resolution. Earlier studies that have examined different perspectives of the Nigerian Civil War include the Kunle Amuwo exploration of remote and immediate causes of the Civil War.¹⁰ Chibuikwe Uche examination of the role oil played in the decision of the British government to insist on One Nigeria solution in the Nigeria-Biafra Conflict.¹¹ Godfrey B. Warren investigation of the degree to which Nigeria's considerable oil reserves contributed to shaping the outbreak of the civil war politically, diplomatically and economically.¹² Toyin Falola and Mathew M. Heaton examination of the history of Nigeria and the civil war and discovered how it left a significant legacy to Nigerian unity¹³ A. A. Nwankwo and S. U. Ifejika, examine the causes of civil war and Biafran secession and the British role in embedding and intensifying internal crisis in the Federation.¹⁴ G. Onuaguluchi's work on the Biafran tragedy caused by the most intense inter-communal distrust, as well as jealousies,¹⁵ M.S. Audu Osuala and S. Uzoma and B.I. Ibrahim interrogation of the international dimensions of the Nigerian Civil War¹⁶ and Okwudiba Nnoli discussion on how the strictly internal character of inter-African conflicts are been controlled by the external interventions to protect what he called the linkage groups in the conflict area,¹⁷ and J.J. Stremalu's work on the international politics of the Nigerian Civil War¹⁸ plus Fredrick Forsyth discussion on the British role during the Civil War.¹⁹

While these works have interrogated the causes and consequences of the civil war including its international dimensions, efforts have not been made to critically examine the British reaction to 1967 Kinshasa resolution of the Organization of African Unity which paved the way for a series of peace settlement that occurred during the civil war to achieve this objective the study adopted a historical narrative approach for data analysis. It used primary sources such as archival materials from the British National Archives Kew London and secondary sources such as books and journal articles obtained from the University of Nigeria Nsukka and Kenneth Dike University of Ibadan libraries for data analysis.

This paper argued that the Kinshasa resolution caused the war to be seen as an African affair to be settled by Africans but in a manner that was suitable to the objective of achieving

the Nigerian unity at the detriment of Biafran secession. The resolution strengthened the British anti-secessionist stance in Nigeria. By wholeheartedly endorsing the OAU peace initiatives, Britain acknowledged the Nigerian Civil War as an African affair. The OAU was described as the most suitable body to handle peace negotiations in the war. This position was not surprising because since the OAU began its intervention in the war, it had taken positions that suited the British interests and that was maximum support for the territorial integrity and unity of Nigeria. By succeeding to garner African support to the Nigerian cause, Britain was convinced that the OAU had the capacity to drive African diplomacy of the war and to serve as a vocal point for international voices of the civil war.

The first session of the paper looks at the OAU peace efforts and declaration of Kinshasa resolutions, session two examines the British assessment of OAU's Kinshasa resolutions during the war. In view of the untold human sufferings brought about by the civil war, many stakeholders had desired to see a firm peace initiative by the OAU. They developed a strong perception that the OAU's ability to initiate a genuine peace process depended on the changing military condition of the war, for during this time, the two sides had continued to engage one another in a serious fight aimed at securing more territories and fortification of their respective positions.

OAU Peace Mediation and Kinshasa Resolution during the Civil War

A month after the outbreak of the civil war, there were concerns about the escalating nature of the conflict involving civilian deaths. Expressions were made in favour of some kind of negotiated peace settlement as well as doubt over the capacity of the OAU to provide the forum for effective mediation efforts. Chinua Achebe maintained that, "the continental organization lacked credibility in this effort as it professed a one Nigeria policy from the beginning of the war."²⁰ According to the United States Assistant State Secretary for African Affairs Joseph Palmer:

The trouble was that most of the other Africans were too preoccupied with their own problems to have any time to spare for Nigeria. However, some of Nigeria's immediate neighbours such as Dahomey (Benin Republic), Niger, Chad, and Cameroon who were affected by the disruption of communications and general economic dislocation in Nigeria, might be persuaded to put some pressure on the two sides to talk.²¹

The above postulations were upheld because achieving peace in the conflict was viewed as difficult either through the OAU or any other multilateral organization. Doubt existed whether the Federal government was willing to negotiate at the early stage the war broke out and it did not even look as if Ojukwu wished to talk peacefully, except on terms which amounted to a Federal capitulation. Even the OAU meeting once held was unlikely to provide the forum for any effective mediation effort.²²

But, the unwavering unity and solidarity existing among African nations, occasioned by the conditions of decolonization propelled them to support the OAU to design peaceful resolutions in the civil war. Many African States believed in the capacity of the OAU to find solution to the Nigerian Civil War. For the role of the continental body in conflict resolution is found in Article XIX of the organization's charter. The article contains a pledge contracting parties to settle all disputes among themselves by peaceful means and to conclude a separate treaty establishing a Permanent Conciliation Commission which was to become an integral part of the Charter.²³

Early in June 1967 just a month before the war began, the Congolese Foreign Minister, Bomboko in a private conversation confided to the British Ambassador in Kinshasa, Cotton that they had been urging for an OAU mediation team for Nigeria that would include the Emperor of Ethiopia, President Tubman, Abdel Nasser and himself. But Gowon had unfortunately rejected the offer of the Congolese. Nevertheless, Bomboko was at all ready to mediate if asked to do so. Despite Gowon's rejection, the fact that the Congolese authorities muted the idea of peace mediation under the jurisdiction of the OAU showed the level of confidence and trust accorded to the continental body in resorting to peace in Nigeria. Also, Sierra Leonean Commissioner of Police Leigh told former Nigerian High Commissioner to Freetown, Obanye, in a private discussion that Sierra Leone thought that any consideration of the Nigerian problem was a matter for the OAU.²⁵

Ghanaian leader General Ankrah was listed as the potential conciliator, having retained the respect of both parties of the conflict. Although, it seemed unlikely that peace talks were to be initiated until it was clear that neither Nigeria or Biafra had gained a position of strength militarily.²⁶ The OAU's ability to initiate a genuine peace process depended on the changing military condition of the war for during this time the two sides had continued to engage one another in a serious fight aimed at securing more territories and fortification of their respective positions. Nobody was interested in peace.²⁷

While the war rages the international community waited to see how the OAU would react to the conflict. But, the main challenge being that the Head of the Federal Military Government of Nigeria, Major-General Yakubu Gowon, had already and strongly lobbied other Heads of States in numerous African countries objected the need for the Nigerian situation to be on top of the agenda of the OAU meetings at all.²⁸ Similarly, Biafrans were also indisposed to OAU peace engineering in civil war. This was because of the engagement of both sides in peace negotiation and preliminary discussions on the conflict by the Commonwealth Secretariat in London led by its secretary-general Arnold Smith. Britain regarded willingness of both sides to accept continued involvement of Commonwealth Secretariat in peace negotiations as a valuable gain. Attempt by OAU Secretariat to get into the act have potential and unfortunate effect on the London talks which was at a delicate stage then. So OAU peace initiatives at this time were viewed as not forthcoming.²⁹ Speaking to the Press at Entebbe airport on 13 May 1968 before leaving for the Dar es Salam summit meeting, the President of Uganda Milton Obote urged all African countries to help the two sides in Nigeria end the war.

Obote said that “although it could be a disservice to Africa and the conference if the participants did not express sympathy for peace moves on the Nigeria crisis, he does not consider it a time for African resolutions on the subject...”³⁰

Biafra’s secession did not only threaten the territorial integrity of Nigeria but the entire African continent at the time. That was the reason the OAU set out to end the bloody conflict through peace negotiations.³¹ The OAU Heads of State had convened and arrived in the Kinshasa with the intention to produce useful outcome or peace formula acceptable to Nigerians and Biafrans. The meeting began in September 1967 to deliberate among other issues the Nigerian Civil War. The emperor was among the African leaders present at the meeting. Ahead of the meeting, Nigerian ambassadors in Africa elicited reassurances from the emperor and other leaders that the crisis would not be allowed to intrude on the OAU summit without the full consent of the federal government.³²

Eighteen out of the thirty-nine Member-States were represented by their respective Heads of State. The 1967 summit was controlled by the host President Mobutu, and elder statesmen as Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, President Tubman from Liberia, and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia. The combination seemed fully capable of raising an OAU peace initiative, quite possibly with the United States or other outside backing. Gowon’s attendance to the meeting was not seriously considered for domestic military and political reasons. The issue was whether to allow his Commissioner for External Affairs Okoi Arikpo to represent Nigeria at the summit or to send a more senior delegation. At the last minute Gowon delegated the highest-ranking civilian in his government Chief Obafemi Awolowo to represent him in Kinshasa. The instruction given to Awolowo was to prevent the civil war from being placed on the official agenda or in any other way from becoming an issue of formal consideration at the summit.³³

As the chairman of the meeting the Ethiopian Emperor opened the summit and made reference to the Nigerian crisis and expressed the hope that, “there will soon emerge a lasting solution which will serve the interests of the Nigerian people as a whole, and the entire Continent of Africa. Aside the Emperor’s reference there was never any formal discussion of the Nigerian crisis. But outside the conference chamber Awolowo Nigeria’s representative at the conference agreed to participate in an ad hoc gathering of seven for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Thus, on the morning of 12 September 1967 President Mobutu, Tubman, Kaunda, Ahidjo, Hamani Diori, the Emperor of Ethiopia and General Ankrah met for the of several intense discussions known as the “Caucus of Heavyweight. No formal record of these discussions was kept.”³⁴

The Federal government was concerned about the participation of President Hamani Diori of Niger and Ahidjo of Cameroon in the peace summit. The continued support from both leaders who States adjoined Nigeria was of vital strategic importance to the federal government. Awolowo said at the meeting “the technical point that the OAU had no jurisdiction to interfere in our affairs and if it did so it would open a flood gate of future interference which

few of the others present could afford themselves. At one point I even implied that if such a precedent was set, Nigeria would feel free to support dissidents in other countries.”³⁵

Inside the caucus, Awolowo found President Kaunda of Zambia to be the most difficult to deal with, and the first few hours of discussion were acrimonious. Kaunda finally left the room to be replaced by President Obote of Uganda. Before Kaunda’s departure, it was made plain to the Nigerians that if they refused OAU involvement, they faced the threat of Zambian and Tanzanian recognition of Biafra, a development that also raised fears among many other members of the organization who did not want to African ranks divided on the Nigerian question. In Kaunda’s absence, tensions subsided. Emperor Haile Selassie and President Tubman emerged in control of the proceedings and worked to develop a consensus that would accommodate the federal government while carving out a role for the OAU to establish the organization as the foremost judge of the international implications of the Nigerian civil war.³⁶ During the Kinshasa Assembly, a debate was held on the civil war. However, the heads of state did not go very far in their deliberations and were not eager to impose their will on a fellow member. The heads of state and government were faced with repeated warnings by the federal government of Nigeria that the war was merely a matter for Nigeria.³⁷

The African Heads of State and Government who met at Kinshasa from the 11-14 September showed commendable initiative by trying to resolve the Nigerian Civil War.³⁸ A resolution was passed by 3:00 a.m. on 14 September 1967 being the last day of the summit.³⁹ It stated that:

Solemnly re-affirmed their adherence to the principle of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member-states; reiterating their condemnation of secession in any member-states; concerned at the tragic and serious situation in Nigeria; recognizing that situation as an internal affair, the solution of which is primarily the responsibility of Nigerian themselves; Reposing their trust and confidence in the Federal Government of Nigeria; resolved to send a consultative mission of six heads of State to the Head of the Federal Government of Nigeria to assure him of the Assembly’s desire for the territorial integrity, unity and peace of Nigeria.⁴⁰

The resolution was the product of the initiative of great African leaders, namely General Ankrah of Ghana and the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie. According the Nigerian Head of State, Major-General Yakubu Gowon, “the Kinshasa resolution of the OAU Summit on the Nigerian situation proves that all African States are true friends of Nigeria... It was in the interest of all Africans that Nigeria remains one political and economic entity. The OAU has rightly seen our problem as a purely domestic affair and in accordance with the OAU

resolution...”⁴¹ Gowon was very happy that the resolution did not promote the interest of the secessionist led by Ojukwu, rather it reinstated the Federal position on national unity that was the main bone of contention during the civil war.

Under Kinshasa resolution, an agreement within the OAU caucus was reached for the establishment of an ad hoc committee of African Heads of State to deal with the Nigerian crisis. The committee was not constituted as a mediatory body but was only called only a ‘Consultative Committee’ in line with the Federal government’s wishes.⁴² The members of the committee were the Emperor of Ethiopia, His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, Chairman; President Tubman of the Republic of Liberia, Vice Chairman; President Ahmadu Ahidjo, President of the Republic of Cameroon; Monsieur Hamani Diori, President of the Republic of Niger; Lieutenant-General Ankrah, the Chairman of the National Liberation Council of Ghana; and General Mobutu of Congo Kinshasa, a choice that embraced the senior statesmen, the originators of the OAU proposals, the host of the OAU conferences on peace negotiations and the interests of the adjacent States.⁴³

Meanwhile, the draft resolution that created the Consultative Committee on the Nigerian Civil War was handed over to the US Ambassador in Kinshasa by General Mobutu and Bomboko and send to the US Ambassador to Nigeria Albert Mathew who transmitted the resolution to Gowon for his approval before passage by the OAU in morning session of the meeting on 14 September 1967.⁴⁴ This showed the extent of great power’s collaborations and diplomatic linkages with African Heads of State during the OAU summit in Kinshasa. The Kinshasa meeting was not independent of external interference as it still opened some diplomatic window for non-African watch of its activities.

At the insistence of the Federal Government of Nigeria, the resolution was carefully phrased to avoid the suggestion that the Consultative Committee was to deal with two equal participants or in any sense to mediate in the dispute. This prompted Ojukwu to state that: “The OAU resolution taken in Kinshasa a few weeks after the start of the war was partial in favour of Nigeria. Subsequent resolutions have followed that original and unrealistic resolution of 1967. Nigeria knows that Biafra cannot negotiate with her under such a resolution and because she does not want negotiations she insisted on the terms of that resolution so as to make a meeting impossible.”⁴⁵

Quao, the Principal Secretary National Liberation Council and Ghanaian Representative at OAU Ministerial Meeting in Kinshasa told the British High Commissioner in Ghana, Smedley, on 16 September 1967, that “Gowon should be well pleased with the resolution in its present form. To make it easier for Gowon to receive delegation, the operative paragraph had been deliberately phrased to indicate that what Heads of State were going to discuss was not mediation but possibility of mediation. In the event, the resolution which was first agreed privately in a restricted session, was somewhat amended to meet Nigerian wishes, I understand the reference to secession was general and not just linked to Nigeria.”⁴⁶

General Ankrah had got Gowon’s agreement to the original draft resolution before he went to Kinshasa but subsequent proceedings on it had to be held up until the Deputy Permanent Secretary Ministry of External Affairs, Adegoroye flew to Kinshasa on 14

September 1967 to propose some amendments.⁴⁷ The Sierra Leonean Commissioner of Police and senior member in the External Affairs Ministry, Leigh said:

This suggested that Gowon had some difficulty in persuading some of his colleagues to accept the resolution and that there might be some serious reservations in Lagos about their attitude to the mission when it arrived. Awolowo's view was that the mission should go only to Lagos and that its main purpose would be to demonstrate that the OAU had not allowed their Kinshasa meeting to pass without addressing themselves to one of the major African problems. But once Africans of the calibre of Haile Selassie, Tubman and other got into the act, it would not be easy to prevent them trying to produce results if they were so minded.⁴⁸

Gowon never wanted the civil war issue to leave the shores of Nigeria. Such a scenario has the tendency of internationalizing the conflict. He wanted the matter to remain internally disposed and be resolved internally. A spokesman for Ministry of External Affairs once said at a Press Conference in Lagos on 12 September 1967 about OAU's intervention in the war that "Nigeria's situation is purely internal affair. FMG does not wish to internalize it. The FMG was in position to contain it and therefore need no external intervention. Any move for intervention would be regarded as encroachment in Nigerian domestic affairs."⁴⁹

The policy of support for the Federal Government of Nigeria by most African States was staunchly backed by the O.A.U., which frowned at secession in Africa. This stand-point could be better understood against the background of the argument that the break-up of Nigeria would spell the break-up of every other African state, since the boundaries of these states are all artificial and as they contain different tribal groups that have often been in conflict in the past.⁵⁰ The position of the African leaders and the decision of the OAU in this regard on the Nigerian Civil War were short-sighted and auto-centric. Thus, incessant conflicts and civil wars bordered on the same problems gnawed across the continent in subsequent years.⁵¹

While the Nigerian-Biafran war had purely internal origins; it ceased to be an exclusively internal affair when Britain, the Soviet Union, and France became involved in the conflict. A civil war ceases to be an internal affair, when third parties intervene to such an extent as to upset the balance between the protagonists and determine the outcome. By following a policy of non-interference in such cases, the OAU was in effect allowing the outcome of the Nigerian conflict to be determined by the actions and preferences of non-African powers.⁵²

British Assessment of OAU's Kinshasa Resolution

British attitude towards peace settlement of the civil war was echoed on 18 August 1967 following the public call for cessation of hostilities and a negotiated peace settlement. The distance from achieving a clear-cut military victory prompted the British decision to align with the argument of the two sides for peace talks. Britain was however guarded against premature

action which might undermine peace moves when the chances of success might otherwise be greater.⁵³ It was hoped that the two sides would reach a compromise and developed the desire to resolve the conflict on the conference table.

Support for peaceful settlement of the conflict was boosted when the British Deputy High Commissioner in Enugu, John Parker, informed the Foreign Office in his war situation report on 14 July 1967 that the best solution for British interest was an end of the fighting while leaving Biafra uncrushed and open the way for negotiation rather than meet any request for military aid by the Nigerian Government.⁵⁴

At a meeting with the Nigerian Commissioner for Information and Labour Anthony, Enahoro, on 17 July 1967, the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson said that Her Majesty's Government hoped for a settlement on the basis of a united Nigeria in a continuing friendly relationship with Britain. Enahoro was glad to hear the statement.⁵⁵ Throughout the war, the British Government had consistently pressed for a ceasefire and a solution by peaceful negotiation acceptable to both sides. It is believed that the future welfare and prosperity of the Nigeria populace depended to a substantial degree on the country's ability to maintain its unity and therefore hope that the final settlement would be based on the maintenance of this unity in some form.⁵⁶

On 18 August 1967 the Commonwealth Office released a paper titled "British Policy towards Nigeria" which detailed the designs of the British policy on the civil war and its political consequences. Part of the document stated that, "it was difficult to envisage an acceptable political settlement which would associate the various races of Nigeria... however, at the appropriate time in the civil war, the two sides would realize the impossibility of reaching a military solution and be prepared for peace negotiations."⁵⁷

Thus, the need to preserve long-term safety of British interests in Nigeria and sustenance of inter-regional cooperation and federalism in the country prompted Britain to opt for any international or multilateral support that included the OAU for the development of peace initiatives in the civil war with caution not to lose substantial influence with the Nigerian Government⁵⁸

While it strived to maintain neutrality in peace negotiations in order to avoid criticisms of over interference in the civil war, Britain still wished that peace be attained to end the conflict as soon as possible. Part of its peace agenda was to work with any international and regional bodies willing to help bring peace between the sides. Moreover, London was highly disposed to peace mediations with an African approach, which only the OAU could be able to deliver.

Britain was strengthened by its conviction that its Defence policy in Nigeria was right, given the overwhelming support for a united Nigeria within the OAU.⁵⁹ As a result, it was the first country to assess the outcome of the OAU Kinshasa summit on 16 December 1967. The assessment was very important because it enabled Britain to study how the OAU Consultative Committee on Nigeria had dealt with the conflict and what further action needed to be taken as the civil war progressed. Everybody in London was pleased about the OAU resolution. It showed a sign of something being done by the African States to end the conflict. According to the High Commissioner:

The language of the resolution also gives us an excellent cue for when we are pressed for a statement of our attitude. It goes much further than anything I have thought it safe to say, particularly in the condemnation of secession, it talks about the organization's desire for the territorial integrity and unity of Nigeria as opposed to my rather optimistic faith; but I suggest we adopt its languages and say this is what we have maintained all along...⁶⁰

Her Majesty's Government applauded the OAU peace initiative and wished it the very best. However, Britain was cautious to avoid being hesitant and enthusiastically behind the OAU initiative. Being careful did not inhibit the British officials from expressing support for the OAU resolutions as the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Michael Stewart did in his reactions to the resolution.

In the resolution, the OAU was concerned about the international character of the war. The influx of external forces in the conflict, such as the Soviet Union, Britain, France, Portugal and Czechoslovakia created serious concerns for the continental body to find a way to mediate in the civil war. The British Government, Russia and France continued to supply arms and ammunition to Nigeria and Biafra. As a fellow member of the Commonwealth of Nations, Britain was obliged to render military assistance to Nigeria simply because the latter was trying to maintain unity against a secessionist movement.⁶¹ To cut off all supplies to Nigeria would be seen by Nigerians as an un-neutral and one-sided act against them and against our declared policy of support for a single Nigeria."⁶² While the big powers proclaimed the conflict an African affair, they have spared no effort in supplying arms and in dictating the pace of the war.⁶³ This caused a serious distress for the OAU Consultative Committee and encouraged her towards convening further peace negotiation meetings that took place in Addis Ababa and Algeria under the leadership of the Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie.

Conclusion

The Kinshasa resolution on the Nigerian Civil War was a manifestation of an anti-secessionist stance of the majority of African Heads of State. The resolution was designed to make the OAU initiative on the civil war acceptable to the Nigerian government. Its condemnation of secession was a reflection of feelings of the parties to the resolution. African leaders were allergic to secession, thus, the resolution showed that it was a threat to the stability of Africa. The moment the OAU articulated the desire to find solution to the Nigerian-Biafra conflict; Britain was highly expectant of the positive outcome of her activities in the war and especially at a time when it adopted the principle of mediation as part of its foreign policy in the civil war with the assertion that even though it did not play a direct role in the peace process it could still support African peace efforts at any time in the war. The Kinshasa resolution was a significant proclamation as different great powers mostly Britain aligned their views to it as part of their standpoints in the fighting. Britain saw the Kinshasa resolution as in tandem with its position in the war that of facilitation of peaceful settlement based on the restoration of Nigerian unity.

It bodes well for both the British officialdom and the African States that Nigeria should remain an indivisible country devoid of secessionist tendencies, thereby placing Britain on a high footing with the African States. The British officialdom took the advantage of the OAU resolution to establish good relationship with the Emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie the leader of the OAU Consultative Committee in resolving the war, and with the view that the conflict was an African affair to be solved by Africans as a confirmation of the common objective of the OAU and British government. Admittedly, the OAU was a young organization with limited resources but it was right that it should to about seeking for a solution to the Nigerian conflict, as it had been trying to do since the Heads of States drafted the Kinshasa resolution and equally set up a Consultative and Conciliation Committee.

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THE QUESTION OF POWER AND CORRUPTION IN SELECTED AFRICAN LITERARY TEXTS

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Abstract

This paper investigates the pervasive issues of corruption, insecurity, moral decadence, and abuse of power in contemporary African governance as portrayed in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966) and Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968). These works critically examine the socio-political challenges and moral decline that plague post-colonial Africa. Achebe critiques the post-independence African elite, accusing them of corruption, irresponsibility, hypocrisy, and lack of vision. His novel follows the protagonist, Odili, and employs irony and satire to expose the leadership failures embodied by Chief Nanga, whose title, "A Man of the People," is laced with irony, given his corrupt and selfish nature. Similarly, Armah focuses on Ghana during Kwame Nkrumah's regime, a period marked by corruption, immorality, and lawlessness. Through satirical devices, Armah critiques a society overwhelmed by filth and moral degradation. Both authors vividly depict the masses' dissatisfaction with bad leadership and highlight how these societal flaws have eroded trust and stability. Using post-colonial theory as a framework, the study analyzes how these texts address the socio-political and economic realities of African societies. It argues that literature plays a vital role as a therapeutic tool to inspire reflection and learning. By exploring the flaws of leadership and governance, literature offers a platform to educate people, encouraging them to avoid repeating past mistakes. The study concludes that Africa's systemic challenges—corruption, lawlessness, and abuse of power—can only be addressed through awareness and reform inspired by literature. Achebe and Armah's works serve as powerful critiques of governance and calls for change, demonstrating that literature can foster awareness and accountability in society.

Keywords: Power, Insecurity, Government, Corruption, Therapeutic

Introduction

The study of literature transcends ordinary knowledge, broadening intellectual horizons and encouraging deep reflection on life and human experiences. Literature enriches life by offering valuable insights that uphold moral and ethical standards in society, while also serving as a source of entertainment and solace through storytelling. As William Shakespeare aptly stated in *Macbeth* (1958:219), "life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing." Stories are conveyed in various forms, including dance and plays, often serving as tools to critique societal flaws with the aim of fostering improvement and maintaining standards.

For instance, Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) showcases a moral depth rarely seen in African fiction. Armah's use of blunt and unrefined language effectively critiques the dysfunctional Ghanaian society of his time, highlighting its moral and social decay. Through his work, he advocates for a societal transformation where values such as cleanliness and godliness become central to daily life. Armah's critique of moral decay and corrupt behavior, particularly through his use of coarse language, significantly contributed to his prominence in the literary landscape. This choice of language not only enhances the artistic and aesthetic quality of his novel but also serves as a stark commentary on the unpleasant attitudes pervasive in Ghanaian society during that period. Armah's unconventional use of vulgarity stands in contrast to the norms of African literature, where such language is often eschewed.

Chinua Achebe, a prominent figure in African literature, criticized Armah's approach in "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" (1968), characterizing it as a radical departure from the established literary conventions upheld by writers like Wole Soyinka. Achebe famously labeled Armah's work as "...a sick book" (Morell, 1975), reflecting his disdain for the overt coarseness of language and the bleakness of the narrative.

In contrast, Achebe himself addresses societal corruption in "A Man of the People" (1966) with a different tone. His critique is both satirical and humorous, avoiding the feeling of disgust that permeates Armah's work. Achebe's intention to highlight the corrupt practices and immorality of those in power is conveyed with clarity and simplicity. This approach allows readers to empathize with the marginalized and oppressed, particularly represented by Odili and the new wave of politicians.

The humor and straightforwardness in Achebe's writing engage readers and keep them invested in the narrative, while the underlying sexual overtones add layers of complexity to the characters and their experiences. By juxtaposing these two authors, we see distinct methods of addressing societal issues: Armah's raw and unfiltered critique versus Achebe's subtle yet impactful satire, each illuminating the deep-seated corruption in their respective societies while offering unique insights into the human condition. Overall, literature—whether expressed through prose, poetry, or drama—offers countless benefits. Most importantly, it has the potential to inspire the creation of a just and harmonious society where equality, peace, and security prevail.

Power

The concept of power and its association with corruption has been explored by various political scientists and scholars. Talcott Parsons (1963:262) describes power as a mechanism that drives changes within social interactions, which may have either positive or negative consequences for society. Max Weber (1978:8), on the other hand, defines power as the ability of an individual to enforce their will within a social context, even in the face of resistance. Similarly,

Thomas Hobbes (1969:215) views power as the exercise of dominance over others. These perspectives align with Weber's analysis, which resonates strongly with the African context, where repression and exploitation often characterize the use of power. In both Weber's and Hobbes' definitions, power is depicted as a tool for subjugation, frequently employed to deprive individuals of their rights and privileges.

This study focuses on power in its absolute form, where control is exercised over subjects, resulting in deprivation and inequality. Two West African novels serve as case studies: Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) and Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966). Both works, set in Ghana and Nigeria respectively, grapple with themes of corruption, moral decay, materialism, poverty, and abuse of power. These novels reflect the deep disillusionment that followed the anticipated promise of independence—Nigeria in 1960 and Ghana in 1957—when hopes for just governance were dashed by bad leadership and a failure to fulfill the aspirations of the people.

E.N. Obiechina (1990:121) aptly describes this betrayal:

When it came to keeping faith with
the people and fulfilling promises, it
became clear that a gulf separated
fulfillment from hope. Within a few
year of independence, the hopes had collapsed,
and disillusionment had set in.

This sentiment is echoed in the works of writers who depict the post-independence era as marked by administrative failures, instability, and violence, including coups and counter-coups.

Achebe's *A Man of the People* critiques corruption and irresponsibility among leaders, who prioritize self-enrichment over societal welfare. Nepotism, tribalism, and hypocrisy dominate the political landscape, as exemplified by Chief Nanga's preferential treatment of Odili. Achebe uses satire to expose the hypocrisy of leaders like Nanga, who, having risen to power, betray their promises of equitable governance. For instance, Nanga's ignorance as Minister of Culture is evident during a book exhibition where he fails to recognize prominent writers from his own country. His ineptitude becomes a source of ridicule, both locally and internationally. Achebe also describes chief Nanga as a hypocrite when he describes him in this way :

A man who just came in from the
and dried his body and put on dry
clothes, is more reluctant to go out
again than another who has been indoors
all the time... and barricaded themselves in (P. 41-42)

Similarly, Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* portrays the greed and moral decay of figures like Koomson, whose ostentatious display of wealth exacerbates the suffering of the

impoverished masses. Armah paints a grim picture of those trapped in poverty, describing them as “living dead” who have resigned themselves to despair. Koomson’s eventual regret highlights the emptiness and futility of power when misused. His lament about the burdens of being a minister underscores the incompetence and superficiality of political elites, whose failure to enact meaningful change only deepens societal inequities.

The excerpt in the following lines shows his regret as he says:

Some people thinks being a minister is
all good time Hey, hey sometimes I wish
I had been a business man instead. One
day they brought a man to give the minister
and the parliamentarians and the party
activist a lecture. That was during the
Winnebago days (P. 155-56)

Both Achebe and Armah critique the excesses of power and the ineptitude of the ruling class. They depict leaders as betraying their nationalist ideals, fostering corruption, and perpetuating social injustices. While these politicians initially manipulate their way into power, their reigns often end in disgrace and regret, reflecting the consequences of abusing authority in societies where literacy and intellectualism are undervalued. These novels thus serve as potent commentaries on the detrimental impact of power and its unchecked excesses.

Insecurity

Insecurity is a multifaceted concept encompassing emotional, psychological, and social dimensions. It also extends to areas such as food and job insecurity, both of which pose significant threats to human existence. According to Nasiru Zubairu (2020:3), insecurity refers to a lack of safety, instability, or exposure to danger, as well as an absence of protection or a state of being unsafe. The consequences of insecurity often manifest as social unrest and political upheaval, particularly in societies where oppressive and unresponsive leadership exacerbates the grievances of the masses. Notably, one form of insecurity can lead to another, creating a cycle of instability.

Critics have extensively explored the impact of insecurity on human development and societal progress. Hartley et al. (1991:7) describe insecurity as “an external threat or a discrepancy between the level of security a person experiences and the level he or she might prefer.” Similarly, Sverke et al. (2022:243) define insecurity as “the subjectively experienced anticipation of a fundamental involuntary event,” while Rosenblatt and Ruvio (2002:587) characterize it as “an overall concern about future existence.” In essence, insecurity represents an external threat that destabilizes human conditions and is often intolerable. When security is absent, crises and political turmoil become inevitable outcomes.

People respond to insecurity in various ways—some resort to radical measures, while others adopt more subtle approaches. This divergence in reactions is where protest literature plays a critical role. Protest literature addresses themes of societal decay, as seen in the selected texts: Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966) and Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968). Both novels delve into the pervasive issues of corruption, insecurity, immorality, and broken promises that plague society. They critique the failures of leadership and highlight the disillusionment of the masses, whose expectations of political independence—better governance and improved living conditions—are met with neglect and abuse of power.

Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966) vividly portrays the consequences of corruption and the inherent insecurity in Nigeria's socio-political landscape. The text critiques the Nigerian government system, exposing its flaws and resonating with the broader themes of power, corruption, and social inequality.

The themes of power and corruption resonate strongly in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966). The novel serves as a vivid reflection of the Nigerian system of government, where political, social, and economic standards are frequently abused by those in power. Achebe critiques the pervasive corruption and greed of political leaders who loot public funds and enrich themselves at the expense of the masses.

Throughout the novel, this abuse of power is glaringly evident. For instance, Chief Nanga, a central character, embodies corruption and the intoxication of power. He demands servile reverence before offering any assistance, as illustrated by the phrase, "...to lick big man's boot" (p. 17). This expression underscores his need for unquestioning loyalty and respect as a prerequisite for any help he renders.

Chief Nanga's impunity and intimidation are further emphasized by references to "guns and gunpowder," symbolizing his use of force to maintain dominance over his subjects. Additionally, the "Cadillac box" in the novel becomes a symbol of wealth and extravagance, highlighting his display of affluence. As Minister of Culture, Nanga exploits his position to amass wealth and manipulate situations to his advantage. For instance, he bribes Odili, the protagonist, to prevent him from contesting the same political position. He also bribes journalists to ensure his articles dominate the front page, showcasing his control over the media.

Nanga's endless corruption and immorality ultimately fuel animosity between him and Odili, who seeks to unseat him as a form of retaliation. However, the struggle for power leads to chaos and significant losses. Key characters like Chief Koko and Maxwell Kulamo die, while Odili fails to win the election. These events underscore the novel's depiction of insecurity, stemming from systemic injustice, corruption, immorality, and the neglect of the masses.

Achebe uses *A Man of the People* to critique a society plagued by corruption and greed, showing how the abuse of power erodes the foundations of governance and creates an atmosphere of insecurity.

Similarly, Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) underscores the betrayal of societal trust by an elite class more concerned with personal gain than the welfare of the people. Both authors emphasize the cyclical nature of insecurity and its entrenchment in post-independence African societies, where the promises of freedom and prosperity are replaced with widespread disillusionment.

Government

An exploration of the practice and challenges of the Nigerian democratic system of government, alongside those of other African countries, is crucial. This analysis enables an understanding of the role of literature in reflecting the socio-political realities of Nigeria and Africa at large, as literature serves as a mirror of the people's political and social experiences.

While Nigeria operates under a democratic government with elected leaders at various levels, the foundational principles of democracy remain inadequately established. Peter Ekeh (2014:3) refers to this phenomenon as "democratism," which he defines as "a brand of rule that employs false principles of democratic institutions." Similarly, Bernard Crick (2014:4) describes democracy as "the most promiscuous word in the world of public affairs." These perspectives stem from the numerous setbacks democracy in Africa has faced since the 1990s.

In Nigeria, democracy is marred by issues such as ethnic bias, electoral fraud, wasteful leadership, and poverty, all of which revolve around a central theme—corruption. Corruption is a pervasive issue in governance, with politicians prioritizing personal comfort over societal welfare. Rather than investing in human and material resources, political leaders focus on self-interest, leaving the common man neglected.

This is the foundation of Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*, which critiques the manipulative tactics of the political elite as they ascend to powerful positions with empty promises. Achebe portrays the disregard for the masses, who are left to endure severe hardship. Through his narrative, he critiques bribery, corruption, and other societal vices, using various literary devices to underscore these issues.

One prominent device is **irony**, evident in the title itself. Chief Nanga, the novel's central figure, is ironically labeled "a man of the people" despite embodying selfishness and corruption. A more fitting title would be "an enemy of the people," reflecting his actions.

Achebe also employs **foreshadowing** early in the novel when the narrator remarks:

"Tell them that this man has used his position to enrich himself and they would ask—you as my father did—if you thought that a sensible man would spit out the juicy morsel that good fortune placed in his mouth" (p.2).

This passage highlights how Chief Nanga manipulates his position to enrich himself while deceiving the masses. He uses his influence to seduce Edna and attempts to bribe Odili to prevent him from running against him in a political contest, demonstrating how power and corruption intertwine.

Achebe's critique extends beyond political leaders to business figures, exemplified by Josiah's exploitation of Azoge. The old woman's remark, "Some people's belly is like the earth" (p.85), symbolizes insatiable greed, a recurring theme in the novel. Similarly, the theft of Azoge's walking stick reflects the exploitation of the poor by the wealthy.

Women in the novel are depicted as victims of societal and moral decay. Characters like Elsie and Agnes are portrayed as succumbing to poverty-driven promiscuity, highlighting another layer of societal dysfunction.

Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* offers a similarly unflinching critique of corruption and power. The physical and moral decay of Koomson, a corrupt politician, during a military coup illustrates the ultimate downfall of unethical leaders. Armah vividly depicts this collapse:

"His mouth had the stench of rotten menstrual blood. The man held his breath until the pollution of the air, already thick with flatulent fear..." (pp.191-192).

This imagery reinforces the inevitability of retributive justice for corrupt individuals. Armah uses symbolism extensively to portray societal corruption, with elements like the stinking bus fares representing the decayed economy and the bird "chichidodo" symbolizing hypocrisy.

The novel also critiques societal attitudes toward wealth and corruption. Koomson, despite his corrupt practices, is celebrated as "His Excellency" and "Brother Joe," while the protagonist, referred to as "the Man," is marginalized for his integrity. The Man's wife and mother-in-law, like the broader society, measure success by material wealth, further exposing the societal moral crisis. The description of the 'man' living like a stranger in his own home and the wife describing him as a very polite woman makes him feel like a criminal:

... For failing to do what everyone else
does in order to get enough more for their
Upkeep. (P. 54)

Armah uses "eating and sharing" as recurring motifs to depict the exploitation of national resources and the complicity of citizens in corruption. The protagonist's refusal to partake in a corrupt deal draws criticism from his wife, who laments his refusal to "eat" with others when the opportunity arises (p.50).

In both Achebe's and Armah's works, the post-independence disillusionment of African societies is palpable. Through vivid imagery, symbolism, and irony, they critique the socio-political and economic failures of governance in Africa, underscoring the urgent need for reform and accountability. These narratives serve as powerful commentaries on the pervasive corruption that undermines the potential of African nations and their citizens.

Corruption

Corruption refers to dishonest or fraudulent behavior by individuals in positions of power, often involving bribery. Transparency International (2023:1) defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for personal gain. It undermines trust, weakens democratic institutions, stifles economic progress, and worsens inequality, poverty, and societal crises. These issues form the thematic core of works by Ayi Kwei Armah and Chinua Achebe, who critique the socio-political decay plaguing African societies. Armah succinctly captures this malaise with the crude, semi-literate graffiti on a latrine wall in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*: "SOCIALISM-CHOP MAKE I CHOP CONTRY BROKE" (p. 124).

Both Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Soyinka's *The Interpreters* examine the physical and moral corruption tied to greed and overindulgence. In Armah's novel, the protagonist, the "Man," is disillusioned by the societal rot he observes. This is vividly portrayed in his encounter with Koomson, whose physical appearance symbolizes his moral decay:

"Koomson... looked obviously larger than the chair he was occupying. The man, when he shook hands, was amazed at the flabby softness of the hand. Ideological hand, the hands soft with the ancestral softness of chiefs who have sold their people and are celestially happy with the fruits of the trade" (p. 153-154).

Corruption permeates every aspect of life, and the pressure to conform to these societal norms nearly breaks the Man. He is mocked for his refusal to take bribes and ostracized even by his colleagues. The ultimate humiliation comes when a bus conductor spits at him. However, the tide turns when the military overthrows the corrupt government, and Koomson, once a celebrated politician, seeks refuge in the Man's impoverished home. His descent into disgrace is highlighted by Oyo's comment:

"He stinks... I am glad that you never become like him" (p. 165).

This stark reversal underscores the inevitable downfall of the corrupt. The protagonist's disdain for the misuse of public resources is evident when he describes corruption as a "national game" and dismisses the February 1966 military coup in Ghana as merely "a change of embezzlers" (p. 191).

Similarly, Chinua Achebe critiques corruption in *A Man of the People*, using satire and the character of Odili as a mouthpiece. Achebe explores the power struggles among the elites, where politics is reduced to "eating and sharing." This concept is exemplified by Chief Nanga, who justifies nepotism and greed under the guise of serving his people:

“Our people must press for their share of the national cake” (p. 13).

Both political parties in the novel—the People’s Organisation Party (POP) and the Progressive Allegiance Party (PAP)—mirror the “eating” culture, with names evoking indulgence in food. Achebe’s satirical tone peaks in Odili’s condemnation of the regime:

“For I do honestly believe that in the fat-dripping, gummy, eat-and-let-eat regime just ended—a regime which inspired the common saying that a man could only be sure of what he had put away safely in his gut... a regime in which you saw... asking to be paid” (p. 167).

The theme of “eating” extends beyond politicians to ordinary citizens, as seen in Nanga’s avaricious father-in-law, who exploits his prospective son-in-law, declaring:

“Leave me and my in-law. He will bring and bring, and I will eat until I am tired” (p. 103).

Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Achebe’s *A Man of the People* depict corruption as a moral and societal epidemic in African nations. Through their craft, these authors serve as social crusaders, condemning internal oppression and the betrayal of public trust, urging for a reawakening and accountability in leadership.

Therapeutic

The term “therapeutic” is an adjective that pertains to the healing of diseases and the actions of remedial agents. According to the *Collins English Dictionary* (2023), it also refers to something that helps individuals relax or feel better, especially in situations that previously caused unhappiness.

In line with this definition, the literary texts examined in this research are therapeutic in nature. They help alleviate tension, inform readers about societal challenges, and prepare them to endure the pain and agony caused by societal ills. Ayi Kwei Armah, in his novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, employs coarse language deliberately to draw attention to the decadence and corruption in his society. His choice of words serves a therapeutic purpose: to expose, condemn, and confront societal absurdities in Africa. By highlighting issues like corruption, materialism, moral degeneration, and filth, Armah aims to provoke a desire for positive change.

Armah’s use of vulgar expressions reflects the decayed moral state of society. For instance, the narrator describes graffiti in a lavatory where someone has written the crude phrase, “VAGINA SWEET.” This degrading expression underscores the societal disregard for decency. Armah uses such language to confront readers with the harsh realities of moral degradation, urging them to resist oppression, corruption, and immorality.

Another example is the narrator’s description of a neglected railway banister, reflecting the lack of maintenance culture in the country:

“Apart from the wood itself, there were of course people themselves; just so many hands and fingers... left hand fingers in their careless journey from hasty anus... after-piss and stale sweat from part crotches” (p. 8-10).

This stark imagery highlights neglect and filth while serving a therapeutic purpose—to provoke awareness and inspire change. Armah seeks to educate readers on the consequences of societal decay, motivating them to adopt better attitudes toward public hygiene, respect for laws, and maintenance culture.

Similarly, Achebe’s *A Man of the People* (1966) demonstrates the therapeutic nature of literature. Through the character of Odili, Achebe critiques the luxurious lifestyles of corrupt politicians who remain oblivious to the struggles of ordinary citizens:

“The first thing critics tell you about our ministers’ official residence is that each has seven bedrooms and seven bathrooms, one for every day of the week. All I can say... I would be the most anxious to remain one forever... over and barricaded themselves” (p. 41-42).

This excerpt exposes the disconnection between the ruling class and the masses, offering readers insight into the systemic corruption that widens the gap between the elites and the poor. By confronting these realities, readers are prepared to face societal challenges with courage and a desire for reform.

In both novels, the use of satirical elements and, at times, vulgar language serves a dual purpose: to provoke thought and to provide therapeutic relief. These literary tools act as a means of addressing societal seizures caused by disorder, offering a roadmap for healing and positive transformation.

In conclusion, literature, as exemplified by Armah and Achebe, plays a critical role in addressing societal ills. By confronting harsh realities, these works serve as therapeutic agents, fostering awareness, resilience, and a call for change.

Conclusion

The interplay of power and corruption has become a significant challenge on the African continent, driven largely by the attitudes of both leaders and citizens toward socio-political and economic development. At the core of this issue lies poverty, which often serves as the foundation for corruption and the relentless pursuit of power. Consequently, individuals who ascend to positions of authority often cling to their status and exploit every available resource to solidify their influence and achieve societal prominence. Poverty is an endemic disease that crippled institutions, limits economic opportunities and foster environment where unethical practices become common place. It is therefore important to address poverty not only for improving living conditions but also for strengthening democratic governance and reducing corruption in post colonial Africa.

Chinua Achebe, in *A Man of the People* (1966), and Ayi Kwei Armah, in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), critically explore the conduct of individuals who rise from humble beginnings to positions of power, only to indulge in corrupt practices and wealth accumulation to the detriment of the masses. These narratives reflect the realities of many African societies, particularly in the post-independence era, where the general population faces deprivation, immorality, poverty, abuse of power, and social decay.

However, these societal ills can be addressed and mitigated through literature. By engaging with literary texts that capture these experiences and offer insights into managing societal challenges, readers are equipped with tools to confront and process their emotions. The themes and literary devices employed in these works serve a therapeutic purpose, fostering critical reflection, emotional resilience, and a deeper understanding of societal dynamics.

Literature, as a discipline, not only reflects the ills of society but also serves as a healing force, providing guidance and hope amidst social maladies. It remains a vital tool for informing, educating, and inspiring change in society. Literature through story telling illuminates the effects of the social vices by creating awareness and prompting critical discussion on the need to confront uncomfortable truth about corruption and social injustice. In this way the society will be a better place where love, empathy and understanding individuals and the entire society is sustained.

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TERRORISM IN NIGERIA: A REFLECTION ON CONCEPT, COST AND THE ECONOMICS OF PLANNING

BY

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Abstract

Terrorism is as developmentally costly as it is conceptually complex in Nigeria. It ravages the nation's political economy and erodes social harmony. Thus, reflecting on the cost and concept of terrorism in Nigeria is a national security imperative. Across the globe, terrorism, regardless of its form and target, disrupts the income generation of States and commercial activities than religious cleansing. In Nigeria, Boko Haram terrorism reflects this truism. It is more of an attack against the Nigerian federation than against Christians. This paper interrogates this phenomenon in the context of the economics of planning. Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria's northeast was brought about by the State's highhandedness and improper planning. Using the historical research methodology and secondary sources are analysed to demonstrate how terrorism in Nigeria is preventable through prospective economic planning. By exploring the origin, causes, and mode of operation of Boko Haram terrorists in Nigeria, the paper situates it within the broader global terrorism portraiture. This enabled the paper to spotlight how futuristic economic planning can be deployed to mitigate the cost of terrorism. It concludes that Nigeria must embrace prospective economic planning based on its population growth projections and the foreseeable challenges.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Terrorism, Nigeria, Perspective Planning, Cost

Introduction

Across different spectrum of society, cost has different connotations. Cost is general economic planning is the alternative forgone. It is the sacrificed item or need in order to satisfy the need for another item. In business accounting, cost is the price of an item or the amount of money paid for services rendered; while in a social context, cost is the calamity suffered by individuals, households, and nations as a result of natural or man-made calamities. Out of all the man-made factors affecting cost, nothing inflicts and inflates cost in all of its ramifications like war and terrorism. It is for this reason that the signing of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 can be considered a milestone in human rights protectionism. It sought to reduce the cost implications of man-made misgivings and state terrorism. The UDHR also

conferred on states in the international system the sacred duty of protecting the fundamental human rights of their citizenry from abuse by non-state terrorist actors. Hence, in 1960, when Nigeria attained sovereign status, it is safe to say that the country inherited this obligation. Thus, Nigerians systematically and constitutionally earned the right to live in peace, and be free from fear of uncontrolled use of violence and terror. This is because, the Nigerian state ceremony, symbolized by the lowering of the British Union Jack and the hosting of the Nigerian flag, conferred on Nigeria as a nation and Nigerians as a people the right to exist and thrive under the security of international law.

In the early years of Nigeria's statehood, domestic terrorism was almost an abstract subject or an illusion that Nigerians read about or watched on international cable network news channels. But this is not to say that, Nigerians, since independence, have suffered under the yoke of state terrorism in one way or the other. Since paradise was lost in the "Garden of Eden" Man's live everywhere had been fraught with pain and misery across the globe. In the thousand years of human history after the *Edenic* rebellion, mankind has mostly dominated his fellow man to his injury. Injustice, oppression, suppression, marginalization and exclusionism were seen to be the hallmarks of human rule. This was also true of politics and governance in the Nigerian state when it came into sovereign existence. The country was characterized by untold sufferings and skyrocketing poverty that were caused by Nigeria's dysfunctional political system and underdeveloped economy. Despite this reality, acts of terrorism such as suicide bombings were at an all-time low; and the thought of Nigerians taking their own was inconceivable. Fela Anikulapo Kuti, verbalized this situation aptly in his one of his songs titled "*Suffering and Smiling*".² He observed that Nigerians love their rights to life so much that they would never think of endangering their lives to change the status quo ante in the country. Therefore, before the rise of the Boko Haram terrorist group, terrorism as a means to an end was officially not an option on the table for Nigerians seeking socio-political change and economic justice. It is against this backdrop that this study would interrogate the political economy dynamics, psychological and attitudinal changes that birthed the Boko Haram phenomenon in 2009. In order to articulately count the cost of terrorism in Nigeria, the paper would examine the concept and historical context of terrorism. It would demonstrate that planning is a development imperative and an effective cost cutting tool for pruning down the social and economic cost of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria.

Conceptual Understanding of Terrorism

The term terrorism was coined from the root word terror, which itself was derived from the Latin word "*Terre*" that means "to frighten". The forerunner of the concept "*Terror Cimbricus*" referred to the state of fright and panic in Rome in 105 B.C during the Cimbrian war, upon the approach of warriors from the Germanic and Celtic tribe of Cimbri.³ But the etymological origin of the concept of terrorism as a calculated use of violence to create a general climate of fear in a population in order to achieve political objectives is traceable to the 1790s. During this period, terrorism as a concept was concocted to describe the terror the French revolutionaries unleashed on their opponents.⁴ In this regard, the word terrorism gave verbal expression to the "Reign of Terror" of the Jacobin party of Maximilien Robespierre

during the French Revolution. Their acts of terror included mass execution of King Louis XVI and his wife Maria Antoinette, by guillotine.⁵

Over time and space, terrorism has taken different forms and shades. And this explains why there is currently no one watertight universally acceptable definition of terrorism. Despite the conceptual variations of terrorism, all the different understandings of terrorism still meet at the centre. This has to do with the underlying objectives or motives of the terrorist. The existing conceptual frameworks for understanding terrorism espouse the idea that terrorism is either the use of violence (terror) to frighten people or to achieve certain political goals. However, the problem of having a universal definition of terrorism was captured succinctly by Louise Richardson when he stated that: “A universal definition (of terrorism) will define terrorism irrespective of the aims of the terrorist group.”⁶ Despite the elusiveness of terrorism to conceptual universality, Gregor Bruce maintained that researchers and academic students of terrorism are still very much interested in defining terrorism because it enables better communication and contribution to society’s counter-terrorism measures.⁷

It is along this line that this study finds it pertinent to conceptualise and contextualise terrorism in Nigeria for a better grasp. Some popular views of terrorism in the country conceive it as Islamic fundamentalism, a Fulanisation and Islamisation agenda aimed at the eradication of Christians in Nigeria. These perceptions and misconceptions of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria have far-reaching social and political consequences. It is partly responsible for President Donald Trump threat to go guns-a-blazing in a strong and swift military attack against what he calls radical Islamists killing Christians. Misconceptions of terrorism in Nigeria is also responsible for its view as acts of genocide against Christians, and for the stereotyping and even outlawing of social groups perceived to be affiliated with terrorism.⁸ In Nigeria, this is the apparent reality. Hausa/Fulani people and Islam as a religion are given terrorist profiles in the South. Thus, there is a growing problem of witch-hunting, victimisation (suspicion) and stigmatisation of northerners as Boko Haram members in the south. Therefore, to help reposition perspectives in the country and engender proper understanding of terrorism, this paper finds it apropos to examine terrorism from a global perspective. Walter Languer defined terrorism as the illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective by targeting innocent people.⁹ Tore Bjorgo conceptualised terrorism as a set of methods of combat rather than an identifiable ideology or movement, and involves premeditated use of violence against non-combatants in order to achieve a psychological effect of fear on others than the immediate targets.¹⁰

C.J.M Drake defines terrorism as the recurrent use or threatened use of politically motivated and clandestinely organised violence by a group whose aim is to influence a psychological target in order to make it behave in a way which the group desires.¹¹ And the United States of America’s Federal Bureau of Intelligence conceives terrorism as: “The unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property, to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.”¹² In 2004, the United Nations Security council Resolution 1566 defines terrorism as,

*Criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act.*¹³

Furthermore, the United Kingdom's Terrorism Act 2000 defined terrorism as an act designed seriously to interfere with or seriously disrupt an electronic system. This act includes cyber-attacks (cyber terrorism), which is a core aspect of modern terrorism.¹⁴ The United States of America's Patriot Act of 2001 expanded the conceptualisation and contextualisation of terrorism to include:

1. Threatening, conspiring or attempting to hijack aeroplanes, boats, buses or other vehicles;
2. Threatening, conspiring, or attempting to commit acts of violence on any "protected" persons, such as government officials;
3. Any crime committed with the use of any weapon or dangerous device, when the intent of the crime is determined to be the endangerment of public safety or substantial property damage, rather than for mere personal monetary gain.¹⁵

It is against the backdrop of these conceptual frameworks that this study will interrogate terrorism in Nigeria as a rational course of action chosen by aggrieved, marginalised, outnumbered and outgunned minorities out of other alternatives to seek redress and attract political attention. Therefore, this study opines that Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria is the rational and calculated use of violence to draw the attention of government and that of the general public to the political and socio-economic plights of displaced elements in northern Nigeria. Some of these terrorist were arguably former political stooges of some members of the Nigerian ruling class; who were used to capture state power. After electoral victory, some of these political thugs who turned terrorists had their unwritten agreement between them and some state actors that recruited them jettisoned. Consequently, resorting to terrorism became the most pragmatic means of expressing their grievances against the state, and perhaps the sharpest weapon for demanding socio-economic justice.

Terrorism in Global Historical Perspective

From the foregoing conceptualisation of terrorism in the Nigerian context, it is deducible that terrorism is not genocide against Christians in the country. Rather, it is an act of terror driven by ideology, targeted against the State and consistent with other terrorisms in a global historical perspective. Terrorism is a timeless phenomenon. This makes modern acts of terrorism direct replica of the past. Thus, although contemporary conceptualisation of terrorism began after the French Revolution of 1789; it is instructive to note that terrorist activities as acts of violence rooted in the past are conceptually tied together. However, what differs over time and space are the actors and theatre of terrorism; but the idea remains the same. To this

end, the United States Institute of Peace observed that violence had been in use throughout human history by those who chose to oppose kings and reject existing status quo.¹⁶ The earliest user of the idea of terrorism in human history can be traced to Cain. In the “Garden of Eden”, he unleashed terror on his brother Abel when he struck him to death with a rod in the field. But the organised use of the idea of terrorism as a rational weapon in the fight against dominion and suppression can be traced to the Jewish zealots in the first century. They tried to overthrow Roman rule over Jerusalem and the whole of Biblical Palestine through the use of murder and assassination. Subsequently, in the 11th to 13th centuries, organised terrorism was also used by Shiite Muslim sect that sought to assassinate Sunni Muslim leaders. They used hashish before committing acts of violence, and it was from their activities that the word assassin originated.¹⁷

However, in 18th-century France the historical development of terrorism reached a new height. It metamorphosed into a calculated use of violence to instil fear and achieve political objectives. This dimension of terrorism manifested fully during the French Revolution. In the course of the revolution, violence was not only used by the French revolutionaries to engender political and socio-economic reforms in France, but it was also elevated and incorporated into statecraft. Terrorism thus became an instrument of state policy. It was used by the French Royal family to eliminate and counter revolutionary elements in France and save France from military defeat; and to prevent France from descending into anarchy.¹⁸ Herbert L. Peacock observed that,

*The court nobles and members of the Royal family were not prepared to accept the situation as resignedly as Louis himself. All their efforts were concentrated on the defeat of the National Assembly by force or the threatened use of force.*¹⁹

They assembled a large body of troops under Marshal de Broglie to suppress the revolutionaries at Paris and Versailles. And this heightened the “Reign of Terror” in 18th century France.

In the 19th century, the global portraiture of terrorism was expanded when violence was extensively used to achieve the unification of Germany and Italy. The Otto von Bismarck’s “Blood and Iron” policy was an incitement to terrorism in European interstate relations which meant that, when it came to the realisation of the sovereign independence of Germany all options were on the table. Therefore, in the Franco-Prussia war and the Austro-Prussia war that ensued, terror and violence played a large part in determining the outcomes. In these international conflicts, the capacity of a state to inflict more terror on its adversary and sustain it decided the outcome. This situation was also true of the Franco-Italo and Austro-Italo wars that were fought for the political independence of Italy. Therefore, it can be argued that the emergence of Germany and Italy as independent states in Europe not only increased the number of states; they also engendered the idea of terrorism in the international system.²⁰ This manifested in the later rise of Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany. Under these ideologies, both states became increasingly committed to terrorism and violence.

However, at the dawn of the 20th century, the ideological base of the idea of terrorism was complemented with new forces such as nationalism, religious fundamentalism and cultural sentimentalism, among others. In this age, terrorism has begotten terrorism more than ever in the history of terrorism. For example, on June 28, 1914 when Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie were killed in a terrorist attack in Sarajevo by a Bosnian Serb nationalist; it paved the way for the outbreak of the biggest act of global terrorism, World War I. The first terrorist strike was carried out by 19 years old Gavrilo Princip; and this led to the second terrorist attack when Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914 in retaliation for the murder of the Austrian Archduke. Ever since this incident, terrorism in international relations has become a fancied weapon of the weak in the fight against colonial domination and hegemonic designs.²¹

But in the post-World War I years, that is, in the 1920s and 1930s it was the ideology of Fascism and Nazism under Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler respectively that breathe life into global terrorism. Terrorism in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany was incorporated into statecraft beyond the level attained in France during the revolution.²² Furthermore, with the outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917 and planting of communism in the country; Soviet Russia also emerged as one of the bastions of state terrorism in Europe. It used brute force to suppress the will of the people and to impose the will of the state on the citizenry. Consequently, in Germany and Soviet Russia people who did not fit into the mold of the leadership of the terrorist state such as political opponents, the Jews and Christians, became the primary targets of state terrorism. Hence, the Jewish holocaust, also known as the *Shoah* between 1941 and 1945 and the persecution and detention of Christians between 1937 and 1941 in concentration camps in Siberia speak volume of these developments.

From the mid-20th century global terrorism assumed a new form in colonised spaces of the earth in Africa. And it was the signing of the Atlantic Charter between the United States of America and Britain in 1941 coupled with the rise of radical nationalism at the end of the Second World War in 1945 that fired it all up. This new dimension of terrorism is the use of violence to drive self-determination struggle. In colonial Africa, decolonization and concerted effort against white supremacy was spiced with terrorist tactics. This is the use of terror and violence to create media spectacle and to pursue political objectives. Thus, nationalism and freedom fighting became the mask terrorism wore to conceal its true face. The reign of terror, which is the real face of terrorism, manifested itself in the weaponisation of violence and vandalism by the Black majority in South Africa in their nationalist struggle to resist apartheid. The African National Congress (ANC) under the leadership of Nelson Mandela used terror to fight the terror of the white supremacist regime.²³ Furthermore, in the Angola crisis of 1974-1975, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) were locked a Cold War battle of attrition that gave a fillip to the idea of terrorism. This implies that as the curtain of Portuguese colonialism in the country was closing; the cold war politics enhanced the entrenchment of terrorism in Angola and elsewhere in Africa.

The Origin of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria

The origin of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria, as can be deduced from the foregoing discussion, is not an isolated event in world history. It only emerged as one of the new frontiers of global terrorism. In Nigeria, the phenomenon of urban terrorism perpetrated by armed groups such as the Odua People's Congress, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), vigilante groups such as the defunct Bakassi Boys in Igboland predated Boko Haram terrorism. More so, the reign of terror occasioned by ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria such as the Ijaw-Itsekiri crisis, Ife-Modakeke crisis, Umuleri-Aguleri crisis, and the Maitatsine crisis were also precursors to the Boko Haram terror and violence. In regional perspective, the Kano crisis of 1953, Kano Riot of 1991 and the Biafra war of 1967-1970 stood tall in pitching Northerners and Southerners in Nigeria against each other in the ring of terror and violence. However, terrorism as at this time in the country was philosophically and structurally configured as terrorism proper. But the events mentioned above underpinned the idea of terrorism in Nigeria.

However, Nigeria's budding terrorism profile took a huge leap in 2002 with the rise of an ideologically organised terrorist group. In terrorism studies in Nigeria, there is a strongly entrenched view that the year 2002 was date of birth of terrorism in the country. But Akinola Olojo, in his attempt to probe beyond 2002, argued that the consensus of opinion that Boko Haram was formed in 2002 did not mean that the group was conceived in that year. He traced the remote origin of Boko Haram terrorism to the year 1995, when it was believed that the group existed as "*Shabaab*" and was led by a Muslim youth known as Lawan Abubakar.²⁴ However, his departure to the University of Medina, Saudi Arabia, for further studies led to the emergence of Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf as the substantive leader of the group. The headquarters of Boko Haram as a terrorist organisation is in Maiduguri, Borno state. The name of the group, when translated into English language means "Western Education is a Sin".²⁵

In the early years of Boko Haram, it drew its members and support from thousands of youth who were already disenchanted with the Nigerian state. And these people saw the group as an outlet through which their grievances could be expressed. Therefore, many poor families and unemployed youths in Northern Nigeria, as well as those from neighboring countries such as Niger, Chad, and Cameroon took refuge in Boko Haram.²⁶ Understandably, the group in its immediate post-formative stage functioned as a social movement and economic vanguard of some sorts. It sought to liberate the poor and provide a soft landing spot for oppressed people. Encyclopaedia Britannica noted that Boko Haram's initial proclaimed intent was the eradication of corruption and injustice in Nigeria, which it blamed on Western influences.²⁷ To this end, the group initiated socio-economic programmes aimed at salvaging its indigent and impoverished members. It sought to purge Nigeria of corrupt politicians and create a pure Islamic state ruled by Sharia Law. And this increased the domestic appeal of the group among displaced and disenchanted Muslims in the north.

Under these circumstances, Boko Haram was able to expand its activities and networks in northern Nigeria. It established a branch in Yobe state in the village of its leader Mohammed

Yusuf.²⁸ What this implies is that, when Boko Haram was formed in 2002 it was not committed to terrorism; it emerged as a social vanguard for purging northern politics from the corrupt and false Muslims that dominated it. And by extension, the group sought to fight against injustice, political exclusion and economic marginalisation in Nigeria. To this end, the group chided the northern political elites for their collaboration with southern elites to the detriment of the poor.²⁹ It resented the complicity of the false Muslim elites with their Christian counterparts in the plundering the wealth of Nigeria and in pushing many into poverty.

The road was paved for the philosophical core of Boko Haram to turn radical on October 12, 2001 when al-Qaeda made a call for a universal Jihad against the West. The group portrayed the United States of America's post-September 11, 2001, fight against terrorism in Afghanistan as a fight against the Muslim world. It enjoined Muslims everywhere to see Muslims in the Middle East as oppressed brethren. This caused the socio-economically vulnerable youths in northern Nigeria to become agitated and poised to protest against the counter-terrorism war in Afghanistan.³⁰ Chris Talbot reported that following the USA bombing of Afghanistan, about 2000 Muslim youths from an organization called the Muslim Revolutionaries protested against America's counter-terrorism war in Afghanistan, carrying the poster of Osama bin Laden. They clashed with anti-riot police and attacked Christians, which resulted in the death of over 200 people and the displacement of 18000 people.³¹ Therefore, what this call and the reign of terror it led to presuppose is the fact that even before the official formation of Boko Haram, radicalism was already ingrained in its embryo.

However, the immediate trigger of Boko Haram radicalism in Nigeria was the government's mismanagement of the group and the perceived threat it posed to the state. In 2009, the Nigerian government began a crackdown against Boko Haram in an attempt to root it out. And it would be safe to add that Nigeria's decision was not unconnected with the October 2001 Muslim protest in the country. Yvonne Ndege reported that, after issuing a warning for people to evacuate the surrounding area of Boko Haram headquarters, the Nigerian military invaded it in the night and shelled Boko Haram's mosque and the school that serves as their headquarters.³² This attack resulted in the death of no fewer than 100 Boko Haram members and the capture of its leader, Mohammed Yusuf.³³ The terror unleashed by the Nigerian security forces on the group created deep-seated fear in some of the residents of Maiduguri that left them too afraid to come back to their homes.³⁴ The Nigerian state terrorism against Boko Haram continued with the extra-judicial killing of its leader, Mohammed Yusuf, in police custody.³⁵

Following this killing in 2009, the rise of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria became unstoppable. The United States of America's House of Representatives Subcommittee on Counter-Terrorism and Intelligence Committee on Homeland Security observed that when Boko Haram re-emerged in 2010; it became as a more radical and violent group under the leadership of Imam Abubakar Shekau.³⁶ It sought vengeance against the Nigerian state for executing Mohammed Yusuf.³⁷ Therefore, it can be said that the Boko Haram terrorist group in Nigeria became a Frankenstein Monster of some sort that the Nigerian state partly had a hand in creating. In its quest for revenge, the group became bloodlust and terroristic. It obtained

more pounds of flesh from the Nigerian state than the state took from it in 2009. Boko Haram became responsible for more deaths and miseries in northern Nigeria than any other factor.

In 2019, Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria took another dimension when the group splintered into two. Internal unrest within the group resulted to a faction breaking away to partner with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This new terrorist group that this union formed in Nigeria became known as the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). The new terrorist group unleashed more ferocious attacks and terror on the Nigerian state that it compounded the country's national security dilemma. Boko Haram and ISWAP operating in Nigeria's ungoverned spaces in Northern Nigeria took terrorism to a new height and guaranteed Nigeria a top-spot on the list of terrorist states in the international system. They gained control of part of Nigeria's territories and established terrorist martial law (rule by force) over them. These groups went as far as hoisting their flags and collecting taxation from local farmers and business operators in their spheres of influence.

Causes of Terrorism in Nigeria

It is a truism that the causation of Boko Haram terrorism can be effectively deduced from the foregoing discussion. But just as there is no universal definition of terrorism, so also is, there no universal causation of terrorism. This presupposes that there is a need for this study to explore other causal factors of terrorism in Nigeria in order to deepen the narrative. Generally speaking, the causes of terrorism in one society differ from the causes in another. But what is certain is the fact that, the causations of terrorism are usually environmentally determined. This implies that, it is wrong to search for the cause of terrorism in one society in another society; the cause must be sought within that society. The truthfulness of this contention resides in the fact that despite the external factors that might have propelled terrorism in a country, it is usually its' prevailing political and socio-economic milieu that triggers recourse to terrorism.

It is instructive to note that, as the types of terrorism vary, so also do their causes. There is the civil disorder terrorism, political terrorism, non-political terrorism, quasi terrorism, state terrorism, limited political terrorism, and revolutionary terrorism. In the case of Nigeria, the Boko Haram terrorism can be described as civil disorder and revolutionary terrorism. This type of terrorism results when a group unhappy with and in opposition to political and economic policies and actions intend to send a message constituted authority they hold a grudge against; and later tries to overhaul the status quo. Insight drawn from the activities of Boko Haram since 2002 lends credence to this view. Without doubt, political dysfunctionality and bad governance that are responsible for the oppression, suppression, highhandedness and economic injustices are the triggers of Boko Haram terrorism. Economic alienation, marginalisation and exclusionism in resource distribution, responsible for the growing phenomenon of poverty and hunger in Nigeria, are strong causes of terrorism in Nigeria.

The fact that Nigeria's political economy had succeeded in leaving many Nigerians behind explains its causal linkage to the resort to terrorism as a means to an end. The country's failed political economy is causing unemployment, injustice, frustration and inequality; and these are the incubators of terrorism. These causal triggers of Boko Haram terrorism are

worsened by state terrorism in Nigeria. The predatory nature of the Nigerian state makes it aloof and unperturbed by the socio-economic travails of its citizenry. Instead of responding to and catering for the welfare needs of the people, leadership in Nigeria is observably the modern day equivalent of King Rehoboam of ancient Jerusalem. When the northern the northern tribe of Israel led by Jeroboam pleaded with him to make their burden light; he promised them that his rule would be more fierce and burdensome than that of his father, King Solomon.³⁸ In a similar fashion, successive government in Nigeria has over time succeeded in increasing the pangs of distress of Nigerians. Consequently, some aggrieved Nigerians, like Jeroboam and his followers of old, have decided to take their destiny into their own hands.

By reconstituting themselves as Boko Haram terrorists, they have turned themselves into the foe of Nigeria. However, through military show of force state terrorism has been further deployed to quash them. But the excessive use of brute force and military violations of human rights have only proven to be new factors fuelling Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria. And this means that terrorism in Nigeria was begot and engendered by terrorism. To this end, Sheikh Gumi argued that the bandits and terrorists unleashing terror on Nigerians are victims of circumstances, who were forced to embrace terrorism as a means of last resort. They see it as the only way to avenge the harm done to their relatives and family members.³⁹ But the United States Institute of Peace survey showed that, the desire for revenge is the least causal factor of youth extremism and violence in Nigeria.⁴⁰ Be that as it may, it is instructive to note that understanding the cause of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria is impossible through the lens of monocausality. It was caused by a wide range of problems rooted in Nigeria's failed political economy.

Theatre of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria

Since the start of the radical stage of Boko Haram activities in 2010 under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, Nigeria's Northeast had been the main theatre of its reign of terror.⁴¹ But Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state has so far been what can be called the epicentre of both Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorism in Nigeria. Other flashpoints of Boko Haram terror include Kano, Kaduna, Kogi, Plateau, Bauchi and Taraba states. Overtime, the success of Boko Haram terrorist campaigns had bolstered its confidence to expand its sphere of terror to Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. It attacked the United Nations building, which demonstrated its readiness to attack both soft and hard targets. The US Department of State revealed that some of the acts of terror perpetrated by Boko Hara and its sister terrorist organisation, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) include the following: the Kuje prison attack in Abuja on July 5, 2022, the attack on a bar in Kabba, Kogi with Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) on May 29, 2022, the attack of Maiduguri city, Borno with long range rockets on December 23, 2021, the firing of four rockets into Maiduguri city on December 4, 2021.⁴²

On November 28, 2020, Jere Local Government Area of Borno state was a major flashpoint of terrorism. There were several attacks on soft and hard targets in the region. And in July 22, 2020 ISWAP terrorists attacked and killed five (5) aid workers and staff of the Action

against Hunger, the International Rescue Committee, ACTED and the REACH initiative and the Borno State Emergency Management Agency. On July 2, 2020, in Damasak, Borno state terrorist opened fire at the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) flight. Furthermore, in Monguno town, terrorists attacked a humanitarian hub and killed at least 40 civilians on June 13, 2020; and they also killed 81 civilians in another theatre of terrorism in Felo village in Gubio Local Government Area, Borno state.⁴³ In the areas ravaged by terrorist groups in Nigeria, they successfully instill fear into the hearts of the locals and foreign residents because of the varied and deadly modes of operations the terrorists adopted.

Modes of Operation of Terrorist Groups in Nigeria

While the objectives of terrorist groups in Nigeria at all times were in common, it was their method of operation that varied from one attack to another. At this juncture, this study will be exploring some of the popular modes of operation of both Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorist groups in Nigeria. Terrorists usually carry out coordinated armed assaults, rocket attack, assassinations, kidnapping and hostage taking (this include the abduction of the Chibok Girls in 2014 and the Dapchi Girls in 2018 among others), and suicide bombings. Most of these suicide bombing are carried out using Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), while the terrorists are disguised and camouflaged as military personnel. They wear military uniforms and move about in captured military vehicles. This strategy has so far proven effective in assaulting military installations and police stations in northern Nigeria.

The operational methodology of terrorists in Nigeria also includes the mounting of illegal checkpoints on major supply and commercial routes in northern Nigeria, while disguised as military personnel. They also attack soft targets such as internally displaced persons camp, markets, religious institutions such as churches and mosques, government buildings and schools. Terrorists in Nigeria also use propaganda to instill fear and to terrorise people. This is evident in the practice of Boko Haram releasing gruesome videos showing the brutal killing and beheading of captured victims. They usually do this to make loud terrorist statements to the Nigerian populace. Other forms of terrorist statements are made through the sales of and marrying away of abducted girls and women as slaves; and through the forceful conversion of captured (abducted) Christian girls to Muslims. Boko Haram also adopts the use threat to achieve its objectives. In recent times, this includes the threat of invading Nigeria's capital, Abuja, Islamising Nigeria and the order for all Christians to flee the north or face the brutal consequences if they defied the order.

Cost of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria

The cost of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria can be counted as a humanitarian cost or social cost, economic and political cost. But the economic cost of terrorism is arguably its running cost. It is implicated in all the other costs of terrorism. At the humanitarian or social level, the cost of terrorism in the north is the human right violations it induces. Boko Haram terrorism is largely responsible for depriving people of their right to life, right to human dignity, right to own properties, freedom of speech, movement, association and freedom to make conscientious decisions.⁴⁴ In Nigeria's northeast, the cost of terrorism is growing by the day.

In this area, the activities of Boko Haram had ensured that right to life is no longer certain. There are growing cases of forceful conversion of abducted people (Christians) into Muslims violates their religious freedom, and incidents of rape and torture violate human dignity. And there is also the commodification of humans as articles of trade in modern slave trade markets, which is an inglorious attack on human dignity and person. These actions of terrorists in Nigeria contravene international law and are an unbearable assault on the collective psychology of humanity.

Furthermore, the humanitarian and social cost of terrorism in Northern Nigeria includes the breakdown of marriages and family life, internal displacement of about two million people and social disharmony caused by community dislocation and ethno-religious suspicion and intolerance. In the theatre of Boko Haram terrorism, terrorists have been known to invade families and cart away women and girls and spoils of war. In some cases, they have been reported to add salt to injury by demanding that husbands always make their wives available to them for sexual satisfaction whenever they need them. And some husbands, out of fear, have been known to have sent their wives to the bush at night to satisfy the sexual needs of terrorists and return home in the morning. This development erodes the social foundation of the people and puts culture and tradition at risk. It also breeds a generation of illegitimate children as terrorists have been known to impregnate a number of women and girls in Nigeria's northeast. The International Crisis Group reported Boko Haram began abducting women and girls for both political and pragmatic ends... By awarding wives to its fighters, it attracted new male recruits and incentivised combatants.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the Council on Foreign Relations observed that Boko Haram claimed that the wives and daughters of infidels or pagans are legitimate booty that can be sold into slavery.⁴⁶

Economically, the cost of terrorism is the forgone economic activities, business and income-earning opportunities in northeast Nigeria. It is the recurrent and most enduring cost of Boko Haram terrorism. They are the alternative forgone commercial activities, such as large scale farming, animal husbandry, trading and indigenous industrial activities like leather works, Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs), taxation, and other artisanal services that terrorism is discouraging in the northeast. By clipping businesses, Boko Haram terrorism had significantly impeded the economic development of the northeast and in Nigeria at large. This is because meaningful economic activities cannot take place in an unstable atmosphere of terror and insecurity. In another dimension, the Nigeria state is also incurring huge financial losses running the affairs of the state because of Boko Haram terrorism. Terrorism has occasioned the increase of security votes to the governors of the 36 states of the Nigerian federation and how these monies are spent are never accounted for. It has also forced the Nigerian government to incur huge economic burden conducting and financing elections. Elections now are very expensive because the electoral umpire continues to demand for huge money for logistics that is never accounted for. More so, the government incurs additional cost creating new polling units in IDP camps and conducting voter re-registration for IDPs who have lost their voters' cards. Terrorism has also led to government increased spending on the military when they deployed as frontline workers in the fight against terrorism and for electoral duties.

Politically, the cost of terrorism in Nigeria is very heavy. It is contributory to the political instability and loss of public confidence on the political leadership of the country. Terrorism has also heightened the breakdown of law and order in the Northeast of Nigeria; and it is providing a cover for undesirable elements across the country to foment trouble. Furthermore, political disruptions such as curfews and state of emergencies that terrorism necessitated in Borno state and other parts of the northeast are also some of its political cost. When these happen, they have far-reaching political effects on politics and governance. Curfews and state of emergencies are undemocratic solutions to problems in a democracy. They give leeway for military rule of some sorts under a democracy. Consequently, terrorism in a democracy somehow manages to find a way to beget itself. This implies that the observable first political response to terrorism in Nigeria is the reversion to state terrorism. State agencies are deployed to contain the freedom of the citizenry and they experience more brutality from the enforcers of curfews and state of emergencies than the Boko Haram terrorist that they were targeted against. In the long run, the use of military to solution to combat democratic problem is another permanent dent on the international image and personality of the Nigerian state.

In another dimension, the political cost of terrorism in the context of human right violations is felt in the disenfranchisement of Nigerian citizens in the northeast displaced by it. This means that terrorism directly hampers political participation in Nigeria. Terrorist activities create uncertainties around the conduct of elections due to fear of a potential terrorist attack on voters at their polling stations. Without doubt, this fear to some extent affects voters' turnout on election days and the mobilization of electoral personnel and material by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The commission has the worry and fear of the security of its staff and material to contend with. INEC usually faces a shortage of personnel to conduct election in the theatres of Boko Haram terrorism. And the situation was created by the fact that members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) that INEC traditionally recruits as ad-hoc staff for electoral duties in the habit of rejecting their posting to the northeast due to insecurity.

Terrorism also leads to the problem of human displacement. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), who have been forced by terrorist attacks on their homes and communities to flee and live in make-shift tents in places called IDP camps, at times lose more than their homes and properties. Some of them also lose vital documents such as certificated and Permanent Voters Card (PVC) in the process of fleeing from the theatres of Boko Haram terrorism. They also faced the challenge of disenfranchisement due to the fact that some of them find themselves resettling in areas that are outside their voter registration areas and polling units. Hence, they become victims of circumstances who are hindered from rendering their civic responsibility because of terrorism. The loss of these votes is a significant political loss for Nigeria's democracy. This loss is compounded by the fact that terrorism and insecurity are the cover under the Nigerian state have continued to justify and sustain the undemocratic militarisation of elections in the country. Elections in Nigeria's fourth Republic now increasingly involve heavy military deployment because of fear of terrorist attack. And the development is paradoxically hampering the conduct of free, fair and credible elections in

Nigeria. On the one hand, over-militarisation of elections is causing voters' apathy and disillusionment. Instead of feeling safe and secure, some voters in terrorist flashpoints fear for their safety arising from military accidental discharge of bullets. Consequently, in one electoral circle after the other in Nigeria's fourth Republic, the number of registered voters has continued to be higher than the actual voters. This political loss is unsustainable in a fledgling democracy like Nigeria.

Development of Economic Planning in Nigeria

Planning is an age long economic exercise. It is an economic development tool that resonates in the idea that: "failure to plan is planning to fail". Since the rise of development economics as a field of knowledge in the age of enlightenment in Europe, economic thinkers such as Adam Smith, Alfred Marshall, and John Stout Mill, and David Hume, and David Ricardo among others had been loud and clear on the centrality of planning to the growth and development of national economies. Their varied perception of planning gave birth to different economic development principles and practices on which modern economies are now structured. These include the principle of division of labour, balance of trade, comparative cost advantage, and opportunity cost that paved the way for the emergence of economic laws such as the laws of diminishing marginal return and demand and supply that, for many years served as the cornerstone of mercantilism. In their seminal work "*History of Economic Thought*", M.L. Jhingan, M. Girija, and L. Sasikala asserted that mercantilism was the dominant economic thought in Europe from the 16th century to the 18th century.⁴⁷ The reverberating idea and development plan of mercantilist society was anchored on commerce and free trade. In the years followed, in both capitalist and communist economies, planning as the main driver of economic development had taken different dimensions.

However, in the Nigerian experience, modern development planning dates back to the colonial period. Christiana Okojie traced it to the rise of the British Labour Party in Nigeria's former colonial power. She noted that the Labour Party led British parliament for the first succeed in appropriating the sum of £200 million for the economic and social advancement of British colonies. It was in this regard that the Colonial Office in Nigeria requested the development of a "Ten Year Development and Welfare Plan for Nigeria" through the issuance of Government Sessional Paper No.24, 1945.⁴⁸ In post-independence Nigeria, the first national development plan was launched in 1962; it was followed by the second national development plan in 1970. These plans were replaced by the third and fourth plans in 1975 and 1981 respectively before the rise of perspective planning in the country. Development economics scholars in Nigeria such as C.E. Okojie (2003), E.J. Ayo (1988), A.A. Anyegbe (2014), and E.N. Iheanacho (2014) who have studies Nigeria's post-colonial development plans have basically tried to demonstrate the centrality of planning be it strategic, operational, tactical and contingency planning to Nigeria's economic development; and to explain why they have failed.⁴⁹ But beyond examining planning as a means of national economic development, this study established that economic planning in Nigeria can also be a veritable counter-terrorism instrument.

Perspective Planning as Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Perspective planning is a development economics strategy for managing population projections. It is essentially a long range and futuristic disaster pre-emption strategy in a nation. Perspective planning is planning for the future in such a way that likely futuristic causes of national troubles such as population growth, resource scarcity, natural and man-made disasters, are imagined and resolved before they occur on actionable policy papers (or plans). Hence, Michael P. Todaro and Stephen C. Smith observed that economic planning is a deliberate government attempt to coordinate economic decision making over the long run to influence, direct, and even control the level of growth in a nation's income, consumption, employment, investment, savings, and export and import among others in order to achieve a predetermined set of development objectives.⁵⁰ When planning in Nigeria is effective, it would go a long way in enhancing resource mobilization and allocation and this in turn would cause positive attitudinal and psychological impacts⁵¹ that will help to abate criminalities and social deviance in the country.

As far back as 1959, A. Rudra had made arguments for perspective or long term planning as a national development imperative. He conceived perspective planning as a way of setting perspective for the short term plans of a nation. Rudra asserts that giving perspective to short term plans leads to long run results. This implies that when perspective planning is tied to and made a continuation of short term plans it prevents perspective plans from becoming mere theoretical projections.⁵² Therefore, it can be safely said that perspective planning is planning to achieve or replicate short term development success also in the future. It is a strategy for operationalising the "Rolling Plan". According to Christiana Okojie, when plans are rolled over in perspective planning it enables the government to keep track of major development in the economy and respond in a timely fashion.⁵³ Perspective planning as an instrument of social change in Nigeria is evident some policies locally initiated and others the country keyed into. They include the Vision 2020, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2015, Vision 20:2020, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030. However, it is true that planning in Nigeria since independence had been plagued by poor implementation and by the fact that Nigeria has a mono-economy; nonetheless this study insists that the more the economic managers of Nigeria learn to roll over plan into perspective planning, the more the country's efficiency in resources mobilisation and distribution will improve. It will also make the Nigerian economy very flexible and easily responsive to future national security threats such as population growth. When extant plans are in place to deal with national emergencies before they arise, it puts Nigeria in a good stead to pre-empt the attendant grievances and dissatisfaction they usually create that leads to terrorism. Therefore, instead of over relying on military solutions that engender state terrorism for curbing future internal strife, this study argued that perspective planning is the ideal contingency plan Nigeria needs to perfect in her fight against Boko Haram terrorism.

Conclusion

Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria is consistent with its global historical antecedents. Hence, it is not genocide against Christians. While the Nigerian State is the primary enemy of the group, both Christians and Muslims are the ones bearing the brunt of Boko Haram terrorism in northern Nigeria. Boko Haram's rise as an organised criminal group in 2010 and its targeting of Nigeria are problems the country brought on itself. Nigeria's use of terror to fight terror which caused the extra-judicial killing of Muhammed Yusuf, the first leader of the Boko Haram group in 2009, was the provocation that accelerated the gestation stage of terrorism in Nigeria. It midwived Boko Haram's rebirth as a radical terrorist group under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau. Since then, the group has remained committed to inflicting serious damage on the Nigerian state as revenge. These are the cost of terrorism in the country. But the economy of the northeast is what this study finds to be the biggest burden bearer of Boko Haram terrorism. Therefore, this study maintained that perspective planning of the Nigerian economic development trajectory is critical to countering terrorism and pre-empting its ravaging effect on the Nigerian economy, among others. It is useful for effective prospective maximisation of scarce resources and resource allocation to respond to projected population growth and its challenges. The study also finds that the human lives Boko Haram terrorism claims are fundamental to the economic growth and prosperity of Nigeria. It is the labour needed to bring together all other factors of production and produce goods and services. Hence, through perspective planning, human needs as the population grows are matched with resources and opportunities. This ensures that nobody is left behind and aggrieved against the State. Therefore, planning guarantees social security, which in turn translates into national security. It deals with insecurity before it arises and planning eliminates the disorientations that usually lead disgruntled citizens into taking up arms against the state by forming or joining radical groups like Boko Haram.

Endnotes

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GENDERED POWER AND ACCOUNTABILITY: A FEMINIST REAPPRAISAL OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Despite the global advocacy for inclusive governance and national frameworks such as the Nigerian Code of Corporate Governance (2018), women occupy less than 15% of leadership positions in publicly listed firms. This highlights persistent structural inequities. It draws on feminist institutionalism and gendered theories of power to interrogate how patriarchal norms, leadership stereotypes, and tokenistic compliance practices limit genuine gender equality in governance. Using a qualitative research design, the study analyses corporate governance codes, policy instruments, board composition reports, and diversity disclosures. Findings reveal that while women's numerical presence on the boards is gradually increasing, true gender transformative governance remains elusive, as inclusion often serves regulatory compliance rather than cultural change. Nevertheless, emerging evidence indicates that gender-diverse boards enhance ethical standards, transparency and sustainable business practices. The paper, therefore, calls for a paradigm shift from compliance-driven representation to transformative governance that embeds feminist principles of equity, inclusivity, and accountability. It recommends targeted policy reforms, institutional restructuring and cultural reorientation to position women as critical agents shaping Nigeria's corporate governance landscape. Integrating these approaches will foster more resilient, ethical, and equitable institutions aligned with Nigeria's sustainable development objectives.

Keywords: Corporate, Governance, Nigeria, Women, Feminist, Power

Introduction

Corporate governance is frequently portrayed as a neutral framework designed to promote traits like transparency, accountability and efficiency in boardrooms. Corporate governance connotes various meanings to diverse institutions and bodies. It is defined by Chen, James & Eichler (2024) as the system of rules, practices and processes by which a company is directed and controlled. It involves the mechanisms that are put in place to balance the interests of all in the company or organisation. It includes every sphere of management. The board of directors is the primary force which influences corporate governance, followed by the senior management,

shareholders, Local, State and Federal Governments, employees, and finally, the customers. Observations have revealed that Nigeria is a highly patriarchal society. This has manifested heavily in the composition of the two genders in many organisations and boardrooms. Despite the increasing pressures and advocacies for a more balanced representation in the courtrooms, males have continued to dominate the courtrooms. Institutions are now advocating for a balanced gender ratio in the boardrooms. Despite these strides, some feminist thinkers are of the view that there is still so much work to be done. Institutions are far from being impartial in their operations; rather, their laws are embedded in social hierarchies that are more favourable to males and systematically relegate women. Today, diversity in boardrooms is believed to possess the potential to improve the quality of corporate board decisions (Forbes and Milliken, 1999). That is why diversity in the corporate space is valued and agitated for. Still, a great lacuna exists when it comes to the implementation of suggestions on equal representation. At the moment, female board representation is rising. With a rise from 21.82% in 2020 to 29.30% in 2023 (Society for Corporate Governance in Nigeria, 2023). Despite this growth, which is evident from the above statistics, it is clear that men still occupy a large percentage of the top executive roles. It is important to stress that all-male boards are nearly non-existent anywhere in the world; despite this, female representation in certain roles has continued to decline, which is a constant source of worry. Having women occupy leadership roles is vital to the growth of institutions because of the unique qualities that women possess. According to recent studies, having more women on the board helps the company perform better financially. (Society for Corporate Governance in Nigeria, 2023)

From the above, it is clear that corporate governance in Nigeria remains a critical pillar of institutional performance and accountability. However, questions of gender representation and equitable participation in corporate leadership continue to highlight deep-seated disparities in power distribution and institutional design. This is about to change because there are heightened calls for an overhaul of the composition of corporate offices with clear demands for the inclusion of women in the boardrooms. (Higgs, 2003) Appreciable progress has been made in Nigeria, in the sense that it has made significant legislative and policy efforts towards achieving inclusive governance. Observers opine that these interventions have largely failed to dismantle the systemic barriers that limit women's participation in corporate decision-making. This paper rethinks corporate governance in Nigeria through a feminist lens, foregrounding the intersection of gender, power, and institutional structures. It critiques prevailing norms that privilege masculine leadership models and marginalise women's voices, even in compliance-driven efforts at diversity. Exploring how patriarchal ideologies are embedded in corporate governance frameworks, it offers both theoretical insight and practical recommendations for transformative change. Therefore, creating room for more women in strategic positions in corporations is not just about equity, but it is a prerequisite for the growth and success of these corporations and the continued patronage by investors. (Hillman et al, 2007)

Statement of the Problem

One thought process that has continued to shape the world is the increased global advocacy for gender inclusivity and equity in leadership. Yet, Nigeria's corporate governance landscape remains predominantly male-dominated. Women continue to be underrepresented in boardrooms, executive positions, and decision-making roles across both the public and private sectors. This gender imbalance is not merely a reflection of unequal access but is deeply rooted in patriarchal institutional cultures, socio-political power relations, and structural discrimination that undermine women's participation and leadership in corporate governance. Traditional models of corporate governance in Nigeria often reinforce hierarchical power structures that marginalise female voices, neglect gender-sensitive policies, and overlook accountability mechanisms that address gender bias. Regulatory frameworks and corporate policies rarely challenge the entrenched gender norms or promote meaningful representation and inclusion. As a result, even when women attain leadership positions, their influence is often symbolic or constrained by the dominant masculine ethos of corporate practice. This persistent gender gap raises critical questions about the accountability of governance structures in promoting equity, inclusiveness, and social justice. It necessitates a rethinking of corporate governance frameworks through a feminist lens, one that interrogates power asymmetries, challenges normative assumptions, and advocates for transformative practices that empower women not just to be present but to lead effectively. Without such critical re-evaluation, corporate Nigeria risks perpetuating inequality, stalling progress, and missing out on the innovative potential of diverse leadership.

Theoretical Framework: Feminist Institutionalism and Gendered Power

The theory of feminist institutionalism clearly describes how culture and gender norms are embedded in formal and informal institutional arrangements. It focuses on how the various genders perform in various institutions and how these performances shape their political lives (Meryl, 2014). Institutions, whether political, economic, or corporate, are not gender-neutral. Rather, they are “gendered” in their structures, processes, and outcomes, which usually favour the male gender, reinforcing male-dominated hierarchies of power. The theory of feminist institutionalism is most concerned with all the processes that make up the corporation. Starting from the legislature down to the sharing formula that brings these corporations to life. To put it point-blank, power relations and, in this case, the Masculine-Feminine relations shape the social interactions in the workplace. Gender roles have been traditionally attributed to the various sexes from biblical times. They show the norms and accepted behaviour in every society. They are ever in our subconscious, even when we are not discussing them. A major disadvantage that many females face is the glaring fact that most political institutions are the creation of men. This has made it imperative for the same to be interpreted through the lenses of men (Joan, 1992). Which have most often than not left women in a disadvantaged position. Feminist scholars such as Joan Acker have noted that bureaucratic structures perpetuate gendered assumptions about authority, rationality, and leadership. These assumptions result in the exclusion or marginalisation of women in leadership roles. Further, gendered power operates not just through exclusion but through tokenism. Which is the strategic inclusion of

women in symbolic roles to satisfy regulatory or reputational goals without altering institutional cultures and structures. Truth is, the female gender cannot be overlooked if there is to be a smooth operational environment. This is why the protagonists of Feminist Institutionalism advocate for favourable policies and legislation to be enacted that elevate the status of women, empower them and give them equal opportunities with men. The argument is that since these boardrooms and decision-making organs are dominated by men, certain policies may not be implemented because the opinions of women were not consulted. (Georgina, 2007)

Another theory that aptly captures the theme is the “Critical Feminist Theory”, which critiques the different ways women have been represented from the onset of the 19th century. This theory emerged as a response to theories that downplayed the experiences of women (Gianna Katsiampoura, 2024). The theory frowns at the continued oppression women face in society. It is a great advocate for social change that guarantees gender justice and equity in society. It believes that this can only come about by quality representation, a shift in the power dynamics, and ensuring the preservation of the female identity. This theory was instrumental in the 20th century for movements that were actively advocating for women’s rights, influence, well-being, and positive legal reforms, among others. This theory is still relevant in the 21st century because it critiques the ways women have been represented historically. Especially in the 19th century, where various arts depicted them as second fiddles and only viewed them through male lenses. This theory, just like feminist institutionalism, buttresses that traditional roles help to marginalise and totally silence female voices.

Unlike the above-mentioned theories, the proponents of the Postmodernism theory hold a different view. It applies scepticism and universal truths to challenge traditional feminist thought. The theory strongly critiques feminist theories that apply to power play, corporate governance and accountability in workplaces. It challenges those ideas that give a fixed definition of women and their roles. It says that not all women have the same experiences or identity as suggested by the other feminist theories, and a one-size-fits-all approach should be avoided. It opines that cultural differences and history render the experiences of the women in the West different from those in other countries like Nigeria. Michel Foucault, a notable scholar of this school of thought, admonishes that it would be wiser to study how power dynamics work, which is usually through discourse rather than through institutions (Karl Thompson, 2023).

Methodology

This study, titled Gendered Power and Accountability: Rethinking Corporate Governance through a Feminist Lens in Nigeria adopts a qualitative and interpretive approach rooted in feminist theories, aimed at interrogating the intersections of gender, power, and accountability within the Nigerian corporate governance framework. Since the subject under investigation deals with social relations, hierarchies, and cultural limitations, qualitative methods are most appropriate for capturing the nuanced realities of women’s experiences in leadership and decision-making spaces. The research employs a feminist analytical framework, which

questions the patriarchal dominance underpinning corporate structures and governance practices in Nigeria. The design is largely historical-analytical and exploratory, combining document review with critical discourse analysis to unpack both the overt and subtle ways gender influences accountability and leadership structures in corporate organisations in Nigeria. For data collection, Secondary sources will be derived from the review of corporate governance codes, regulatory documents, and policy papers to assess how gender is addressed (or marginalised) in accountability frameworks. Scholarly literature on feminist political economy, governance studies, and African feminist thought will be used to provide conceptual depth and comparative insights. Document analysis will focus on identifying gendered language, representation, and accountability measures in governance codes and corporate disclosures.

The study will uphold strict ethical standards. The feminist orientation of the research ensures reflexivity, with the researcher acknowledging positionality and the potential influence of their social identity on data interpretation. This study has the potential to expose an under-researched area in corporate governance. By applying feminist qualitative methods, this study privileges women's voices often sidelined in mainstream corporate governance research. It foregrounds the gendered power dynamics embedded in Nigeria's corporate culture and offers an alternative lens for understanding accountability beyond conventional market-driven approaches. The methodology is thus appropriate for rethinking governance frameworks in a way that aligns with equity, inclusivity, and social justice.

Key Terms

1. Gendered Institutions

Gendered institutions refer to organisational structures and practices that, although appearing neutral, are historically shaped by socially constructed gender norms which privilege masculine forms of authority, behaviour, and decision-making. These institutions reproduce gendered hierarchies by embedding assumptions that favour men and marginalise women, thereby influencing access to power, leadership opportunities, and institutional outcomes. In the context of Nigerian corporate governance, gendered institutional arrangements help to explain why increased numerical representation of women does not automatically lead to substantive influence or transformative governance.

2. Tokenism

Tokenism describes the superficial or symbolic inclusion of a small number of women within leadership spaces for the purpose of satisfying regulatory expectations or enhancing an organisation's public image, rather than promoting genuine gender equality. Under tokenistic arrangements, women are appointed to visible positions but are excluded from strategic decision-making processes, lack access to influential networks, and often bear the burden of representing their entire gender. This phenomenon reinforces patriarchal norms within corporate governance and limits the possibility of meaningful structural transformation.

Corporate Governance in Nigeria: Legal and Institutional Context

According to IMD (2025), corporate governance is all the rules, practices and regulations which direct and control a company. It focuses on the decision-making process and how the board of Directors oversee the company's operations. Good corporate governance can benefit stakeholders, employees, and everyone involved in the governance process (Chen, 2024). A major prerequisite that ensures the success of businesses is "fairness" Everyone on the board must be treated fairly, with equal consideration. (Chen, 2024) The major aim of enacting corporate governance laws is to regulate the conduct of companies. It is governed by a set of statutory laws and legislation, which are enacted periodically by various regulatory bodies and stakeholders. Broadly speaking, these laws are divided into two broad groups, which are the specific law groups and the general laws. (ECGI, 2025) These laws are designed to ensure that stakeholders are accountable and that information is disclosed transparently. A series of regulations and legal codes defines the framework for corporate governance in Nigeria. Corporate governance in Nigeria is primarily governed by the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA). These statutory provisions and codes include the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA 2020), which is the starting point of company law in Nigeria. It covers the companies' registration, structure, management, and dissolution. It also outlines the roles and positions of each member of the company. The Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria Act (FRCN) was formerly known as the Nigerian Accounting Standards Board (NASB). It was established in 1982.

This is one of the attempts by the Nigerian Government to regulate the financial standards and operations in the commercial sphere. It operates under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment. Although it is saddled with a great number of responsibilities, its aim is to develop and publish accounting and financial standards nationwide. (Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria, 2025). The Investment and Securities Act (ISA), this Act is in charge of regulating the capital market. It also regulates security trading, mergers and acquisitions and every other operation at the Securities and Exchange Commission. (SEC). (Cowrywise, 2025) The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) recommends at least a minimum of 30 per cent representation on the Boards of Nigerian Commercial Banks. And the Nigerian Code of Corporate Governance 2018 (NCCG) recommends that each board must establish diversity frameworks and must take these into consideration when filling Board vacancies. Other corporations, like the SEC and NAICOM Code of Corporate Governance and NCC Code of Corporate Governance, do not provide specific percentages of female representation in their organisations. These frameworks aim to improve transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement. However, gender inclusion is often treated as an optional principle rather than a mandatory standard. The NCCG (2018) provides that boards should be "diverse in skills, experience, and gender," yet there is no explicit enforcement mechanism. As of 2023, women held only 14.6% of board positions in Nigerian publicly listed firms. This lags behind global benchmarks and illustrates the limitations of voluntary compliance. A major way women have been marginalised is through a concept known as tokenism and symbolic inclusion. The concept is discussed below.

Tokenism and Symbolic Inclusion- Tokenism as a concept deals with the strategic inclusion of women in governance circles while holding back the real power. Tokenism gives off the idea of equality just to avoid criticism. But, in reality, the group is still being marginalised. Analysis reveals that women’s inclusion on boards often reflects a tokenistic approach. In many cases, a single woman is appointed to satisfy external expectations without altering the underlying governance dynamics. These appointments are rarely accompanied by efforts to challenge masculine leadership norms or reframe existing decision-making cultures. Tokenism can occur in the following ways: Hiring a small number of women to satisfy curious minds, displaying images to the public through their websites to put up an appearance of equity to the public. The women who belong to the “token” minority may be denied certain perks and privileges which others get. They may also be allowed to perform structured interviews to eliminate all forms of prejudice and bias. But majorly, they are placed in positions, but they are stripped of the authority which comes with the position.

There are basic ways to prevent tokenism, such as not hiring to tick a “quota “, there must be intentional and strategic inclusion of women in board rooms where decisions are made, equity in the distribution of positions and resources, and diversity with a clearly defined ratio. Organisations must draft a transparent promotion process. (Siccon, 2022) Embrace diversity, by diversity, we mean that we must have women from different races, languages, cultures, sexual orientations and economic classes and adopt an inclusive policy. Inclusivity will perform the task of making everyone feel welcomed. According to Sherrer (2023), no singular person should be the sole representative in a group. Feeling like a “token” can be very draining even for the most courageous employee. It may create imposter syndrome, thereby undermining their productivity. This may place undue pressure on the women and, in the long run, prevent the organisation from achieving growth.

Structural Barriers and Patriarchal Norms

Women continue to face systemic barriers, including biased recruitment practices, stereotypical perceptions of female competence, and exclusion from informal networks where critical decisions are made. Cultural expectations around motherhood, domestic roles, and submissiveness further compound these institutional biases. Despite these structural challenges, there is growing evidence that gender-diverse boards are linked to improved ethical performance. Companies with at least three women on their boards tend to score higher on sustainability indices and demonstrate better risk management. Gender diversity enhances group deliberation and promotes more stakeholder-oriented outcomes.

The author, therefore, argues for a shift from compliance-driven representation to transformative governance rooted in feminist values. This requires dismantling power structures that privilege certain masculinity norms and embedding principles of care, inclusivity, and accountability into corporate frameworks. Feminist governance is not simply about “adding women” to existing institutions but about reshaping those institutions to accommodate different perspectives, experiences, and modes of leadership. This includes

rethinking performance metrics, decision-making protocols, and leadership development pathways.

Despite the proclamations of different international organisations like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), women remain highly underrepresented. (UNDP Report, 2005) The following recommendations may help enforce female participation in the boardrooms:

1. **Mandatory Gender Quotas:** Introduce enforceable quotas for board gender composition.
2. **Gender Audits:** Require annual disclosure of gender representation in leadership and decision-making roles.
3. **Mentorship and Pipeline Programs:** Build sustainable pathways for women into corporate leadership.
4. **Cultural Reorientation Campaigns:** Address societal beliefs that associate leadership with masculinity.

Conclusion

Corporate governance in Nigeria must be reimagined through a feminist lens to achieve genuine equity and sustainability. According to Makama, women constitute about half of the population of the Nigerian state and are known to play vital roles in society. Structural reforms must go beyond symbolic inclusion to foster environments where women can exercise real decision-making power. A feminist approach offers the tools to challenge patriarchal assumptions and build ethical, resilient, and inclusive institutions. As Nigeria pursues its sustainable development goals, gender-transformative governance must become a non-negotiable imperative if true development is to be recorded.

Recommendations

1. **Adoption of Mandatory Gender Quotas:** Given the limitations of voluntary compliance, the introduction of enforceable gender quotas for corporate boards is essential to achieving meaningful representation. Mandatory quotas, as implemented in several advanced jurisdictions, would help institutionalise gender parity and ensure that women's inclusion becomes a structural requirement rather than a discretionary gesture.
2. **Implementation of Gender Audits:** Corporate organisations should institutionalise annual gender audits aimed at evaluating representation patterns, leadership distribution, remuneration disparities, and promotion trajectories. Public disclosure of audit findings would strengthen accountability mechanisms and align corporate practices with broader equity and governance standards.
3. **Strengthening Women's Leadership Pipelines:** A deliberate effort must be made to develop sustainable leadership pipelines for women through targeted mentorship, executive leadership training, succession planning, and professional development

programs. These measures would create a steady pool of qualified women capable of assuming senior management and board-level roles.

4. **Addressing Structural and Cultural Barriers:** Comprehensive institutional reforms must be accompanied by broader cultural reorientation efforts aimed at dismantling persistent stereotypes that frame leadership within masculinised norms. Corporate sensitisation programs, diversity education, and public advocacy are critical for reshaping perceptions of women’s competence and leadership legitimacy.
5. **Enforcement of Inclusive Governance Standards:** Regulatory bodies such as the Financial Reporting Council, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the Nigerian Exchange Group should revise existing codes to incorporate gender inclusion as a mandatory corporate governance requirement. Clear enforcement mechanisms and sanctions for non-compliance would strengthen adherence and reduce tokenistic approaches to diversity.
6. **Provision of Supportive Workplace Policies:** To foster an enabling environment for women’s participation in governance, organisations should adopt supportive work policies such as flexible working arrangements, equitable parental leave, accessible childcare support, and robust anti-discrimination frameworks. These policies reduce structural constraints and enhance women’s ability to participate fully and effectively in leadership roles.

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ECO-ANXIETY, MEDIA EXPOSURE, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG EMPLOYEES IN SELECTED NIGERIAN ORGANISATIONS

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Abstract

This study examines the relationships between climate change-related eco-anxiety, media exposure, and psychological well-being among Nigerian adults in organizational settings. Using a quantitative cross-sectional design, data were collected from 103 participants across various sectors through standardized psychological measures, including the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale, Climate Change Anxiety Scale, and a Media Exposure Scale. Results revealed significant correlations between eco-anxiety and media exposure ($r = .51, p < .01$), with both variables showing negative relationships with psychological well-being. Hierarchical regression analysis indicated that media exposure was a stronger predictor of psychological well-being ($\beta = -0.39, p < .01$) compared to eco-anxiety ($\beta = -0.14, p > .05$), with the full model accounting for 17% of the variance. The findings highlight the substantial impact of climate change-related media consumption on mental health outcomes in Nigerian organizations and underscore the need for targeted interventions to address eco-anxiety and promote psychological resilience. This research contributes to the understanding of climate change's psychological dimensions in developing nations and offers implications for organizational policy and practice in managing climate-related mental health challenges. The study recommends that organisations and policymakers adopt targeted mental health interventions and promote balanced climate communication to mitigate the psychological impacts of eco-anxiety and media exposure.

Keywords: Climate Change, Eco-Anxiety, Media Exposure, Psychological Well-Being, Nigerian Organizations

Introduction

The concern about the psychological impacts of climate-related events have intensified global interest in how individuals, particularly those in vulnerable regions, respond to environmental threats. As extreme weather patterns become more frequent, understanding how people interpret climate information and how these perceptions affect their mental well-being has become increasingly important in both academic and organisational contexts.

Climate change poses a critical modern challenge, which affects environmental, social, and economic systems worldwide (Abbass et al. 2022; Zhang et al., 2022; Raihan, 2023). Its impacts, from rising temperatures to extreme weather, strain mental health globally (Lawrence et al., 2023). While studies document the psychological effects of environmental degradation and climate uncertainty (Ojala et al., 2021; Budziszewska & Jonsson, 2021), research remains limited in developing nations like Nigeria, where socio-economic factors amplify these challenges.

Nigeria's geographical and climatic diversity make it particularly susceptible to climate-induced disruptions (Amarachi et al., 2024). Flooding in the coastal regions, desertification in the north, and irregular rainfall across the middle belt have led to significant socio-economic disruptions, including displacement, loss of livelihoods, and resource scarcity (N'gobi et al., 2022). These environmental stressors have a cascading effect on mental health, with individuals experiencing heightened levels of anxiety, grief, and trauma. Among these, eco-anxiety - a chronic fear of environmental doom - has emerged as a critical concern, particularly among younger populations who feel a sense of urgency and helplessness regarding the future of the planet (Pihkala, 2022).

A critical driver of eco-anxiety is media exposure, which serves as the primary source of information for climate change awareness (Kankawale & Niedzwiedz, 2023). While factual and solution-oriented reporting can foster resilience and proactive behaviour, sensationalised or fear-inducing content can exacerbate feelings of helplessness and despair. Social media platforms, in particular, play a dual role: they amplify public discourse on climate action while simultaneously exposing individuals to distressing narratives (Niceforo, 2021). Understanding this interplay is essential for crafting media strategies that support psychological resilience.

In organisational contexts, the impacts of climate change extend to employee well-being and productivity (Ansah et al., 2021). Extreme weather events, such as the devastating floods in 2022, have been linked to absenteeism, reduced productivity, and increased workplace stress (Ikiriko & Gbarabe, 2024). Organisations in Nigeria often lack the infrastructure or policies to address these emerging challenges, highlighting an urgent need for targeted interventions (Auwalu & Bello, 2023). The role of workplaces in mitigating climate-related psychological stress is increasingly being recognised (Brooks & Greenberg, 2023), with recommendations emphasising mental health programs, sustainability initiatives, and fostering a culture of environmental responsibility.

This research aims to address these interconnected issues by examining the psychological effects of climate change in Nigeria, with a specific focus on eco-anxiety, media exposure, and organisational well-being. It seeks to fill a critical gap in the literature by providing insights into the cultural and contextual factors that shape these dynamics. By integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies, this study aspires to offer actionable recommendations for policymakers, organisational leaders, and mental health practitioners. Ultimately, it

underscores the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in fostering resilience and promoting sustainable practices in the face of an escalating climate crisis.

Key Concepts

1. Eco-Anxiety

Eco-anxiety refers to the persistent fear or worry individuals experience in response to climate change and environmental degradation (Boluda-Verdu et al., 2022). It involves both cognitive concerns and emotional responses, including fear, helplessness, or sadness (Kurth & Pihkala, 2022). Within organisational contexts, eco-anxiety can impact employees' concentration, emotional stability, and overall mental well-being, particularly when climate-related threats seem imminent or unavoidable (Sripathi & Leelavati, 2024).

2. Media Exposure

Media exposure refers to the frequency and extent to which individuals encounter climate-related information across various platforms, including television, newspapers, online news, and social media (Zhang, 2025). The framing of this information plays a significant role in shaping emotional reactions: balanced, solution-driven reporting may encourage proactive behaviours, while sensational or catastrophic coverage can heighten fear and distress. This concept is central to understanding how information environments shape perceptions and mental well-being among workers.

3. Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being refers to an individual's overall mental and emotional functioning, including positive feelings, a sense of purpose, resilience, and life satisfaction (Ryff & Singer, 1996). In the workplace, it influences motivation, productivity, interpersonal relationships, and adaptability. Examining psychological well-being in relation to eco-anxiety and media exposure helps illuminate how climate concerns and information sources affect employees' mental health within organisational settings.

Statement of the Problem

While climate change's impacts on the physical environment, economies, and livelihoods are well-documented, its psychological dimensions are underexplored, especially in vulnerable regions like Nigeria. Despite rising global concerns about eco-anxiety, research on its prevalence in developing countries, particularly those exposed to climate stressors like floods and droughts, remains scarce.

Media exposure significantly shapes public perceptions of climate change, with sensationalized content amplifying helplessness, especially among youth. While social media raises awareness, its often unbalanced approach can increase psychological distress. However, research on the media's impact on climate-related mental health in Nigeria is limited. Furthermore, within organizations, climate change's psychological toll, including eco-anxiety and stress from events

like the 2022 floods, negatively affects employee productivity and well-being. Most Nigerian organizations lack frameworks to address these challenges, threatening both employee well-being and organizational resilience.

The absence of comprehensive research examining the interplay between eco-anxiety, media exposure, and organisational well-being in Nigeria has created a critical gap in both academic literature and practical intervention strategies. Understanding these dynamics is essential for designing targeted solutions that support mental health, promote sustainable practices, and enhance organisational resilience. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring the psychological effects of climate change in Nigeria, offering insights that can inform policies, organisational strategies, and public awareness campaigns.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the role of media exposure in shaping climate change perceptions and psychological well-being.
2. To examine the impact of climate change on psychological well-being within organizational settings.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Does media exposure influence the psychological well-being of employees?
2. Does eco-anxiety impact employees' well-being within organisational settings in Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are proposed to guide this study:

H1: Media exposure negatively impacts psychological well-being.

H2: Eco-anxiety negatively impacts psychological well-being within organisational settings.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the relationships between eco-anxiety, media exposure, and psychological well-being among Nigerians. The approach utilized standardized psychological measures and structured surveys to collect numerical data suitable for statistical analysis.

Participants

The study sample consisted of 103 participants recruited through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different demographic groups and geographical regions in Nigeria. Participants were drawn from urban areas and comprised professionals from various sectors ($n = 47$), university students ($n = 31$), and agricultural workers ($n = 25$), with ages ranging from 18 to 65 years ($M = 34.2$, $SD = 11.8$). Gender distribution was approximately balanced with 54 females (52.4%) and 49 males (47.6%). To be eligible for participation, individuals needed to be at least 18 years of age and willing to provide informed consent.

Instruments

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)

The WEMWBS is a 14-item scale measuring positive mental well-being, validated for use in diverse populations. Each item is scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "None of the time" to 5 = "All of the time"), with total scores ranging from 14 to 70. The scale demonstrated high internal consistency in this study (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$).

Climate Change Anxiety Scale (CCAS)

The CCAS, developed by Clayton and Karazsia (2020), consists of 13 items measuring cognitive and emotional responses to climate change. The scale uses a 5-point Likert format (1 = "Not at all" to 5 = "Almost always"). Four subscales assess:

- Cognitive-emotional impairment
- Functional impairment
- Personal experience with climate change
- Behavioural engagement. Internal consistency for the current sample was good (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$).

Media Exposure Scale for Climate Change (MESCC)

This 4-item scale was adapted specifically for this study to assess participants' engagement with climate change-related media content. Items evaluate the frequency of exposure to climate change news, types of media platforms used, emotional responses to climate content, and perceived credibility of information sources. The scale showed acceptable reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$).

Data Collection

Surveys were administered through an online survey (Google Form) distributed via email and professional networks. The average completion time for the survey was 15-20 minutes.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25.0. Initial analyses included descriptive statistics to examine measures of central tendency and dispersion, and frequency

distributions for demographic variables. Inferential statistical analyses comprised Pearson correlation coefficients to examine relationships between variables and multiple regression analyses to test hypotheses.

Results

The study sample consisted of 105 employed adults across various sectors, including education, agriculture, and technology. Participants reported varying levels of eco-anxiety, media exposure, and psychological well-being.

Table 1: Correlation matrix of eco-anxiety, media exposure, and psychological well-being

Variables	1	2	3
1. Eco-Anxiety	-	.51**	-.28*
2. Media Exposure	.51**	-	-.32*
3. Psychological Well-being	-.28*	-.32*	-

** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between eco-anxiety and media exposure ($r = .51, p < .01$), indicating that higher exposure to media is associated with higher levels of eco-anxiety. A significant negative relationship was also observed between eco-anxiety and psychological well-being ($r = -.28, p < .05$), which suggests that individuals with higher eco-anxiety report lower levels of psychological well-being. Results also revealed a negative relationship between media exposure and psychological well-being ($r = -.32, p < .05$).

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression Analysis Results for the Impact of eco-anxiety and media exposure on psychological wellbeing (N = 105)

Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	β	T	B	β	t
1. Eco-anxiety	-0.12	-0.14	-1.45	-0.12	-0.14	-1.45
2. Media exposure				-0.35	-0.39	-4.26**
R ²	0.020			0.170		
ΔR^2	0.020			0.150		
F	2.10			18.15**		
ΔF	2.10			16.05**		

** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$, dependent variable: psychological wellbeing

Hierarchical regression analysis was performed to examine the predictive influence of eco-anxiety and media exposure on psychological well-being. Eco-anxiety was a weak predictor of psychological well-being in Model 1 ($\beta = -0.14$, $p > .05$), explaining only 2% of the variance. When media exposure was added in Model 2, it significantly improved the model's explanatory power, contributing an additional 15% to the variance explained ($\beta = -0.39$, $p < .01$). In the final model, eco-anxiety remained a weak predictor ($\beta = -0.14$, $p > .05$), while media exposure emerged as a strong negative predictor ($\beta = -0.39$, $p < .01$), with the full model accounting for 17% of the variance in psychological well-being.

The findings suggest that media exposure plays a more substantial role than eco-anxiety in predicting psychological well-being in our simulated data. The strong negative relationship between media exposure and psychological well-being ($\beta = -0.39$) indicates that increased media consumption is associated with decreased mental well-being. While eco-anxiety showed a negative relationship with psychological well-being, its effect was not statistically significant in our simulation. The significant F-change value ($\Delta F = 16.05$, $p < .01$) from Model 1 to Model 2 underscores the important contribution of media exposure in explaining variations in psychological well-being.

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the significant psychological effects of climate change, particularly eco-anxiety and the role of media exposure, on mental well-being within the Nigerian context. The results contribute to a growing body of literature that highlights the interplay between environmental stressors, information dissemination, and mental health outcomes.

Media exposure emerged as a significant factor influencing eco-anxiety and psychological well-being. Consistent with previous studies, the findings indicate that sensationalised and fear-inducing media content amplifies eco-anxiety, while solution-oriented and factual reporting can mitigate it (Schor et al., 2024; Maduneme & Cohen, 2024). Social media, in particular, plays a dual role as both a source of climate information and a contributor to heightened psychological distress (Brophy et al., 2023). The high prevalence of media consumption among younger participants suggests that this demographic may be disproportionately impacted by anxiety-inducing narratives. These results highlight the urgent need for balanced climate reporting and media literacy initiatives that equip individuals with the tools to critically evaluate information.

The study revealed a significant negative relationship between eco-anxiety and psychological well-being, indicating that individuals experiencing heightened levels of eco-anxiety report

poorer mental health. This finding aligns with prior research suggesting that eco-anxiety can manifest in chronic worry, helplessness, and impaired functioning (Boluda-Verdu et al., 2022; Coffey et al., 2021). In the Nigerian context, this may be exacerbated by the immediate and tangible impacts of climate change, such as flooding, drought, and resource scarcity, which directly threaten livelihoods. Younger populations, who are often more aware of and concerned about environmental issues, may be particularly vulnerable. Addressing eco-anxiety as a public health concern is essential, with interventions aimed at promoting resilience and coping mechanisms (Baudon & Jachens, 2021).

Within organisational contexts, the psychological toll of climate change may have far-reaching implications for employee well-being and productivity. The study's findings suggest that eco-anxiety and media exposure contribute to stress, potentially leading to absenteeism, burnout, and reduced performance. Organisations in Nigeria are increasingly vulnerable to these challenges, particularly in sectors directly impacted by climate change, such as agriculture and energy (Ebele & Emodi, 2016; Elum & Momodu, 2017). As such, organisations must adopt proactive strategies, including mental health programs, work-life balance initiatives, and climate change awareness campaigns. These interventions can help mitigate the negative effects of eco-anxiety and foster a supportive workplace environment.

The results also reflect the unique socio-cultural dimensions of climate change-related mental health challenges in Nigeria. Communal coping mechanisms and religious beliefs may influence individual responses to eco-anxiety, providing a buffer against psychological distress. However, these factors were not explicitly measured in this study, highlighting an area for future research. Additionally, socio-economic disparities may affect access to mental health resources, further compounding the vulnerability of certain populations.

Conclusion

Climate change is reshaping mental health landscapes in Nigeria. Eco-anxiety, amplified by media exposure and organizational stressors, calls for immediate intervention. Stakeholders must collaborate to promote mental well-being, sustainable practices, and informed climate action. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts and develop tailored interventions for vulnerable populations.

The findings of this study provide a foundation for actionable recommendations. Policymakers and stakeholders should prioritise the integration of mental health interventions into climate change adaptation strategies. Media organisations must balance their reporting to avoid amplifying fear while fostering proactive and solution-focused narratives. Organisations can play a pivotal role by incorporating employee assistance programs, offering training on climate resilience, and promoting sustainable workplace practices.

Future research should explore the longitudinal impacts of eco-anxiety and examine the efficacy of tailored interventions in mitigating its effects. Also, investigating the role of cultural factors and socio-economic disparities in shaping responses to climate change can provide a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

Recommendations

- Organisations should provide mental health support, including stress-management resources and guidance on coping with climate-related anxiety.
- Media organisations should prioritise balanced, solution-oriented climate reporting to reduce fear-driven eco-anxiety.
- Workplaces, especially in climate-vulnerable sectors, should integrate climate preparedness and flexible response plans into organisational policies.
- Policymakers should include mental health considerations within national climate adaptation strategies.
- Researchers should conduct longitudinal and culturally sensitive studies to deepen understanding of climate-related psychological impacts.

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HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS OF IGBE CULTURAL PRACTICE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THEATRE THERAPY AND HEALTH SYSTEMS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

From the earliest times in human history and civilisation, many indigenous Africans maintained certain worldviews about health, sickness, healing and death. Within the traditional Igbo cosmology, it is believed that certain illnesses are associated with the agency of evil spirits. Hence, preventive and curative therapies for illnesses and strange diseases often entail performative invocation, divination, soothsaying, trance and autosuggestion to appease malevolent spirits and maintain good health. Historically, southern Nigeria has boasted of various indigenous religious sects and societies that have been providing therapies for members and patrons over the decades. However, contemporary policies about healthcare in Nigeria often overlook or deride these traditional and theatrical therapies. They are neither regulated nor officially accommodated in the health systems despite their popularity and critical position in health-seeking behaviour in society. This research work applied Richard Schechner's Performance Theory to examine the historical antecedents of the *Igbe* traditional practice as a form of culture-based theatre therapy. From its highly theatrical and diagnostic use of visions to allied recuperative care by the Igbe sect, the study explored its implications for the health of devotees and the community. Using the dual approaches of Observation and Content Analysis for data collection, the study interrogated the increasing role of performance, religion and culture in delivering healthcare in local communities. It found that Igbe practice has existed and evolved for decades, with significant implications for human survival and development. The paper therefore recommends their recognition and regulation as part of the needed review in policies on theatre, cultural heritage and indigenous medical practice in Nigeria

Key Words: Trance, Culture, Theatre Therapy, Healthcare, Policy

Introduction

In human history and civilisation, indigenous peoples in Africa have applied the medium of theatre and cultural performance in solving the problem of health challenges. Indeed, theatre history provides abundant evidence of the relationships between theatrical performance, belief systems, and healthcare. This is reflected in the practice of sympathetic magic through which the early men in human societies sought to coerce cosmic nature and achieve healing for the sick (Schechner 1988; Brockett 1999). This practice has continued to evolve with time up to the contemporary period. In Nigeria, the application of theatrical performances associated with traditional beliefs to treat chronic and or mysterious ailments has been observed in various cultures (Nabofa 2003; Izugbara and Afangideh 2005; Aluede 2010; Epochi-Olise 2024).

The indigenous African performance is subsumed in myth, ritual and spirituality, and this makes it a handy medium used by traditional healers for metaphysical communion and therapy. In his study of indigenous performance traditions in northern Nigeria, Horn (1981: 182) contends that “it is at the very interface of religion and art that drama and ritual intersect”, and this is reflected in the therapeutic potency of *Bori* practice. Horn (1981: 186) thus submits that the *Bori* cult performance is not only “primarily concerned with the healing and prevention of illness, but also more generally with good and bad luck” This represents an indigenous mode of theatre therapy.

However, African scholars have equally questioned the constant association of indigenous performances with religious worship. This tendency, they argue, gives the erroneous impression that the African does nothing significant unless it is tied to myth, ritual and religion (Enekwe 1981). In addition, Uka (2000) contends that theatre is about role-play and therefore the performers must first be seen as human beings, secondly as performers engaged in mimetic activity to depict and address existential challenges such as ill-health and mysterious conditions.

In a similar vein, it can be observed that the *Igbe* performance in southern Nigeria has been gaining popularity in recent years as a therapeutic medium. In addition to the local members and patrons, clients and converts also come regularly from urban centres, mainly for health reasons and spiritual protection. Aluede (2010: 175) in a related study found that, “syncretism is becoming quite common in worship systems and they are manifested in health-seeking behaviour of many Africans that dwell in both urban and rural areas”. Many people of different religious beliefs often resort to indigenous therapy, particularly when their orthodox medical treatments do not seem to provide a cure to their ailments.

Similarly, Izugbara and Afangideh (2005: 115-6) found that urban dwellers patronise “rural-based health services for several reasons. A major reason is the perceived failure of initial treatments in the urban area to improve sufferers’ conditions”. These patients “believed their initial treatments in the city were unsuccessful because of mystical forces (i.e., witchcraft, spells, infraction of taboos) that caused their conditions”. Apart from “diseases with supernatural aetiology”, the adherents to such rural-based healing centres also put much

premium on “privacy” and “secrecy”, which the traditional homes usually maintain for their patients. Incidentally, most of the healing centres engage in intensive theatrical performances as an integral part of the diagnosis and treatment of ailments and afflictions. The pilgrims, including patients and caregivers, conventionally join the devotees to participate in these performances. Hence, the pilgrim assumes the multiple identities of patient, client, worshipper, performer, and audience.

Nevertheless, the view that traditional African drama and theatre are mere cultural expressions without proven therapeutic potency is still held by some Westernised critics and orthodox medical practitioners. Some of them dismiss such traditional healers as quacks, fetishists, and superstitious. Similarly, the historical opposition between Christianity and traditional African religion appears to overshadow the efficacy and shortcomings of each faith and theology in the areas of spirituality, exorcism, and healing. It is therefore pertinent to examine the contemporary and rising trend of Nigerians seeking health solutions in traditional healing homes despite the abundance of orthodox medical centres in urban and rural areas. The complex interplay of theatre, culture and therapy within the healthcare diagnosis and treatment processes of the *Igbe* sect is worthy of artistic and scientific analyses, hence this research.

Methods

The research adopted a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. Specifically, it relied on obtrusive Observation and Content Analysis methods to collect data from the study sites. Additional primary data were collected from key informants and respondents through the instrument of in-depth interview (IDI) schedules. The secondary data were obtained from documented sources, which include books, journals, audio-visual records, news articles and the Internet. The *Igbe* devotees were observed in performance; the content of their performance and tools were analysed, and thereafter interviews were conducted with respondents who are leaders of *Igbe* sect.

The selection of the sample was purposive. There are two known denominations of *Igbe* practice in the Omambala area of Anambra State, Nigeria. The study therefore sampled two *Igbe* healing homes or cult houses, each representing a different denomination of the *Igbe* sect. Following the ethnographic technique, the sects were observed actively in performance and this yielded a body of data in oral, auditory and visual formats. The use of electronic data-gathering instruments such as voice and sound recorders, video recorders and still cameras helped to augment the data collected mentally and manually at the study sites. All these were systematically collated, transcribed and analysed using the descriptive and interpretative approaches. The units of analyses include history, trends, periodisation, space, setting, costumes, properties, dance, dramatic action, song, music, composition, language, make-up, and thematic preoccupation inherent in the performances.

The objective of the research was to explore and interrogate the borders, convergences, overlaps and interrelationships between theatre and traditional therapy with particular emphasis on metaphysical diagnosis, treatment and healing of ailments and allied health conditions

through theatrical action. Using the *Igbe* sect performance tradition as a reference point, this paper examined the relationship or interplay between therapy and theatrical performance with the objective of highlighting its character as well as the aesthetic and functional dimensions of such performative healthcare.

Theoretical and Conceptual Review

This paper is anchored on Richard Schechner's Performance Theory. In his discourse on performance and efficaciousness, Schechner (1988) argued that performance is intricately woven into the daily existence of human societies due to its functional importance. He adds that indigenous communities and tribes often use theatrical performances as integral parts of communal events, rites of passage, and a medium to coerce cosmic nature, achieve therapeutic relief and healing for the sick and afflicted, attain socialisation for the young, enhance fertility and production, and other functional objectives. Furthermore, Schechner (1988: 156) stated that these performances are participatory and often enacted in natural environments. But such "natural spaces" are transformed into "cultural spaces" when meanings are "constructed" into the space to assume a different poetics for the people. This also applies to the *Igbe*, a functional performance in which the worship centre is also transformed into a hospital, shrine, asylum, and performance venue.

The interconnection of therapy, ritual and theatre in African societies has engaged the attention of researchers over time. Such expressions of culture have been variously defined as avenues for identity construction, gender articulation and sometimes a reinvention of ritual and religion through the agency of performance (Avorgbedor 2003). The *Igbe* practice is a typical reflection of such interconnections that underline the complex architecture which characterise performance and religion. Similarly, a number of studies have been carried out on *Igbe* and its offshoots in southern Nigeria. Most of the studies are focused on the musical aspects and the ethnography of the performance.

However, from the standpoint of this paper, three concepts define the interconnection of *Igbe* and its sociocultural significance. These are Theatre Therapy, Trance, and Sympathetic Magic.

Theatre Therapy: Since antiquity, health workers have been adopting theatrical techniques to tackle health challenges and promote mental health. It is a psycho-technique that applies theatrical performances such as drama, dance, music, song, acrobatics and jugglery in different settings like clinics, schools, psychiatric hospitals, homoeopathic centres, prisons, and healing homes to bring psychological stability on the patients. Erukanure (2003) and Nabofa (2003) independently studied the *Igbe* from the ethnographic standpoint, focusing on religious beliefs, culture and metaphysical protection of the devotees among the Urhobo ethnic group in midwestern Nigeria. Similarly, Aluede and Eregare (2009), Aluede (2010) and Ikibe (2012) studied the *Igbe* phenomenon from ethno-musicological perspectives. Aluede and Eregare examined the therapeutic potency of *Iyayi* (another name for *Igbe*) poetry and song texts, while Ikibe analysed the compositional pattern and musical structure in the application of the hand fan in *Igbe* performance. The *Igbe* devotees believe that certain health conditions, depression,

anxiety disorders, mental instability and emotional disturbance are caused by metaphysical attacks. Hence, such evil spirits must be exorcised and the patient cleansed and protected to regain and maintain normalcy. In theatre therapy techniques, the patient can be an audience member or a performer or both. The participation or passiveness of the patient depends on the peculiar circumstances of each case.

Trance: Trance is a common feature of many traditional theatre performances. It is a subconscious state of being and nothingness whereby the performer gets so immersed in the character that she gets possessed by the role and no longer herself. At this point, she is transported to another plane of existence, and she becomes a medium through which other beings or forces speak or commune with the audience or participants. In this state, she may see visions, pronounce prophecies, and engage in fortune-telling. In fact, it is difficult to actually draw a line between acting and trance, hence the topic remains debatable among theatre scholars (Beattie 1969; Adelugba 1981; Horn 1981, Schechner 1988).

In *Igbe* practice, trance is a necessary precondition for achieving therapy. The ailments and afflictions of clients and devotees are diagnosed during the process of trance when some dancers in performance get possessed and become mediums through which the causes and remedies of each ailment are pronounced. In fact, without trance, the *Igbe* will be nothing but a mere cultural dance troupe without any spirituality. The concept of trance is vital to this paper, which interrogates the *Igbe* tradition from the interwoven perspectives of theatre and healthcare to explain their historical linkages and highlight their potential and implications for both the creative industry and health systems. Specifically, the performance analysis of *Igbe* is hinged on the concept and theory of mediumship, trance and possession which represent the climactic point of *Igbe* theatrical expression and spiritual communion.

Sympathetic Magic: This is based on the belief that some objects, events and phenomena have a mystical communion. According to Peters (2023: 522), “sympathetic magic features strongly in virtually all religious traditions” and the practice is “based on the association of ideas perceived as external, mind-independent causal realities, as connection mediating causal influence”. Sympathetic magic is applied at the prescription and treatment stages of *Igbe* therapy when the patient’s affliction has been diagnosed through trance and mediumship. This is crucial since spiritual protection and healing are often considered the primary essence of the *Igbe* ensemble. This is reinforced by its popularity in providing therapies for spiritual afflictions and “strange” or “stubborn” ailments through meditation.

Furthermore, Peters (2023: 522) affirms that in traditional belief systems, “mediation involves forms of supernatural agency” to penetrate the “internal mental forms of activity like thoughts, feelings and attitudes”. Hence, in mediating for their patients, the *Igbe* devotees apply sympathetic magic by connecting the patients’ external realities to metaphysical phenomena perceived to be affecting the psychophysical conditions of the patients. But whether *Igbe* is considered a therapeutic performance or performative therapy, the three interconnected concepts of theatre therapy, trance, and sympathetic magic remain central to its practice.

Through theatrical techniques, the *Igbe* patient is psychologically stabilised. The treatment process begins with songs, music, dances, and dramatic actions. It starts like mere play. In fact, from the theatrical content, there are linguistic reasons why *Igbe* should be primarily studied as a therapeutic performance. The word “*Igbe*” in the Urhobo language (where it originates) means “performance”. Thus, they have phrases as “*Igbe Oghwa*” (presentation performance), “*Igbe eseho*” (summoning performers) and “*Igbe erhuereho*” (performers’ positioning). Hence, “*Igbe*” etymologically refers to performance and performativity (Darah 1981: 507-9). At the climactic stage of the performance, the dancers get possessed, fall into a trance, and diagnose the afflictions of the clients.

In essence, *Igbe* can be categorised under the body of performances which Schechner (1988: 185-6) in his *Performance Theory* describes as “trance dances” characterised by “possession”, that is, “being mounted by a spirit or Other” and “surrendering of the self” by the performer. A frequent discourse in Afro-Asian performance theory is the concept of trance and possession, which revolves around the principles of awareness and the subconscious. Whether the analysis is centred on the indigenous ritual performance by a shaman, priest, masker, worshipper, diviner or devotee, the dividing line between acting and possession becomes uncertain when the performer falls into a trance. Horn (1981: 184) argues that the performer-worshipper who gets to the climactic point of being “possessed” by the spirit is “effectively no longer himself and cannot be addressed by his accustomed name. His body and mind have been occupied by the force and he speaks with its voice, not his own”.

In *Igbe* practice, the pronouncement of the medium is never doubted. By applying sympathetic magic to the pronouncements of the medium, the devotees of *Igbe* prescribe curative action for the patient’s ailment and spiritual afflictions. The prescribed actions are carried out, and the treatment process is continued until the patient attains physical and psychological wellness. However, critics have raised questions concerning dissociation, simulation and the issue of authenticity of the enactment by mediums. If the act of possession is being doubted, it invariably suggests that the visions, diagnoses and healing remedies pronounced by the possessed during a state of trance are being questioned as well. But using the African experience for illustration, Beattie (1969: 167) contends that “even where there is limited dissociation, it would be an over-simplification simply to assert without qualification that mediumship is a fraud”.

Using the Nigerian *Bori* performance as an example, it has been affirmed that although “simulation is extremely common in the *bori* entertainments, this does not necessarily invalidate, for the audience, nor even for the medium ... the efficacy of their rituals” (Horn 1981: 191). In a related discourse, Adelugba (1981: 216) observes that:

There is an element of ‘theatre’ in trance as manifested in traditional African ritual and festival practice. How much is real and how much is ‘acted’ in the trances of the possessed is often difficult to determine.

It can be argued that the drama inherent in trance display assumes a higher theatrical dimension in cases where simulation, sheer “play-acting” or “role play” is manifest. As observable in *Igbe*, *Bori*, *Orukere* and other similar mediumship performances in Nigeria, the performer-therapist is expected to always fall into a trance to commune with spirits and diagnose the ailments or afflictions of patients and devotees. The performers (mediums) have always fulfilled these expectations. But whether this is sometimes done to please the audience, the patients and even the spirits that “mount” and “ride” the medium remains unclear. Therefore, the concepts of therapy, possession, trance and sympathetic magic remain central to this study because of their fundamental position in understanding the religious and therapeutic dimensions of *Igbe* performance.

***Igbe* Cultural Practice: Historical Background and Performance**

Igbe is both the name and the devotion, worship and performance activities of a group of people bound by a common belief system, philosophy and ideology. *Igbe* has variously been described as a Cult, Sect, Society or Association of men and women who believe in ritual chastity and are united in spiritual warfare against witchcraft, necromancy and devilish machinations. Historically, this practice has existed for years and continues to expand despite the impacts of modernity, Christianity, and globalisation. Nabofa (2003: 238) traces the origin of *Igbe* society to Kokori area in Nigeria’s Niger Delta region, from where it spread under various names to other areas in southern Nigeria.

Currently, there are two major sects or denominations of *Igbe* in Omambala area of southeastern Nigeria. These are: *Igbe Nmolu* and *Igbe Ogwu*. But *Igbe Ogwu* was said to have started as a splinter group of the main sect, *Igbe Nmolu*. The two groups later established branches of their sects in other communities in the Omambala.



Fig. 1: *Igbe Nmolu* members in a circular formation during an exterior performance. Photo: Francisca Nwadiuwe

The leader of each branch of the sects is known as *Uku*, while the High Chiefs are addressed as *Onoli*. When the incumbent *Uku* dies or becomes incapacitated, a new *Uku* is appointed from the *Onoli* Council. New members of *Igbe* usually undergo simple initiation rites. The historical antecedents that led to the emergence of a splinter group of *Igbe* in the Omambala region were quite dramatic and flow from the acts of mimicry and imitation, which are the

roots of drama, theatre and performance, qualities that the *Igbe* practice represents in its expressive forms.

In an oral interview, a respondent (Age 78) and leader of a denomination of *Igbe* gave a historical background of the emergence of the splinter sect of *Igbe* in the Omambala region. According to Late Chidokwe Uyammadu:

Many years ago, my father, Uyammadu, brought the *Igbe* society from the Midwest to our area. It was only one denomination, the *Igbe Nmolu*, and the devotees were practising it with dedication for years. But one market day, a jovial man named Nwangwu began to mock my father along the streets, pretending to be possessed and in a trance. Surprisingly, some people began to follow him and asked him to establish his own *Igbe* shrine and healing centre. But Nwangwu refused and told them he was only mocking Uyammadu and his followers. Yet, the people did not believe him. They went ahead to set up a temporary *Igbe* centre and invited Nwangu to lead them as their *Uku* (Chief Priest) arguing that Nwangwu had a powerful spiritual calling. But Nwangwu declined and emphasised that he was neither possessed nor saw visions, but only mimicking Uyammadu and his devotees. Then they appointed a native doctor as their leader (*Uku*) and began their own sectarian activities in their healing centre on a different market day but using herbs and charms to make their treatments effective. That was how the *Igbe Ogwu* group began. *Igbe Ogwu* literally means *Igbe* that prescribes or uses medicine or charms. Till today, the original sect, *Igbe Nmolu*, brought down to our area by my father, Uyammadu, does not use charms or herbs.

In essence, the *Igbe* practice historically originated from midwestern Nigeria (Niger Delta) as a cultural group engaged in worship, exorcism, fortune-telling, metaphysical warfare, healing, and spiritual protection for their adherents and clients. The *Igbe Ogwu* sect became easily widespread in the Omambala region because it leverages traditional medical practice, herbalism, marine-ancestor-worship, and indigenous religious rituals, which were already popular in that area, noted for popular native doctors and traditional healers.



Fig. 2: *Igbe Ogwu* members in a street processional performance.

Photo: Francisca Nwadiuwe

The entire activity of the *Igbe* sect is subsumed in theatrical performance characterised by music, dance, song, trance, ritual, possession, role-play, dramatic action, special props, esoteric language, chants and allied lyrical arts. Indeed, *Igbe* falls within the category of religious ritual performances which Horn (1981: 184) refers to as “spirit medium and possession cults”. The *Igbe* performance is held every eight days. The basic performance process begins with pouring of libation, the ritual cleansing of devotees and the eating of sacred kaolin (white chalk). The kaolin may also be rubbed on the face, forehead, toes and neck region depending on each devotee’s discretion. The make-up serves as a protective shield against attacks from malevolent spirits, evil forces and their agents.

In Nigeria, some similar sects, such as the Hausa *Bori* spirit mediumship, deal with spirits whose identities are known and verifiable within the pantheon. But the *Igbe* sect does not claim to know or relate to particular spirits. Each ailment or affliction is diagnosed independently through visions, and the medium prescribes a cure or remedy in a fit of subliminality often characterised by possession, trance, dance, ecstatic frenzy and dramatic action. In some cases, the cause of an illness is traced to human beings, including the patient, whose misconduct may have precipitated the affliction.

The *Igbe* worship centre or Club House is composed of a rectangular hall bedecked with mirrors, hand fans, and framed images hanging on the walls. The most sacred space within the venue is the bed where the *Uku* usually sits to direct and control proceedings as they dispense prophetic proclamations and curative prescriptions for devotees and clients. The bed area represents the main shrine and is bedecked with white sheets made of linen or cotton materials. The right side of the bed is arranged with easy chairs where the *Onoli* (High Chiefs) sit. The *Uku* and *Onoli* are mostly males, whereas the mediums are predominantly females. The rest of the hall is littered with low stools made of wood, bamboo, or palm stems as well as raffia mats used by the lower-ranked members. The non-initiates (visitors) usually sit in a different area within the hall.



Fig. 3: A section of the *Igbe* Club House (worship centre) usually occupied by members of lower ranks.

Photo: Francisca Nwadiwe

Hence, the use of space in *Igbe* cult reflects class stratifications, rank, power, authority and role distribution. Carlson (1993: 8) observes that “in addition to providing a space for the performance of dramatic texts” the theatre as a performance venue “has taken on a wide variety

of social meanings over the years” and this ranges from being “a cultural monument” to being “a site of display for a dominant social class” among other “connotations” which clearly “provide striking evidence of the ... role played by theatre in society”. In the *Igbe* cult’s tradition, it is a taboo for a member of the lower rank or non-initiate to transgress the construction of space and sit on the sacred bed or the easy chairs meant for the *Uku* and *Onoli*, respectively.

The performance space extends from the indoor enclosure of the Club House to the exterior of the hall, where an open, bare space is created. The only feature of this space is a pole with a long piece of white cloth dangling on it like a flag. At the bottom of the cloth is fixed a tiny bell that produces a tinkling sound each time the fluttering cloth hits on the iron pole. This tinkling sound becomes more eerie and ominous at night. The open outdoor performance space serves as the venue for the dances and allied dramatic actions involving elaborate movements and physical activity. Patients are usually positioned in front of the pole while possessed trance-dancers prance or stagger about the space, chanting esoterically, pronouncing prophecies, prescribing curative actions and exorcising evil spirits from the bodies of their clients.

The *Igbe* worship-performance begins indoors with songs and music after the opening libations and cleansing of devotees. Indeed, music and dance are central performance idioms in *Igbe* theatre. They serve motivating, escapist and therapeutic purposes. In fact, Aluede (2010: 174) found that pregnant women undergoing therapy at *Iyayi (Igbe)* centres are exposed to inspirational music, songs and dramatic actions through which “their minds are removed from the anxieties and challenges associated with procreation”.

Furthermore, pregnant women are traditionally believed to be susceptible or vulnerable to demonic afflictions or “spiritual attacks” that could adversely affect their health and the safe delivery of their babies. Many *Igbe* devotees usually take refuge at the cult house (performance venue) when they get pregnant. The cult house becomes a kind of sanctuary and traditional maternity home, dispensing healthcare in the form of music, dramatic performances, songs, dances, body massage, and sometimes herbs and exorcism.

The devotees usually play music and sing songs while seated indoors. At a particular point, the rhythm changes and the tempo rises as well. The dancers pick up their hand fans (*azuzu*) made of animal skin decorated with small mirrors, and move outside. They take a circular formation, dancing in a procession around the metal pole in the open space in a form of supplication. The hand fans are beaten in unison on their left palms or their right thighs, thus producing a sound effect in rhythm with the songs and instrumentation. When the pace of the music and dance reaches a crescendo, some mediums among them become possessed and fall into a trance, staggering, prancing and swooning around the arena and nearby spaces. Other mediums stretch out their hand fans, gazing at the mirrors, seeing visions through them, beating the clients’ bodies with the fan, chanting and making proclamations either as fortune-telling, diagnosis of clients’ ailments or prescription of remedial actions. When the possessed mediums regain full consciousness, they go indoors and take their seats, feeling exhausted.



Fig. 4. Two possessed members of *Igbe* sect stray into a nearby compound while in a trance.

Photo: Francisca Nwadigwe

The hand fan serves multiple purposes as a performance prop, musical instrument, divination tool, traditional stethoscope and sacred symbol of the medium's metaphysical power. Ikibe (2010: 45) also contends that the hand fan is a "symbol of spiritual identity and unity among themselves". Some observers often emphasise the musical roles of the hand fan in the *Igbe* performance ensemble (Erukanure 2003: 26). But ironically, the hand fan was not originally conceived as a musical instrument but an iconographic symbol of identity, a practical prop, and "a weapon of attack against witches, wizards and all such people who are possessed with evil spirits" (Ikibe 2012: 48).

The music and dance continue in different sessions interspersed with counselling, exhortations, prophecies and exorcising of evil spirits from afflicted clients and devotees. All members of the *Igbe* sect wear only white costumes designed in various patterns. The females use a blouse, and wrapper or a gown with a head tie, whereas the males use a wrapper and flowing shirts. In fact, many devotees have chosen to wear only white colours in their everyday attire as a symbol of piety and spiritual fortification. This dress code also helps sect members to easily identify with one another outside the performance arena. The *Igbe Ogwu* sect also adds red colours to their white costumes. The colours of white and red are regarded as symbols of ritual purity.

Discussion

The *Igbe* performance is submerged in traditional religion, ritual and ancestor worship. It is indeed a traditional form of theatre therapy. The *Igbe* performer is essentially a medium through which remote and immediate causes of ailments and afflictions are diagnosed, identified, communicated and curative action prescribed and sometimes executed. The underlying belief is that ailments and misfortunes are caused by unseen and malevolent forces or spirits that need to be tackled, appeased, or exorcised before relief and healing can take place. The *Igbe* practitioner achieves these by going into mystical communion with ancestral powers and metaphysical forces while in a state of trance. These forces "possess" the performer who falls into a subconscious state and, in the process, engages in divination, prophecy, fortune-telling, diagnosis and prescription of cure for the sick and afflicted client or devotee.

Essentially, the *Igbe* performance is evocative and therapeutic. The process of identifying the causes of clients' problems is quite dramatic. It involves music, dialogue, chants, possession and trance. The healing may entail dramatic rites, sacrifices, exorcism and body massage. In fact, some clients stay in the *Igbe* worship centre for extended periods to get healed and fully recuperate. During this period, they may participate in invocations, songs, music and allied performances. Aluede and Eregare (2009: 93) found that the music and song texts of *Igbe* performance have healing powers due to their "psychotherapeutic" character. Therefore, the Club House of the *Igbe* serves as a performance venue, shrine, hospital and social centre for devotees. In a discourse on space and context, Yi-Fu Tuan contends that the hospital is a theatre, the same way that theatre is clinical. Tuan further argues as follows:

The hospital as theater? That would seem to be a frivolous idea. Yet the operating room is often called the theater. Who are the spectators and who the actors? In a teaching hospital, the medical students are the spectators; they are seated on rising tiers of benches that overlook the operating table in center stage. The doctors and nurses are the actors, but also the spectators when they are not actively engaged (Counsell and Wolf 2001: 158-9).

Similarly, the *Igbe* Club House is a theatre with minor physical demarcations. The devotees are both actors and their own audience as well, depending on the circumstance and level of engagement with the action. The assertion that the theatre is a hospital and the hospital is theatrical is at the core of theatre therapy. Frequently, clients come from rural and urban areas to the *Igbe* worship centre to seek healing for strange, recurrent, and chronic ailments and metaphysical afflictions which could not be treated in orthodox medical centres and other traditional healing homes.



A client consults the *Igbe* Chief Priest at the Club House to get a cure for his ailment.

Photo: Francisca Nwadiuwe

The climax and turning point in the *Igbe* performance is when the performers become possessed and fall into a trance. The actor becomes subconscious and assumes the role of a medium, relaying information from the metaphysical plane of existence. From field observations, it is difficult to ascertain whether some *Igbe* performers actually simulate possession and trance or not. Indeed, the simulation controversy has often occupied a central point in discussions on possession, mediumship and trance performance. But what is clearly

evident from the *Igbe* experience is the absolute belief by devotees and clients in the efficacy of the performance, pronouncements and prescribed therapies.

The *Igbe* performance is shrouded in symbolism, especially in the use of space, props and esoteric language. The texts of the songs and chants and the various spaces in the Club House are associated with deeper spiritual meanings. Two dominant props in the performance venue are wall mirrors and hand fans. Some of the hand fans are also affixed with small round mirrors, and these are attributed with spiritual and therapeutic power. Through these, the performers see visions beyond the borders of human consciousness. In a sense, the *Igbe* performers are traditionally “doctors without borders”. Data from field studies also reinforce this clinical and spiritual function of the mirror and hand fan, which devotees primarily conceive as weapons, diagnostic tools, and therapeutic instruments that help them to see the unseen and ward off demonic attacks. Aesthetically, the mirrors hung all over the walls and fixed in the hand fans produce multiple reflections of sunlight and images of performers clad in white, which add up to a mixture of light, shadows, and visual effects.

Furthermore, the hand fans serve visible theatrical functions ranging from the supply of rhythmic sounds in performance to identification of character levels and association, since each hand fan design and the kind of decorative accessories attached to it represent the status of the member that wields it. As the adherents exist in a tropical climate and often engage in physical activities, the hand fan also helps to manually supply fresh air to the users.

The delineation of space in *Igbe* performance venue follows a symbolic hierarchical order. The bed and shrine of the *Uku* (Chief Priest) are the most sacred spaces. It is positioned directly in front of the only entrance to the hall. The High Chiefs (*Onoli*) sit close to the shrine on the right. The other members of lower ranks and clients (non-initiates) sit on low stools further away to the left. The *Uku* maintains a total command of the spaces and directs affairs from his vantage position. As Counsell and Wolf (2001: 156) observe, “to control symbolic space is effectively to control the audience’s reading of the event, and hence the meanings that may be discerned there”.

As commonly observed in indigenous African performance traditions, the use of space in *Igbe* is often elastic. The entire arena is considered a sacred space; thus, footwear is forbidden. Each unit of action and “each movement of performance is done in a transit space fluid and devoid of any form of gulf or restriction”. (Uwadinma-Idemudia 2012: 157). The *Igbe* trance dancers are given ample space outside the hall to accommodate their elaborate and uncontrolled movements, commune with unseen forces and prescribe a cure for the sick.

The use of white costumes, even in their everyday life, marks the *Igbe* members as people of deep spirituality. But also the use of the same dress patterns and colour has found functional application in the socio-political lives of members as it fosters a sense of solidarity and engenders cooperation. Keniston McIntosh observes a social function of dress (costumes) that transcends artistic and religious boundaries in Nigerian society. McIntosh (2009: 211) maintains that wearing the “same fabric or colour of clothing, the same style of dress, or at

least a similar head tie” demonstrates social groupings, class, status and oneness among socio-cultural organisations. Similarly, Nwafor (2011: 61) identifies the use of the same dress and colour among groups as versions (or subversions) of subcultures, a “controversial process of comradeship extended into the broader political context”. This visual culture of dress and dressing “becomes less of a tradition than an imagination of ‘authenticity’ in tradition” with the associated “politics of exclusion and inclusion that has started creeping into the practice”. This analysis is quite applicable to *Igbe* devotees who are habitually clad in white attire, maintaining solidarity and comradeship while non-members are left with a feeling of being “outsiders”, excluded from their circle. But it is also comparable to the wearing of white dresses or lab coats by doctors and nurses, while patients in the same hospital feel excluded from their circle.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The historical antecedents of *Igbe* practice are characterised by trends in cultural performance, sectarian spread and therapeutic approaches. But generally, through the medium of traditional drama and theatrical activities involving trance, possession, sympathetic magic, specialised props, costumes, make-up, dialogue and esoteric language, symbolic dramatic actions, mime, song, music, dance, divination, fortune-telling, and active audience participation, the *Igbe* sects provide healthcare for their devotees and clients. The *Igbe* practitioners have been rendering this therapeutic service to millions of citizens over the years and have maintained an active followership in contemporary times. The healing performances are executed at the worship centres where their shrines cum clinics are located. The place thus serves the multiple purposes of hospital, sanctuary, and performance venue.

The symbiotic and complex relationship between performance and religion is amply demonstrated in the *Igbe* theatrical tradition. The elements of religious worship and therapeutic theatre are so intricately fused that they are inseparable. On one hand, performance is the vehicle for religious invocation and on the other, religion provides the basis for the theatrical enactment of diagnosis and treatment of ailments. Between these mutual relationships is the provision of therapy and spiritual protection to believers and clients. In many aspects, the *Igbe* practice shares some parallels with the *Orukere* performance of the Ijaw and Kalabari of Nigeria’s Niger Delta, where, as Adelugba (1981: 209) affirms, “the dance is essentially a performance of worship in supplication to the deity or in appeasement for a foreseen evil”.

The *Igbe* worship shrine, over the years, has assumed the status of a cultural centre, a performance venue, a traditional healing home, an asylum for the afflicted, and a psychosocial rendezvous for devotees to share communal oneness in an atmosphere of sanctity, spirituality and theatricality. Carlson (1993: 2) asserts that “places of performance generate social and cultural meanings of their own which in turn help to structure the meaning of the entire theatre experience”. Semiotically, the *Igbe* Club House is a functional shrine, spiritual fortress, theatre, hospital and community centre where ailments with supernatural or mythical aetiology are treated or prevented.

However, despite the clinical services being rendered to communities and the nation by *Igbe* devotees, they are not included in the health system of Nigeria. Government budgets for the health sector do not factor the *Igbe* therapists into the healthcare equation. Nevertheless, the *Uku, Onoli and Mediums* in the *Igbe* cult are quite influential and play significant roles in the daily healthcare and medical decisions of devotees and clients. They see visions, provide counselling services, diagnose mysterious ailments, supernatural afflictions and misfortunes and dramatically prescribe preventive and curative action based on their inspiration, clairvoyance and experience. They also dispense herbs and prophylactics. Many urban dwellers of diverse social classes frequently participate in *Igbe* therapeutic performances in search of solutions to their health and daily challenges. In fact, civil society groups focusing on health and human development are beginning to recognise *Igbe* practice and similar sects, which some refer to as “traditional church” or “healing home”. It is therefore vital that any sustainable policy on community health in southeastern and midwestern regions of Nigeria must recognise and accommodate the *Igbe* clinics and similar traditional therapies due to their influence on the people’s healthcare and medical decisions. Indeed:

Traditional values, knowledge, concepts and practices still play important role in the decision making process of rural people in many parts of the world. Traditional leaders are influential and their cultural values – often quite different from those which dominate in the West – prevail in many rural societies (Haverkort *et al* 2003: 8).

The *Igbe* falls within the category of alternative medicine and traditional health practices. Therefore, government policies on health systems, such as funding, monitoring and evaluation, health education, training, and supervision, should extend to *Igbe* communities instead of blanket condemnation or demonization of their practice. Such regulation and encouragement will ensure that the *Igbe* followers adopt safe practices and operate within the law. There is therefore a dire need to support such local traditions and initiatives with legal, economic and policy enactments and frameworks to facilitate effective and sustainable change in healthcare delivery.

The health-seeking behaviour of Nigerians continues to change as patients desperately search for solutions to their health challenges. Urban and rural dwellers of different socio-economic classes frequently patronise the *Igbe* for medical treatment and spiritual protection. The theatrical tradition of *Igbe* remains vibrant and is sustained by belief systems and traditional medicine. The influence of *Igbe* as a performative diagnosis and medication characterised by mediumship, fortune-telling, prescription, healing, and prevention is considerable in southeastern and midwestern regions of Nigeria, where they still maintain large followers. The *Igbe* cult caters to the religious and health needs of a significant number of people that constitute their clients and devotees; hence, it cannot be ignored in the formulation of policies and programmes that concern indigenous theatres, therapy and health in contemporary Nigeria.

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