ADOLESCENTS' SEXUAL BEHAVIORS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS ON SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Adolescent sexual activity is an area of worry in Nigeria with implications for well-being. Adolescent sexual behaviors can have grave consequences for their physical and psychological health, as well as for their social and economic welfare. The majority of adolescents in Nigeria engage in sexual activity before turning 18, and this has serious negative implications for society. The study's primary goal is to investigate adolescents' sexual behavior and its effects on Nigerian social institutions. An appraisal was carried out to explore the realities of adolescent sexual behaviors in Nigeria. Numerous factors, including sexual maturation, peer association, and environment, play key roles in an adolescent's motivation toward first sexual involvement. Risky sexual behaviors, such as early sexual initiation, and many others, put them at high risk of being infected with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS, as well as unintended pregnancies. It is therefore recommended by this study that, effective intervention devices on adolescents' sexual health needs should be made available in all primary and secondary schools, parents should encourage adolescents to keep peers/friends with sound morals, sex education should be included in primary and secondary schools' curriculums, and adolescents should delay sexual activities until they get to an acceptable legal age and are married in the proper manner

Keywords: Adolescents, HIV/AIDS, Nigeria, sexuality, social institutions, STDs.

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical stage of life, and adolescents are a distinct population group with unique potential as well as peculiar needs. Countries with a large adolescent population face various challenges. These comprise a sharp demand for resources on education, healthcare, food, and social amenities, which can strain the government. Adolescents are a crucial section of any human society as they are the ones preparing for the full assumption of adult roles and responsibilities. Adolescents constitute the future productive force of any society; therefore, it is pertinent to create an enabling environment that would positively influence their knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, and behavior regarding sexual activities. Most people become sexually active in their teens, and significant proportions engage in sexual activities, and many lack information on sexual health and the ability to negotiate sexual relationships correctly. Considerably, sexual activities among adolescents continue to be unsafe: early sexual initiation and other sexual behaviors expose them to the risk of contracting STDs, including HIV/AIDS. Kumar and Timari (2003), Joshi and Chauhan (2011), agreed that adolescents are having more sex regularly early in life, and the occurrence of pregnancies among adolescent girls is rising, and the majority of them run the danger of an induced abortion under unsafe settings (Okunlola et al., 2011). Centers for Disease Control (2009), Nare, Katz, & Tolley (2007) posit that adolescents with a multiplicity of sexual associates expose themselves to the dangers of pregnancies, STDs, and HIV/AIDS infections. The danger of pregnancy equally exposes them

to illegal abortions, which is detrimental to health. One of the menaces inherent in this is the likelihood of contracting the HIV/AIDS virus. The central thrust of this study is an appraisal of adolescents' sexual health behavior and its implications for Nigerian society. The position of this paper is not to advocate for adolescents to partake in sexual or reproductive health activities. The paper states what is presently happening, intending to guide against it and protect society.

Theoretical Framework

The construct of Health Locus of Control was derived from the Social Learning Theory developed by Rotter in 1966. The Social Learning Theory states that an individual learns based on his or her history of reinforcement. The individual will develop general and specific expectancies. Through a learning process, individuals will develop the belief that certain outcomes are a result of their actions (internals) or as a result of other forces independent of themselves (externals). From the social learning theory, Rotter developed the Locus of Control Construct, consisting of an internal-external rating scale. Health Locus of Control (HLC) is the degree to which individuals believe that their health is controlled by internal or external factors. External entails the belief that one's outcome is under the control of powerful others or is determined by fate, luck, or chance, while internal is the belief that one's outcome is directly the result of one's actions (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005).

Applying this theory to adolescents' sexual behavior and health, the theory shows that one's decision regarding sexual action is a result of both the environment he/she stays in (external) and the internal concise about making the right choice regarding sexual life (internals). Wallston & Wallston (1981, 1982) as cited in Luszczynska & Schwarzer (2005) argued that health locus of control beliefs (whether individuals consider their health to be under the control of internal factors, powerful others, or chance) would add to the analytical power of this model.

The Nigerian Situation

According to the UNAIDS report (2000), the greatest hindrance to adolescents' knowledge of the implications of indiscriminate sexual activities in Nigeria is a lack of proper information and education. As noted previously, adolescent sexual encounters, whether with one or multiple partners, are unacceptable and should not be encouraged. The lack of knowledge of the implications of sexual encounters is because some Nigerian cultures frown on open discussions of sexual issues. Words used in expressing sexual acts are habitually indirect to reflect the quietness expected in such matters. The doctrines of Christianity and Islam tend to authenticate this issue. People cannot openly discuss or ask questions about sex or sexual activities. The belief is that such matters belong to the jurisdiction of marriage. Nevertheless, sexual activities continue to thrive amongst adolescents in Nigeria. Undeniably, adolescents all over the world are sexually active, but the age of sexual initiation differs from region to region.

Adolescents constitute a very important part of every society in the world, but regrettably, this large and vulnerable group is not adequately prepared for sexual and reproductive life in preparation for the right time to come. Adolescents' choices and behaviors during their teen years can have life-changing and lifelong consequences for themselves, their families, and society as a whole. Uneducated or wrongly educated adolescents may have hopeless and long-lasting implications for the family and society as a whole, since the future

of any society depends on them. What is challenging about this stage of life is that it determines the lifestyle of boys and girls in adult life, and this includes not only their sexual life but also their socioeconomic life (Omobuwa, Asekun-Olarinmoye & Olajide, 2012). This is why they must be educated to make the right choices in conformity with moral values.

Available proof shows that sub-Saharan Africa has some of the worst signs associated with adolescent sexual and reproductive health in the world. Data indicates that by age 19, at least 80% of the continent's adolescents become sexually active. In most sub-Saharan African nations, the first sexual encounter takes place outside marriage under circumstances of low and inaccurate knowledge of sexual and reproductive health. This pattern of high-risk sexual behavior is connected with an increased occurrence of sexually transmitted diseases. With about 30% of the world's population being in the adolescent (10-19) age group, the sexual health requirements of adolescents have neither been explored nor satisfactorily addressed; as a result of this, their reproductive health needs are often misjudged, unrecognized, or undervalued.

Wrong sexual behavior among adolescents has been widely condemned by professionals at different forums; some condemned the phenomenon on the basis of medical hitches while others on basis of moral and psychological predispositions. Conversely, the consequences of sexual behavior, thereafter, are that adolescents contract sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and run the long-term health effects such as infertility. The health, physical, economic, social, and psychological disadvantages of adolescent sexual behaviors greatly overshadow any known benefits. The inspiration for this article is drawn from the many negative effects of adolescents' sexual misbehaviors.

The State of Sexual Health of Adolescents in Nigeria

The level of **… sex** is objectively high among adolescents in Nigeria, as reported by the 2018 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS). The sexual health status of the Nigerian adolescent is poor, principal among the reason responsible for the current high levels of infections among adolescents is that, the average age at first intercourse has declined and there is greater practice of **…** sexual intercourse with multiple and casual partners by both boys and girls (Federal Ministry of Health, 2001; Omoregie (2002), Adegoke, (2010) asserts that, as a result of increasing poverty and other adverse social conditions, there is an increase rate of antisocial practices including drug abuse and violent crimes such as rape and armed robbery which has expose more adolescents to hazardous sexual behaviors.

The National Demographic Health Survey (2018) study puts the average age at first sexual intercourse at 17.2 years, However, over one-third of Nigerians had their first sexual experience by the time they were sixteen, 41 percent had practiced sexual intercourse and of these, 82 percent of girls and 72 percent of boys had sexual intercourse by the age of 19 years (Okunlola et al, 2011). According to WHO, Nigeria is projected to have 105.6 million young people aged 10-24 years, representing 44. % of the Nigerian population. This segment is expected to contribute approximately 46.1% of deliveries in Nigeria in the year 2025. About two-fifths of adolescent pregnancies in Nigeria are believed to end up in induced abortion, with the majority being carried out by quacks and in an unsafe environment. These projections underscore the significance of targeted interventions to address adolescents' sexual and reproductive health in Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

Furthermore, gender discrimination and conventionally accepted beliefs about women and girls, and the difference in the perception of men's and women's sexuality have also been linked to the increased vulnerability of adolescents to STDs and HIV/AIDS infections.

Perceptions of sexuality are learnt through socialization processes, which are socially and discretely determined. Deeply embedded beliefs about the role of men and women significantly affect females' ability to choose the circumstances of sexual relations.

Factors Influencing Adolescents' Sexual Behavior in Nigeria

Several factors worsen the risky behaviors and outcomes among adolescents in Nigeria. Poverty and deficiencies in education increase the risk and vulnerability of adolescents. At the same time, several factors related to the family, community, and service facilities have been identified that aggravate these risks. While awareness of **sex education issues** is increasing, much of this awareness is superficial, and myths, misunderstandings, and a sense of invulnerability thrive. In 1994, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) emphasized the need to "protect and promote the right of adolescents to the enjoyment of the maximum attainable standard of health, provide appropriate, specific, user-friendly and accessible services to address effectively their sexual health and reproductive health education, information, counselling, and health promotion strategies" (Nzioka, 2001). WHO (2006) in its report lists factors increasing young adolescents' vulnerability to sexual activities leading to STDs and AIDS. These factors include: poverty, illiteracy, culture, peer group influence, environment, and gender disparities.

Poverty: Poverty is a major problem, which is widely acknowledged internationally as deserving urgent attention, especially in sub-Saharan African countries which including Nigeria. In these countries, abject poverty has increased the vulnerability of adolescents to unacceptable sexual behaviors. Adolescents are also more likely to live in unhealthy and risky environments that expose them to a higher risk of sexual abuse/violence. Poverty has led to the acceptance of sexual contacts, where adolescents (boys/girls) exchange sex for money, food, tuition fees, housing, and clothing.

Illiteracy: Access to quality education positively impacts the well-being and development of adolescents. It contributes to increased health knowledge and health literacy, equips adolescents with life skills, increases their competency for self-care, and empowers them for effective decision making. Education improves the opportunities to have access to family life and HIV/AIDS education, physical education, and other forms of school health services. Increased access to education also limits the rate of girl-child marriage. A high level of school connectedness also improves emotional well-being and is a protective factor against engagement in several sexually risky behaviors. In a broad-spectrum, less educated adolescents in Nigeria have poorer health status and a higher risk of sexually risky behavior compared to their more educated counterparts.

Cultural Factors and Social Norms: Cultural factors and social norms negatively impact the sexual health of the girl child. Cultural factors and social norms are also at the root of several pervasive harmful practices against girl child in Nigeria, including gender-based violence, female genital mutilation/cutting, and girl-child marriage. These social norms and cultural beliefs have considerable negative influences on the overall well-being and the reproductive health of the girl child. Sexual orientation can influence health and health care access differently, and it is an important dimension of social inequality. Sexual minorities have higher risks of STIs, sexual violence, and some mental health issues, such as suicidal ideation, suicidal attempts, and depressive symptoms, compared to heterosexual adolescents. The

population of sexual minorities in Nigeria remains largely hidden, and access to relevant sexual and reproductive health services is limited because of the state of the law, discriminatory attitudes of health workers, and strong cultural opposition.

Peer Group Influence: Peer-group norms favors premarital sex. Adolescents boast of their sexual conquests to their peers. The boys feel the need to conform to social norms of male ability, with sexual activities starting early and having several partners, yet their feelings about this behavior are ambiguous and contradictory.

Adolescents' Sexual Behavior and Its Implications on the Social Institutions in Nigeria.

Social institutions are the structural components of a society through which the activities of the society are organized to meet human needs. Each of these institutions has its unique and distinct service it renders for the survival of society. Thus, we have the family, religious, economic, political, educational, and health institutions. Adolescents' sexual behaviors can have life-altering and lasting penalties for various social institutions.

Family institutions: Adolescents' sexual behaviors expose them to the risk of contracting STDs, including HIV/AIDS, and this has several socio-economic consequences on the family. To begin with, it can lead to unintended pregnancy, which can impact the family dynamics and relationships. In some cases, the family's financial resources are overstretched due to treatment, caring for an unplanned baby, and also emotionally due to the loss of a member.

Religious institutions: When the chips are down, adolescents, especially those from poor homes, those who might have lost their parents, or even those who might have been disowned by their parents, tend to take solace in their respective religion. They go to places of worship to take refuge. These exact pressures on the religious institutions to provide economic and moral support for them.

Economic institutions: The cost of treatment for an infected person constitutes a financial burden for all the social institutions. From the family to the society as a whole, they experience one financial burden or the other in trying to stabilize a sick or displaced person. Again, a person who is sick is expected to take a sick role and be exempted from duty. This duty can be either in the family or in the larger society. So an adolescent who is sick from infection or the effect of pregnancy or complications from abortion will be exempted from his/her roles in family or society, hoping to be reinstated to normalcy after stabilization.

Political institutions: The political institution is burdened with the responsibility of responding to plagues in terms of decisions and actions. Over the years, Nigeria has exhibited a high level of support from international donors and partners, but just of recently, the administration of Donald Trump has brought to an end most of this support, especially on HIV/AIDS for Africa and Asia. What this means is that Nigeria will have to carry the financial burden caused by the sexual behavior of adolescents. In 1990, Nigeria introduced anti-retroviral drugs, and the availability was only for the rich due to their high cost. In terms of funding, it has been estimated that Nigeria contributes only 5% of its funds for such treatment, a huge amount of the funding comes from foreign partners in terms of grants and loans. By implication, Nigeria will remain indebted to meet the demands of the treatment of infections.

Educational institutions: It must be acknowledged that educational institutions is susceptible and also vulnerable due to adolescents' sexual behaviors. The World Bank identified areas of vulnerability in this regard to include out-of-school children. There is a tangible danger that adolescents will be forced to leave school either because of pregnancy, illness from infections, and may be consequently death. Being infected with STDs and HIV/AIDS has implications for effective concentration on academics in terms of health maintenance and social relationships. Adolescents are our future leaders; their inability to be successfully armed today towards taking leadership roles for the future has inconceivable implications for the future.

Health institutions: This institution has suffered great setbacks and workload as adolescents' sexual behaviors exact unnecessary pressures on the health institution. Adolescents' sexual behaviors lead to increased demand for reproductive health services, STD testing, and treatment. It also puts a lot of pressure on social healthcare services as the need for counselling and therapeutic services increases due to adolescents' guilt, shame, and emotional distress. Adolescents living with infections require more medical attention and consumables. In other words, increased use of health services leads to increased spending, and secondly, decreased incomes, as an increasing section of this population becomes economically inactive.

Conclusion

Sexual activity carries with it dangers to sexual health at any age, but most particularly during adolescence. This is because the risks of infections are greater when full physical maturation is incomplete. The sexual behavior of adolescents in Nigeria can no longer be ignored. The short and long-term consequences to the country are immense. However, these problems can be reduced and the trend overturned by well-planned and implemented sexual health programmes for adolescents, as they are the key and future leaders in all sectors of society, and their education should not be endangered by avoidable illness.

Recommendations

- ❖ Firstly, effective intervention devices on the sexual health needs of adolescents should be made available in all primary and secondary schools in the country to limit the trend of morally in accepted sexual behavior of adolescents.
- ❖ Secondly, adolescents should be educated on the risks and dangers of having sexual intercourse at their age.
- ❖ Thirdly, it is imperative to encourage adolescents to keep peers/friends with sound moral backgrounds and avoid staying in the mix of others who lack proper moral upbringing to avoid being influenced into making inappropriate sexual decisions.
- ❖ Most adolescents know about sexual health issues, but the sexual health policies that target them have not been so effective. It is important for the government and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to fully implement in primary and secondary schools sexual health policies that are tailored towards protecting the well-being of adolescents.
- ❖ In addition, sex education of adolescents should be included in primary and secondary schools' curriculum as a subject to dynamically educate adolescents on sexual health concerns. However, adolescents should desist from sexual activities to ensure a healthy

life devoid of any academic challenges like unwanted pregnancy, low academic performance, and dropping out of school, which can ruin their future.

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THE "THLIPSIS" (PERSECUTION) IN ACTS 14:22 AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CONTEMPORARY BELIEVER IN CHRIST

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Abstract

In Acts 14: 22 Paul teaches that God's people would go through much tribulation to enter God's kingdom. The Greek word**, "Thlipsis"** is translated as tribulation. This seems to negate and contradict the promises of Jesus Christ in Matt 11:28-30: *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden light"*. However, Jesus also relates to suffering in Christianity in Matt 7:13-14 (the narrow gate and difficult way) and self-denial and carrying one's cross in Matt 16:24-26, as He Himself did. Jesus meant that Christians would still be enjoying the peace of God that is beyond human understanding (Phil 4:7) despite tribulations. Tribulation connotes suffering, pains, trouble, trials, afflictions, and hardships that a child of God passes through as a result of his or her faith in Christ. Tribulations, by implication, have a crushing and squeezing effect on the child of God, so that the chaff is removed from his/her life to make him/her useful to God. Paul gives a list of some of the tribulations, such as troubles, hardships, persecutions, famine, nakedness, danger, or sword (Rom 8:35-36). He also states that Christians are not only to believe in Christ but to also suffer persecutions for His sake (Phil1:29. This paper aims at looking at the place of tribulations in the life of a Christian, his response, benefits and how other members of God's household should respond to the tribulations of other members, as revealed in Church history.

Keywords: Church, Christianity, Suffering, Tribulation, Cross, Peace

I. Introduction

The sovereignty of God implies that no man or Satan has the power to do anything in this world without God's approval. Tribulations are necessary and an inevitable evil allowed by God in the life of His Child for His glory and the benefit of His children. God's children are not meant to pray for tribulations to come, but to be delivered from them (Matt 6:13). The Old Testament, even the most godly among them, underwent suffering, namely, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, the prophets, etc.

According to Amaowoh (2022:373), Satan is the major sponsor of afflictions being experienced by any child of God, as in the case of Job. These include all he does to separate Believers from God, discourage commitment to God's service, depopulate the Church of Christ, and cause the Believer to curse or blaspheme God or to backslide and return to Satan. Paul and Barnabas did

not hesitate to let the young Believers at Lystra and Iconium know that tribulations were a part of the normal in the Christian race. Jesus Christ refers to tribulation as "the cross". Even our Lord Jesus was persecuted, hated, and killed, not because He sinned. He remarked that he was hated without cause and that Believers would be persecuted the same way He Himself was hated and persecuted (John 15:18-25). The Apostles went through tribulations and rejoiced for the privilege of suffering for the sake of Christ (Acts 5:41).

II. Definition:

Tribulation: Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines "tribulation" as "distress or suffering resulting from oppression or persecution". Its synonyms are affliction, agony, anguish, distress, excruciation, hurt, misery, pain, torture, woe, pain, rack, torment, and strait.

III. History of Persecution of the Church:

1.0. Acts of the Apostles: The early Church started to experience persecution shortly after the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate (Acts 3). The religious leaders were greatly disturbed by the preaching of Peter about the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and so they arrested Peter and John and put them in prison, but later released them the next day and threatened them not to preach about Jesus again. They were released because they could not find any reason to punish them, since the people were happy about the healing of the lame man who was over forty years old (Acts 4:1-22).

1.1 The second persecution followed the growth and miraculous works of the Church after the death of Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, when the apostles were arrested and imprisoned by the religious leaders, but at night, the angel of the Lord released them to go and "speak to the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5:20). Being arrested again in the temple, they were charged for not obeying the command to stop preaching Jesus. However, following the brilliant speech of Gamaliel, the apostles were beaten and let go, warning them again not to preach Christ. Amazingly, the apostles rejoiced for the privilege of suffering for Christ, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name (Acts 5:41). They were not deterred in preaching Christ by the actions of the religious leaders (Acts 5:42).

1.2 Acts chapter 7 records the first Martyr of the early church, Stephen, one of the seven deacons. The religious leaders had false witnesses who accused him of speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God (Acts 6:11-15). The death of Stephen led

to the scattering of the church at Jerusalem (Acts 8). Saul is mentioned as the arrowhead of the persecution of the church (Acts 8:1-3). Scholars, however, see this persecution and the scattering of the church at Jerusalem as an act of God for the gospel to reach the Gentile world.

Fuller (1988:31-32) opined that God forced the first believers through persecution to reach out to the Gentiles and beyond Palestine. Halley (1965:567) posited that this was the first persecution of the church when the Church was about a year or two old. Halley sees the providence of God in the persecution which led to the fulfillment of (Matt 28:19; Acts 1:8). The persecution led to the founding of the church at Antioch.

1.3. Acts 12 records the killing of James, the brother of John, by Herod. Halley (1965:571) stated that James was the first of the Twelve to die. The same Herod was about to kill Peter, whom he put in prison, but God miraculously delivered him because the Church prayed earnestly.

1.4. Paul who was formerly called Saul later became the central figure in the story of persecution, according to God's word, that he would suffer many things for the sake of God's name (Acts 9:16), having many occasions of a "close to death experience" some of which he listed in (2 Cor 11:22-23; 12:7-10).

2.0. **Persecutions by Roman Empire:** Ajah (1989:25-29) listed the persecutions of the Church by the Roman Empire, stating that the persecutions were according to what Jesus envisaged when He talked about the gates of hell not prevailing against the Church (Matt 16:18). To Ajah, the gates of hell referred to the battles of persecution, namely:

2.1. **Nero (AD 54-68):** According to Ajah, this was the first and worst of the persecutions of the Church by Rome. Emperor Nero blamed the Church for the great conflagration, which devastated the Empire. This persecution claimed the lives of Peter and Paul.

2.2. **Domitian (AD 81-96:** Emperor Domitian wanted to be worshipped as "Lord and God," and so he hated Christians because they would not accept that. Under this persecution, Andrew, Mark, Onesimus, and Dionysius the Areopagite were slain, while John was banished to the island of Patmos.

2.3. **Trajan (AD 98-117):** Although he did not support the killing of Christians based on vague allegations, he was the Emperor who proscribed Christianity as a "secret society" and a "religious illicita". Under him, Ignatius of Antioch and Symeon of Jerusalem were martyred.

2.4. **Hadrian (AD 117-138):** He upheld Trajan's proscription of the religion and gave the Christian faith a criminal status worthy of death. Christians were allegedly accused of atheism, incest, and cannibalism, and blamed for any natural disaster in the Empire. Several Christian leaders were killed.

2.5. **Antonius Pius (AD 137-161):** He tried to protect Christians, but under him, Polycarp of Smyrna was killed.

2.6. **Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180):** This Emperor is said to have considered the Christian doctrine of immortality of the soul with its grave moral consequences, as vicious and dangerous to the welfare of the State, countless numbers of Christians were killed despite their several apologetics which they wrote him in defense of their faith. During his time, Justin Martyr was killed, a famous virgin by name Bladinda, and a boy of fifteen years, Ponticus, were also martyred. Bladinda is quoted as exclaiming, "I am a Christian, among us no evil is done".

2.7. **From Commodius to Gallienus (AD 180-260):** Christians continued to be persecuted during this period of eighty years, under different Emperors. Notable virgins such as Potamiaena and Ursula, and Cyprian of Carthage gave their lives for the sake of their faith.

2.8. **Period of respite (AD 260-303):** Emperor Gallienus cancelled Trajan's law, which proscribed Christianity, and promulgated another law in favour of it "a religio lecita". Christians enjoyed peace, freedom, and appearances in public places under the regime of Gallienus.

2.9. **Diocletian (AD 303-**311): History records this period as the worst in terms of persecution of Christians. Christians were killed regardless of sex or age, and sacred books were burned.

2.10. **End of persecution (AD 311):** The conversion of Emperor Constantine marked the end of persecution in AD 311 when, according to Fuller (1988:41), the Emperor, in his edict of Milan (a decree), made Christianity a Legal (State) religion of Rome.

Christians remained courageous and resilient all through the persecutions. According to Ajah, one of the Church fathers, Tertullian, said, "The blood of the Christians is the seed of the Church". According to Meta AI, before he was killed, Polycarp of Smyrna (AD 69-155) said, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?" According to Halley (1965:763) Christians used an underground building, well-constructed for the burial of slain brethren as place of worship during the persecutions. This was known as the catacombs.

Boyd (n.d) posited that Christian suffering is inseparable from following Christ, that it is divinely ordained, and no Christian should think that it is alien or foreign to him. He sees fiery trials as a furnace where gold and silver are refined, and that God uses suffering to purify His children.

IV. **Persecution of Christians in the contemporary period:** Meta AI gives the following on this topic that the persecution of Christians continues in various forms around the world in the contemporary period. According to Pew Research Center (2020), Christians face harassment in 145 countries; the persecution is in the form of physical violence, intimidation, imprisonment, torture, and even death for their faith. Some of these are government-sponsored persecution or religious extremism leading to death or displacement as refugees in some countries.

Wurmbrand (1084:32) narrated how Christians were tortured and gruesomely killed in Communist Russia. A Pastor was tortured with red-hot iron pokers and with knives, forced to stand for two weeks, asking him to betray his brethren, but he resisted steadfastly. Christians were hanged upside down and beaten so severely that their bodies swung back and forth under the blows. They were put in ice-box "refrigerator cells" which were so cold that they froze to death.

In an attempt to exterminate Christianity, Churches have been burned in some countries, and the preaching of the gospel has been either banned or restricted. All these constitute the **"thlipsis"** which Christians must undergo on earth according to (John 6:33). Like those in history, contemporary Christians are to remain steadfast in their confession, and not recant when their faith is being tried by persecution, hardships, etc.

V. Theology of suffering, Prosperity Gospel, and Theodicy:

Paul exhorted Believers in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch to stand firm in the faith despite persecution, that through **"Thlipsis"** they would enter God's kingdom. This has become a complex issue to Theologians and Bible Scholars, especially when Christianity is supposed to be "a bed of roses" according to (Matt 11:28-30). This matter has led to serious theological postulations, such as the Theology of suffering, Prosperity Gospel, and Theodicy.

1. **Theology of suffering:** According to Meta AI, Theology of suffering explores the biblical and Theological perspectives on suffering, pain, and evil. It seeks to understand why God allows suffering, how it relates to His sovereignty and goodness, and how Believers can respond to it. The basic themes in Theology of suffering are:-

1. The problem of evil: The question of why God allows evil and suffering to exist in the world.
2. The sovereignty of God: The understanding that God is in control of all things, including suffering.
3. The purpose of suffering: The idea that suffering produces a greater purpose, such as spiritual growth, refinement, or witness.
4. The role of sin: The recognition that sin is the primary cause of suffering in the world.
5. The Hope of Redemption: The promise that God will ultimately redeem and restore all things, including those who suffer.

Biblical perspectives:

1. Job: The Book of Job explores the question of why the righteous suffer.
2. Psalms: Many Psalms express the pain and struggles of the Psalmist, while also affirming His goodness and sovereignty.
3. (Rom 5:3-5): Paul writes that suffering produces perseverance, character, and hope.
4. (2 Cor 1:3-7): Paul describes God as the Father of all comfort and compassion, who comforts Believers in their afflictions or tribulations.

2. **Prosperity Gospel:** According to Meta AI, Prosperity Gospel, also known as Health and Wealth Gospel, is a Christian doctrine that emphasizes the idea that God rewards faithful Believers with material prosperity, good health, and success. It has been argued that the prosperity Gospel overemphasizes material and financial prosperity, over spiritual growth, and

with no emphasis on suffering, which the Bible unequivocally teaches. It misinterprets and takes biblical verses out of context to support its teachings, places no emphasis on holiness, and its preachers are known for the exploitation of vulnerable individuals to enrich themselves. They ought to balance their teaching based on God's word, which includes "Thlipsis" in the believer's walk with God, although they are blessed people of God.

Speaking on the Theology of suffering, (the) New Dictionary of Theology opined as follows: "While scripture says very little about the suffering of humanity generally, it speaks extensively about the suffering of God's people"(p 667). It gives two reasons why Christians suffer, namely, as a result of God's grace in their lives, and the consequence of fallen humanity in a fallen world (p 668).

3. Theodicy:

The concept of "Thlipsis" has bearing on the Theodicy, which is the branch of Theology, according to Meta AI, that deals with the problem of evil, suffering and injustice in the world, and attempts to justify or defend God's goodness, power, and wisdom in the face of these realities.

The key questions in Theodicy are:

1. Why does God allow evil and suffering?
2. How can a good and all-powerful God permit injustice and pain?
3. Is God's existence compatible with the presence of evil in the world?

Types of Theodicy:

1. Augustinian Theodicy: St. Augustine attributed evil to human sin and rebellion.
2. Irenaean Theodicy: St. Irenaeus saw evil as a necessary part of the soul-making process, allowing humans to develop and mature.
3. Process Theodicy: This view, which was developed by Philosophers like Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Harts, emphasizes God's relational and dynamic nature, and sees evil as a result of human freedom and creativity.

Met AI observes that Theodicy is a complex and ongoing debate about God's goodness, sovereignty, and evil in the world. However, this article believes that God created a beautiful and pleasant world, but the sin of Adam and his descendants brought evil with it, including

diseases, poverty, hatred against one another, and death. Believers in Christ will either suffer for righteousness' sake (Matt 5:10-12; 24:9-10); their own mistakes that bring divine chastisement or discipline (2 Chronicles 7:12-14), or as a result of their being in the world of evil (John 16:33; Rom 8:18-24). Ultimately, both good and evil will work out good for the Believer, as in the case of Joseph (Gen 50:20 and Job 42:7-17. The supreme example of this fact is the suffering of Jesus Christ, which led to His exaltation as "LORD" (Phil 2:5-11). This is why Peter admonishes Believers to emulate Christ and His suffering for the benefits thereof (1 Peter 3:18-22; 4:12-19).

VI. The Benefits Of Tribulations

Amaowoh (2022) gave the following as the benefits of tribulations to Christians.

a. Purification

See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction (Isaiah 48:10).

But he knows the way that I take, when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold (Job 10:23).

The purest fuel in fractional distillation is the one with the highest boiling point. Christians who have passed through the hottest crucible are highly inflammable, that is, spiritual, to be the most highly anointed and used by God.

b. As part of a Believer's identity with Christ:

"For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for Him" (Philippians 1:29-30). To illustrate Believers identity with Christ, He said*, "Remember the words that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20).* The implication is that whatever happens to the Master will happen to the disciples.

The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name (Acts 5:41).

c. As a cross to carry:

And Jesus Christ said, *"And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:27).* The cross is a symbol of suffering and self-denial in the Christian faith.

d. To draw the Believer closer to God and foster spiritual growth:

This is illustrated when God punishes His children for their sin to bring them back and closer to Him (Heb 12:3-11). Refer also to (2 Chron 7: 12-14). Some tribulations require that Believers confess and repent of their sins and return to God.

e. To test faith:

Some very good Christians have remained childless in legitimate marriage, some have lost their loved ones to untimely death, some have had to put up with certain chronic diseases, some are poor, some are unemployed, yet with good academic qualifications, and serving the Lord fervently. Job passed through it although he was righteous, and God and Satan knew this (Job 1:8-12). This is clearly stated by James *" Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:3)* and Peter *"That the trail of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise ad honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1Peter 1:7).* Faith must be tested to prove its genuineness.

f. To give experience to Believers:

Paul declared, *"Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character, and character, hope" (Romans 5:3-4).*

Believers will use their own experience to comfort, advise, and counsel others in their tribulations.

g. To balance lives as human beings in the world:

Job replied to his wife, who asked him to curse God and die, *"You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not also trouble?"* In all this, Job did not sin in what he said (Job 2:10).

Scientifically, it takes the positive and negative poles of electricity to generate power. This is the indisputable law of success, fruitfulness, and power in the universe. If good is female, evil

is male. If good is day, evil is night. If good is rainy season, evil is dry season. All for the good of the world and humanity (Rom 8:28). Good and evil are sovereignly allowed by God in the world for the good of humanity.

Life is based on the law of opposites. Great men and great women in all spheres of life, including preaching and Christian life, are those who have gone through beds of roses and crucibles of afflictions. Are we surprised that God asked the Israelites to eat the Passover meat/ meals with bitter herbs (Exodus 12:8)?. The godliest persons in the world have had their celebrations and sorrows, songs and tears, prosperity and losses. Yet, they still say and preach that GOD is GOOD.

h. To humble His children:

Paul said, *"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me" (2 Corinthians 12:17).*

This was Paul's understanding of **"Thlipsis".** The thorn may have been sickness, which God refused to heal in answer to his prayers. Rejection by a church congregation despite a Pastor's enigmatic profile and fame can be allowed by God to humble him and prepare him for a lifting in due course. Hardship can make a person humble enough to fit into God's plan for his life to condescend to minister to low-profile people, according to God's purpose. Rejection can be humiliating to any man of God. Yet, great people like Moses, Samuel, David and Jesus experienced it. It takes humility to handle humiliation and prepare for exaltation.

i. As pruning

In the allegory of the vine, Jesus said,

"He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful" (John 15:2).

Tribulations come as a sharp knife used by the vine dresser or horticulturist to prune the tree or flower for more fruitfulness and beauty. The church worker may cry because of a bad or demotional transfer. But God is taking him to another level of fruitfulness, cutting off old branches for new ones to emerge. One cannot, however, ignore or deny the pains and

discomfort of the pruning. This is where patience and endurance are required in negative experiences of life.

j. To disgrace and prove Satan wrong

Satan was disgraced and proved wrong in Job's case, when he insinuated that Job worshipped God because he was blessed by God, that he would deny God in suffering. Job stood firm for God, and Satan was proved wrong (Job 1:6; 2; 1-9).

k. To be blessed:

The Bible says, *"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5: 10-12).*

The child of God is blessed through persecution, even as he is also blessed through serving God. This is what Jesus taught in the Beatitudes. Vine (1996:69) defines "blessed" from the Greek word "eulogeo" as "to cause to prosper, to make happy or to bestow blessings on".

l.. To prepare His people for heaven:

In the Beatitudes, Jesus taught the disciples that their reward for perseverance was heaven, *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:11-12).*

Tribulations can make the world loathsome to Believers, so that they long for the one where tribulations are absent. (2 Peter 3:13; Rev 21:1-7).

m. To prepare Believers for crowns:

Paul said*, "Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8).*

n. To do Believers good, to bring about good:

Amaowoh (2012:44) opined that problems are meant to escort people into their destiny

Paul said, *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).*

Joseph told his brothers in Egypt, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about as it is this day (Gen 50:20).

o. To reveal Himself to Believers:

Then Job replied to the Lord*, "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. (You asked,) Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?'Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know (You said.) Listen now and I will speak, I will question you, and you shall answer me. My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes (Job 42:1-6).*

Most people have gained a deeper knowledge of God through tribulations, as in the case of Job.

p. Believers are warned not to suffer as evildoers

Peter exhorted the brethren, *"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed, If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you, if you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name" (1 Peter 4:12-17).*

VII. What God Does In Tribulations

Amaowoh (2022) gave the following as what God will do when His children are going through **"thlipsis"**:-

God comforts Believers in their tribulations:

God does not abandon His children in their tribulations, but he comforts them. The Scripture says *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4*).

God supplies sufficient grace:

He also gives sufficient grace to go through our tribulations. According to Paul, God told him *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).*

God will be with them: Joseph went through tough times in his early life, but God was with him, according to the Bible, "*The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did. The Lord was with him, he showed him kindness and granted him favour in the eyes of the prison warden" (Genesis 39:2-3,21).*

God will deliver them: According to the Psalmist, *"A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all" (Psalms 34:19).*

God causes them to triumph: Paul's testimony reveals this, *"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him" (2 Corinthians 2:14).*

God will bless those who are faithful in tribulation: Job was lavishly rewarded and blessed by God for standing firm in tribulation.

"And the LORD turned the captivity of job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him: every man also, gave him a piece of money, and everyone an earring of gold. So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job! more than his beginning for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first, Jemima, and the name of the second, Kezia, and the name of the third, Keren-happuch. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, und saw his sons and his sons' sons even, four generations. So Job died being old and full of days". (Job 42.10-17)

Viii. Implications For Contemporary Believers

The Scripture cannot be broken concerning the inevitability of **"thlipsis"** in the contemporary period, *" But thou has fully known y doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, what persecutions I endured but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (1 Tim 10-12).*

It matters so much how God's children react to sufferings in this life, especially when they know they are relating well with the Lord, doing the best they can for Him. It should be noted that Satan does not attack those who are not profitable to God. He does not attack those who are not a threat to him. He is all out against those that are branded "DANGEROUS TO SATAN'S KINGDOM". In order to overcome the devil as God has promised, the child of God has to adopt a scriptural view and disposition towards **"Thlipsis"** (tribulations), as follows:-

a. Worship God

Vine (1996:687) gives the Greek word "proskuneo" for worship, which means "to make obeisance or do reverence.

David and Job showed a good example of this, after losing their children,

"But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, "Is the child dead?" And they said. He is dead. Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat" (2 Sam:12-20). Job 1:20-22 records Job's reaction to the death of his children, and how he also worshipped God..

Paul and Silas praised and prayed to God throughout the night when they were in prison, and God miraculously delivered them (Acts 16:16-27).

b. Patience: Tribulation requires patience, according to the Scripture, *"Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance" (Romans 5:3).*

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" (Romans 12:12-13). "Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance" (James 1:3-4).

"Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy" (James 5:10-11). To be patient is to trust God to have the final say. Vine (1996:462) gives "hupomone" as the Greek word for "patience" to mean "endurance as in trial, under undeserved affliction".

c. Rejoice: The apostles did not mourn or murmur against God in persecution but they were happy for it; *"The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name" (Acts 5:41).* Peter wrote to Believers, saying *"But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:13).* Vine (1996:519) translates the Greek word "Chairo" to mean "rejoice" to be glad on so many grounds including afflictions, trials and persecutions.

The believer has to rejoice in **"Thlipsis"** (tribulations) because it will redound to his/her blessing and prosperity of God's work as Paul testified; "Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ" (Philippians 1:12-13).

d. Stand firm in the faith:

Some tribulations can be so excruciating that the affected child of God may wish to deny his or her faith in God, especially when he or she feels that such an affliction is undeserving. There are Christians who married as virgins, yet they became childless. Paul was moved to write the Thessalonian brethren thus*: "So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know. For this reason, when I could stand it no longer; I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts*

might have been useless. But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith" (1 Thessalonians 3:1-7).

Job said*: "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face" (Job 13:15).*

e. Not be terrified: Paul encouraged the Philippians brethren; *"Without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved and that by God" (Philippians 1:28-29).*

He or she should not be terrified because God is faithful.

f. Be confident in the existence, love and sovereignty of God:

Job said, *"I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end He will stand upon the earth" (Job 19:25)*

Tribulation can cause a Christian to deny God or doubt His existence. As mighty as John the Baptist was, he doubted whether Christ was the messiah he was preaching about when he was imprisoned by Herod (Matt 11:2-3).

g. Glory in tribulations

Vine (1996:268) translates the Greek word "kauchamai" to mean "to glory or glorying or to boast".

"Not only so, but we also rejoice (glory) in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance (Romans 5:3). He said to me, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me"* (2 Corinthians 12:9).

h. Take pleasure in tribulations: Paul said*, **"**That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:10).* Paul had no issues with suffering because he would suffer many things for the sake of His name (Acts 9:16).

i. Remain faithful: This was God's message to the Church at Smyrna, which suffered serious persecution, "I know your afflictions and your poverty yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer: I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:9-10). Vine (1996:223) gives the Greek word "pistos" to mean "faithful" used of God or Believers to mean "reliable or to be trusted".

j. Prayer: Prayer is a stabilizer in **thlipsis**. James said, *"Is anyone of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise" (James 5:13).*

Those going through afflictions should pray for deliverance. Prayer will not allow Satan to have a certificate of occupancy or permanent residency in the life of the Believer through problems, except God allows him, as in the case of Paul's thorn in the flesh.

k. Forgiveness: Like Jesus, Paul stressed the need to forgive persecutors,

"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse" (Romans 12:14). On the contrary*: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head" (Romans 12:20).* Jesus taught this in the Beatitudes (Matt 5:38-48). Job did this when he prayed for his friends, and it opened the doors for his prosperity (Job 42:10).

l. Self-examination to determine the real cause of the suffering, whether chastisement for sin or an attack from Satan: To do this, the Bible says, *"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith" (*2 Corinthians 13:5-6).

m. Remain in the ministry (Pastors): Jesus told His disciples they would suffer (Matt 10:16-26). They suffered many things, but they did not deny Christ or abandon their ministry.

Paul said, *"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However; I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace" (Acts 20:22-24).*

n. Study God's Word: Like prayer, God's word is a pivot of stability in **"thlipsis".** It provides comfort, (Rom 15:4) encouragement, and how to behave in" **thlipsis**".

The Psalmist said, *"When I thought how to understand this. It was too painful for me - until I went into the sanctuary of God. Then I understood their end" (Psalms 73:16-17).*

0. Praise Him: David, Paul and Silas proved a good example of this, David said, *"I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Psalms 34:1).* Paul and Silas praised God while being unjustly imprisoned (Acts 16).

p. Seek counsel from experienced men of God/professionals for solution as allowed by God. This may help to know the cause or source of the affliction or **"thlipsis"**, and the needed response.

Ix. Proper Attitudes Expected of Co-Laborers/ Fellow Believers Towards Those That Are Suffering.

Amaowoh (2022) cited as follows:

a.They should weep with those who are weeping*: "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15).*

Laughing or mocking while a colleague, brother or sister is suffering is unscriptural.

b. They should pray and intercede for them: The early Church did this, *"So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him" (Acts 12:5).*

It is unfortunate that some Christians do not understand the importance and relevance of other members of the Body of Christ in the fellowship. Had the Church not prayed, Peter would have been killed like James.

c. Give Materials, financial and emotional support: The parable of the sheep and goats nation applies here, *"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory, All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father,' take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world, For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I*

was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 1 needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I. was in prison and you came to visit me," "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me". (Matthew 25:31-40).

d. Act as people who do not have adequate knowledge of cosmic phenomena: Avoid a "holier than thou" attitude, knowing that all humans are vulnerable to suffering. This was the mistake of Job's friends who accused him of wrong doing and was suffering the consequences of such actions.

e. Encourage them with the word of God

The Bible says, *"Therefore encourage each other with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:18).*

f. Show love and compassion: Jesus showed compassion to all who suffer, *"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:35-36).*

"When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick" (Matthew 14:14).

Job said, *"To him who is afflicted, kindness should be shown by his friends" (Job 6:14).*

g. Attack the devil behind the tribulation and not the victim (your colleague): This was the content and focus of the ministry of Jesus. He declared, *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor "(Luke 4: 18-19).*

h. Develop the spirit of comradeship and one Body approach: The Bible says that Believers are one body in Christ, like the human body, relates with one another in pain or joy.

"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts, and though all its parts are many, they form one Body. So it is with Christ, If one part suffers, every part suffers with it, if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it" (1 Corinthians 12:12, 26).

No spirit-filled child of God will speak exasperatingly or sarcastically like Peninnah did to Hannah, who was going through the trauma of childlessness (1 Sam 1:6). Wicked Jews did the same to Jesus when he was being crucified. They taunted him with harsh words and gave Him vinegar when he needed water to assuage His thirst. Job referred to these people as "miserable comforters" (Job 16:1-3).

Taunting exacerbates affliction. As God comforts those going through trouble, Believers should do the same (2 Cor 1:3-7).

In any case, like Joseph, Job, David, the Lord Jesus and Stephen, let those who are being persecuted or taunted in tribulation forgive and treat their assailants with kindness. Jesus was not only a Tupocrat (one who leads by example, according to Wikipedia, Meta AI and Amaowoh 2022) in compassion, righteousness, etc, but also a Tupocrat in suffering to be emulated by His followers.

According to Meta AI, "Tupocracy is a system of government or leadership style where leaders set positive and inspiring precedents through their own actions and behaviours. Is essentially leadership by example, where leaders demonstrate desired values, work ethic, and integrity consistently, inspiring and motivating others to follow suit. This is why Peter asked Believers to emulate the example of Jesus Christ in suffering, *"For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving an example, that ye should follow his steps; who did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth"* (1 Peter 2:21-22).

Conclusion:

Although no one should pray for **"Thlipsis"** (tribulations), they will come in various ways, whether one is righteous or not, in this world. While the ungodly will suffer because of their ungodly lifestyle both in this life and in the life to come, except they repent, the righteous will only suffer in this life, though not without due benefits of suffering as enumerated in this article. God does not expect His child or servant to backslide but to emerge victorious. This formed the message of encouragement which Paul gave the young converts in Lystra, Leconium and Antioch and the message is relevant for contemporary Believers. **"Thlipsis"** does not negate

or contradict (Matt 11:28-30). God gives peace in **"thlipsis"**, the "Shalom" in trouble that brings joy in sorrow. The understanding of **"thlipsis"** is that it refines the Believer and prepares him for eternal life and rewards as it did for Jesus who was given the title "LORD", after He suffered up to the point of dying ignominiously, although vicariously, on the cross. Happily, God will not abandon the Believer in **"thlipsis",** albeit, the Believer is warned not to suffer for sins he committed. Believers need to encourage those who are undergoing **"thlipsis"** as the early Church brethren did. Though Christians may be persecuted for their faith, Matt 16:18 remains valid. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church.

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LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION, AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Language and communication, no doubt, play a credible role in the development process of any nation. This is because the development of any society is actualized through language. Language is, therefore, presented as an important means of human communication, a social tool used to properly inform, incite, influence, and educate the community and the larger society for development purposes. However, human communication is faced with a lot of problems and difficulties where misinterpretation and misunderstanding arise. Since no society can attain national development amidst mistrust, fear, tension, crises, violence, and insecurity, promoting the effective use of language and communication becomes a core strategy to entrench the peaceful conditions required to achieve sustainable development in any society. This study, therefore, interrogates the extent to which language and communication have impacted national development, as well as examining its challenges. For the theoretical framework, this study adopts the Functionalist linguistic theory. Relevant research questions were raised in line with the study's objectives, which were analyzed using a qualitative approach. The findings reveal, amongst others, that, lack of effective and sustainable language policy implementation in Nigeria, coupled with the inappropriate use of language as well as miscommunication, hinders effective communication, which in turn affects national development. Finally, the study recommends, amongst others, that there is a need to promote intercultural communication and understanding, and create policies that promote diversity and inclusion.

Keywords: Communication, culture, language, national, society, sustainable development.

Introduction

Learning to speak and understand a language is one of the most complex types of learning for humans. Despite the difficulties associated with learning how to speak and understand, humans must acquire the necessary linguistic skills for communication purposes. Language is recognised as old as human society, although the concept of national development is relatively new. Language and communication play a crucial role in society. Effective communication is crucial for any meaningful development as it connects and brings people together. Since national development has to do with improving the well-being of the population, language and communication, therefore, become a tool in achieving these developments in any society. Language and communication are an essential part of cultural

character that reflects a society's history, values, and traditions. These two media are used to communicate development ideas, devise policies, and implement them. Language and communication help to define and distinguish various cultures, which contribute to the rich tapestry of a country's heritage. Nwadike in Olaoye (2013) emphasises that language and communication are the key to the heart of the people; if we lose the key, we lose the people. If we treasure the key and keep it safe, it will unlock the door to wealth or affluence, thus bringing about national development. This development ranges from growth in education (i.e., intellectual growth), politics, economy, science, and technology. Individuals develop educationally, socially, economically, politically, and culturally through their interaction with government agencies, which disseminate ideas and policies through various media in the languages that the individual speaks. Language and communication are the main pillars of the educational process, through which man must plan, instruct, and evaluate programmes.

Languages Unlimited (2024) further maintained that language is a crucial component of national identity and development in multicultural societies, and it is a form of communication that conveys a community's views, sentiments, and ideals from generation to generation. Language Unlimited (2024) states further that language not only helps people communicate, but it also reflects their cultural legacy and historical background. It allows people to convey their views, customs, traditions, and way of life. As a result, understanding the importance of language in determining national identity and development is critical for comprehending the diversity of cultures and communities worldwide. Adedimeji (2023) holds that studies in language, literature, and communication play significant roles in achieving unity, peace, and progress for sustainable development in Nigeria. Therefore, it is indisputable that language and communication are effective instruments that can be used to raise awareness and effect change. Through effective and persuasive communication, people and organizations can motivate action and encourage sustainable practices. Public awareness campaigns about the significance of sustainable development and the effects of different activities on the environment and society can have a big impact. Effective communication is imperative in promoting a positive transition towards sustainable practices. The utilization of persuasive language that resonates with the public can catalyze inspiring individuals to embrace eco-friendly behaviors, such as reducing energy consumption, recycling, and supporting sustainable products and services. Since language use is essential to effective community engagement, emphasising clear and compelling communication motivates people to take action towards a more sustainable future. Building trust, comprehending local needs, and promoting participation in sustainable development programs all depend on using a language that speaks to various groups. Development initiatives can be made culturally aware and responsive to the communities they serve by means of active engagement and communication. To make a lasting impression, it is crucial to speak in a language that appeals to a variety of audiences (Latiff,2024).

Statement of the Problem

Language and communication are a social phenomenon that embraces all facets of life; it is, in fact, the lifeblood of any nation. Thus, any nation that wants to develop must work as one, plan together, and speak with one voice. For years, men have tried to live amicably with other humans as well, but because of the multitude of languages, meaningful cooperation is sometimes impossible, and when people are not living a cooperative life, it becomes difficult for them to come together and plan for meaningful development. Since no society can attain national development amidst a lack of trust, fear, tension, crises, violence, and insecurity, the effective promotion of peaceful language and communication becomes a

core strategy to entrench the peaceful conditions required to establish sustainable development in any society. This study, therefore, interrogates the extent to which language and communication have impacted national development, as well as assessing its challenges and proffering meaningful solutions.

Objectives of the Study
This study seeks to:
  i.   Examine the extent to which language and communication have impacted national development;
  ii. access the challenges of achieving national development through language and communication; and
  iii. proffer meaningful solutions aimed at enhancing national development through language and communication.

Research Questions
This study seeks to provide answers to the following questions:
  i.   To what extent has language and communication impacted national development?
  ii. What are the challenges of achieving national development through language and communication?
  iii. What are the solutions to the challenges of achieving national development through language and communication?

Theoretical Framework
This study adopts the functionalist linguistic theory by Michael Halliday (1978). This theory emphasises the function and purpose of language structures and elements in social and cultural contexts, with a focus on how language is used in everyday communication. It stands in contrast to methods like generative linguistics that are mainly concerned with the formal structures of language. Functionalists study how language is modified to accomplish these communicative goals because they see language as a tool for meaning-giving, emotional expression, and persuasion.

Language is far more than just a means of communication. It is a strategic lever for a country's progress, a reflection of its culture, and a vector of identity. Through sociolinguistic theories, sustainable development viewpoints, and language policies, the relationship between language, communication, and national development will be investigated in this study. As noted by Gao (2023), as people's living standards continue to rise, communication across countries becomes increasingly important. As an essential part of people's lives, movies and television works also play an indispensable role in the cultural exchange and communication of different countries, which not only can bring people a visual feast but also contribute to the dissemination of culture and development. In his book Development as Freedom, Amartya Sen (1999) emphasises the importance of human capacity in development. Since it facilitates access to public services, information, and education, using a language that everyone can understand is a prerequisite for enhancing these capacities.

Languages and cultures are always changing, and this occurs at all levels of structure. According to Osgood (1963), a language is a collection of linguistic habits that symbolise different features of a civilisation. No single speaker holds a whole inventory of the signs and structures of a living language; however, the society of speakers collectively possesses a language and can change its forms. However, people who want to utilise the language of another linguistic community must learn how to use the terms in a culturally acceptable way.

People who live apart from one another cannot retain a language since languages are primarily interactive, aimed towards the development of a people.

Conceptual Review

Language, Communication, and Development

Language is a social phenomenon because, first and foremost, it is not biologically inherited, but socially acquired. As Ohen & Oghiator (2024) clarify, a child readily learns the language of the environment in which he/she grow up and not necessarily the language of their biological parents, who may not be in the same environment with them and do not speak it to them. Crystal and Robins (2024) define language as a system of conventional, spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols that humans use to express themselves as members of a social group and participants in its culture. For Mu'in (2019), language is a system of communication that consists of words, sounds, and grammar utilised by a certain group or nation to express thoughts, ideas, experiences, and feelings. It expresses emotions, provides information, and connects people. Even though there could be many definitions of language as shown above, it is clear that the bottom line of these speculations is that language is a system of communication used by human beings. That means that humans cannot interact with one another without the use of language.

Communication has been regarded as being equivalent to culture, language, behaviour, personal effectiveness, etc., while communication is not only essential to man but to other animals as members of each group communicate among themselves. Some researchers consider communication to be an act of establishing contact between a sender and a receiver, with the help of a message, where the sender and receiver have some common experience that gives meaning to the message encoded by the sender and decoded by the receiver. Communication is a process in which two or more individuals or groups share information to reach a mutual understanding of the world in which they live. Overall, communication is a foundational element that supports various dimensions of national development. By facilitating information flow, fostering participation, and promoting social and economic cohesion, effective communication strategies can significantly enhance a nation's development trajectory. Quora (2024) examines the following key roles communication plays in national development:

Information Dissemination

Effective communication helps disseminate information about government policies, health initiatives, and educational programs, ensuring that citizens are informed and can participate in national development. It enables access to vital information, which is essential for decision-making at both individual and community levels.

a. Social Cohesion

Effective communication fosters understanding and appreciation for different cultures and ideas, hence promoting social cohesion and national unity. It mediates conflicts and promotes conversation between different groups, which is critical for sustaining peace and stability.

b. Crisis Management

In times of crisis (e.g., natural disasters, health emergencies), effective communication is critical for coordinating responses and disseminating vital information to the public. It aids in building resilience by keeping communities informed and prepared for potential challenges.

Technological Advancement

The rise of digital communication platforms has transformed how information is shared, making it easier to reach wider audiences and engage with different demographics. Communication technologies can drive innovation and improve access to services, contributing to overall national development.

Development, on the other hand, is of different types, which include: social, political, economic, educational, environmental, cultural, green development, and so on. The primary objectives of all types of development, therefore, are to promote authentic human development. The word, development, has a variety of interpretations; Oxford Dictionary (2007) views development as the action of making a larger or more advanced new product, idea, or phase, or an area with new building on it. Catherine Walsh in Anyaeneh (2024) agrees with this by stating that development has recently shifted from economic progress towards a more humanistic view focused on the individual and the quality of life, which is often referred to as "integral and sustainable human development". This emphasises the interdependence of economics with politics, culture and society, and the environment, as well as human needs, capacities, and potential. So development can also be described as: material progress or economic growth, or reformation of social institutions and infrastructures. For Uzoma (2016), development has to do with improving the well-being of the majority of the population, ensuring people's freedom, and increasing their economic security. The key to the achievement of all these is language.

Development can also be said to simply mean providing qualitative improvement in the lives of people or providing a greater quality of life for humans. Orisawayi (2005) thoroughly asserts that the concept of development can be perceived as an omnibus package of several multifaceted phases and defining characteristics. It could be seen or defined in terms of steady and systematic advances towards the following parameters or directions of growth: Intellectual and mental expansion for the person in society; A stable polity with a strong sense of commitment to nationalism/nationhood among the people; Economic development, progress and equitable distribution of national wealth; Scientific and technological progress and its application to the improvement of the quality of life of the people; Highly enlightened citizenry with 80% - 90% achieved level of functional literacy among the people and highly sharpened awareness of individual and collective fundamental rights, with freedoms of speech and association; Stable employment for all citizens in private and public sectors of the economy; A highly developed network of communication and transport system.

Thus, as Igiri (2017) emphasises the link between language, communication, and development, he opined that communication of national development is made possible only with the instrumentality of language. One expresses to a citizen the goals he or she hopes to attain in terms of national development.So, one uses language to advance to himself/herself the best possible reasons in support of these objectives, projecting in the best possible manner the advantages which he/she expect to draw from the national development objectives. Again, whenever progress is achieved towards national development goals, it is shared to its citizens.All these are mainly done by the use of language. Also, the process of criticizing and assessing national development is done with the instrumentality of language.

National Development: The Challenge of Effective Communication

National development is the development that belongs to a nation. According to Obasi in Igiri (2017), it refers to the "progressive transformation of the economic, social and political structures of a society from relatively less complex, less efficient and less desirable forms to relatively more complex, more efficient and more desirable forms". Human communication, however, is faced with a lot of problems and difficulties. Misinterpretation and misunderstanding arise more often than not. This is because when individuals try to communicate, something always appears to come in the way of communication, and the message is not received in the intended manner. Even when there is understanding, it is often difficult to persuade individuals to believe or behave in the way that one desires, and this is primarily determined by the goal of the communication. For communication to be effective, Anyaeneh (2024) argues that a message must be received (heard or read), understood, accepted, and acted upon (change behaviour or attitude). If this does not occur, communication has failed, and those involved in a communication event become dissatisfied and resentful. Regardless of the activity or functions, the participants in a communication event communicate with and through other participants. As a result, individuals' communication abilities influence the effectiveness of any communication event. Therefore, it appears acceptable to say that one of the most limiting factors to the efficiency of any communication event is a lack of effective communication, and that good communication skills are critical to one's success as a participant in a communication event. To communicate effectively, both parties must use a language that they both understand, taking into account the communicants' linguistic proficiency in the language, the amount of vocabulary they share, and their culture. Hence, the major constraint to good health development, according to Akase (2012), in any society is ignorance engendered by a lack of adequate information and knowledge on prevention and cure. Take HIV/AIDS and Coronavirus diseases for instance, what people need more is speaking to them on the preventive measures in the language they understand. In other words, prompt dissemination of accurate information through language on the causes of the disease, elementary precautions, how and where to go or seek help when the need arises, as well as information on the existing facilities, should be made known to them and on time too. It is clear that without the language, the health institution will not function well, and this will be an obstacle to development.

Ngwu and Adimelechi (2021) identified factors that mar effective language use for society's development:

Poor communication

Poor communication is a lack of using proper language while speaking. Poor communication mars understanding and development. Communication is said to be effective when there is understanding between the sender and the receiver. Good communication is crucial in every society. When an intended goal is not made clear through communication, confusion sets in. There is no effective communication if there is no effective feedback. When the message is wrongly conceived, the reaction will be negative. Language is a medium of communication, and word usage plays an important role in communication. Be objective and select words while addressing the public, especially in a multilingual society, to avoid misunderstanding of the intended aims and objectives.

Ignorance and lack of awareness

Ignorance, they say, is a disease. A misinformed society is a deformed society. These two factors play dangerous roles in society. Wars, racism, terror, tribalism, and the like are caused by sheer ignorance and a lack of awareness. It is ignorance that makes people forget

that nobody lives forever, no matter your tribe, race, religion, rank, position, etc. Ignorance results from a conscious effort to do the wrong thing (Robert, 2011). If we are mindful of the weight of our utterances and their meanings in a given situation, some wars will be wedged. When you believe more in rumour than the truth, you live in ignorance. Those who cause disunity with the use of negative words operate in ignorance; hence, an adage says, "A stone thrown in the middle of the market may either fall on the head of your kin's men or on the head of your mother's kin's men". This means that when unrest erupts through the careless use of language, you are either affected directly or indirectly. Again, when there is a lack of awareness of the impending danger of wrong use of languages/hate speech, the reverse becomes the case.

Situating Language and Communication in the Process of National Development

Language and communication undoubtedly play a role in the development process of any nation; this is because the development of any society is actualized through language. For instance, during the global COVID-19 pandemic, language and communication played a prominent role in sensitizing citizens on preventive measures. Further, Egbe and Bassey (2002) have the same view that language serves as a people's mark of identity, pride and oneness and that a people's language helps to preserve their cultural heritage and fosters unity among the diverse peoples of the nation which ushers in development, which cannot be achieved without unity. Language and communication have potential that can be tapped and maximized for development through adequate and proper use. Akase (2012) identified the following societal areas where language and communication can play developmental roles:

Language and Communication Enhance Economic Development
Every activity that is of economic importance is carried out by using language. In all human communities, buying and selling are done essentially through the use of language. At the level of production, all the human beings who are involved carry out their various roles or duties by using language. The use of language also makes the distribution of goods and services possible. In trading, the producer communicates with buyers of his goods with the use of language. International trade involves the use of language to communicate either in oral or written form. There is no way a country can carry out economic transactions with another without using both spoken and written language. If language is not in existence, trading among nations of the world would not be possible, and this would hinder development.

Technological development is promoted through language and communication
Technological inventions are recorded on paper with language. Scientists who carry out technological experiments communicate orally or in written form among themselves and to the general public with the use of one language or the other. These technological discoveries were made possible through language has enhanced development in our human society. Language is the basic tool for education, and education is the fundamental tool for development. Without education, there can be no development. Scientific discoveries that have enhanced development were made possible by education. Education and training are conducted in all societies with the use of language.

Language and communication enhance the health system in society
Health professionals are trained in the use of language, and health professionals like doctors, nurses, etc., communicate with patients with the use of language. If a person is sick, he would make it known to people by speaking in a language they all understand. It is when the sick

person has expressed the magnitude of the illness that his helpers would know the decision to take to help him.

Language and communication enhance information dissemination

In all human societies, information dissemination is dependent on language. In fact, without language, there cannot be efficient information. Generally, information is relayed to the general public mainly with the use of language. The same thing is applied to the print and electronic media, where language is used as a means of information dissemination. Since information is essential for the survival and development of societies, language, which is the main means of information dissemination, is even more important. This is because without the language, there cannot be effective information and communication relay that will sustain development.

Methodology

The three common approaches to conducting research, according to Williams (2007) are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The researcher anticipates the type of data needed to respond to the research questions. For instance, numerical, textural, or both numerical and textural data could be needed. Based on this assessment, the researcher selects one of the three aforementioned approaches to conduct his research. Given the above, this study adopts the qualitative approach as its method. What constitutes qualitative research according to Leedy and Ormrod (2001) involves its purposeful use for describing, explaining, and interpreting collected secondary data. Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA), according to Nigatu (2009), is the range of processes and procedures whereby we move from the qualitative data that have been collected into some form of explanation, understanding, or interpretation of the people and situations we are investigating. The study therefore relied on the use of libraries, newspapers, the internet, journals, and publications, etc. for its secondary sources. Thus, the outcome of qualitative social research is an enhanced 'interpretative understanding' of the social world (Weerahandi, 2003).

Discussion and Analysis

Language and Communication and Their Impact on National Development

There is an inseparable inter-connectivity between development and language communication as they play complementary roles to bring about meaningful development in any society. Language has a significant impact on national development, identity, and unity. A shared language can unite people and create a sense of belonging and community development. UNICEF (2015) buttresses this fact that language communication lies at the very heart of sustainable development. In some countries, the government has achieved the promotion of a specific language through policies such as language education, media, and official language laws, which have created a sense of national identity, unity, and pride among citizens who communicate in that language. Anaeto and Solo-Anaeto (2010) align with this position, that language communication helps in understanding the needs and realities of the people and mobilizes them towards development goals. Governments and societies must carefully consider language policies and practices to ensure that they promote inclusivity and diversity, rather than division and exclusion. Emenanjo, in Olaoye (2013), further buttresses that Nigerian languages have a lot to contribute to the evolution and success of democratic culture towards sustainable development. Nigerian languages can become veritable instruments for the full empowerment of Nigerian youths through a national language and literacy policy that

recognises egalitarian multilingualism and the full empowerment of Nigerian languages as vehicles of communication through literacy, causing them to fully appreciate democracy, its workings, its values, and, indeed, its raison d'etre as a way of life.

Eyisi in Mbah and Ayegba (2014) also agree that language communication has helped in the development of intelligence and thought patterns, which enable individuals to express their creative potentials, which further contribute to the development of many societies. In the area of physical and moral instruction, language is vital because it is the means through which effective communication or interaction is achieved. Language communication is an important variable in developmental processes. The indigenous language(s) of a specific civilisation or nation are critical in any developmental problems that society faces. Olaoye (2013) equally confirmed that, as the world is fast becoming a global village through mass communication and information technology. The local languages are now being used in the teaching of science and technology, including computer science, thus contributing to advancement in science, health, technology, and national development. The Indigenous language keyboard has been designed to facilitate language learning. The keyboard has such linguistic facilities as tone markers, diacritics, special orthographies, graphic and graph-logical cues. All these are aids to faster learning of computer appreciation. The youths get empowered faster through these linguistic facilities.

Challenges of Achieving National Development Through Language and Communication

With the multilingual nature of Nigeria, there is every need for an adequate and effective national language policy that puts all the ethnic groups and regions of the country into consideration. The sense of collective struggle and participation can only be attained linguistically if the attentions of all the ethnic groups in Nigeria are drawn, and their interests are represented in a well-reviewed language policy. Akase et al (2018) argue in line with this study that the use of indigenous language is central to the holistic development of any nation. It is critical to include linguistic aspects in order to ensure full participation of all citizens in governance. To ensure full and equal participation of all citizens in Nigerian governance and development, there is a need for understanding of government policies in local indigenous languages, so that locals can express themselves in their indigenous languages, contributing their fair share to the country's development. Development in social, agricultural, technological, political, economic, and scientific fields depends on the use of indigenous languages in administration.It is not just enough to formulate policies and programmes in the English language at the federal level or the top level of government, but it is of more importance to be able to understand such policies and programmes at the grassroots level for better implementation, utilization, and cooperation at this level through indigenous languages.

In line with this study, Akase et al (2018) further identified frustration on the part of the people and language conflict as issues in language communication that hinder development governance in Nigeria. He maintained that many people in the country are so frustrated as a result of the language used in governance, particularly those in the rural areas. They expect that the policies, programmes, and decisions of the government should be communicated to them in a language that they would understand and contribute to their implementation. Further, when an appropriate language is not used in governance, we usually experience language conflict, which contributes to hate speech. The consequence is that there will be disunity in the governance of the nation. This is because people from different ethnic groups will see themselves as united people, but they are in the country as different people, with different interests and identities. The result is that one group is always seen fighting the others, and peace

eludes the country, and disunity thrives. Agbedo (2007) and Uguru (2008) also identified a lack of effective and sustainable language planning and policy in Nigeria as a bane to national development. They argue that the multilingual situation of Nigeria has, over the years, generated linguistic rivalry; there is a struggle for whose language will be chosen as the official or national language of the country. The trilingual language policy, which constitutionally recognizes Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba as national languages, cannot work in a multilingual nation like Nigeria.

Conclusion and recommendations

According to the findings of this study, language is the most common means of sharing information for national growth. Language is more than just a means of communication; it also represents national pride, identity, and growth. Language is used to make government policies and agendas plain; without language, there is no communication, and no communication means no growth. As a result, for any significant development to occur and be sustained, language and effective communication must become the only mediums via which individuals of a community or nation may be persuaded to participate in initiatives that will yield beneficial results.

The study therefore revealed and contributed to knowledge that:

1. Language and communication have contributed to the evolution and success of democratic culture towards sustainable development among Nigerian youths; thereby enhancing the development of intelligence and thought patterns, which enable individuals to express their creative potentials, which further contribute to the development of many societies.

2. Lack of effective and sustainable language planning and policy implementation in Nigeria, as well as frustration on the part of the people and language conflict, are issues and challenges in language communication that hinder sustainable national development in governance in Nigeria.

The study, therefore, recommends the following as solutions to strengthen language communication in Nigeria towards sustainable development:

a. There is a need to celebrate cultural festivals and events, as well as promote intercultural communication and understanding, and create policies that promote diversity and inclusion.

b. To sustain national and cultural heritage, languages should be communicated in the national anthem, pledge, currency, or national flag.

c. There is a need to draft a comprehensive language and communication curriculum framework aimed at enhancing reforms and effective implementation for national development.

d. Languages and culture should be encouraged at the primary level of studies as a way to maintain their custodians' stature of indigenous culture, wealth of wisdom and experience, as well as history of the people, which is tantamount to development.

e. There is a need to embrace linguistic diversity, to create a stronger and more inclusive national cohesion that celebrates and respects the cultures and traditions of all members of society

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EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT (TFD) AS A TOOL FOR COMMUNICATING HAND WASHING PRACTICE AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
In the present day campaign for improved health services, particularly as it relates to respiratory ailments, frequent hand washing practice, with soap, under running water, has been identified as an acceptable therapeutic health behaviour. This seemingly novel health practice has not been fully adopted by the people, hence

the need for this study. Aimed at finding out if TfD can sufficiently create awareness about the health intervention of hand washing practice, and the correlation between TfD and influencing positive attitudes towards hand washing. The study was anchored on the Diffusion of Innovation theory and the Theory of Reasoned Action while the research design adopted for the study was survey approach. The population of the study was 112,087 pupils in Anambra State. A sample size of 384 pupils was drawn for the study. The pupils were exposed to theatrical display on hand washing with soap in their school arenas. Thereafter, questionnaire was used as a research instrument to gather the views of the respondents on hand washing and TfD. Data obtained from the study were presented in simple frequency distribution tables, and subsequently analysed. Results revealed that TfD was effective in making the pupils to adopt hand washing practice. The study recommended that government and NGOs should scale up the use of TfD as a health campaign strategy.

Key Words: Communicating, Development, Hand washing, Practice, Theatre

Introduction

Until the year, 2020, during the Corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic, not much was heard in Nigeria about Hand washing With Soap (HWWS), under running water, as a therapeutic health behaviour. Ezeaka, Ezeoke, and Nwodu (2021) corroborate the novelty of HWWS as a health behaviour in Nigeria, and state that awareness campaign for it was heightened by COVID-19. According to Ezeaka, et al (2021), in the absence of not any known drugs for treatment of COVID-19, mitigating the spread of the disease was ensured through HWWS and social distancing. The public health campaigns that followed, afterwards, created a general wide knowledge about the practice.

The Centre for Disease Control- CDC (2020) informs that hand washing is one of the easiest and simplest practices to personal hygiene, yet it is a neglected practice in Nigeria, adding that it is a shared knowledge that most people do not consider hand washing as an important aspect of their healthy living, and for that, do not pay much attention to it. Washing one's hands, a form of hygiene, is one of the most effective way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Hands washing helps to physically remove germs by friction, and to "rinse them down the drain." Adults and children are supposed to wash their hands for the following reasons:

- When hands are visibly dirty
- Before you eat
- Before you prepare food items
- After touching raw meat like chicken or beef.
- After contact with another person's fluid, like blood, urine or vomit
- After changing infant or adult nappies
- After blowing your noise or sneezing.
- After touching animals or pets
- After going to the toilet
- For routine cleaning of hands, anytime they are visibly dirty
- If you have contact with contaminated objects in the environment e.g. dirty tissues/nappies, trash bins.
- Before and after you care for, or have contact with someone who is very sick, very old or very young.

John Oxford (2020) posits that hand washing is the best way to avoid flu and other viruses postulating that, up to half of all men and a quarter of women fail to wash their hands after they have been to the toilet; we have between two (2) and Ten (10) million bacteria between fingertip and elbow; the number of germs on your fingertips doubles after you use the toilet, and germs can stay alive on hands for up to three hours.

Studies have showed that hand washing with soap (HWWS) is one of the most effective means of preventing diarrhea disease, along with stool disposal and safe and adequate household water treatment. Evidence indicates that improved hand washing can have major impact on public health in any country, and can significantly reduce two leading causes of childhood mortality, diarrhea disease and acute respiratory infection. World Health Organization WHO (2020) reports that there are three interventions that attempt to address the transmission of diarrheal pathogens, they are: water, sanitation, and hand washing; WHO points out that, while each has its merits, no one approach is as effective as when paired with the other two.

Review of available literature on HWWS initiatives in schools globally indicates that for HWWS programmes to succeed, several factors have to be considered, these include a policy environment that supports services and activities being put

in place; infrastructure to ensure both hardware and software; an approach that ensures participation of stakeholders; coordination and management of resources that are available at school, community and national levels etc.

This study, therefore, built on existing programmes, and proposed to use theatre as one of the approaches for promoting sustainable hand washing behaviour. The theatre approach emphasised importance of children, their involvement and engagement in their affairs and an opportunity to make critical decisions on matter concerning them. Theatre was chosen for the experimental intervention in this project because it has been used to inform and conscientise people through human history in other countries such as India (Ghosh & Benerjee 2016), conservation, gender violence/abuse, children's rights, etc. Guanah (2018) sees drama as "a useful tool in national discourse and social commentary because it is a very formidable force and a transformer of society" (p. 385), and because it is the textual representation of theatre.

Frequent hand washing is one of the single most important things we can do to help to reduce the spread of infections and prevent ill health. For example, good hand hygiene in children will help prevent the spread of common communicable infections such as colds, and tummy bugs; getting this message out to children will also help to influence their hand washing practices at home as well as at school, and everywhere they find themselves, and even at play grounds and at sports.

Nkrumah (2023), opines that, as a result, theatre has developed through time to become a vehicle for development communication. According to Guanah and Ibbi (2024), drama, which is an arm of the theatre is one of the ways through which communication takes place. They emphasise that drama and mass media use strategies to grab and maintain audience attention; they both make use of dramatic elements such as conflict, tension, and resolution. These similarities impact on audience perception and interpretation. Theatre is used in what is known as Theatre for Development (TfD) to aid in the process of altering outdated behaviours, attitudes, beliefs, and practices. It enables everyone to participate (participate) in an activity (solve an issue) that affects them (development) (Illah, 2019).

Statement of Research Problem

Every public health intervention programme requires that the target beneficiaries, to not only have full knowledge about the intervention, but to buy into it for successful implementation. This is because health promotion programmes are successful to the extent that the expected therapeutic behaviours are elicited from the target beneficiaries. Guanah (2022) accentuates that the use of communication medium such as print media in carrying out health-awareness campaigns, particularly as it pertains to conveying health hazards and solutions to individuals and groups of people, is one of the roles played by health communication.

It, therefore, becomes imperative that effective health literacy, health promotion and campaign must involve sufficient and adequate communication. The efficacy of communication strategy (or mixed strategies) to be adopted depends of its/their ability to elicit favourable attitudes and behaviours. This explains the reason why, in contemporary global society, engagement communication platforms are preferably used for public health campaigns. Thus, for the hand washing practice, even though traditional media have tried to address the issue of hand washing, it has failed to reach the hearts of majority of children and the grassroots, as they are cut-off from media like the televisions, billboards, Internet and radio advertisements due to underdevelopment.

Most importantly, majority of individuals, especially children of all classes in the society, have not imbibed the habit of hand washing; therefore this important knowledge is at an unfortunate low among the populace. Using theatre as a medium to communicate this practice (hand washing) will cut-across all parts of the society, and can reach the grassroots children because it is participatory, and is going to reach out to the primary school pupils so that they can participate. According to Aristotle, "tell me, I will know, show me, I will not forget, show me, I will remember, involve me I will understand."

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this research was to use theatre as a tool and medium to communicate hand washing to primary school pupils, and to see how effective the theatre which encompasses drama, storytelling, songs and the role drama can

be used to achieve this habit among the children. Specifically, other objectives of this study were:

1. To find out if TfD helps children to understand hand washing as a public health campaign,
2. To ascertain if TfD was capable of inculcating the habit of hand washing with Soap in the pupils, and
3. To find out if the pupils perceive TfD as an effective communication strategy for hand washing with soap.

Theoretical Framework

The Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOI) is the theoretical underpinning for the study. Everet M. Rogers is the principal chronicler of the Diffusion of Innovation theory (McQuail & Deuze, 2020), and the theory relates to the many attempts to harness mass media to campaigns for technical advance or for health and educational purposes (World Bank Group, 2018). DOI originated in communication to explain how, over time, an idea, a concept, a product, and a thought gains force and spreads (diffuses) through a target population/audience, or social system. The outcome of this process is that the target audience/population, as part of a social system, adopts a new idea, behaviour, or product.

According to Greehaulgh, Robert, Macfariance, Bate, and Kyriakidax (2018), adoption in this context, means that the target population does something differently from what it has previously (that is, acquires and performs a new behaviour or attitude). The World Bank Group (2018) however remarks that the key to adoption is that the adopter must perceive the idea, concept, behaviour attitudes, or a product as new or innovative.

In their model of information diffusion, Rogers (1962), and Rogers and Shoemaker (1973) (as cited in West & Turner, 2022), envisaged four stages: information, persuasion, decision or adoption, and confirmation (Greenhaudgh *et al,* 2018). This implies that the stages by which a person adopts an innovation, and whereby diffusion is accomplished, include awareness of the need for innovation (information and persuasion), decision to adopt (or reject) the innovation, initial use of the innovation to test it, and continued use of the innovation.

Rogers (as cited in Littlejohn & Foss, 2018), further explains that the adoption of a new idea, behaviour or product does not happen simultaneously, but rather passes through certain categories of the target audience (Li, 2020). Rogers (1962) identified five adopter categories as: innovators, early adopter, early majority, late majority and the laggards.

In public health, diffusion of innovation theory is used to accelerate the adoption of important public health programmes that typically aim to change the behaviour of a social system. For example the roll back malaria programme was an intervention which is promoted to the people with the goal of adoption of the attitude of regularly sleeping under the mosquito insecticide treated nets (ITNs). This is also the case with the Zip-up programme, which aimed at discouraging youths from sexual promiscuity and promoting protected sex through the use of condoms.

The theory is suitable for this study because social changes involve adoption of positive developments. The relevance of the theory to the study refers to how hand washing messages seek to communicate information that will promote hand washing, especially at critical times among primary school pupils in the study areas. The change may be immediate or long term behaviour change. Nwosu (2016) asserts that intensive, well-organised, and implemented advocacy campaigns are needed for the expected results to be achieved. The flow of advocacy impacts can range from information or awareness creation, knowledge change, opinion change, attitudinal change, to behaviour, actions or practice adoption or amendment.

Conceptual Discussion

Hand Washing and Hand Hygiene

Hand Hygiene: Many strategies have been designed and evaluated to address the problem of low hand hygiene (HH) compliance with most of these strategies conflicting as most effective but how they really work are still unclear. Healthcare associated infections account for approximately 80,000 deaths per year in the United States. A worldwide systematic review found that the incidence of health care- associated infection ranged from 1.7 to 23.6 per 100 patients, hospital costs directly related to health care associated infections ranged from $28.4 to $33.8

billion in 2007 U.S dollars. Yet these infections are frequently preventable through hand hygiene.

Substantial epidemiologic evidence supports that hand hygiene reduces the transmission of healthcare-associated pathogens and the incidence of healthcare-associated infections. The link between hand hygiene and improvements in healthcare-associated infections is hard to prove definitively in modern day health care. However, the importance of hand hygiene is universally acknowledged by organizations such as the Joint Commission, World Health Organization (WHO) and Center for Diseases Control (CDC), which recommend or require hand hygiene practices and interventions to improve hand hygiene compliance in order to reduce health care- acquired infections. This review focused on interventions to improve compliance with hand hygiene rather than on the efficacy of hand hygiene for reducing heath care- associated infections. Compliance with hand hygiene practices among health care workers has historically been very low, averaging 39 percent.

The review on hand hygiene compliance and intervention aimed improving it that was conducted for the original CDC (2001) "making health care safer" report found that poor compliance has been documented in studies across hospital unit types and in various other settings workers tends to underestimate the importance of compliance and often over estimate their compliance with hand hygiene procedure, the report concluded that future research studies needed to identify reasons for poor compliance and design sustainable intervention that target these factors. Hand hygiene is a general term for removing microorganisms with a disinfecting agent such as alcohol or soap and water. Hand hygiene should be conducted by health care workers before seeing patients majorly after contact with bodily fluids, before invasive procedures and after removing glove.

Hand washing with soap at key events was rare at baseline in both the intervention and control groups (1% to 2% at 6 weeks follow-up, hand washing with soap at key events was more common in the intervention group than in the control group. This study shows that substantial increases in hand washing with soap can be achieved using a scalable intervention based on emotional drivers. Improved hand hygiene has the potential to reduce morbidity and mortality from infections spread by oral routes and person to person contact. Infections preventable by

improved hand hygiene include gastrointestinal infections and respiratory infections and trachoma, fatal neo natal infections, and possibly norm infections. Diarrhea and respiratory infections remain the two most important causes of child death globally. Improved hand hygiene can also improve the child development and school attendance.

Hand washing is one of the most important practices to personal hygiene that helps reduce germs and keep us healthy, especially children because of their playful and exploring life-style because they are easily exposed to dirt. Even though traditional mediums has tried to address the issue of hand washing, it has failed to reach the grassroots as they are cut-off from mediums like the Television, Radio, Bill-boards, Magazines, Newspapers and cinemas, due to science and technological growth that brought social, economic and geographical change. In the society, this also lead to change in mode and medium of communication, this also comes with its own limitations such as network barriers that make it difficult and inaccessible to the grassroots people as a result of this barriers and limitations, this research has focused on how theatre can be used as a tool for communication and to bridge a gap or poor hygiene practice. This gap between human beings in their various social environment (the urban, cities and villages) such as the urban people and grassroots people on important issues of health, economic, social behaviours, politics and environment.

Theatre is a folk art which, like any such art, must originate in the community. It can best be developed and communicated to the audience by people who 'speak the same language' with the audience, people who, as Stuart Hall points out, must share sets of concepts, images and ideas which enable them to think and feel, and thus interpret phenomena, in roughly similar ways. This paper serves to highlight the importance of community theatre with a view to encouraging its development and establishment of such community-based programmes in Africa as a sustainable machinery for addressing the myriad and ever increasing environmental, socio-economic and political problems confronting the continent. It also illuminates some potential implementation constraints and offers ways of overcoming them.

Theatre for Development (TfD)

Scholars like Guanah and Okowa-Nwaebi (2023) affirm that drama belongs to the traditional genre of the mass media, and that it can be used to address various issues because it is capable of arresting the attention of varied audiences, no matter their religious or ethnic differences. They opine that "theatre (drama), like other forms of the traditional media, has its foundation in the culture of the primeval society, for it is the origin of all arts that arose from the life of the community" (p. 206).

The exceptionally eclectic and complex nature of Theatre for Development makes it challenging, if not problematic to define. A glut of nomenclatures, pointers, tags, even brands have been allotted to the endeavour by diverse reviewers, researchers, intellectuals, critics and even theatre practitioners. These nomenclatures include Theatre for Integrated Development, Community Theatre, Popular Theatre, Participatory Educational Theatre, Theatre in Education, Alternative Theatre, Campaign Theatre, Resistance Theatre, Revolutionary Theatre, Protest Theatre, Liberation Theatre, Oppositional Theatre, etc. Many efforts have grappled and tussled seriously with this subject. The phenomenon is generally a popular theatre form, aimed at conscientising and sensitising the society through research, performance and dialogue for positive action.

Despite the fact that the classification seems to fluctuate, the fundamental nature of all these variations remain the same, which is looking ahead to the idea of theatre whose focus and ideological position is strictly tied to the services it provides, which is social transformation, change, restructuring and above all, overhauling of the society. Theatre-for-Development is conceived as transcendence over the less interactive styles of popular theatre. Byam (2023) is of the view that the area of the increased participation of the target audience in the theatrical process is key and fundamental. As a result, she proposes that "theatre for development must aspire to give confidence to the spectators in an examination of the social environment using dialogue." Mda (2021), argues that Theatre-for-Development can be described as "modes of theatre whose objective is to disseminate messages, or to conscientise communities about their objective and social-political situation." Mlama (2022) sees the concept as Popular Theatre, and expresses its purposes swiftly thus:

> It aims to make the people not only aware of but also active participants in the development process by expressing their viewpoints and acting to better their conditions. Popular theatre is intended to empower the common man with a critical consciousness crucial to the struggle against the forces responsible for his poverty (p. 67)

It has become quite realistic that even the most untailored commitment with these definitions provided here divulges their frequent denominators as intensification and interactive audience participation and the expected resultant empowerment of those involved in the programme, which is the target audience. In this particular study, the researcher shall adopt the expression: Theatre-for-Development (TfD) as the operational concept. This is so because the term replicates its description as theatre in the service of community. Aesthetic performances, expressions and forms which include pantomimic dramatisation of poetry, dances, narratives and plays are all slackly considered as theatre in this research effort; agreed that in nearly all Theatre for Development endeavours, the boundaries between the different performance genres are not only liquid but also tremendously shallow.

Yet, different cultures and traditions react differently to artistic forms of transmitting messages. Very truly, Theatre for Development frequently aspires to be the form that will communicate the aesthetics and worldview of the community in the most efficient and effective manner. No wonder TfD provokes people to be constantly aware of the forces which determine their living conditions and those active participants in the development process, in this manner, increasingly expanding their point of views, thereby developing their critical thinking, their perceptions and actions to improve their living conditions.

Theatre generally is that genre that gives room for participation and not just watching and hearing audience in a building or an open space, using this theatre as a tool to communicate and educate and not just to entertain is another exciting phase of the theatre among it numerous facets and aspects. It is very interesting to know that theatre can serve as a tool for communicating important life issues in our society. We should also understand that theatre is a mirror unto the society,

because plays, performances, dances, storytelling, folklores are part of the human activities in the society.

The Significance of Community Theatre

Community theatre an effective way of communicating sensitive issues without the attending antagonism that would have normally occurred in direct realistic situations, a point earlier observed (Eyoh, 2010). Despite the fact that some of the messages conveyed by my plays were a direct criticism of local activities and customs that were incompatible with development and conservation goals, the audiences participated actively and positively during the question-and-answer session that followed each theatre performance, as opposed to several cases of hostility that had often greeted community meetings.

Theatre presents community members with situations that engage them not only intellectually and aesthetically but also emotionally (Bentley, 2010). This type of emotion is best described as "empathy" which Augusto Boal in his *Theatre of the Oppressed* defines as the emotional relationship established between the character and the spectator, which makes the latter feel the impact of what has happened, is happening, or may happen, to the former. He opines that on a number of occasions during his theatre programme at Korup and Banyang-Mbo, some members of the audience were so emotionally involved that they climbed on stage or shouted/cried out passionately in reaction to the renditions or actions on stage.

Theatre is also a powerful way of putting across messages with the aim of stimulating community action to address identified problems and issues. The theatre activities helped to generate positive conservation actions in the targeted communities, with two traditional councils mobilising the male youth to evict foreign hunters from their forest territories. Similarly, five traditional councils passed injunctions against the use of pesticides and dynamite to kill fish, and two voluntarily assisted law enforcement officers in the arrest of culprits. It was also noted that most farmers who watched the theatre performances voluntarily abandoned their traditional method of burning trees on farms indiscriminately and took precautions not to clear farms too close to rivers. Voluntary community actions of this nature were hardly observed when only community meetings were conducted in the villages.

Empirical Review

Azuogu, Ilo, Nwimo, Azubogu and Owunaka (2016) did a study on "the extent of hand washing practice among Secondary School Students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria." The study noted the high incidence of infectious diseases like diarrheal among secondary schools in Nigeria; the, study explained how contaminated hands promote the transmission of infections, especially with people living in close like school. The study indicated that washing the hands with running water and soap prevents the spread of diseases. The study used a cross-sectional survey to determine the extent the secondary school students in the study area (Ebonyi State) practice hand washing exercise with a sample of 420 students from both junior and senior classes from government schools in the rural and urban area of the state; the study used a 3- point scaled while the instrument of data collection was 18 items self-structured questionnaire.

Also a Cronbach Alpha that obtained the reliability of 0.862 while T-test statistic was used for the hypotheses with 0.05 alpha level. The study found the extent of hand washing to be low among secondary school students in Ebonyi. The study revealed that findings of the study have implications towards hand washing campaign in the country and recommended the use of mass media to promote the campaign and improvement of hygiene education and its curriculum, that all the concerned agencies from the government take appropriate policies that will enhance good hygiene; in terms of education in schools, mainly the primary as well as the secondary schools in the area of creating a conducive environment for hand washing practice to improve through the provision of hand washing facilities in all the schools.

Vivas, Gelaye, Aboset, Kumie, Berhane and William (2015) conducted a study on the "Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices KAP; of Hygiene among school children in Angola, Ethiopia," The study noted that poor hygiene practices and insufficient sanitary conditions play significant parts in the increased problem of infectious diseases, the study examined the knowledge, attitude and practice of hygiene; among rural school children in Ethiopia with a sample size of 669 students carried out in a government-owned institution from the study population made up of all Angolan primary school children from grades 1-6. The research design used was survey while the questionnaire provided both demographic

questions and frequencies to which pupils maintained the personal hygiene; and issues relating to hand washing during the day, especially at critical moments. Knowledge about sanitation, proper hygiene; and presence of parasite were highlighted. The findings show that 52 per center of the pupils knew about basic hygiene; the frequency of hand washing with soap was at 36.2 percent.

Methodology

The researchers worked with pupils of Staff School, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (for Anambra Central Senatorial Zone), All Saints Primary School, Onitsha (for North Senatorial Zone), and Core Maria Primary School, Nnewi (for South Senatorial Zone) where they were involved in games and exercises, role play, storytelling, songs and drama with emphasis on hand washing and its importance to them and their health.

Having identified the schools to work with, the researchers met the various relevant authorities of the schools with an introductory letter to seek for permission to work with primary five (5) and six (6) pupils of the school. After series of meetings with the school authority, the request was granted. As a result of the busy schedules of the schools, such as the teaching hours, and time table of the concerned classes, the two days and time selected for the researchers, fell during the break periods.

The researchers, in collaboration with the Health Educators/Social Mobilization Officers (SMOs) from Primary Health Care Development Agency, and National Orientation Agency, used some of the pupils to expose though the other pupils' theatrical displays on hand washing with soap. After exposing the pupils to theatrical display on hand washing with soap, their observations were sought on the experiences gained. The researchers made a total of 384 copies of the questionnaire and shared them according to the population strength of each schools under study

The area of the study is Anambra State, Nigeria. The area is located in the South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria; and is bounded in the East by Enugu in the south west by Delta and Edo State; in the North by Enugu and Kogi states; and in the South by Imo and Abia States. The area has a total Landmass of 4,844km^2

(Okunna 2013) and popularly known with two commercial and industrial cities (Onitsha and Nnewi) and one administrative capital city (Awka).

The population of the study was one hundred and twenty-one thousand, and eighty-seven (121,087) primary 5-6 pupils in primary schools from the three senatorial districts of Anambra State. In determining the sample size, the Krejcie and Morgan table was used to determine the sample size. The population of the study which was 121,087 was known. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) (as cited in Nwodu, 2017), table for sample size determination was applied to obtain the sample size of 384.

The cluster sampling strategy was used for the purpose of this study. The cluster sampling strategy is suitable for this study because the population of the study is distributed in cluster and pockets of settlements. The population is geographically distributed, as well. The researchers made use of random sampling to select the sample subjects from each cluster/area.

The research instrument for this study was the Likert Scale questionnaire. The questionnaire had two sections – section A and section B. while section A bore the biographic data of the respondents, section B bore the thematic questions. The thematic questions had five (5) rating scales – Strongly Agree (SA), Agee (A), Undecided (UN), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D). Out of the 384 copies of the questionnaire administered on the respondents, only 335 (87.24%) copies were returned and found usable.

Data Presentation and analysis

Table 1: Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	107	32
Female	228	68
Total	335	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 1 shows that there were more females than male in the sample size.

Table 2: Respondents' Age Distribution

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
8-9	14	4
10-11	282	84
12 and above	39	12
Total	**335**	**100**

Source: Field Survey 2024

The data in Table 2 indicated that the dominant age range was between 10-11, representing 84% of the respondents, the age range of 12 and above represented 39% while between 8-9 age range represented 14%.

Table 3: Mean Distribution of Questionnaire on Knowledge/Awareness Response

SN	Do you know about hand washing messages?	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total	Mean
1	I know little about hand washing messages	78 (390)	60 (240)	62 (186)	58 (116)	77 (77)	335 (1009)	3.0
2	I only hear of the messages occasionally	122 (610)	74 (296)	59 (177)	50 (100)	30 (30)	335 (1213)	4.0
3	It is a message that encourages the proper washing of hands with soap and water	145 (725)	60 (240)	47 (141)	39 (78)	44 (44)	335 (1228)	4.0
4	It is a message for disease prevention	44 (220)	37 (148)	152 (456)	64 (128)	38 (3)	335 (990)	3.0
4	It is a message for disease prevention	44 (220)	37 (148)	152 (456)	64 (128)	38 (3)	335 (990)	3.0
5	I do not know anything about the message	40 (200)	42 (168)	144 (432)	50 (100)	59 (59)	335 (959)	2.86

Figures in brackets are Alternative Response Scale Values
Source: Field Survey 2024

The table above shows the mean distribution table of the responses to the five items in the questionnaire on knowledge/awareness of hand washing messages among the respondents. The mean score associated with item one on research question one which has to do with knowledge response produces a mean score of 3 showing that respondents knew of hand washing messages.

The second item from the questionnaire shows a mean score of 4.0, indicating that respondents got to hear about hand washing messages occasionally. The respondents agreed that hand washing message encourages the proper washing of hands with soap and water with a mean score of 4.0. Thus the mean score of 3.0 indicated that respondents believed that hand washing messages have to do with sensitization; for disease prevention.

Finally, the last item on knowledge/awareness response shows the mean score of 2.86 below the decision rule of 3.00, indicating that respondents did not know anything about the hand washing messages. From the analysis above, the results from knowledge/awareness of hand washing message revealed that respondents from the study area know of hand washing messages.

Table 4: Mean Distribution of Questionnaire on Response to Knowledge Source

SN	Do you know about hand washing messages?	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total	Mean
1	It is through radio programmes	170 (850)	45 (180)	52 (156)	49 (98)	19 (19)	335 (1303)	3.88
2	It is through television programmes	175 (875)	52 (208)	45 (135)	42 (84)	21 (21)	335 (1323	3.94
3	It is through fliers, posters and handbills	165 (825)	47 (188)	51 (153)	45 (90)	27 (27)	335 (1283)	3.83
4	I don't know of any source of hand washing	22 (110)	38 (152)	149 (447)	74 (148)	52 (52)	335 (909)	2.71

Figures in brackets are alternative response scale values
Source: Field Survey 2024

The data on Table 4 revealed that the highest mean score recorded 3.94 followed by 3.88 and 3.83 indicating that the respondents' information sources for hand washing messages were through television and radio programmes as well as through flyers, posters and handbills. The result further revealed the mean score of 2.71 indicative of the respondents' reaction of not knowing any source of hand washing messages showing negative mean score that should be rejected.

Table 5: Mean Distribution of Questionnaire on Response to Practice

SN	How do you practice hand washing message?	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total	Mean
1	I only wash hands with water	48 (240)	39 (156)	155 (465)	47 (94)	46 (46)	335 (1001)	2.9
2	I wash my hands with soap and water when my hands are dirty	55 (275)	40 (160)	139 (417)	46 (92)	55 (55)	335 (999)	2.9
3	I wash my hands often	55 (240)	60 (240)	76 (228)	68 (136)	76 (76)	335 (955)	2.8
4	I don't wash my hands at all	45 (225)	49 (196)	120 (360)	62 (124)	59 (59)	335 (964	2.9

Figures in brackets are alternative response scale values
Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 5 shows the response to the practice of hand washing messages. All the four items from the questionnaire relating to hand washing practice revealed the mean scores that are below the decision rule, indicative of the respondents' poor performance of hand washing practice.

Discussion of Findings

The study was aimed at evaluating the knowledge and practice of hand washing messages among the respondents from the study area. The results of the demographic data of the respondents enabled the researchers to determine the eligibility of respondents in the study area. A majority of the respondents were within the age range of 13-14 (84%). Therefore, the respondents are true representative of all the students in Anambra State. Results showed adequate knowledge of hand washing messages with positive mean scores of 3 and above (3 as decision rule). This was evident in the number and frequency of the surveyed pupils from the study area that affirmed exposure to hand washing messages. This finding show that the respondents were aware of hand washing messages.

Also, the findings are in agreement with White, Kolble, Carlson and Lipson (2018) on "the impact of a health campaign on hand hygiene and upper respiratory illness among college students living in residence halls" and found that exposure to media campaign and the availability of gel hand sanitizer;

increased students' knowledge of health campaign. Despite the acquired knowledge from the hand washing messages, the practice of hand washing has remained insignificant or low.

The responses from research question three showed that respondents do not practice nor advocate the hand washing messages. These findings are in agreement with the research findings of Azuogu et al. (2016) where the study found the extent of hand washing to be low among secondary school students in Ebonyi. Also, the study is in agreement with the findings of Junxiong, Shao, Lumen and Liyang (2015) that a high knowledge and attitude of the respondents have not translated to good hygiene practices. Similarly, the study also agreed with Ikogho and Igbudu (2023) who found that few availability of hand washing facilities were utilized, and that this was hindered by the maintenance of a few available ones.

The findings also supported Merenu et al. (2015) where it was discovered that majority of the respondents had adequate knowledge of the use of hand sanitizer; while few practised correct hand washing exercise. The findings also supported Mwachiro (2012) where it was observed that lack of provision of soap in schools, inadequate water and disappearance of soap and hand washing facilities as obstacles towards hand washing practice. Therefore, the study found that despite the knowledge acquired from hand washing messages, the practice still remains low.

In line with the diffusion of innovation theory, which the study was anchored on, it was observed that the rate of diffusion was influenced by individual differences among potential adopters as well as the social system of the respondents. Though the respondents were exposed to hand washing messages through media information by the government and different agencies like UNICEF (1998), the adoption of the practice of proper hand washing still has to do with individual differences. Also, the social system of the respondents has a lot to offer towards the realization; of the practice of hand washing messages. If the respondents were adequately exposed and have a favourable attitude to hand washing messages without a conducive environment, then the practice of the knowledge gained from these messages may not be realistic. Thus, irrespective of the acquired knowledge

from hand washing messages, the practice of hand washing has remained insignicant or very low.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings from this study confirm and show that Theatre can be used as a tool for communication. From the practical field work analysis, the importance of theatre to children and how it can serve as a platform for learning and not just for entertainment. The Theatre that was deployed in this study included: games and exercises as theatrical activities, and dance, storytelling, role-playing and above all the hand washing exercise. In view of the use of Theatre as a tool and medium of communicating hand washing among primary school pupils, the importance and strength of Theatre to educate, and also entertain cannot be overemphasised.

It is therefore recommended that, apart from TfD being used for hand washing as a public health campaign, it should also be used to address other health issues. Also, since TfD is an effective communication strategy, and is capable of inculcating the habit of hand washing with soap in the pupils, its use should be intensified. Likewise, government and NGOs should scale up the use of TfD as a health campaign strategy.

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SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES IN CONTEMPORARY TEXTILE DESIGN

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Abstract

As environmental concerns and ethical production demands grow, the field of textile design is experiencing a major transformation towards more sustainable practices. This article explores how modern designers are adopting eco-friendly strategies, including the use of biodegradable materials, plant-based dyes, methods that minimize waste, and energy from renewable sources. It examines the creative and technical hurdles designers face in combining artistry with environmental responsibility. Through real-world examples from forward-thinking textile brands, the article illustrates effective strategies for achieving sustainability. It also emphasizes the importance of education, consumer influence, and policy reforms in advancing sustainable practices within the industry. By shedding light on these evolving approaches, the article aims to contribute to broader conversations about eco-innovation and the future of responsible textile design.

Keywords: Sustainability, textile design, environmental responsibility.

Introduction

For decades, the global textile industry has been a major source of environmental harm, consuming vast resources and producing significant waste and pollution. However, increasing environmental pressures, alongside a shift in consumer values, have driven a new wave of change in textile design, centered around sustainability. Designers today are not just creators but are also advocates for environmental and social responsibility. They are tasked with making textiles that are both beautiful and environmentally sound. This article explores the techniques and materials modern designers use to pursue sustainable outcomes, the challenges they encounter, and the broader systems of education, consumer activism, and governmental regulation that support these efforts. By examining recent developments and brand case studies, the article adds to the growing understanding of eco-conscious design.

Earlier discussions about sustainable textiles focused mainly on material choices like organic cotton and recycled fibers. Scholars such as Fletcher (2023) argued for the slow fashion movement as a way to counter the harms of fast fashion. In more recent work, Black (2024) expanded the dialogue to include broader systems like the circular economy, where products are designed to be reused, repaired, or recycled. Research has also highlighted innovative strategies inspired by nature, such as biomimicry and regenerative design. Scholars today see sustainable textile design not just as a technical issue but as part of a broader movement for social and ecological resilience, emphasizing that material innovations must be paired with shifts in consumer behavior and supportive policy actions (Jones, 2024).

Some Ways to Promote Sustainable Eco-designs

One of the key strategies in sustainable textile design is the choice of biodegradable and renewable materials. Natural fibers like organic cotton, hemp, flax, and bamboo are gaining popularity for their reduced environmental impact compared to synthetic alternatives. Recent breakthroughs in biofabricated textiles, such as mushroom-based leather and lab-grown silk, offer even greater opportunities. These new materials lessen the industry's reliance on petroleum products and open new creative possibilities. A prominent example is Mylo, a mycelium-based alternative to leather developed by Bolt Threads. It is entirely biodegradable and requires fewer resources than traditional leather production. Esteemed designers like Stella McCartney have incorporated Mylo into their collections, proving its viability in both luxury and mainstream fashion markets (Rodgers, 2024).

Traditional synthetic dyes are responsible for considerable water pollution and environmental damage. In contrast, natural dyes derived from plants, minerals, and insects offer a more sustainable choice. While natural dyes often present technical challenges, such as less consistent color and lower durability, modern designers are finding creative ways to overcome these issues. Brands like Botanical Colors are leading the way by offering vibrant, plant-based dye options. Additionally, experimental approaches using bacteria or algae to create living textiles that respond to environmental factors are gaining interest. These advancements show how environmental responsibility can foster creativity rather than stifle it.

Waste reduction is a crucial part of the movement towards sustainable textile production. New methods focus on zero-waste or minimal-waste designs. Designers are rethinking pattern layouts to avoid fabric scraps and are giving new life to discarded materials through upcycling. Zero Waste Daniel, a designer from New York, creates garments exclusively from leftover fabric pieces, demonstrating how scrap material can be turned into valuable fashion. Marine Serre similarly incorporates recycled textiles into high-end collections, showing that waste materials can become a source of artistic and commercial innovation (Smith, 2025).

Sustainability in textiles also depends on the energy and processes behind the scenes. More manufacturers are switching to renewable energy, like solar and wind power. Advanced production technologies such as 3D knitting are helping brands create goods locally and on demand, cutting down on waste and emissions from transportation. The Speed Factory initiative by Adidas is a good example. Although it ended in 2023, the project demonstrated how digital technologies and sustainability can be combined to produce goods more efficiently and responsibly (Brown, 2024).

Several brands have successfully incorporated sustainable practices into their business models. Patagonia, for instance, has made recycled materials a standard in its products and encourages customers to repair and reuse clothing through its Worn Wear program. The company also invests in regenerative agricultural practices to improve soil health and biodiversity. Eileen Fisher is another leader. Through its Renew program, the brand collects worn garments and resells them after refurbishment, helping to close the loop and reduce waste (Fisher, 2024). Meanwhile, newer brands like Pangaia are pushing boundaries with innovations like FLWRDWN, a plant-based alternative to traditional down feathers, and sustainable water-repellent treatments derived from natural sources.

Education plays a critical role in promoting sustainability among future designers. Today, leading design institutions are embedding sustainability into their teaching, equipping students with knowledge about materials, life cycle impacts, and ethical production. Programs at the London College of Fashion's Centre for Sustainable Fashion and the MFA Textile Program at Parsons School of Design are excellent examples of how education is evolving to prepare students for the environmental challenges of the industry.

Consumers have considerable influence over the textile industry. Surveys show that younger generations, especially Generation Z, prefer to support brands that are transparent about their sustainability practices (Lee, 2025). On the policy front, government action is becoming increasingly important. Initiatives like the European Union's Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles, introduced in 2022, set ambitious goals for reducing waste and promoting sustainable production practices. Regulatory support for eco-labels, responsible sourcing, and recycling initiatives is essential to accelerate progress.

Obstacles in Sustainable Textile Design

Moving towards sustainability is not without its obstacles. Designers must meet the high expectations of consumers in terms of performance, price, and style, while also maintaining environmental standards. Biodegradable materials sometimes fall short of synthetic fibers in strength and durability, and natural dyes may not match the vibrancy customers expect. Addressing these challenges demands ongoing research and technical development. Cost is another barrier. Eco-friendly materials and processes are often more expensive, making them harder to adopt for smaller brands or independent designers. Additionally, the problem of "greenwashing," where companies exaggerate their environmental credentials, can make it harder for consumers to identify genuinely sustainable products.

The future of sustainable textile design will likely be shaped by technology and new thinking. Blockchain technology promises better traceability of materials across supply chains, while artificial intelligence can help optimize production to reduce resource use. Regenerative design is emerging as a bold new concept, aiming not just to minimize harm but to actively repair damaged ecosystems and support communities through textile production. Success will depend on collaboration across industries, governments, educational institutions, and consumers. Through innovation, transparency, and systemic change, sustainable textile design can become a standard practice rather than a niche trend.

Conclusion

Contemporary sustainable textile design is a vital response to environmental and social challenges facing the fashion and textile industries. By embracing biodegradable materials, natural dyeing, low-waste techniques, and renewable energy, designers are redefining their craft. Although hurdles remain in terms of technical capabilities and economic accessibility, many brands and educational institutions are proving that sustainable design is not only possible but can be a driver of creativity and resilience. As consumer awareness grows and policies strengthen, sustainable practices are set to become a core part of the textile industry's future, offering a way forward that harmonizes beauty, function, and environmental stewardship.

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ORALITY, ETHICAL MATURITY AND ANLO-EWE NORMATIVE NOTIONS OF PERSONHOOD

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Abstract
The spoken word and techniques of communication other than writing have been employed by indigenous people to craft a unique understanding of personhood. Indigenous oral traditions such as proverbs, maxims, idioms, folklores, and naming practices are embedded with aesthetic, intellectual, and creative resources that construct a particular modality of ethical maturity and personhood among indigenous people. This paper examines orality, ethical maturity, and Anlo-Ewe normative notions of personhood. It explores how, through a critical and deep philosophical exploration of some oral traditions, a certain conception of a person emerges. This qualitative research employs in-depth interviews of key informants and participants to gather primary data. Key informants such as sages, chiefs, clan and lineage heads, linguists, and other persons with a thorough knowledge of the indigenous knowledge systems of the Anlo-Ewe are interviewed to provide useful insights about the philosophical significance and motifs of Anlo-Ewe oral traditions. This paper highlights a conception of a person who would be a morally sound adult who demonstrates in practice a sense of responsibility to household, clan, and society. It is argued that the normative idea of personhood is a status earned by meeting certain community standards that are believed to define personhood. This normative conception of personhood is so fundamental that it could be described as the distinguishing and defining feature of African philosophical thought.

Keywords: Orality, Anlo-Ewe, Oral traditions, Ethical maturity, Personhood

Introduction
Scholars in African philosophy, such as Menkiti (1984) and Molefe (2020, 2019, 2017), have written extensively on the normative notions of personhood. Gyekye (2013, 2010, 1992) and Wiredu (2009, 2004) have also discussed the influence of orality in the normative conception of personhood in African philosophy, especially among the Akan in Ghana. However, little research has been done on how oral narratives are employed to construct ethical maturity and Anlo-Ewe normative notions of personhood.

Indigenous people, such as the Anlo-Ewe, employ several oral traditions to construct a particular understanding of ethical maturity and personhood. These oral traditions, such as proverbs, maxims, idioms, folklores, and naming practices, are enshrined with aesthetic, intellectual, and epistemological resources which envisage a particular understanding of ethical maturity and personhood among the Anlo-Ewe. This ethically mature individual (*tsitsi le nute5ew4w4me*) is equally evaluated as truly a person (*ew4 ame `ut4*). Such an individual has been formed and transformed in a society (by parents, guardians, and adult members) to become a morally mature adult person capable of discharging his or her responsibilities to the household, clan, and the entire society. Additionally, such an individual can exhibit certain societal values such as hospitality, generosity, kindness, patience, cooperation, greetings, truthfulness, and hard work. It is, therefore, hoped that proper and positive development through character formation, socialisation, and education will eventually lead to ethical maturity and (moral) personhood. Nevertheless, it is relevant to point out that the opposite is also possible.

Objectives
The objectives of this paper are to:
   i.   Examine how indigenous oral traditions such as proverbs and maxims construct a particular modality of ethical maturity and personhood among the Anlo-Ewe.
   ii.   Investigate the aesthetic, epistemological, and creative resources embedded in Anlo-Ewe oral traditions.
   iii.   Have a deeper understanding of ethical maturity and personhood among the Anlo-Ewe.

Methodology
The research employed the analytic method to examine the various outlines of some oral traditions that are used in crafting a particular understanding of ethical maturity and normative notions of personhood among the Anlo-Ewe. The method involved a detailed analysis of some oral narratives, their language, content, contexts in which they are used, and the rationale behind the narratives. Participants for the study included sages, linguists, chiefs, clan and lineage heads, and persons with a thorough knowledge of the philosophical worldview of the Anlo-Ewe.

Conceptual Framework
The conceptual framework guiding this research is ethical formation. It refers to the process whereby an individual is formed and transformed in a society to become a morally mature adult person capable of discharging his or her responsibilities to household, lineage, and society. It is a process of human maturation and transformation aimed at making an individual act by the moral standards of a society. Children and young adults are taught and learn about morality through instructions, imitation, modelling, self-reflection, critical analysis, rewards, and punishments.

This gradual formation takes place from the time of conception until death at the home (which could mean more than a whole village), in all the public theaters of human interactions, such as workplaces, the court, the places and occasions of festivals and entertainment (Wiredu, 2009). Additionally, this human ethical formation is reinforced during evening gatherings, family meetings, settling of disputes, celebration of festivals, performance of rites and rituals, commemoration of events and ceremonies, undertaking occupational responsibilities, etc. The process of ethical formation is matrixed within a network of mutually interdependent relationships between the individual himself or herself, parents, guardians, adult members of the society, the lineage, clan, and the larger society (Chowdhury & Umadevi, 2023).

Ethical formation is both formal and informal. Formal ethical formation takes place during the performance of rites of passage, specifically during the period of seclusion when the initiate(s) receive intensive, systematic, and comprehensive education from elderly kinsmen and women. Additionally, formal ethical formation takes place during apprenticeship to secret cults and certain professions, such as blacksmithing and goldsmithing, and the period of confinement for a chief, diviner, priest, and priestess.

During puberty rites for girls, they are instructed by elderly kinswomen in the indigenous notion of ethically mature womanhood (Abotchie, 1997b). They are further instructed about the virtues of good housekeeping, respect, hospitality, fidelity, chastity, self-control, industriousness, cleanliness, personal hygiene, and how to prepare various types of meals and care for their future husbands. On the other hand, the giving of a cutlass, hoe, gun, and the building of a house ritually symbolise the values of hard work, diligence, independence,

resourcefulness, commitment, bravery, fearlessness, courage, responsibility, and self-reliance for boys (Doe, 2024).

Parents impart continuous daily informal ethical formation to their children. This formation is described as informal because it takes place at anytime, anywhere, with no specific syllabus and by any adult member of the community, such as parents, guardians, elder siblings, clan and family members, and the entire community. Nevertheless, key moments when informal ethical formation takes place include the performance of daily household chores (sweeping, cleaning, washing, running errands, fetching water and firewood, etc.), games, and recreational activities. It is hoped that ethical formation – formal and informal – will lead to ethical maturity and moral personhood.

Even though the ethical formation that an individual undergoes may be hard and demanding, it is considered very critical for the total education, development, transformation, and, more importantly, the preservation of the community's knowledge systems (Chowdhury & Umadevi, 2023). Ethical formation is considered one of the surest means of preserving ethics in indigenous societies and an essential process of preparing young boys and girls for the challenges of adult life. Thus, the significance of ethical formation can be understood primarily as a process of preparing individuals "to live in the community as a worthy moral agent" (Wiredu, 2009). Additionally, it is to keep alive the oral traditions and socio-cultural moral values of the communities, and to nurture the spirit of community bonding (Chowdhury & Umadevi, 2023).

Indigenous Oral Traditions

Oral tradition is a form of knowledge that is acquired and transmitted through spoken words and techniques of communication other than writing (Wiredu, 2009). It is one of the major means of acquiring and transmitting knowledge in indigenous societies. Boakye (2018) considers oral tradition as a true reflection of philosophy, community life, as well as depicting an authentic voice and spirit of the ancestors, and a reflection of the development in an indigenous society. Oral tradition is used for education, socialisation, recreation, and an understanding of the identity of a people (Boakye, 2018). They are disseminated during evening gatherings, family meetings, settling of disputes, celebration of festivals, performance of rites and rituals, commemoration of events and ceremonies, undertaking occupational responsibilities, etc. (Adom, 2016). During the performance of oral traditions, people are entertained, but most importantly, get educated and socialised (Boakye, 2018).

Indigenous Anlo-Ewe oral traditions, such as proverbs, maxims, idioms, riddles, puzzles, myths, folklores, taboos, and naming practices are embedded with aesthetic, epistemological, and creative resources which construct a particular modality of personhood among indigenous people. This conception of a person evaluates an individual as an ethically mature adult, as well as a truly person.

Anlo-Ewe

This paper focuses on the Anlo-Ewe as a specific ethnic group in a particular geographical area. The Anlo-Ewe are located mainly in the Keta Municipality and the Anloga District in the Volta Region of Ghana. It needs to be noted that the issue of clearly delineating the Anlo-Ewe "is not so easy … because it is a term with more than one referent" (Nukunya, 1977). The researcher's usage of 'Anlo-Ewe' is not in its generic sense to include the Avenors, Somes, and Aflaos but rather in a strict sense to refer to the group of Ewe located in the two districts mentioned earlier. Additionally, many Anlo-Ewe have migrated to other parts of Ghana, for example, Anloga in Kumasi and others. Despite the restricted use of the term 'Anlo-

Ewe', it must be affirmed that the other categories of Ewe earlier mentioned – Avenors, Klikors, Somes, and Aflaos – who are close neighbours, share a culturally similar philosophical worldview and historical affinity with the Anlo-Ewe (Nukunya, 1977). While acknowledging the close association between the Anlo-Ewe and other groups of Ewe in the southern part of the Volta Region of Ghana, Nukunya (1977) equally affirms marked cultural variations. He states:

> Language and common traditions of origin formed the most important bases of Ewe unity.… In the linguistic sphere (which is their second unifying factor), however, marked variations are found which make it difficult for people of one area to understand properly the local dialects of others…. It is clear that other cultural traits also differ from place to place. These are most clearly evidenced in musical forms, dancing, modes of salutation and facial markings…. Because of these differences, generalisations embracing the whole Ewe-speaking group are bound to be misleading unless the sphere or area of their application is clearly delimited. It is only through a detailed study of the different tribes that the similarities and differences between them can be established (pp.2-3).

Some major towns in Anloland that come under the research purview include Anloga, Keta, Tegbi, Alakple, Tsiame, and Afife because of their importance in the ritual worldview of the Anlo-Ewe.

Literature Review

The African normative conception of personhood distinguishes between persons and mere biological human beings on entirely different grounds. This normative conception of personhood is so fundamental that it could be described as the distinguishing and defining feature of African philosophical thought (Behrens, 2011). Two normative notions of personhood in African philosophy can be identified (Molefe, 2019).

The first notion, which I term moral personhood, assigns moral value to an entity by possessing specific ontological properties that are morally significant. This idea features prominently in bioethics and discussions on dignity or rights. In this sense, to be called a 'person' is to be classified as a moral patient and possessing moral status who deserves duties of respect. What is essential in this notion of personhood is that the entity in question is owed respect because it has the relevant ontological properties – rationality, consciousness, or sentience – without regard to how one uses them (Molefe, 2019). Such an analysis of personhood examines whether by merely possessing the relevant property, not its use, determines that a being deserves some moral respect (Molefe, 2019).

The second normative notion of personhood, which I term moral evaluative personhood, examines an individual's conduct about certain societal values such as generosity, patience, hospitality, solidarity, kindness, greetings, truthfulness, and hard work. The fundamental issue in this discourse of personhood is how individuals use their ontological capabilities to perfect or defect their humanity and not the ontological status of the human agent. One who is called a person is acknowledged to have added an essential dimension of educational moral transformation to his or her humanity (Molefe, 2019). To be called a non-person is to be evaluated as having lived below the moral expectations of society without denying one's humanity and the basic respect due to one merely as a human being (Wiredu, 2009). This second normative notion of personhood examines human beings as moral agents

who have developed morally virtuous characters. The evaluation of an individual human being as a person is to highlight specific moral virtues as deserving of 'high (moral) praise'. This analysis of personhood reports on the quality of the character of the human agent, which depends on the performance of specific societal moral values considered suitable for a befitting human being. Molefe (2019) rightly opines that "failure to live up to these norms leads to the denial of personhood" (p. 7).

According to Molefe (2019), some African scholars, such as Ikuenobe and Wiredu, argue that the moral evaluative notion of personhood is "more dominant" in the African philosophical tradition. In other words, ethical issues are more pronounced in an African conception of a person than the ontological aspects of the concept. Thaddeus Metz (2007) observes that this dimension of personhood is probably the dominant interpretation of African ethics. One is expected to go beyond being merely a human being by developing moral characteristics imbued with moral virtue (Gyekye, 2010).

Behrens (2011) rightly differentiates the two normative notions of personhood – moral personhood and moral evaluative personhood – in terms of *patient-centred* and *agent-centred* respectively. The *patient-centred* notion specifies the relevant ontological properties of the individual – rationality, memory, and so on – that mark him or her as a moral patient. In this understanding, any entity with the relevant property counts as a moral patient. Behrens (2011) explains that the *patient-centred* notion of personhood represents the value of a human person in terms of specific metaphysical capacities or properties possessed by the individual in question. The *patient-centred* idea embodies a view of personhood that assigns value to the individual about whether he or she possesses the relevant metaphysical capacities. It highlights the concept of *moral status* that identifies human beings and other entities (moral patients) as part of the moral community as they possess relevant metaphysical capacities (Behrens, 2011).

The concept of 'moral status' involves identifying some properties possessed by some entity in virtue of which it counts as a moral being and deserving of moral regard. This idea of personhood – *patient-centred* – is concerned with what is due to some entity, not for what it does or has done, but merely because it has the relevant properties. This means that some being is worthy of respect simply for being the kind of being it is, depending on what property is thought to be crucial – rationality, sentience or capacity for love (Metz, 2012). Moral status implies moral significance by which a moral agent deserves moral respect due to possessing relevant metaphysical capabilities. The possession of these metaphysical properties makes the moral agent a bearer of intrinsic value – a person. By being a bearer of intrinsic value, the moral agent is owed direct duties of respect (Molefe, 2020).

The *agent-centred* notion assesses the quality of the ethical behaviour of the agent as ultimately attracting moral praise or blame. The emphasis in this consideration is on moral performance. To be called a person is to be praised for having achieved ethical maturity (Molefe, 2019). Augustine Shutte (2001) thus argues;

> The moral life is seen as a process of personal growth…. Our deepest moral obligation is to become more fully human. And this means entering more and more deeply into community with others. So, although the goal is personal fulfilment, selfishness is excluded (p. 30).

The second normative notion of personhood invokes respect due to moral agents relative to their ethical performance, which Behrens (2011) refers to as the *agent-centred* notion of personhood. Those who perform well are called 'persons', and those who do not are 'non-persons'. In the second normative notion of personhood, to name a human being a 'person' is to make a moral judgement that he or she is leading a proper human life. It is, however, not to deny or denigrate his or her humanity *qua* a biological fact. Rather, it is to say he or she is

treating his or her humanity in the best way possible, morally speaking. In this light, personhood is a moral achievement that depends on the agent's performance (Molefe, 2019). Thus, to refer to some human being as a person is a commendation of and a commentary on his or her ethical behaviour. It is to judge an individual's behaviour patterns as morally praiseworthy or morally outstanding (Wiredu, 2009). Human agents who live according to society's normative standards are appraised as persons, and those who do not as non-persons (Gyekye, 2013). Menkiti (1984) explains that this socio-moral personhood has to be attained, and it is characterised by a widened ethical maturity. Besides, it should be noted here that while the first normative notion of personhood speaks of the respect one deserves merely because one possesses the relevant ontological capacity, be it rationality, sentience, or capabilities, the second refers to the respect one earns relative to one's moral performance.

It is critical to stress the two normative notions of personhood and how they play distinct roles in African moral thought. One is riveted on an invariable property possessed usually by human beings in virtue of which they deserve moral regard, which Kevin Gary Behrens (2011) refers to as the *patient-centred* notion of personhood. A human being possesses moral status which specifies some ontological features by which he or she is morally significant and for the very reason of possessing and not exercising this feature, he or she deserves moral respect (Molefe, 2018).

Motsamai Molefe (2018) opines that although these two normative notions of personhood – *patient-centred* and *agent-centred* – are moral, they differ significantly. While *patient-centred* involves the respect every human being is accorded purely because he or she is human, *agent-centred* refers to the consideration a human agent earns concerning individual ethical performance. The *patient-centred* notion grounds respect on ontology and the *agent-centred* on performance. Molefe (2018) describes the respect under *patient-centred* as invariable since all those with the relevant ontology are to be respected despite their performance. In contrast, respect under *agent-centred* is variable relative to one's moral accomplishments.

Despite the distinction, there is a relationship between these two normative dimensions of a person. It could be argued that the *patient-centred* notion forms the basis of any analysis of the *agent-centred* notion of personhood. In other words, the *patient-centred* concept informs the *agent-centred* notion. For instance, an individual accorded the moral praise of being truly a person should possess sufficient reason and the use of it. One may ask whether an individual who lacks sufficient use of reason but exhibits actions which deserve moral praise could be referred to as truly a person in African philosophical thought.

Ethical Maturity among the Anlo-Ewe (*Tsitsi Le Nute5ew4w4me*)

The first interpretation of ethical maturity in Anlo-Ewe is *2evi nute5e w4la,* meaning a child who is ethically mature or respectful. This category of ethical maturity refers to children who, though lacking experience, are seen as the reincarnation of an ancestor who exhibited a high sense of morality in the family. An interviewee described such a person as *ametsitsi 2evi* (an ethically mature child). Four interviewees argued that they were called *t4gbi* (chief) from childhood. The second rendition of ethical maturity is *ame kp4 nute5e eye wo w4 nute5e*. This interpretation, according to some interviewees, generally caters for relatively young persons but, because of their interactions with the elderly, possess rich and diverse experiences of life and also exhibit maturity in thought, speech, and in good character. Additionally, this interpretation is in tandem with the maxim: "When a child knows how to wash his hands, he eats with the elders". In other words, the maxim acknowledges that a young adult can exhibit ethical maturity and critical judgement as a result of his or her interactions with elders.

The third meaning of an ethically mature person (*ametsitsi nute5e kp4la klpe nute5e w4la*) among the Anlo-Ewe is of age, with vast and diverse experiences in life, and shows maturity in thought, speech, teaching, and, perhaps more importantly, in good character. The fourth interpretation of ethical maturity is about the ancestors. They are the spiritual elders in the supernatural world who have attained the apex and pinnacle of ethical maturity and are sometimes reborn to continue the life cycle of existence in Anlo-Ewe cosmology. The distinguishing factors in the above analysis of ethical maturity are length of experience, the depth of wisdom and knowledge exhibited, and commitment shown in discharging one's responsibilities, and not necessarily the age of the individual.

According to one interviewee, there is a clear distinction between (*amegaxoxo/nyagaxoxo*), that is, old man or woman, and (*tsitsi*) maturity in Anlo-Ewe. Among Anlo-Ewe, like other indigenous societies, (*tsitsi*) maturity is not measured only or necessarily in one's age or number of years but in one's knowledge, wisdom, experiences, behaviour, conduct, and attitudes (Gbolonyo, 2009). A person is as old or young (maturity) as he or she acts; a person is as old as the quality and amount of wisdom possessed, knowledge displayed, and productivity to society. Thus, (*tsitsi*) maturity, which is symbolically seen in the grey hair, is a compliment and elicits respect, status, responsibility, and pride. If an elderly person's behaviour does not merit his or her status and position, he or she is said to be (*2evi*) 'young' or a 'child' despite his or her age. Such a label is not a compliment but often a devaluation, disrespect, or even an 'insult' (Gbolonyo, 2009).

One interviewee argued that *ametsitsi* (maturity) in this sense is like a title given to persons who exhibit the qualities aforementioned. Thus, the Anlo-Ewe maxim "the best quality of liquor is in the mature palm tree" argues that the more mature and well-developed the palm tree, the better quality and quantity of liquor that it produces. Additionally, the maxim "what a mature person sees while sitting in a lazy chair cannot be seen by a child who climbs a tree", buttresses the argument that maturity usually comes with advancement in age and close interactions with elders. More importantly, maturity is associated with the wide and deep experiences of life and commitment shown in the performance of one's responsibilities. Hence, it is natural to credit an elderly person with wisdom because he or she has gained experience in life. Nevertheless, it does not always work that way (Gbolonyo, 2009).

Perhaps, a crucial assessment of an *ametsitsi nute5ekp4la kple nute5ew4la* (ethically mature or virtuous person) among the Anlo-Ewe is an individual who promotes the well-being of a family, for example, by taking care of a deceased brother's or sister's children. Additionally, such a person can articulate a critical intellectual analysis of a subject matter, an event, or a practical solution to a problem. According to (Gbolonyo, 2008), he or she must be able to provide the relevant facts, point out the underlying reasons, argue, and convince others about an issue under discussion. Such a person is considered to be a wise and deep thinker (Gbolonyo, 2008). Moreover, the intellectual and moral characteristics of an *ametsitsi* are not the preserve of elders. Indigenous societies recognise that these abilities are also found in some young adults who usually might have lived with elders.

An ethically mature or virtuous person among the Anlo-Ewe people must exhibit other-regarding values such as kindness, hospitality, generosity, patience, and wisdom in thought. Such a person performs his or her responsibilities towards his or her children, family and clan members, and the larger community. Perhaps, one of the greatest symbols of ethical maturity among the Anlo-Ewe is *akpasa* or *zi* (lazy chair or stool). As one interviewee noted, a child

does not sit on an *akpasa*. It is an *ametsitsi* (elderly mature man) who sits on an *akpasa*[1] and shares his rich experiences of life and maturity with children and young adults. It is, therefore, a great insult to be questioned (*akpasa mele a5eme na wo ma ha*), meaning whether one has not got *akpasa* in one's home. This question seeks to find out whether one has no ethically mature person in the family who would offer pieces of advice to him or her? Hence, a child who wants to sit on the seat reserved for elders would be reminded that a child breaks a snail's shell and not a tortoise's shell. A child must fit himself or herself into where he or she belongs.

Two Normative Notions of Personhood among the Anlo-Ewe

The first normative notion of personhood in Anlo-Ewe thought describes a person possessing moral status by having certain metaphysical-ontological features which deserve duties of respect and honour. By merely possessing certain relevant properties, such as soul and spirit, and not necessarily their use, implies that a human being must be accorded some moral respect. In Anlo-Ewe philosophical thought (*ame*), that is, a human being possesses certain basic moral rights (life and dignity) which must be respected and protected by every member of the community.[2] It is an acknowledgment of the moral status of an individual which Kevin Behrens (2011) describes as the *patient-centred* notion of personhood. Among the Anlo-Ewe, an individual who lacks sufficient use of reason would hardly be evaluated as a person. The statement "*mele ame me o*" according to the Anlo-Ewe, means an individual is not in human form. It is about an individual's moral and intellectual deformity rather than a physical one, although the latter also applies when the individual is insane (Hiagbe, 2008).

The recognition of the moral status of an individual among the Anlo-Ewe is similar to the position of Polycarp Ikuenobe (2017) that a community can recognise individual abstract rights, but could place limits on some rights in some situations. This is usually done to individuals such as *hl--dolawo kple dugbalawo*, that is, persistent deviants and criminal behaviours in terms of denying certain actions or choices in some situations. For example, Anlo-Ewe punish certain deviant behaviours such as incorrigible thieves, persistent adulterers and rapists by the death penalty- that is, burying alive to the neck or banishment some seven decades ago (Abotchie, 1997a). These forms of punishment involve the community taking away or failing in some form to recognise some of the deviant's rights, especially the freedom to live in the community. Similarly, in many traditional African societies, a certain category of people is not allowed to marry. For example, people who do not have sufficient use of reason since they cannot execute the duties and responsibilities associated with marriage and family life (Ikuenobe, 2017).

Ikuenobe (2017) argues that establishing the recognition of one's substantive (as opposed to abstract) rights on the demonstration of ethical maturity or moral actions that are conducive to communal harmony does not imply that individual rights are not recognised by the community. Among the Anlo-Ewe, when a persistent deviant or violent criminal threatens the peace and harmony of a community, he or she has failed to manifest in his or her actions a sense of moral dignity, duty, and personhood. In that regard, he or she does not deserve his or

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[1] One interviewee argued that sitting in an *akpasa* is the preserve of men. It is very uncommon for an elderly mature woman to sit in an *akpasa*

[2] The Ewe word *ame* or *amegbet4* also refers to a human being. More specifically, *ame* refers to both the living and the dead. When a person dies, his or her name is hardly mentioned. He or she is referred to as *amea*, the person or *mia5e amea*, our person; *wo k4 amea gb4nae*, the person is being brought; *wo le amea dim*, the person is being buried. Hence, the term *ame* or *amegbet4* is ambiguous, like *onnipa*, the Akan word used for both a person and a human being.

her substantive right to freedom to be recognised. When a community states that people cannot choose to do certain things because of communal harmony and people's well-being, it is not an indication of a lack of recognition of their autonomy or other rights (Ikuenobe, 2017). It is rather a recognition of the destructive effects of certain patterns of behaviour, not only to the individual but more importantly, towards the entire community. It must be reaffirmed that in indigenous societies like Anlo-Ewe, emphasis is always placed on individual responsibilities and obligations rather than individual rights.

The second normative notion evaluates the conduct of an individual about specific societal values such as hospitality, generosity, kindness, patience, cooperation, commitment to one's responsibilities, etc. To refer to someone as *ew4 ame `ut4* (he or she is truly a person) is to say that he or she lives according to the moral standards of the society, and so is an embodiment of the society's values. When the statement *ame ma, amee loo* (that person/human being is truly a person) is used about someone, it denotes a normative judgement[3] about his or her character as being hospitable, generous, truthful, patient, and kind. According to Hiagbe (2008), such a person contributes positively to the well-being of others or society. To say *menye amee wò nye o*, meaning he or she is not a human person, suggests that the individual has no morals (Hiagbe, 2008). It is a highly contextual statement. Nevertheless, in essence, it refers to an individual who fails to exhibit certain societal values, as mentioned earlier. Thus, the argument of Gyekye (2013) about the Akan that there is a clear distinction between the concept of a human being and the concept of a person is very much applicable to the Anlo-Ewe: *an individual can be a human being without being a person*.

It is in showing other-regarding values such as generosity, patience hospitality, solidarity, kindness, greetings and in the performance of one's social responsibilities that earn one the high moral praise of being evaluated as *ame ya, amee loo...*, or *ew4 ame `ut4* meaning, this person, is truly a person. It is worth reiterating that all the participants contacted for the study in evaluating an individual as *amee loo* that is, truly a person, mentioned other-regarding values that he or she exhibits. In addition, his or her morality must not ground the basis of good conduct on the likes and dislikes of any being, 'natural' or 'supernatural (Wiredu, 2004).

Among the Anlo-Ewe, someone who demonstrates unethical human conducts such as lack of generosity and concern for others is judged as *menye amee wonye o*, or *me w4 ame o* or *ame na kp4 abe ame ene* (not a person or person in a diminished sense). Although it is important to clearly delineate between individuals who (persistently) fail in the second normative dimension of personhood on the one hand and (hardened) criminals on the other hand, one cannot deny the propensity of the former to degenerate to the latter. Individuals who have failed in the second normative dimension of personhood or are persons in a diminished way are still considered as valuable and do contribute to the well-being of a clan or a family. Hence, the saying, *av4 n4 me 5ea, enyo wu tren4n4* which literally means, a cloth in the house is better than being a bachelor. The Anlo-Ewe abhor bachelorhood to such an extent that they would prefer a man marrying than to remain a bachelor throughout his life. In other words, it is better to have a wife, whatever her character than to remain a bachelor. Although the wife might not be the ideal woman, her presence and services are considered better than bachelorhood. Similarly, *ze gbagba be ye mew4a 2eke o ha, ya tso tsi na d4n4wo*; meaning, a

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[3] Although Komi Ahiatroga Hiagbe argues that the statement *ame ma, amee loo* is used to 'describe' someone's character, the researcher agrees with Kwame Gyekye, who in assessing a similar statement about the Akans, *oye onipa paa* proffers that such a statement refers to the 'normative form of judgement' about an individual's character. Hence, the statement *ame ma, amee loo* and *oye onipa paa* in Ewe and Akan respectively denote a normative judgement about a person's character and not a descriptive judgement about a person.

broken pot says even if it has not done much, it can prepare medicine for the sick. Among the Anlo-Ewe, a broken pot is not useless but very useful in the preparation of traditional medicine for the sick.

However, individuals who persistently fail to attain the second normative dimension of personhood among the Anlo-Ewe **and** exhibit certain patterns of behaviour such as murder through witchcraft or evil magic and persistent adulterers, rapists and robbers are not only evaluated as *menye amee wonye,* that is, not persons. They are also considered (*wobu wo5e ame nyenye* or *ame- nyenye mele wo me o*) to have lost their personhood and are thus equated with *gbemel7,* a wild beast. This expression is highly opprobrious which describes an individual who can no longer be tamed and is therefore not considered worthy to live among human society.

Gbemel7wo are individuals who are described by the Anlo-Ewe as *dugbalawo, nugblegawo* and *hl-dolawo* (blood related crimes such as incest, homicide, rape etc.). Such an individual is sometimes considered as *bometsila,* (an individual still existing in the beginning stage of the life cycle). *Bometsila* has not yet arrived in *xexeame*, that is, the earth, which is considered the second stage of the life cycle in Anlo-Ewe cosmology. As one interviewee argued, if *bometsila* is yet to be considered as part of the living, then he or she must remain at the beginning of the life cycle. Among the Anlo-Ewe, the very presence of such an individual among the human society is considered detrimental and harmful to the total well-being of the community. According to Agbanu (1999), such people threaten the security and solidarity of the society. Hence, to protect the very existence of the Anlo State, social concord, and the safety of other members of the community, the individual who persistently and consistently fails in the second normative dimension of personhood by committing certain grievous acts is given the death sentence or banished.

The above analysis of *me w4 ame* reveals a categorisation of individuals evaluated as *not persons* among the Anlo-Ewe. First, some individuals are considered not to be persons or to be persons only in a diminished way. Secondly, some individuals are deemed not to be persons and have lost their personhood and are considered as *gbemel7wo.*

It is relevant to add that the Anlo-Ewe are not quick to invoke the death penalty on any misdemeanor, immoral acts, or on anyone unable to achieve personhood. Every opportunity is given to people who fail in the project of personhood to reform. Hence, the death penalty, that is, one buried alive to the neck at *T4k4 At-lia*, the fifth landing stage, is resorted to as the last measure in dealing with people who can no longer be handled by any form of social control mechanism. As one interviewee argued, such individuals are human beings but do not act as persons. *T4k4 At-lia* is an attempt to totally eliminate certain behaviours such as persistent adultery, robbery, death through witchcraft, incest, and incorrigible individuals from a family, clan, or society. As rightly noted by Chris Abotchie (1997b), it is usually the family or clan members of the deviant who suggest the death penalty. His argument was corroborated by all the interviewees the researcher contacted for the study. *T4k4 At-lia* was abolished in the middle of the twentieth century.

For Anlo-Ewe, one who persistently fails in the moral evaluative dimension of personhood loses some rights that are ascribed to a person *qua* person. Hence, for the Anlo-Ewe, it is not enough for an individual to be considered a person *qua* person or a human being, but that this biological entity needs to be transformed to become a truly person. The equation of a human being to a wild beast is rightly the answer that an Anlo-Ewe will give to the question of Masaka; if it is acceptable that personhood is something that one may fail at, one is bound to ask what will become of those who persistently fail at it (Masaka, 2018).

Conclusion

Ethical maturity and the normative notions of personhood are viewed as the distinctive features of African philosophical thought since they encapsulate the essential nature of African ethics. The moral evaluative notion of personhood encompasses the ideas of moral maturation, the performance of other-regarding virtues, and society as the crucial catalyst in attaining the status of ethical maturity. Although the Anlo-Ewe notions of personhood might not differ from other African conceptions, they have significant caveats about individuals who persistently fail to attain the moral evaluative notion of personhood. Such individuals are considered non-persons, and very few are considered wild beasts. Ethical maturity and the moral evaluative notion of personhood among the Anlo-Ewe are structured around ethical values which are other-centred. These values reinforce human relationships defined by reciprocal obligations and emphasise interdependence as opposed to autonomy or individualism. Ethical maturity and Anlo-Ewe moral evaluative notion of personhood are achieved stage by stage and gradually by transitioning from the status of (*2evi*), a child characterized by no moral responsibility and lack of experience, to (*ametsitsi*), an adult person with a widened sense of (*tsitsi le `ute5ew4w4me*) ethical maturity.

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CERAMIC TOOLS, EQUIPMENT, AND MATERIAL HANDLING: SAFETY GUIDE FOR EDUCATIONAL STUDIOS AND WORKSHOPS

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Abstract
As ceramic studios and workshops become more widely used in educational settings and also grow in both tourist and income generation, it is clear that more can be done to create a safer and healthier work environment. Translating this into ceramics, which is both an artistic medium as well as an environmental and materials-based setting, this study presents the issues of health, safety, and welfare that face both professionals and students working with ceramics - a true paradox of dangerous equipment and hazardous material but with artistic appeal. The focus of this research is to investigate current safety legislation and procedures in educational studios/workshops to create a health and safety guide, accounting for both serious and minor health and safety risks, for use in ceramics. Using secondary data, the study provides a literature review on existing safety protocols and hazards related to the use of ceramic equipment and the handling of ceramic materials. This lack of added protection highlights the problems with existing safety standards and the need for individualized safety recommendations that can be mechanical, thermal, chemical, and ergonomic. This guidance is important as the study outlines the precautions needed to be aware of when handling and storing ceramic pieces and glazes, kiln and other machinery operation, and the need for PPE, ventilation systems, and ergonomic practices. Through this research, the aim is to create awareness and promote a culture of safety in ceramic studios and workshops to ensure a safe and productive environment for instructors and students alike.

Keywords: Material Handling, Studios, workshop, Ceramics, Education, Silicosis, Safety Guide, Artificial Intelligence.

Introduction

Educational Studios and Workshops are such settings where practitioners, students, and teachers have access to a range of tools, materials, and technologies to work on practical projects and collaborations. Educational studios promote flexible learning environments that respond to different modalities of learning, broadening learning styles, and improving critical thinking that engages in problem-solving capabilities (Yu, 2024). Experimental spaces such as

studios and workshops have been shown to significantly enhance student engagement and knowledge retention of students (Song & Cai, 2024**).** Thousands of educational studios and workshops are springing up that encourage creativity, collaboration, and interdisciplinary learning. They combine different fields such as art, science, technology, and design, encouraging participants to think across disciplines. These studio environments can lead to new career paths or innovative/groundbreaking solutions, according to Porter (2016), such as artistic practices meeting technology in workshops. In such collaborative spaces, teachers also foster community and support, which can make individuals feel safe to take risks and play with their ideas.

Creativity enhances artistic expression, as with technological development in ceramic studios or workshops. Clay allows for unique and one-of-a-kind creations that explore some form, gesture, and material combinations. Studios serve as temples of creative zeal where artists can freely conceive and develop their ideas on their terms and at their own pace **(**Burton et al., 2000; Eisner, 2000**)**. As artists explore and break through their medium, personally and collectively, the activity drives both individual growth and advances in the ceramic greater community. Ceramic studio creativity means not only personal expressing creativity but also sharing ideas and collaboration. The discussions give room for interactions where the individuals can learn from one another and drive inspiring ways of doing things going forward.

The cross-pollination of ideas in the studio can produce new methods that can create novel trends in the craft. An example could be an artist who, mixing traditional processes with contemporary influences, creates hybrid styles that raise questions about the definitions of ceramics, and in return expands the field (Nwigwe et al., 2024) And as with art, ceramics are made through a problem-solving process; it is not uncommon for artists to struggle and have to critically reflect and make strategic adjustments. Whether devoted to technical matters - glaze application, fire regimens, and those everyday workhorse clay bodies - or purely intellectual speculation, these experiments promote persistence and a closer engagement with the material. This process-oriented approach not only shapes the artist's skills and finished works; it also highlights the fact that creativity is a non-linear process, with each artwork being a link in a chain of artistic development.

The rationale for the study would be discussed, with the most prominent reasons being the relevance of making sure that educational environments where ceramics are taught or created under the guidance of an expert are safe. A gap in the literature on ceramic studios and workshops was their lack of a comprehensive safety guide. None of the referenced studies focused specifically on these settings, nor did they address the multifaceted nature of health and safety issues that can arise in ceramic studios and other academic location workshops. First, ceramics as an art form employs many tools, equipment, and materials that can be dangerous to students and teachers if not handled and understood properly (Ojie-Ogwu, 2013; Ebeigbe & Ikeneri, 2011). Such hazards include harmful dust exposure, misuse of kilns, as well as cuts while handling sharp tools. Hence, a critical guide of best practices on safety is

necessary to prevent these hazards based on the assumption of a healthy and safe learning environment

The paper also notes that learning takes place in a novel educational environment with students of different ages and at different proficiency levels. A broad range of comprehension levels and physical abilities among this diversity necessitates bespoke safety protocols. The guide seeks to be widely applicable and effective by creating an inclusive user base. Moreover, the study aims to give educators the knowledge and tools they need to get their students practicing best practices in safety. Everybody who plays a role in such a learning environment that significantly impacts students' perceptions towards safety, and this guide is here to help educators fulfill this responsibility. Moreover, the study makes a noteworthy contribution toward ensuring that accidents and health concerns associated with ceramics are minimized through a culture of safety in ceramic studios or workshops in educational institutions. To improve the safety of creative and educational spaces for immediate users, and to serve as a role model for common safety standards for future generations.

Ceramic art and craft represent a unique intersection of artistic expression and hands-on expertise, which is made possible by a remarkably wide selection of instrumentation, tools, and materials. Due to the risky processes involved with ceramic processes, those within the educational studios and workshops must be safe. Ceramics is both an art and a science that requires substantial skill and patience to master, but it ultimately still involves a risky process with many hazards involved. Recognizing these hazards and implementing comprehensive safety precautions is critical to ensuring that everyone who interacts with ceramic (whether with the equipment, tools, or materials) is properly protected. To mitigate these hazards, it's crucial to adopt proper safety practices for safe handling within the educational environment, as these practices will transcend after completion of their educational career towards self-sufficiency by setting up their studio for entrepreneurial purposes (Ojie-Ogwu, 2016).

The field of ceramics is deeply rooted in the evolution of humankind (Hawley, 2018). Various practical functions, technical uses, and conceptual achievements form an underlying influence on both practice and interpretation (Raby, 2015). Archaeological excavation of ancient civilizations has found ceramics to be a prevalent practice across vastly different cultures, separated by time and space. As such, it forms an expressive, expensive, and expansive traditional technology and art form reaching as far back as 37,000 BCE (Raby, 2015**;** Maniatis, 2009). The materiality of clay is unique, its use for both functional and symbolic objects; its metaphoric qualities have assimilated it with creation myth in various religious and social contexts (Ozidede, 2024; Livingstone and Petrie, 2017; Ojie, 1993).

Ceramics can be described as a non-metallic solid substance, made up of either metals or non-metal compounds that have been heated and cooled (Mishra et al., 2023). Ceramics are generally hard, corrosion-resistant, and brittle after passing through various thermal treatments. The demand for ceramics in the world is what has led to the development of pottery-ceramics

centers, studios, educational research institutions, and industries, thus being able to meet the demands of its goods and services (Curious Mind, 2023).

Even today, ceramics are interwoven into our everyday lives, performing many household functions as vessel materials, containers for food, bricks, and tiles for shelter. In addition, it also serves various industrial functions, such as electrical insulation, cladding spaces for shuttles, and advanced applications in medicine **(**Matizamhuka, 2019**)**. Through its transformative abilities, its persistence, and intimate connection with daily lives, ceramics gains its power as an artistic medium, fulfilling dynamic artistic roles as a vehicle for exploration of material culture. It is this persuasive ability of clay and its transformation into ceramic forms and shapes for creative practice that has made it possible for use by the ancients to the present-day modern humankind (Livingstone & Petrie, 2017; Curious Minds, 2023).

Educational studios and workshops ready with ceramic equipment, tools, and raw materials without proper measures may be exposed to the risk of injury and health hazards involved in the process between preparing materials and manipulating forms for their desired work. Many people have played with and made things with the materials related to ceramics from early childhood. It is challenging for them to imagine that these materials that have enabled them to produce objects while providing creative efforts can be harmful to their health. These risks are exposure to dangerous dust, unsafe operation of machinery without the right safety measures, and ergonomic problems due to incorrect manual handling of materials, to name just a few.

This is intended to highlight the necessity of crafting a specialized safety guide that is tailored to the interests of ceramic studios and workshops in school settings, that addresses and helps in avoiding these dangers and risks involved in working with ceramics and clay. Artists must recognize studio hazards and how to protect themselves and the people working around them. The following specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Evaluate the safe operating procedures associated with ceramics equipment, tools, and materials in educational studios and workshops.
2. Find out about potential hazards and dangers of using ceramic instruments and tools, and handling materials used in educational settings.
3. Protect, as well as assess the credibility of current safety procedures and measures within educational studios and workshops.
4. Recommendations for improving safety standards and procedures for the use of ceramic equipment and materials in educational environments.
5. Educate on best practices for the safety of students and instructors working with ceramic equipment and material.

The research relies totally on secondary data collection. Secondary data was drawn from various sources, which have been duly acknowledged and referenced. The secondary data involves gathering Information on occupational health and safety concepts and various issues

related to health and safety in ceramic studios and other educational workshops. This gathered information was obtained by consulting the websites, journals, books, periodicals, and reports from various government and non-governmental agencies. The research further took a qualitative turn by using the descriptive research method. The method is used in describing the implications of health and safety of ceramic professionals and how it affects their social, mental, and psychological well-being when working with hazardous ceramic equipment and materials.

Basic Ceramic Tools, Equipment, and Materials Found in the Educational Environment

Ceramic art has emerged as a fundamental element in numerous educational workshops and studios in Nigeria and globally. A list of fundamental ceramic equipment, tools, and materials commonly found in a standard ceramic studio is presented below:

i. *Pottery Wheels*: Pottery wheels are instruments utilized for forming clay into symmetrical objects such as bowls, vases, and mugs. Electric and kick-wheel formats are available, enabling artists to produce various types of pieces according to their preferences (Ojie-Ogwu & Egede, 2009; Bazunu & Odokuma, 2008).

ii. *Kilns*: Kilns are essential for firing pottery at elevated temperatures, transforming the clay into completed items. Various types of kilns include electric, gas, wood-fired (Atuh & Ozidede, 2023; Ozidede, 2024; 2017), and at different sizes.

Figure 1: Electric Pottery Wheel
Source: https://www.theceramicshop.com/store/

Figure 2: Multiple-fueled liquid burner Kilns.
Source: Delta State University, Abraka.

Kilns have been used throughout the ages by prehistoric people to modern-day civilization to subject ceramic objects to varied temperatures. In ancient times and also in today's modern-day society, born fire or pit firing was utilized before the advent of the kiln (Agumba & Abbott, 1996). The firing method consisted of heaping the pots untop one another in a properly arranged manner alongside stuffing with sawdust (Ojie &

Egede, 2010; Abamwa, 2002). After this process is completed, straws and small wood are arranged by the side of the stuffed pot to create an open fire. Similarly, in the pit firing, a small pit is dug, sawdust alongside other combustible materials, with the wares to be fired. This operation is usually done during the dry season. The application of heat to ceramic wares is as important as DNA in a human body. Kilns are designed to house heat, and it is one of the most expensive equipment and most energy-intensive. According to Ozidede, (2017), Institutions usually use periodic kilns because the kilns are used periodically, and their operation often involves a downdraft or an updraft kiln; while industries are required to work with continuous kilns due to their continuous nature of firing. Kilns have been designed to accommodate different fuels for firing, while some have been modified to utilize multiple fuels for combustion.

iii. **Ball Mill**: Ball mills are essential in the manufacturing of ceramic wares. They are extensively utilized in manufacturing and are deemed second of the second most essential after the kiln in modern-day ceramic manufacturing. It provides a flexible and effective approach for material preparation that directly influences the quality and attributes of ceramic products (Ozidede & Ofili, 2024; Sherma et al., 2015; Heim et al., 2005). This setup facilitates particle size reduction by impact and attrition as the balls drop from near the top of the shell and cascade with the materials in the mill. According to Ozidede & Ofili (2024), ball mills can mix different materials and can achieve the needed physical and chemical composition and properties when the right ratio of materials (the substance) and the grinding materials is in proportion. The consistency of the final product can be directly influenced by the milling process and time, which ensures that the final product's structural integrity and aesthetic appearance are adequate for use after passing through proper milling to attain the right particle size. Also, water can be added to the ceramic material through the ball mill cavity to the right proportion, following the size of the chamber and the grinding material to form a paste either for glaze preparation or clay body slurry for casting (industrial reproduction with the use of Plaster of Paris – POP). Different types of ball mills suffice for different operations.

Figure 3a & b: Porcelain Pebbles of different sizes and Ball Mill **(**Ozidede & Ofili, 2024).

A hollow cylinder that revolves around its axis is the component that makes up a ball mill. The axis might be horizontal or at an angle to the horizontal, depending on the use of the ball mill. For grinding, the cylinder is partially filled with balls, which serve as the grinding media. Rubber, steel (such as chrome steel), ceramic (such as flints or porcelain

pebbles), or stainless steel are some of the materials that can be used to make these ball mills and ball constructions. The inner surface of the cylinder is lined with an abrasion-resistant material such as manganese steel or rubber at regular intervals, which results in a reduction in wear in mills that are lined with rubber (Ozidede & Ofili, 2024). The materials that are going to be ground are introduced into a ball mill through the hole that is located at the very top of the cylinder. It is also possible to charge balls into the cylinder, which is then closed and rotated. This gives the balls the ability to crush materials as they move through the cylindrical structure.

Figure 3c: Cascading effects of balls in a ball mill (**source:** http://en.m.wikipedia.org**)**

According to Longhurst (2010), if we do not have the balls installed in the cylinder or some other medium to crush the materials that we want to grind, then there will be very little or no grinding that takes place. The balls are hoisted onto the rising side of the shell as the cylinder rotates, and then they cascade down (or drop down on the feed) from near the top of the cylinder. This causes the solid particles that are between the balls and the ground to be reduced by collision.

iv. *Clay*: Clay is one of the most significant components of ceramics manufacture at any level. The type of clay available to ceramics has a vital role in determining the type of wares produced, whether porcelain, earthenware, or stoneware. Each clay and clay body has distinct qualities that influence the ultimate product's color, texture, and durability. Ceramics are made feasible by clay, a very common but distinctive material. Nelson (1983) suggests that clay should not be confused with soil, which is a mixture of clay, sand, humus (partially decaying vegetable), and a variety of other components when compared to other earth materials.

Clay is a fascinating substance that is flexible and sticky, making it an ideal medium for a ceramicist and another clay enthusiast. Clay's ability to stick is known as plasticity, and remains its greatest virtue (Otimeyin 2015). Aside from being soft and flexible, which allows the fingers to respond to its plasticity in the hands, clay is delicate when dried and can easily crumble. Igbinedion (1995) defines clay as a natural material found in the earth's crust or rocks that exhibits flexibility when exposed to a suitable amount of water. This water allows the clay to be easily shaped into any desired shape while moist. After heating, the clay becomes a permanent substance that can retain its original shape for

thousands of years (Ojie-Ogwu & Ozidede, 2021; Speight & Toki, 2003); enabling the artists or potter to communicate with past civilizations and explore the vast reaches of space (Hawley, 2018).

v. **_Glaze:_** A glassy surface mixture used to cover ceramic objects for aesthetics and to make them resistant to water and stains. From a chemical point of view, glazes are made from silica, fluxes, and alumina, which create a sturdy surface after they are fired in a kiln (Otimeyin, 2015; Ojie & Egede, 2002). Firing takes place, turning that powdered glaze into a glossy surface, sealing the body of the ceramic. Aside from helping enhance the representation of the work through its colors and textures, glaze also affects how long the work will last and whether it can be used, so it is integral to both works of art and more utilitarian pieces.

Ebeigbe, (2011) states that different types of glazes, such as glossy, matte, transparent, and opaque, act in various artistic and useful ways. Glossy glazes, for instance, ease light reflection and intensify colors, making them a favored choice for decorative objects, while matte glazes give a more subtle, mellow effect. In contrast, Transparent glazes show the clay body or decoration underneath them, while opaque glazes completely cover the substrate, providing a solid color. Glazes can be applied using various techniques, including dipping, brushing, or spraying; the technique used will ultimately influence the outcome (Ojie & Egede, 2002). This vocabulary of global color alone, in application methods (engobe, glaze) and effects (artist pigments) can shape even more effectively the result of ceramic pieces, yet still enable the artist to express creativity and determine the utility of the piece.

vi. **_Workbench and Workspace_**: A studio's worktable and workspace are essential components since they promote efficiency and safety while facilitating the creative process (Sicotte et al., 2019; Suckley & Nicholson, 2018). The workbench may contain any equipment and supplies needed for pottery. The worktable is a specific area used for molding, sculpting, and finishing clay products, mixing glaze test batches, as well as other important activities in the studio or workshop. Bear in mind that the workspace, which will include hand-building areas, wheel throwing and glazing areas, is important for making full use of a session and reducing potential safety hazards. A space large enough to move around in and for tools to be stored decreases the chance of accidents occurring and allows for a more conducive learning environment for students.

vii. **_Tools for Sculpting_**: In a ceramic studio, sculpting tools are of primary importance, as they allow artists to perfectly shape and smooth their work after creation (Taylor, 2011). Such tools often include wire cutters, loop tools, rib tools, and carving instruments used for various purposes, including trimming and smoothing or adding a texture to the clay. Wire cutters are excellent for cutting through large blocks of clay, and loop tools enable the removal of excess material and the formation of finer details. Rib tools are an important tool for creating smooth surfaces and shaping forms, so they are essential to

both hand-building and wheel-throwing techniques (Otimeyin, 2015; Speight & Toki, 2003). Moreover, there are different types of carving instruments available in different sizes, which help to create intricate patterns on the sculptures. Understanding these tools in detail helps the sculptor not just in the expression but also in making the process very efficient and safe, ensuring that the sculptor performs with skills in the studio.

viii. **Safety Equipment**: Personal protective safety equipment in the ceramic studio is required for protecting artists or students from any unexpected injuries while working with clay, glazes, and tools. PPE such as dust masks, gloves, and safety goggles reduces exposure to dangerous materials like silica dust and toxic chemicals contained in certain glazes (Ceramic Art Network, 2024). In addition, aprons help to keep clothing clean from spills and stains, and proper ventilation systems, according to Peterson (1996), can reduce the risk of inhaling fumes released when firing or toxic gas from glazing. Ensuring safety equipment is readily available and used helps to ensure a safe working environment, safe practices, and a better, more comprehensive learning environment for ceramic studios, other studio practitioners, and staff.

Context of Workplace Hazards

1. Thermal Hazards: Thermal hazards are common when working with materials that produce hot surfaces, like kiln walls, or using equipment that has open flames, like burners. The use of ceramic equipment and tools, especially those used in kiln operations, leads individuals to experience high thermal hazards (Ojie-Ogwu & Ozidede, 2021; Ozidede, 2017). The process of working with ceramics - molding, shaping, and firing the material to complete it - comes with built-in risks, given the high temperatures involved. As such, it is critical to understand and prevent such thermal dangers for workplace safety. First of all, kilns burn at very high temperatures, often above 1,200 ° Celsius, depending on the type of clay body. Leading to severe burns on the direct or, even from indirect contact with such temperature or heat. Similarly, when people load or unload the kiln, there is a risk of a thermal burn if the kiln is not given sufficient time to cool down before unloading.

As a result, it is important to keep a safe distance from the kiln when it is in use and to provide suitable barriers or shielding for radiant heat (Atuh & Ozidede, 2023). Use safety equipment when handling hot ceramics or kiln furniture, and this includes the use of face shields and heat-resistant gloves. Another useful thing to do, to minimize the chances of burns, is to establish a protocol that enables the kiln and its contents to cool enough that it can be opened safely. Harm done to the people handling hot kilns through thermal shock should be considered a risk that cannot be understated. Extreme temperature changes, like transferring a piece from one point to another point create a significantly new design during Raku firing and operation. Such an operation can create cracks in the material and drop onto your body or, even worse, explode on your face and hands (Scottish Potters Association (SPA), 2021). Apart from threatening the ceramic wares of statues themselves, this risk of emitting razor-sharp shards

should not be taken for granted. Finally, specific tools and equipment used in the shaping and finishing of ceramics, such as hot wax tools or heated drying equipment, also pose thermal hazards. Taking precautions such as using these tools in a well-ventilated space away from heat-sensitive surfaces directed by the manufacturer, can reduce these risks. A crucial way to understand ceramics is that you must know how to handle and transfer ceramic objects.

2. Mechanical hazard: Mechanical hazards mainly come from operating a wide range of equipment and tools, which can cause risks if not used properly or if appropriate safety protocols aren't followed to verify the safety of those working in a ceramic studio. Mechanical hazards in ceramic studio practice may be:

i Sharp Edges and Points: Trimming tools, needles, and wire cutters are just some of the ceramic tools that can have sharp edges or points that can easily cause cuts or punctures if misused.

ii. Rotating Machinery: Potter's wheels, pug mills, and similar equipment, rotating parts that have entanglement hazards. Hair, clothes, or jewelry can get caught in these components and are known to cause serious injury.

iii. Crushing and Pinching: Heavy machinery that is used for pressing or extruding the clay can cause crushing hazards. Rotating angular blades with equipment like pug mills and corn milling equipment is an excellent example. Fingers, hands, or limbs can be caught between the moving angular blades, resulting in serious injuries.

iv. Flying Debris: Many processes, for example, trimming, cutting unfired clay, and sanding the surface of ceramic ware, can produce chips and debris that can fly off and injure your eyes or cause minor cuts. Eye protection and nose masks must be regarded as essential commodities to minimize dust inhalation and to keep debris away from the eyes.

v. Noise exposure: Significant noise-generating equipment (gas and oil kilns, burners, mixers, air compressors, construction equipment, etc.) can expose individuals to excessive noise levels, which, without proper hearing safety, can potentially result in hearing damage over time.

3. Chemical hazards: Some chemical hazards may exist when working with ceramic materials. Health hazards associated with ceramics are mainly related to the materials and methods used, such as raw materials, including glazes, and the firing process.

i. Dust and Inhalation Hazards: Silicosis disease is one of the major ailments faced by ceramists (Kurtul et al., 2021). Numerous raw materials employed in ceramics, including silica, talc, and other various types of clay and ceramic materials, have the potential to create dust that, when inhaled, can present significant health risks. Silica dust, for instance, when inhaled for a long time, can cause silicosis, a debilitating or deadly lung disease (Sakar et al, 2005; Britannica Encyclopedia, 1998).

ii. Toxic substances: Several materials used in glazes and decorations, like lead, barium, cadmium, chromium, and manganese, are a few examples (Taylor, 2011; Peterson, 1996; Kirkpatrick, 1978). These materials can be dangerous if swallowed or if their vapors are inhaled while firing. (In particular, you need to use lead-free or low-lead glazes for items

that will be used to hold food and make sure there is good ventilation when firing your pieces.)

iii. Chemical Reactions: During firing, chemical reactions take place, which could discharge some hazardous gases to the atmosphere. These poisonous fumes can include carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and multiple nitrogen oxides (Scottish Potters Association (SPA), 2021). These gases can be hazardous if inhaled, requiring that kiln areas be adequately ventilated

iv. Skin Contact: Direct exposure to certain chemicals and raw materials may cause skin irritation or more serious dermatitis. Wear protective gloves and clothing to reduce skin exposure.

4. Ergonomic Hazards: Ergonomic hazards are workplace conditions that have the potential of causing injury to a person's musculoskeletal system when using ceramic equipment and tools over time (Ceramic Art Network, 2024; Johnston & Lipscomb, 2006), and these hazards may include:

i. Repetitive Motion: Tasks such as wedging clay are repetitive, and ultimately cause strain and injuries in the wrist (i.e., over time). Modernity has also made pathways for such work, and equipment has likewise been engineered to ease some of the ergonomic load. Equipment such as the pug mill has been dedicated to such an operation.

ii. workstation height: Working at tables or equipment that are too high or too low can put the body in poor positions, straining the back, shoulders, and neck.

iii. Heavy Lifting: Without proper lifting techniques, heavy bags of clay or large pieces of ceramics can fall or hurt your back.

iv. Poor Tool Design Using tools that do not rest comfortably in the hand or that require too much force for repetitive action can result in hand and wrist injuries and damage, such as carpal tunnel syndrome.

v. Static Postures: Prolonged sitting in the same position, such as being at the potter's wheel, can lead to discomfort and musculoskeletal disorders (Melzer, 2010).

To counteract these ergonomic hazards, one must ensure that workspaces are properly tailored to suit individuals working in the studio. The studio should be equipped with adjustable equipment, simple tool design, and tool use. Also, regular breaks from the studio or workshop should be practiced to encourage stretching the body, changing posture, and training in proper lifting techniques after working.

Material Handling in Educational Workshops and Studios

Safe space procedures for material handling in educational workshops are important, as these studios and workshops often involve tools, machinery, and materials that can be risky if used incorrectly. Several key components involve a safe space, as explained below:

i. Safety Briefing and Training for Staff and Students: As part of pre-workshop orientation, a detailed safety briefing must be given to students and staff, and safety instructions relayed to them to avoid the various hazards referred to above (Osinubi et al.,

2017). This includes how to use studio equipment safely, the necessity of using personal protective equipment (PPE), and the management of any hazards in the event of an emergency.

ii. Clear Signage and Instructions: Signage should be easily visible in studios and workshops, including safety procedures, first aid kits, usage, and emergency exits. Operating instructions for machinery and tools should be visible as well.

iii. Physical Precautionary Measures: Set up the workshop in a way to minimize risks. This includes making sure there is adequate space around equipment and does not cause crowding, and making sure pathways to emergency exits are clear. The studio technician or the workshop instructor also needs to ensure that routine maintenance checks are performed on the equipment so that they are in good working condition.

iv. Mental and Emotional Sense of Safety: Creating a supportive and inclusive environment is crucial. It includes creating an environment where questions are welcome, mistakes are growth opportunities, and harassment or bullying are not tolerated in the studio environment (Sutas, 2022).

vi. Emergency Preparedness: Students should be aware of the procedures and protocol for using the studio or workshop, including information on how to use a fire extinguisher in the event of a fire outbreak, where to recover in the event of an evacuation, and contact information in the event of an injury.

vii. Supervision and Support: A Qualified individual should always be present at all times to supervise students using the studio; they should be ready to provide guidance and ensure that safety protocols are followed. By implementing these safe space procedures, educational outfits can provide a secure environment that encourages learning and creativity while minimizing the risk of accidents or harm.

Developing a Safety Training Program

Developing a safety training program for educational studios and workshops that focus on ceramic equipment, tools, and material handling is crucial to ensuring the safety and well-being of students and staff. These structured approaches could enhance an effective safety training program:

i. Safety Risks Assessments: Make the proper assessment of the studio or workshop to reduce safety risks regarding the ceramics equipment, tools, and material handling. That can involve hazards from kilns, pottery wheels, glazes, and other materials.

ii. Formulating Safety Precautions: Based on the hazards recognized, devise definitive safety measures. This includes information on proper use of equipment, requirements for use of personal protective equipment (PPE), and proper procedures for handling material as well as actions to take in the event of an emergency.

iii. Develop Training Content: Write up the content needed to train on all the areas of safety associated to the studio or workshop This includes proper functioning of ceramic

equipment, the right way of handling and storing materials, consistent use of PPE, first aid, how to handle an accident, and fire safety, particularly with kilns.

iv. Organize Interactive Training Sessions: Different participants are being engaged in the different sessions. Limitations of teaching methods: Use a combination of presentations, demonstrations, and hands-on practice to ensure participants have a thorough understanding of safety procedures. Add tests to check that students understand (Osinubi et al., 2017).

v. Plan Regular Refresher Courses: Safety training is not a one-time deal; it involves several hands-on experiences. It is pertinent to organize regular refresher courses to update everyone on safety protocols and to familiarize staff, studio practitioners, and clay hobbyists with any new standards or equipment as needed

vi. Write or Revisit Safety Manual: Put together a safety manual containing all safety protocols, guidelines, and procedures. This manual should be available to all students and staff in the studio or workshop

vii. Create a Safety Culture: Make safety a shared responsibility. Encourage open dialogue about safety issues and make sure everyone knows that they can speak up about unsafe conditions or behavior. To create a solid safety training program that each educational studio and workshop may follow to ensure the safety of everyone involved while allowing them the best possible opportunity for learning, creativity, and exploration.

Review of Safety Standards and Regulations

In revisiting today´s safety standards and regulations, ensure compliance with all existing guidelines. That also means keeping up-to-date with changes or updates to safety standards and ensuring that equipment, tools, and materials are used according to these regulations. Safety audits and inspections; Regular inspections can identify areas that need to be improved to achieve a better and safer working environment (Ebeigbe & Ikeneri, 2011).

One important thing to do to make sure educational ceramic studios and workshops are safe is to follow national safety codes. But it does not name or provide details of these codes. National safety codes generally have rules and guidelines that are put in place to help protect people from possible dangers that could arise from equipment, materials, and practices. These can differ from country to country, but can include topics like fire safety, handling chemicals, operation of mechanical equipment, and general workplace safety. There will, however, be specific national safety codes pertinent to ceramic studios and workshops, which would have to be sought by looking up the regulatory bodies responsible for occupational health and safety. They are typically the bodies that offer access to the applicable codes and guidelines for educational   and   workshop   settings.

Institutional policy on safety rules often revolves around a framework that ensures the health as well as safety of all organization members. These frameworks may consist of, however, not limited to: Compliance with Legal Requirements, Risk Assessment and Management, Training and Education, Emergency Preparedness, Reporting and Investigation, Continuous Improvement, Employee Involvement, etc. Health and safety policy can be customized by each institution according to the needs of the institution, requirements of the industry, specifications determined for the industry, as well as the hazards of its operations. Still, the underlying goal is the same: to provide a safe and healthy environment for all.

Conclusion

There is no arguing about the absolute need for a safe space in ceramic studios and workshops, particularly in educational environments. Educators and students can take advantage of this guide and implement the guidelines and practices so that they can achieve a safe and productive workspace. Such preliminary measures are necessary to keep people safe from the threats posed by kiln use and ceramic materials and to cultivate an attitude of responsibility and respectfulness toward the art. While ceramic processes continue to be a common narrative in educational institutions, it is pertinent that the principles outlined in this guide are essential in preserving the well-being of all participants (staff and students) and ultimately creating sustainable practices and a creative environment free of hazards for the ceramic arts. That's also understandable, there must be things that go against hazards in the studio. Thus, there is always a potential period to encounter workplace hazards. Not predicting the possible hazards in the work environment would be a naïve decision by both staff, students, and other studio practitioners.

This approach requires following some appropriate guidelines and recommendations to guarantee safe working practices in studio and workshop environments, particularly those associated with ceramics. This involves proper training and familiarization with all ceramic equipment, tools, and materials, and how to handle them safely, as well as keeping a safe and clean workspace for ceramic practice. Proper maintenance and equipment inspection can avoid these types of malfunctions, which can result in injury. Routine workplace cleaning to mitigate any dust accumulation, as well as an understanding of the specific hazards associated with the quantities and materials you're working with, is also a good way to ensure your worksite remains the safest it can be. Proper ventilation systems must be put in place to ensure that toxic dust and fumes are not inhaled. Finally, protective equipment (safety goggles, overall, gloves, etc.) should be provided and users trained on how to use them, along with clear and accessible emergency procedures (e.g., fire extinguishing, evacuation exit, etc.) for the safe utilization of the workspace and its equipment.

Additionally, AI can revolutionize studios and workshop environments by facilitating the customization of learning experiences, along with the automation of administrative labor. Artificial Intelligence has great potential in creating personalized experiences in creative environments, where AI-powered instruments end up examining published books to individual

students by teaching them how to cultivate responses and open opportunities for near-infinite customization of feedback. For instance, after analyzing a student's work, machine learning algorithms can suggest resources tailored to that individual's needs and allow instructors to give more personalized feedback. This flexibility may lead to better outcomes for students and would allow educators to focus more on innovation and creativity, rather than drowning in administrative duties. Moreover, AI technologies help improve operational efficiency in workshops by strategizing non-core processes like inventory management and materials handling. Through the use of advanced data analytics, educators can track tool and material consumption that reduces waste, while ensuring that valuable resources are available on demand. For teachers, predictive analytics predicts materials usage trends so that teachers can manage their needs and resources. These new efficiencies free up time for students to engage in hands-on learning, experimentation, and creativity, instead of logistical headaches that drag exhausted teachers down.

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