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Editor's Introduction

Welcome to the *ASEAN Journal of Research*, Volume 2, Number 2 (July-December, 2024). The AJR is an academic journal that publishes papers on a double-blinded peer-reviewed system. Papers may be submitted in any academic discipline but should be written in English. Editorial support is provided, especially for authors for whom English is not their first language. The AJR is totally open access; there are no fees to submit or publish a paper and no fees to read one either. This policy will not change.

In addition to research papers, the journal also publishes book reviews, which are edited but not peer reviewed. Other forms of paper (e.g. practitioners' reports) may also be published. The editor is always open to considering different forms of submission.

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There is little doubt that 2024 will be regarded as a dark year in history. Not only is it the hottest year on record (presumably 2025 will break the record at once) but the obvious impacts of climate change are being increasingly felt everywhere. One of the reasons that everything is becoming more expensive is because it is more difficult to grow and distribute food and other vital resources, as a direct result of climate change. Things are not going to get better without radical and determined change by governments and people around the world. It is a particularly unfortunate time to have the prospect of a second Trump administration looming on the horizon, given how systematically disastrous his first one was. Presumably, the USA will be again withdrawn from multilateral commitments in many areas, not the least of which would be those to mitigate the already occurring disasters of climate change.

As if this were not bad enough, we have also seen the seemingly endless Russian invasion of Ukraine and Israel's ongoing bombardment of Gaza, which increasing numbers of people and institutions are concluding is a form of genocide. There is also an intense war continuing in Sudan, which seems particularly affecting since I had my first overseas job in Kassala. At the time of writing, there does not seem to be any prospect of any of these conflicts ending soon.

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One of the most notable features of 2024 away from the miseries of war has been the continued emergence of the large language models that power the current iteration of artificial intelligence (AI). At the moment, most people in the education field are treating this emergence as an ethical issue because now students can simply ask their AI interface of choice to compose an essay on the subject of their choice, formatted as required and it is becoming increasingly difficult to tell where machine begins and student ends. However, there are perhaps more important issues to consider. I am old enough to remember when pocket calculators first came into circulation and the moral panic then was that children would no longer learn to do multiplication and division in their heads and that this would be a significant loss to their abilities. Well, it is true that people these days do not seem to be able to do that kind of arithmetic as much as used to be the case but calculators now are everywhere – society has survived. When mobile phones became ubiquitous, a new panic formed around the idea that young people would not be able to remember useful facts – like everyone else, I can reel off the telephone numbers of half a dozen people, as well as addresses, my national insurance number and much more. Now, like most people, I can scarcely remember my own telephone number but life seems to have continued anyway. Now, with AIs able to write essays, the question is not whether we should relentlessly persecute people for copying and pasting but whether the ability to write an essay is really a vital skill everyone should be educated into being able to do? If not, then what are the skills we should be inculcating in our young people?

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In this issue, I am delighted to welcome papers from a wide range of subjects, including social and environmental sciences, educations, religious studies, arts and the humanities. ASEAN Journal of Research is intended to be an academic journal that publishes papers in as wide a range of academic disciplines as are taught at Krirk University and this gives space to the diversity of thought to be found within these pages. Papers are from authors in both Asia and Africa, with Bangladesh and Nigeria well represented. I hope to welcome more papers from these countries in the future and many others.

John Walsh, Krirk University

Peer-Reviewed Research Papers: Social and Environmental Sciences

Readership and Perception of Newspaper Editorials for Social Mobilization and Transformation among Selected Netizens in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study, which was anchored in the 'technology determinism' and the 'uses and gratification' theories, interrogated five research questions and three hypotheses to determine readership and perception s of newspaper editorials for social transformation among Netizens in Nigeria through a survey of 1,250 respondents found by random sampling. Findings showed a significant difference between readership of hardcopy and softcopy newspapers among the respondents. A majority of the respondents did not read editorials in softcopy newspapers regularly. Most of them also perceived editorials as efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation. However, the study found that gender did not determine respondents' perception of editorials but found a significant relationship between respondents' age brackets and their perception of editorials. The study concludes that low readership renders editorials inefficient as a force for social mobilization and transformation in present-day society. It recommends that planners of social mobilization and transformation campaigns should focus more on online newspapers than hardcopy versions.

Keywords: *editorials, netizens, perception, readership, social mobilization, transformation*

1. Introduction

It is common knowledge that, unlike radio and television, a newspaper requires literacy from the reader. This requirement makes newspaper an elitist medium of sorts. It also makes editorials an exclusive content for only the avid and analytically-minded reader. However, in the contemporary age of media convergence and digital technologies, it is unclear whether newspaper editorials still have the large readership and influence of the era of analogue communication technologies, especially when the issue is social mobilization and transformation, and the audience consists of Netizens.

There is no naysaying that continuous holistic improvement or transformation is a topical concern in most contemporary societies, both locally and globally. Governments, politicians, and bureaucrats seek holistic and continuous improvements in the standards of being and living of the citizens, residents, and other stakeholders in their spheres of jurisdiction. This desire and concerted quest for the better life in societies is perhaps as old as humanity and finds expressions in numerous terms such as 'mass mobilization,' 'social transformation,' 'grassroots development,' 'growth' and 'progress,' to mention but a few. However, mass mobilization of stakeholders, especially citizens and residents, is *sine qua non* for any entity seeking the attainment of beneficial transformation in the society. Moreover, mobilization for social transformation requires strategic communication in various media, including newspapers.

The newspaper, which is a multi-feature, diverse-content mass medium, has a long history. The pioneer mass medium, which preceded the invention of the printing press facilitated its production centuries ago, has come

of age. However, unlike the randomly aged organism, it has successfully defied the pull of extinction. Instead, it has evolved unceasingly to become a major lane in the contemporary information and communication superhighway. Since the *acta diurna* era of the newspaper in 59 BCE Italy, and the Chinese *Tsing Pao* of about 500 CE, the newspaper has moved from street walls, through street corner newsstands, to the Internet. Locally and globally, publishers release new issues of hardcopy and softcopy newspapers daily and weekly, thus maintaining as it were, a significant expanse of communication space in the media convergence and digitalization era, with editorials as a major content on offer to Netizens. Newspapers publish editorials, their corporate opinions on contemporary issues in society, on the assumption, rightly or wrongly, of their wide appeal, readership, and influence. Newspapers also write editorials on the supposition that they could inform, persuade, and mobilize readers towards social transformation.

Meanwhile, concerns about those assumptions caused one of these researchers to ask his students in 'Editorial Writing,' a M.Sc. course at the University of Lagos, to seek approval for topics of their choice, preparatory to class seminars. The topics the students submitted included 'Editorials and Maladministration in Nigeria: Writing to Right Bureaucratic Touting in Passport Processing,' 'Editorials as Panacea for Cash and Fuel Scarcities in Nigeria' and 'Editorials as Tool for Crises Management: A Study of the #ENDSARS Protests.' Others are 'Editorials as Tool for Social Mobilization: A Study of the Naira Redesign Policy in Nigeria,' 'Editorials in the Social Media Age: A Positive Influence or Waning Influence on Readers?' and 'Locating Editorials in the Formulation and Implementation of Health Policies in Nigeria.' Moreover, topics that assigned grand roles to editorials included 'Role of Editorials in Campaigning against Electoral Violence in Nigeria,' 'Role of Editorials in Combating Misinformation and Disinformation in Nigeria,' 'Role of Editorials in Dousing Separatist Movements' Agitations in Nigeria' and 'Role of Editorials in Mobilization for Political Participation in Nigeria,' among others.

Analysis of those students' topics showed that most of them were reminiscent of the classical 'hypodermic needle theory.' This theory posits that the mass media exerts magically powerful influence on the helpless and hapless mass audience, though, the 'uses and gratification ' theorists later argued that the audience is not passive; rather, the audience makes cognizant and motivated choices among available channels and contents. It was expected that the two-pronged pivot around which all the students' presentations revolved, was that the public read editorials massively, and that editorials are efficient engines for driving social transformation in the world today. The students' grand presentations prompted the need for further scholarly interrogations of those assumptions, to enable the separation of fiction from facts. Against this background, this study sought to determine the extent to which Netizens in Nigeria read editorials, and their perception of editorials as means mobilization for social transformation.

1.1. Research Questions

1. To what extent do Netizens in Nigeria read hardcopy and softcopy newspapers?

2. To what extent did Netizens in Nigeria read editorials in hardcopy and softcopy newspapers?

3. How did Netizens in Nigeria perceive the use of editorials for social mobilization and transformation?

4. Do genders of Netizens in Nigeria influence their perception of use of editorials for social mobilization and transformation?

5. Do age groups of Netizens in Nigeria influence their perception of use of editorials for social mobilization and transformation?

1.2. Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between readership of hardcopy and softcopy newspapers among Netizens in Nigeria.

2. There is no significant relationship between gender and perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation among Netizens in Nigeria.

3. There is no significant relationship between age and perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation among Netizens in Nigeria.

1.3. Contextual and Conceptual Clarifications

Several words and terminologies, which are pivotal and recurrent in this study, are clarified in alphabetical order as follows.

Firstly, an *editorial* herein refers to the corporate opinion or official perspective of a newspaper publication on topical issues in the society. It is published regularly in a dedicated space designated as the *editorial page*. Secondly, the term *Netizen* is rooted in the two English words *internet* and *citizen*, and it means 'Net citizen' or 'citizen of the Internet' or 'citizen of the Net.' A Netizen is a person who is habitually an active participant in Internet or online communities. *Netizens in Nigeria* are therefore Nigeria-based active and regular users or contributors to the Internet and online communities. Thirdly, a *newspaper* is a printed publication issued regularly on daily or weekly interval. It contains news, articles, advertisements, and correspondence.

A *hardcopy newspaper* is a newspaper consisting of folded, unstapled, physical sheets, while a *softcopy newspaper* is a newspaper published regularly on the Internet and online communities. Moreover, *hardcopy newspapers* refer to traditional newspapers obtainable on newsstands, while *softcopy newspapers* or *online newspapers* are electronic copies of traditional newspapers accessible on Internet websites.

Meanwhile, *perception* is a Netizen's personal opinion, understanding, or interpretation of newspapers as a vehicle for social mobilization and transformation, while *readership* herein refers to Netizens' frequencies of reading hardcopy and softcopy newspapers. *Social mobilization* is deliberate communication campaign designed to raise massive awareness and active support for a communal goal. Finally, *social transformation* is improvement in society arising from social mobilization.

2. Theoretical Context and Literature Review

The theoretical framework of this study consists of the 'technology determinism' and the 'uses and gratification' theories. Technological determinism is attributed to Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929). As cited in numerous articles (such as Ihuoma & Njoku, 2024; Appelgren, 2023; Hallström, 2020; Mardiana & Daniels, 2019), it is averred that technology defines and drives culture in any society and it is thus the principal agent of social transformation. Feng (2022), cited by Ihuoma and Njoku (2024), noted that technological determinism revolves around the notions that technology is both an autonomous force and an independent factor, and that technical advancement leads to societal transformation. The relevance of technological determinism to this study is that contemporary human communication at all levels is media driven and that the media evolves concurrently with technology. Therefore, technological advancements will determine available communication media and media options will in turn determine media users' choices. More specifically, advancement in technology and its attendant availability of online media and Apps has broadened media and contents options in society. The enhanced media and media contents options

could, in line with the postulation of the technological determinism theory, transform the way respondents in the study access and assess newspaper editorials.

Conversely, Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch propounded the uses and gratification theory in 1974. They claimed that a media audience consciously, freely, and actively seek and select media and contents to gratify their communication needs and desires; that an individual would select and use a particular medium rather than others of perceived higher satisfaction potentials of that medium relative to other media . The users also decide how media use affects them. According to Denise McQuail (1987), cited by Oketunmbi (2015), the audience '… makes a conscious and motivated choice among channels and contents on offer .' The relevance of the uses and gratification theory to this study is respondents are likely to choose between hardcopy and softcopy editorials because of perceived higher gratification potentials of either of the two.

2.1. Review of Selected Pervious Studies

In the study 'Assessment of Patterns of Editorial Readership in Nigerian Newspapers,' Udende and Onobe (2014) reported that 81% (n = 120) of the respondents read editorials, out of which majority were regular readers and only 17% (n = 17) were occasional readers. One year later, another researcher (Oketunmbi, 2015) reported similar findings in the study 'Newspaper On-Air and On-Line: Boom or Doom to Readership among Journalism-Educators?' It was found that a simple majority of the respondents (58.07%, n = 18) read hardcopy newspapers regularly. The study further reported that less than half of the respondents accessed on-line newspapers regularly and concluded that there was no declining readership of hardcopy newspaper in Nigeria.

Conversely, in another recent study, 'Newspaper Readership Pattern among Nigerian University Students: Perspectives from Mass Communication Students,' Apuke and Omar (2020) concluded that newspaper readership among the respondents was poor because most of them (82.8%, n = 198) read newspapers only occasionally. Furthermore, in a further study, 'Readers' Perception and Preferences for Online and Print Newspapers in the University Library,' Anyim (2021) found that a simple majority of the respondents (52.2%, n = 52) preferred online newspapers to print newspapers. The reason for this preference, according to the findings, was that most of the respondents (48.9% n = 44) considered online newspapers as being more convenient to read compared to print newspapers. Similarly in their study, 'Readership of Newspaper Editorial among Undergraduates of Mass Communication Department Federal University Oye-Ekiti' Rufai, Onayinka, Opele and Salami (2022) concluded that readership level of newspaper editorials among the respondents was low. Instead, they preferred reading other contents. Moreover, the respondents preferred editorials in online platforms to those hardcopy newspapers.

It is noteworthy that, the conclusions by Udende and Onobe (2014) on one hand, and Oketunmbi (2015) on the other hand, sharply contradict findings in more recent studies (such as Apuke & Omar, 2020; Anyim, 2021; and Rufai et al, 2022). The contrast is probably because of the relative novelty and adoption of online-first newspapers in Nigeria in the early years of the 21 century. In summary, the status of current literature is that newspaper readership is on the decline in Nigeria, and readers read more of online newspapers in the country than hardcopy versions.

3. Design and Limitation of the Study

The study adopted the United Kingdom (UK) version of the English language for this work because it is the first language of the population of the study and the respondents. The choice of language is simple enough for readers whose first language is not English, provided those readers have a basic understanding of English language.

The study was a quasi-national survey with a population comprising Netizens in Nigeria, from which it selected a sample of 1,250 by random sampling. The research instrument was a closed-ended, seven-item Google Form and the study was validated by the face-validity and peer-review methods, while the study determined the reliability of the instrument by the test-retest method. It was administered online by the researchers and research assistants recruited from members of the University of Lagos M.Sc. Mass Communication Course of 2023. The questionnaire was administered online through emails and various social media to enable access to respondents who possibly read both hardcopy and softcopy newspapers. The response rate was 100% because, the questionnaire was enabled for submission only after respondents fully and dully responded to all items in the questionnaire. Data gathering spanned 16 days and timestamps of 2023/02/24 2:05:02 pm and 2023/03/12 1:53:00 pm. Data analysis was by simple percentages, cross-tabulations, and tests of hypotheses.

However, online administration of the questionnaire is probably a limitation to the study because only respondents with access to Internet and social media participated in the survey. The findings of the study would probably have been different if Nigerians without access to Internet and social media were not precluded from the study.

4. Data Analyses and Results

The data gathered in the study were analysed and the results are as follows.

4.1. Readership of Hardcopy and Softcopy Newspapers among Netizens in Nigeria

On research question 1, 'To what extent did Netizens in Nigeria read hardcopy and softcopy newspapers?' Table 1 shows that 23.1% (n = 289) never read hardcopy newspapers, while 64.6% (n = 808) read hardcopy newspapers occasionally. When those figures [23.1% (n = 289) and 64.6% (n = 808)] were added together, it means that 87.7% of the respondents (n = 1097) either do not read hardcopy newspapers or were, at best, irregular and therefore uncertain readers. In other words, only 12.3% (n = 153) of the respondents were regular readers of hardcopy newspapers comprising 7.9% (n = 99) who read daily; and 4.3% (n = 54) who read hardcopy newspapers weekly or at weekends.

Type	Never Read (%, n)	Read Daily (%, n)	Read Weekly/Weekends (%, n)	Read Less Often (%, n)	Total (%, n)
Hardcopy	23.1, 289	7.9, 99	4.3, 54	64.6, 808	
Softcopy	3.2, 40	48.6, 608	15.5, 194	32.6, 408	100, 1250

Table 1: Respondents' Frequencies of Reading Hardcopy and Softcopy Newspapers; source: Originnal Research

However, the study found that softcopy newspapers were more popular among the respondents. An inference from Table 1 is that more than half of the respondents (64.1%, n = 802), comprising 48.6% (n = 608) for 'daily', and 15.5% (n = 194) for 'weekly and weekends' respectively, were regular readers of softcopy newspapers. The remaining respondents (35.8%, n = 448) comprising 3.2% (n = 40) for 'never' 32.6% (n=408) for 'occasionally' were irregular readers of softcopy newspapers. For further analysis, the study tested Hypothesis I as reported in Table 2.

Responses (n)	Hardcopy Newspaper	Softcopy Newspaper	Total
Never	144	20	164
Daily	50	304	354
Weekly/Weekends	27	97	124
Less Often	404	204	608
Total	625	625	1250

Table 2: Test of Hypothesis I" There Is No Significant Difference between Readership of Hardcopy and Softcopy Newspapers among Netizens in Nigeria, source: Original Research, p = 0.000**

Arising from the decision criteria, the study deduced that there is a significant difference between readership of hardcopy and softcopy newspapers among Netizens in Nigeria. Therefore, in answer to research question 1, the study found that the respondents read more of softcopy newspapers (64.1%, n = 802) than hardcopy newspapers (12.3%, n = 153). This finding corroborates current and relevant postulations of the two theories in which this study is grounded, to wit, the 'technology determinism' and 'uses and gratification.'

4.2. Readership of Hardcopy and Softcopy Editorials among Netizens in Nigeria

On research question 2, 'To what extent did Netizens in Nigeria read editorials in hardcopy and softcopy newspapers?' Table 3 indicates that 27.2% (n = 342) never read editorials in hardcopy newspapers while 62.6% (n = 783) did so only occasionally. Inferentially, this means that majority of the respondents (89.8%, n = 1,125) were not regular readers of editorials in hardcopy newspapers. The remaining 10.2% (n = 125) of the respondents comprising 4.3% (n = 54) for 'daily' and 5.7% (n = 71) for 'weekly and weekends' were regular readers of editorials in hardcopy newspapers.

Type	Never Read (%, n)	Read Daily (%, n)	Read Weekly/Weekends (%, n)	Read Less Often (%, n)	Total (%, n)
Hardcopy	27.2, 342	4.3, 54	5.7, 71	62.6, 783	
Softcopy	10.8, 135	28.5, 356	15.9, 199	44.8, 560	100, 1250

Table 3: Respondents' Frequencies of Reading Editorials in Hardcopy and Softcopy Newspapers; source: Original Research

Inferentially also, slightly more than half of the respondents (55.6%, n = 695) comprising 10.8% (n = 135) for 'never' and 44.8% (n = 560) for 'occasionally' were not regular readers of editorials in softcopy newspapers. Only 44.4% (n = 555) of the respondents, comprising 28.5% (n = 356) for 'daily' and 15.9% (n = 199) for 'weekly and weekends' were regular readers of editorials in softcopy newspapers.

Therefore, in answer to research question 2, the study found that only 10.2% (n = 125) of the respondents were regular readers of editorials in hardcopy newspapers, while a landslide majority (89.8%, n = 1,125) were not. Moreover, only 44.4% (n = 555) of the respondents, regular readers of editorials in softcopy newspapers, while a simple majority (55.6%, n = 695) were not. Again, this finding corroborates current and relevant postulations of the two theories in which this study is grounded, to wit, the 'technology determinism' and 'uses and gratification.'

4.3. Perception of Editorials for Social Mobilization and Transformation among Netizens in Nigeria

On research question 3, 'How did Netizens in Nigeria perceive use of editorials for social mobilization and transformation?' Table 4 reveals 15.7% (n = 196) of the respondents strongly agreed that editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation, while 50.8% (n = 635) simply agreed. Inferentially, a simple majority of the respondents (66.5% n = 831) thought that editorials

are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation. The remaining 33.5% (n = 419), comprising 24.6% (n = 307) who were undecided; 8.4% (n = 105) who disagreed; and 0.6% (n = 7) who strongly disagreed, did not think that editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation.

Therefore, in answer to research question 3, the study found that, despite low level of readership of hardcopy and softcopy editorials as reported in the analysis of data on research question 2, a simple majority of the respondents (66.5% n = 831) thought that editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation. On count three, this finding corroborates current and relevant postulations of the two theories in which this study is grounded, to wit, the 'technology determinism' and 'uses and gratification.'

Editorials Are Efficient, Convenient, and Cost-Effective for Social Mobilization and Transformation					
Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
15.7%	50.8%	24.6%	8.4%	0.6%	100 (n = 1,2500

Table 4: Respondents' Perception of Editorials for Social Mobilization and Transformation; source: Original Research

4.4. Genders and Perception of Editorials for Social Mobilization and Transformation among Netizens in Nigeria

On research question 4, 'Do genders of Netizens in Nigeria influence their perception of use of editorials for social mobilization and transformation?' Table 5 specifies that a simple majority, slightly more than half of the respondents or 54.7% (n = 684) were females, while the remaining 45.3% (n = 566) were males.

Editorials Are Efficient, Convenient, and Cost-Effective for Social Mobilization and Transformation		
Responses (%)	Male	Female
Strongly agree	8.2	7.4
Agree	23.6	27.2
Undecided	9.6	14.9
Disagree	3.5	4.9
Strongly disagree	0.2	0.3
Total	45.3 (n = 566)	54.7 (n = 684)

Table 5: Cross-Tabulation of Respondents' Genders and Perception of Editorials' source: Original Research

On the proposition that 'Editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation' 8.2% (n = 103) males strongly agreed compared to 7.4% (n = 93) females. 23.6% (n = 295) males simply agreed compared to 27.2% (n = 340) females. 9.6% (n = 121) of males were undecided compared to 14.9% (n = 186) of females. 3.5% (n = 44) males disagreed with the proposition compared to 4.9% (n = 61) females, while 0.2% (n = 3) males strongly disagreed compared to 0.3% (n = 4) of females.

Inferentially, 31.8% (n = 398) of males thought that 'Editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation' compared to 34.6% (n = 433) of females. Similarly, 3.7% (n = 47) of males did not think that 'Editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation' compared to 5.2% (n = 65) of females. For further analysis of data on research question 4, the study tested Hypothesis II through cross-tabulation with chi-square testing. The result was $p = 0.054016$, so the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Grounded in the decision criterion, the study inferred that there is no significant difference between gender and perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation among Netizens in Nigeria. Moreover, since, from Table 5, there appeared to be no significant differences between the figures of males versus females on the proposition that, 'Editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation' the study therefore found, in answer to research question 4, that gender did not determine respondents' perception. Literature again supports this finding.

4.5. Age Groups and Perception of Editorials for Social Mobilization and Transformation among Netizens in Nigeria

On research question 5, 'Do age groups of Netizens in Nigeria influence their perception of use of editorials for social mobilization and transformation?' Table 7 revealed that almost half of the respondents (43.0%, n = 537) were within the 20-29 age bracket at the time of the study. The 30-39 group followed with a frequency of 19.9% (n = 248), 40-49 with 14.2% (n = 178), 50-59 with 11.4% (n = 143), and 13-19 with 7.7% (n = 96). The seniors' age bracket of 60 years and above polled the least count with 3.8% (n = 48).

To get a clearer view of respondents' age brackets versus perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation, the study merged the 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses across all age brackets and did the same thing for the 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' responses across all age brackets. Thus, out of the 7.7% (n = 96) respondents in the 13-19 age bracket, 5.1% (n = 64) comprising 0.8% (n = 10) 'Strongly Agree' and 4.3% (n = 54) 'Agree' perceived editorials as 'efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation' while 0.3% (n = 4) did not. The remaining 2.2% (n = 28) in the 13-19 age bracket were undecided.

Moreover, out of the 43.0% (n = 537) respondents aged 20-29 years, 26.4% (n = 330) comprising 5.5% (n = 69) 'Strongly Agree' and 20.9% (n = 261) 'Agree' perceived editorials as 'efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation' while 4.30% (n = 54) did not. The remaining 12.2% (n = 153) in the 20-29 age bracket were undecided. Furthermore, out of the 19.9% (n = 248) respondents aged 30-39 years, 14.0% (n = 174) comprising 3.8% (n = 47) 'Strongly Agree' and 10.2% (n = 127) 'Agree' perceived editorials as 'efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation' while 1.50% (n = 19) did not. The remaining 4.4% (n = 55) in the 30-39 age bracket were undecided.

Likewise, out of the 14.2% (n = 178) respondents aged 40-49 years, 11.1% (n = 134) comprising 3.7% (n = 42) 'Strongly Agree' and 7.4% (n = 92) 'Agree' perceived editorials as 'efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation' while 0.8% (n = 10) did not. The remaining 2.7% (n = 34) in the 40-49 age bracket were undecided.

Also, out of the 11.4% (n = 143) respondents aged 50-59 years, 8.0% (n = 100) comprising 1.8% (n = 22) 'Strongly Agree' and 6.2% (n = 78) 'Agree' perceived editorials as 'efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation' while 1.7% (n = 21) did not. The remaining 1.8% (n = 22) in the 50-59 age bracket were undecided.

(%)	Editorials Are Efficient, Convenient, and Cost-Effective for Social Mobilization and Transformation					
	13-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Strongly agree	0.8	5.5	3.8	3.7	1.8	0.5
Agree	4.3	20.9	10.2	7.4	6.2	1.8
Undecided	2.2	12.2	4.4	2.7	1.8	1.2
Disagree	0.3	4.2	1.3	0.7	1.5	0.3
Strongly disagree	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.0
Total	7.7 (n = 96)	43.0 (n = 537)	19.9 (n = 248+	14.2 (n = 178)	11.4 (n = 143)	3.8 (n = 48)

Table 6: Cross-Tabulation of Respondents' Age Brackets and Perception of Editorials; source: Original Research

Moreover, out of the 3.8% (n = 48) respondents aged 60 years and above, 2.3% (n = 29) comprising 0.5% (n = 6) 'Strongly Agree' and 1.8% (n = 23) 'Agree' perceived editorials as 'efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation' while 0.3% (n = 4) did not. The remaining 1.2% (n = 15) in the 60 years and above age bracket were undecided.

This leads to the inference that the 20-29 years, and the 60 years and above age groups, polled the highest and the least respectively for positive perception of editorials. In other words, age group of respondents influenced their perception of editorials. To verify this inference, the study tested hypothesis through cross-tabulation with chi-square testing. The result was $p = 0.001227$, which is a highly significant result and meant the null hypothesis was rejected.

Given the decision criterion, the study deduced that there is a significant relationship between age and perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation among Netizens in Nigeria. Therefore, in answer to research question five, the study found that, respondents' age brackets influenced their perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation. This finding, although not supported by literature reviewed in this study, yet corroborates relevant postulations of the 'uses and gratification.'

4.6. Summary of Findings and Discussion

The respondents more often read softcopy newspapers than hardcopy newspapers and tests proved the hypothesis 'there is no significant difference between readership of hardcopy and softcopy newspapers among Netizens in Nigeria' to be false. Moreover, a landslide majority of the respondents were not regular readers of editorials in hardcopy newspapers while more than half of them were also not regular readers of editorials in softcopy newspapers. However, despite a significantly low level of readership of hardcopy and softcopy editorials, majority of the respondents, albeit unexpectedly, thought that editorials are efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation. The respondents' majority opinion is debatable because it could be argued that since majority of the respondents did not read editorials, then editorials are unlikely to be effective in driving social mobilization and transformation in 21 century society.

Meanwhile, it is, perhaps, worth noting that gender did not determine respondents' perception of editorials as drivers of social mobilization and transformation in contemporary society and test of the hypothesis 'there is no significant relationship between gender and perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation among Netizens in Nigeria' supports this finding. However, respondents' age brackets did influence their perception of editorials as instruments for social mobilization and transformation. This finding finds support in the test of the hypothesis 'There is no significant relationship between age and

perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation among Netizens in Nigeria.' These findings, in the main, validate current literature and relevant postulations of the two theories in which this study is anchored, to wit, the 'technology determinism' and 'uses and gratification.'

Since 'Technology determinism' asserts that technology shapes, drives, and transforms culture in any society, then it is easy to understand why the respondents prefer new technology driven softcopy newspapers to old technology-based hardcopy newspapers. Moreover, the 'uses and gratification theory' stipulates that the audience purposefully and actively seek and select media and contents which they perceived as best to gratify their communication needs and desires. This theory thus offers an insight into why the respondents prefer the easier and faster to access online newspapers to the slower and more difficult to access hardcopy versions. The overarching point from the findings therefore, is that editorials, particularly those in hardcopy newspapers do not, on their own, constitute an effective of efficient driving force for social mobilization and transformation in contemporary world.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Arising from its findings, the study concludes that there is a significant difference between readership of hardcopy and softcopy newspapers among Netizens in Nigeria because respondents read more softcopy newspapers compared to hardcopy newspapers. Only a tenth of the respondents were regular readers of editorials in hardcopy newspapers, while nine tenth of them were not. Moreover, only 44% of the respondents were regular readers of editorials in softcopy newspapers, while a simple 56% majority were not. These particular findings lead to the conclusion that, the pre-study grand assumptions that the public reads editorials massively, and that editorials are efficient drivers for social mobilization and transformation in contemporary society, have been proved false.

However, despite the low level of readership of hardcopy and softcopy editorials among the respondents, a simple 67% majority of them perceived editorials as efficient, convenient, and cost-effective for social mobilization and transformation. On the other hand, the study found no significant difference between gender and perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation among Netizens in Nigeria. Gender did not determine respondents' perception of editorials. Also, the study found a significant relationship between age and perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation among Netizens in Nigeria. Respondents' age brackets influenced their perception of editorials for social mobilization and transformation.

It could be noteworthy to remark that the findings of the study corroborate, on the one hand, current literature on readership of newspapers and editorials and, on the other hand, the comparative preference of softcopy over hardcopy newspapers in Nigeria. Finally, the findings also reflect the main assertions of both the 'technology determinism' and the 'uses and gratification ' theories in which the study was anchored.

Arising from these conclusions, the study recommends that planners of social mobilization and transformation campaigns should look beyond newspapers and editorials, particularly the hardcopy versions. If newspapers must be used at all, online platforms should be accorded priority because they are likely to be more effective than hardcopy newspapers.

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Disruption and Adaptation: Assessing the Impacts of Climate Change and Adaptation in Arkandi Village of Bangladesh

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Abstract

Though climate change is a global crisis, it has harmful effects on the lives and livelihoods at the local level and agriculture is one of the most vulnerable sectors exposed to this issue. The present study aims to explore the impacts of climate change on the agricultural sector and adaptation in a riverine village in Bangladesh. Utilizing mixed methods, this study attempts to unravel the disastrous impacts of climate change on the agricultural sector including reduced quality of agro-ingredients and lower rates of crop production that eventually disrupt the lives and livelihoods of the peasants. However, people in that village tend to adopt different adaptation strategies to combat such effects. In this regard, they make their decisions based on the types of calamities by utilizing local knowledge and perceptions, intuitions and experiments, and institutional guidance.

Keywords: *adaptation, agriculture, climate change*

1. Introduction

As agriculture is one of the largest sectors in the Bangladeshi economy, most of the people in this country are dependent on it (Ahmed, 2012). The weather patterns and geographical position of Bangladesh alongside numerous swamps are helpful for the agricultural sector (Ahmed, 2012). However, at present, it is evident that there are severe harmful impacts on this sector due to climate change (Ahmed, 2012).

"Climate change refers to any change in climate over time whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity (Abbass *et al*., 2022; Europäisches Zentrum für die Prävention und die Kontrolle von Krankheiten, 2010)." However, human activity is largely responsible for the present climate change crisis (Islam & Shafie, 2017). Climate change causes global warming around the world that can create numerous harmful incidents and disasters including ice melting, heavy rainfall, the rise of sea levels, high frequency of floods, drought, river erosion, salinity intrusion and impediments to the growth of plants (Islam & Shafie, 2017). However, the people of Bangladesh try to adjust to adverse realities through climate adaptation. When an accepted definition of adaptation is "… the processes by which organisms cope with environmental forces and stresses (Kottak, 2008)," climate adaptation can be defined as "… taking actions to prepare for and adjust to the current and projected impacts of climate change (Global Center on Adaptation, 2024)." In this regard, the knowledge of disaster management (whether formal or informal) is essential. Disaster management can be defined as "… a process of effectively preparing for and responding to disasters, involving strategically organizing resources to lessen the harm that disasters cause through a systematic approach" (Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, 2021). However, sometimes, people can apply local knowledge and perceptions to manage disasters that are obtained through generations (Hassan, 2000).

Being located in South Asia on the northern edge of the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh is a small country, which is comprised of low-lying deltaic plains. Several rivers, including the Ganges, and Bramhaputra, crisscross the country. Except for the hilly areas of Sylet and the forest regions of Chittagong, most of the lands are not more than 35 feet (10.7 metres) above sea level (Country Reports, 2024). Owing to its unique geographical location, Bangladesh is one of the worst vulnerable countries to being victims of climatchange in the world (Ahmed, 2012). In particular,

people living in the riverine and coastal areas are most vulnerable to different types of hazards and disasters (Islam, Shitangsu & Hassan, 2015). Arkandi, a remote village in Bangladesh, is our research site; it is a riverine area (mainland), which is greatly affected by hazards and disasters multiplied by climate change, where most people depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.

Despite being a global crisis, climate change has largely disrupted the lives and livelihoods of Bangladeshi peasants and overall the whole agricultural sector in Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2012). In coastal areas, climate change-induced hazards have a serious impact on coastal agriculture, livestock and fisheries, which are the main sources of the livelihoods of the people living in coastal areas. In particular, those who are disadvantaged in terms of wealth and gender are more vulnerable to crisis (Hossain & Majumder, 2018). From the study by Ahmed *et al.* (2021), it is evident that the agriculture of chars (islands) has been largely affected by climate change. Besides, many studies have been conducted on the impacts of climate change on multiple sectors and the adaptation processes of people in Bangladesh (Ahmed *et al.*, 2021; Dasgupta *et al.*, 2017; Hossain & Noor, 2016; Hossain & Majumder, 2018; Islam *et al.*, 2015). However, studies, that highlight the impacts of climate change and people's adaptation processes on the riverine areas (mainland) in Bangladesh, can hardly be found.

In this context, utilizing mixed methods, we explored the impacts of climate change on agriculture in Bangladesh with a focus on local adaptation processes in the riverbank (mainland) area at Pabna (a district in Bangladesh), by adopting a micro perspective. Besides, this study inquired into some significant issues such as local perceptions of climate change and alternative livelihood strategies. To retain authenticity, we used some Bengali words like *bigha* (a unit of measurement of land: 1 *bigha* is equal to 0.33 acres) and *beel* (a special kind of wetland in Bangladesh). Moreover, we used an abbreviation of an agricultural term that is HYV (high-yielding varieties), which refers to such varieties that can increase food production per unit).

1.1. Objectives

The main objectives of this paper are:

- to understand the impacts of climate change on the agricultural sector in Arkandi, Pabna • to explore the local adaptive strategies of the peasants in this area.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Climate Change and Its Impacts on Agriculture

Despite being a global crisis, the harmful impacts of climate change often disrupt local lives and livelihoods (Islam & Shafie, 2017). Owing to its geographical position, Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries in this crisis and climate change has hampered multiple sectors in the country. Being an agricultural country, where more than half the population is directly or indirectly associated with this sector, climate change can threaten the lives and livelihoods of a significant number of people in this country (Ahmed, 2012). Hossain and Noor (2016) described how the agricultural sector and food security of Bangladesh is being threatened by climate change (Hossain & Noor, 2016). Climate change causes higher temperatures, decreased rainfall in winter and rises in sea level that eventually damages crop production (Hossain & Noor, 2016). On the other hand, Islam *et al*. (2015) examined the harmful effects of sea level rise in the agricultural sector by demonstrating that it can cause salinity intrusion, recurrent floods and increased cyclone frequency.

Though a large number of people are dependent on the coastal areas, these areas are the worst victims of climate change. The multifaceted consequences of climate change in the agricultural sector of southern areas in Bangladesh include higher infestation of pests, deficiency of water and soil moisture and salinity

intrusion (Hossain & Majumder, 2018). Moreover, calamities like cyclones can make the situation even worse. For example, during the cyclone of Amphan in 2020 (Bangladesh Relief Web, 2020), the coastal areas of Bangladesh were largely devastated. Along with the lives and livelihoods of people, the harmful effects of the agricultural sector were highly visible (IFRC, 2020).

2.2. Climate Crisis and Adaptation

"Adaptation refers to the processes by which organisms cope with environmental forces and stresses (Kottak, 2008)." In this study, we have utilized the concept to understand the processes by which people can cope with the adverse situations of climate change. Based on a synthesis of micro and macro perspectives, Islam and Shafie (2017) illustrate the impacts of climate change and adaptation techniques in four districts of Bangladesh, which are each situated in different geographical regions. As the natural calamities and other difficulties caused by climate changes differ in terms of regions, people tend to adapt to their situation in different ways (Islam & Shafie,2017). Islam *et al.* (2015) recommended some adaptive strategies such as control of saline water intrusion into agricultural land, coastal afforestation, cultivation of saline tolerant crops, homestead and floating gardening, embankment cropping, and adopting alternative livelihoods at the local level (Islam *et al.*, 2015).

Like most of the least-developed countries, Bangladesh contributes little to the global crisis. Nevertheless, it is one of the worst sufferers from the crisis. It is quite evident that it has limited adaptive capacity in the institutional, educational and economic contexts (Huq *et al.*, 2003). However, people in the country often adopt different forms of adaptation techniques that have been passed down through generations. The study of Hasan (2010) resonates with the fact as in his study he shows how Rakhain people perceive, predict and adapt to disasters like cyclones. On the other hand, some studies highlight the possibility of technology-based adaptation strategies (such as soil-resistant rice) to combat the harmful impacts of climate change in disaster-prone areas (for example-coastal areas) (Dasgupta *et al.*, 2017).

Careful observation reveals that some of the studies, relevant to the impacts of climate change and the adaptation strategies to combat climate change, are focused on disaster management, while others focus on the impacts and adaptation processes of multiple sectors in Bangladesh. Some studies indeed focus on the agricultural sector but they have been conducted in coastal areas or adopted a macro perspective. However, the present study illustrates the impacts of climate change and the adaptation process in a local context from a micro-perspective.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sources of Data

Though this article is based on an empirical study, we have collected data from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of data include qualitative data collected from fieldwork whereas the secondary sources were books, research papers, newspapers and the internet.

3.2. Selection of the Site

As we decided to conduct a study that investigated the impacts of climate change on agriculture and the adaptation processes people adopt to combat such effects, we selected a remote village named Arkandi in the southern area as a research site, where most of the people are associated with agriculture and the area is largely affected by climate change.

3.3. Sampling

As ours was a qualitative study, we decided to do an in-depth study with a small sample size. Therefore, we talked with the thirty participants most vulnerable to the situation. While most of the

participants were peasants, some of them were associated with local businesses.

As we wanted to assess the impacts of climate change from an anthropological lens, we chose to talk with people who have clear ideas about it or those who are the sufferers of climate change. So, we adopted purposive sampling to select participants in our study where we particularly chose peasants and people who are closely associated with farming. We also tried to select participants from all classes, religions and genders so that the sample could successfully represent the study population.

3.4. Methods of Data Collection

In our research, we have used several anthropological methods to collect sufficient data. All the interviews and notes were taken in Bengali as the native language of both participants and researchers is Bengali. After the data collection, we translated these into English. While translating the interviews and notes, we strive as much as possible to retain the original meanings.

The methods, by which we collect the data, are:

Key informant interviews: we have interviewed some professionals and businesspeople who have well-articulated notions about the impacts of climate change in the locality. These interviews were helpful to guide us in understanding the local dimension of this global crisis.

- Observation: we have also observed the activities of our participants and the surroundings to understand the impacts of climate change on their daily lives and how they adapt to such changes.

- Semi-structured interviews: in our fieldwork, we mostly used semi-structured interviews to collect data from our participants. In this method, we had some predetermined questions about the impacts of climate change and adaptive strategies that can be used to combat climate change-induced hazards and adverse situations. We also provided sufficient freedom to our participants so that they could utilize their agency in explaining their knowledge and experience.

3.5. Data Analysis

"Qualitative analysis- in fact, all analysis - is the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain the existence of those patterns (Bernard, 2006)." Like most of the qualitative studies, our data analysis began when we started to collect data from our field. At that time, we used to review our notes (that were collected during the interview or observation) and found the gaps that were required to fill.

After our fieldwork, we utilized the triangulation method to analyze the collected data. At the outset of the study, we used some quantitative techniques to identify the percentages. After that, we classified our qualitative data by some general themes, including the impacts of climate change on the agricultural sector and the local adaptive strategies to such adverse situations.

4. Findings

4.1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Participants

As mentioned earlier, at the outset of the study, we collected some fundamental demographic information. These are presented in Table 1 below.

Variables	Options	%age
Population	Male	41.7
	Female	33.3
	Children	25.0
Household Pattern	Nuclear	73.3
	Extended	26.7
Educational Attainment	None/non-formal	20.0
	Literate	20.0
	Primary	3.3
	Secondary	26.7
	Higher Secondary	3.3
	Above Higher Secondary	26.7
Yearly Income Range[1]	0-19,999	16.7
	20,000-50,000	46.7
	50,001-100,000	26.7
	100,001+	10.0
Amount of Agricultural Land (*bigha*)	Landless	16.7
	1-5	60.0
	6-10	20.0
	11+	3.3

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Participants; source: Original Research

4.2. Types of Crops in the Locality:

Though the peasants in Arkandi used to produce different types of crops, nowadays, they only produce rice, jute, wheat, mustard, sesame and vegetables in three particular seasons. The following table can illustrate this variation in detail:

Name of the Cropping Season	Duration	Produced Crops	Average Level of Produced Crops
Kharif-1	March-May	Rice (IRRI), jute, wheat etc.	Medium
Kharif-2	June-October	Aman rice, summer vegetables etc.	Medium
Rabi	November-February	Mustard, sesame	High

Table 2. Seasonal Crops and Its Production Rate; source: Original Research

4.3. Impacts of Climate Change on the Agricultural Sector of Arkandi

4.3.1. Climate Change and Arkandi Village

The area is vulnerable enough in the case of climate change. The western part of the area is close enough to the River Padma and the eastern part is connected to the Chalon *beel* through various channels. The entire village is residing on segregated soil heaps which are somewhat elevated from the land. In the dry season, people collect soil from their water reservoir and with that soil they heighten their residing land. They do it to adapt to flood but the agricultural land is low-lying, so that land becomes easily flood-

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[1] 1 US$ is equal to 117.5 Bangladeshi taka (BT).

affected every year.

In the rainy season, agricultural land was inundated very swiftly at the start of the flood. There are two specific reasons for that catastrophe, first of all, the geographical position and the second one is climate change. The effect of climate change accelerates the rate of vulnerability and that is why the situation has progressed to an extreme level. The crops have gone underwater before harvesting. Those who try to harvest them have had no end of trouble.

In the dry season, people cannot maintain the irrigation process properly. All the channels and the river also dry up and consequently people install shallow or deep pumps for irrigation. Though there is a sluice gate under the dam, the quantity of water that flows through it is not enough to cover the area. So, the peasants have to carry water to the land from afar or use deep pumps in the dry season. Moreover, hailstorms, heavy rainfall, heatwaves, cold waves and so on are common natural disasters that make it very difficult for people to cope. A statement from one participant, Afzal Pramanik (60), can reveal the overall situation:

> "In our childhood, we saw many kinds of crops that our ancestors cultivated. My father and grandfather used to farm many kinds of cereal crops like *buro, cown*, China, *ukunmodhu dhan, kalojira dhan* [different types of paddy] etc. At that time, we had to face an irrigation problem because pumps were not so available on that time. The HYV paddies had not been cultivated at that time. We had to depend on precipitation or channels for river water. The fact is, we didn't face so many natural catastrophes but now we are doing so. Every natural phenomenon occurred at an exact time in the past. We didn't go through frequent floods, rainstorms, heat waves, or cold waves. Every kind of calamity happened in moderation. But at present, we are experiencing them in extremity. Some unwanted and terrible situations are happening frequently. Our village was full of trees and roads were not covered with pitch. We were segregated from the municipal area. We used a boat as our transport system. Now, more recently, people have cut many trees to construct those bridges and roads. Now we are in touch with the modern transport system but the system cannot reduce our suffering. Moreover, we are facing strong gusts of winds because of the trees having been cut down."

4.3.2. Quality of Agro-Ingredients: Past and Present

The quality of some essential components for agriculture including soil, seeds and water sources has been disrupted by climate change. The comparative chart can clarify the matter:

Component	Past	Present
Soil quality	Moist and fertile from natural means Low land erosion Moderate pH level	Dry soil Low fertility Rise of soil erosion etc.
Seed quality	Moderate germination power Well-nourished and free from insect attacks	Reduction of quality Reduction of germination power
Water source	River water through channels Moderate precipitation	Deep or shallow pumps required
Fertiliser use	Moderate rate of using fertilisers and pesticides	Excessive use of fertilisers and pesticides
Form of plants	Sufficient growth naturally	Insufficient growth Extensive insect attacks

Table 3: A Comparative Chart on Agro-ingredients' Quality; source: Original Research

4.3.3. Quantity of Crops

People of that village farm mainly two kinds of crops; paddy and mustard. Once they cultivated various other crops but at present the situation has become a little bit tough and is getting out of control. Here we can explain the situation with a case study. Gafur Pramanik (80) is an elderly peasant of the village who observed:

> "We cultivated so many kinds of crops but we don't do it now. The land has become infertile and that's why we don't get enough crops from that land. We can't produce as much as we could before. As an example, once upon a time, we cultivated jute and other crops in the rainy season [Kharif-2]. We didn't have to face many difficulties as much as we have to do nowadays. Heavy rainfall and excessive flooding impede the production level of jute cultivation. Moreover, the floods at unsuitable times and high-water levels of the flood make the situation much more adverse and this is not favorable to jute cultivation ... we were also used to cultivating wheat, barley and many kinds of cereals but wheat is grown in the summer and excessive heat now does not let the wheat grow properly. This is the reason we stopped cultivating so many crops. Nowadays, we only cultivate rice, mustard, some kinds of peas and pulses."

4.3.4. Impacts on the Livelihood of Peasants

People have been going through this adverse situation for more than two decades and day by day the situation is getting worse. Peasants are trying to combat the adverse effects of climate change but in some cases, they are getting destitute. Low production rates and economic loss are pushing those people to move from agriculture. Most of the people are engaged in another profession besides agriculture and some of them have taken that profession permanently. The impacts of climate change have lessened the standard of living. People are working as day labourers, rickshaw pullers, bricklayers, auto-rickshaw pullers and so on. Some of them are moving to a city or town in search of work. After coming to a city area like Dhaka, they work at brick kilns in garment factories or as a day labourer. As they cannot manage their family through cultivation, they are breaking down economically. Some of them sell their land permanently and go to another place forever. We have found at least five households that have been left by their residents.

We asked some of those people's neighbours why they left their dwelling house. One of their neighbours replied: "They couldn't run their family. The prime members of those families are sharecroppers. For being a sharecropper, they can't grow all of the produced crops required. As a rule of sharecropping, the sharecropper gets 2\3 of the whole production and 1\3 goes to the land owner. However, the sharecropper gets the lion's share but this is not now sufficient to feed their family and not even enough to be compensation for their efforts. They have been broken down economically and mentally and that's why they left everything and gone to Dhaka to do something else so that they can eat three times a day properly."

This is how climate change makes changes in the pattern of livelihoods. People are losing interest in agriculture and they are being engaged in some other professions.

4.4. Adaptation Strategies for Climate Change

4.4.1. Calamity-Based Adaptation

In the village of Arkandi, people have no limits to the adversity they face. First of all, they live in a marginal area of Bangladesh and that is why they are deprived of so many of the advantages of the modern era. Moreover, climate change effects added an extra dimension to the problem. It is true that they really cannot get rid of this problem completely but they are trying to cope with the adverse situation by following some adaptation strategies. Generally, the peasants follow up the adaptation processes based on the calamity being faced. In the summer season, as the peasants face a water

crisis, they plant drought-tolerant rice seedlings. Moreover, every year they cut the water reservoir deep so that they can store water in the monsoon season and use that for irrigation in the dry season. To avoid the flood effects, they make their homeland higher from the ground by heaping up soil. In the flood time, they cultivate some kind of vegetables on the sides of their land. In the rainy season, people use water hyacinths as cattle food. They gather together water hyacinths and bind them with rope and bamboo and cement pillars in the water.

4.4.2. Sources of Adaptation Strategies

There is an ongoing process of adaptation but people do not always discover and maintain this strategy respectively by themselves. In the village of Arkandi, they have learned the adaptation process in three ways.

The first is through local perceptions and knowledge. The people of Arkandi utilize popular local perceptions and knowledge that are circulated through generations. A statement can clarify the situation, Labu Sarkar (35) said:

> "I am an uneducated person. I don't know how to survive or keep pace with civil society. That's why agriculture is perfectly suitable for us. We know how to cultivate and how to save our crops. Still, we are following some adaptation processes that we learned from our ancestors. We apply those processes whenever we need them. In the future, we will do the same thing but if we face any new difficulties then we have to discover some new survival tricks."

The second is through intuition and experimentation. Apart from local knowledge and perception, the people of Arkandi sometimes rely on intuitions and experiments while combating new forms of problems. Labu Sarkar's further statement can help explain the situation.

> "It's true that we depend on techniques that we learned from our fathers, grandfathers or his grandfather. But sometimes we have to use our senses when a new type of problem appears. For example, if the situation is getting so diffiuclt, we have to move to another place or shift our occupation. Nothing but our intuition told us to do so."

Finally, there is institutional guidance. To solve any critical problem that requires a scientific solution, various kinds of local-level agricultural institutions or agro-training centres play leading roles in guiding the peasants. However, the people of Arkandi do not have proper institutional guidance. Rather, they rely a lot on local knowledge, intuitions and experiments.

5. Discussion

From the findings of the previous studies, it is evident that despite being a global crisis, climate change has disrupted the lives and livelihoods at the local level (Islam & Shafie, 2017). Due to its geographical position, Bangladesh is suffering a great deal because of climate change and the agricultural sector is one of the most threatened sectors in this country (Ahmed, 2012). The findings of the present study also reveal that the quality of agro-ingredients has been reduced due to climate change in Arkandi village. The production of crops has also been decreased, which eventually hampers the lives and livelihoods of the peasants. Some of them were forced to shift their occupation while some were forced to migrate.

As the national adaptive capacity of Bangladesh is quite low in educational, economic and institutional areas (Huq et al., 2003), people tend to rely on local knowledge a great deal (Hasan, 2010; Hassan, 2002) and they utilize different techniques for different calamities (Islam & Shafie, 2017). Our findings also show that the people of Arkandi determine their adaptation strategies based on the patterns of calamities. For example, in the summer season, people tend to plant drought-resistant seedlings while they plant water hyacinths in the rainy season. It is also revealed in the

study that people learn adaptation processes from three sources: circulation of local knowledge through the generations, intuition, experimentation and formal training. However, they usually depend on local perceptions and knowledge.

While most of the studies in social sciences that deal with the impacts of climate change on agriculture have been conducted in coastal areas or islands or adopted a macro perspective, this study sheds light on the impacts of climate change and adaptation processes in a riverine area (mainland), utilizing a micro perspective.

By utilizing in-depth qualitative interviews alongside some quantitative methods, the present study illustrates the impacts of climate change on the agricultural sector, as well as the lives and livelihoods of the peasants of a mainland riverine area, which can be quite insightful for South Asian studies and anthropology of climate change as it can shed light on the human dimensions of climate change as well as highlighting the impacts of climate change on agriculture that largely shapes the fate of Bangladesh, one of the most highly populated countries of South Asia.

6. Conclusion

Utilizing mixed methods, this study aimed to explore the impacts of climate in the agricultural sector in a local context. To investigate these factors, we selected a riverine locality, where people are victims of poverty and multiple forms of disadvantage. It reveals the impacts of climate change on the agricultural sector are multiple including compromised quality of agro-ingredients and decreased crop production rates that eventually hamper the lives and livelihoods of the people of the village.

Despite being the victims of various forms of discrimination, people adopt different adaptation strategies individually based on local knowledge, intuition and experiments. In some cases, formal guidance from different governmental and non-governmental organizations is available.

6.1. Limitations

As we both belong to the urban middle class, it was not quite easy to communicate with our participants, who were mostly peasants. Honestly speaking, most of them were confused about our research objectives and even skeptical about our purpose. However, when we told them in detail about our research, theycordially assisted us. Moreover, our gender identity (female) also creates hindrances to observing the activities of the farmers.

6.2. Recommendations

Based on the research, we want to suggest some recommendations for policy and future research directions. They are:

- While determining the adaptation policies, local knowledge should be emphasized;

- More research should be conducted on the agro-tech sector;

- Local people should be provided with training and

- Joint endeavours of government and private sectors should be emphasized.

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Leadership and Developmental Models: The Case of China and Nigeria

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Abstract

This study looks at two powerful countries' political leadership and their capacity to formulate ideas that might influence the modernization of their countries. The study shows that to propel their country towards economic progress and prosperity, political leaders must design, formulate, and carry out realistic short- and long-term goals. The study employed content analysis and collected data through homogenous purpose sampling. This investigation selected several criteria for analysis, including political leadership, economic policies, ideological beliefs, and Chinese and Nigerian visions. The framework for understanding this study is based on developmental state theory. It emphasizes the political leader's proactive and strategic intervention in driving a state's economic development and transformation. The paper posits that the trajectory of any civilization is contingent upon the nation's stable and ideological political leadership, which endeavors to alter the economic, political and cultural foundations of society. Therefore, the political leadership of the nation must be at the centre of any effective modernization vision. The path to economic development, according to this work's conclusion, is predicated on stable political leadership, a vision, a purpose, and an objective that may spur both short- and long-term, realistic policy action that satisfies the needs and desires of the populace.

Keywords: *Chinese and Nigerian visions, developmental state model, economic development, political leadership, policy -making*

1. Introduction

This work is located within the precincts of political leadership and the policy framework. Political leaders are critical in society through the authority of the government they wield to assess the distribution of power and resources, build relationships with stakeholders, and make decisions that can significantly impact the well-being of a nation and its people. Donahue (2003) explains political leadership through the evolving definition of public leadership: the term's broad definition refers to "people who accept responsibility for defining and pursuing the public good." In pursuing these objectives, they create ideas or visions. A vision can be seen as a concept or a vision of the people's or nation's aspirations. Its focus perhaps rests on the individual or the personality of the people. The challenges for today's leaders are to find and communicate a better vision of society than the old one and encourage others to share that vision.

Vision does not descend from above, but it depicts knowing precisely what you desire and having a clear vision. The vision articulates specific values and principles, and a clear articulation of a process is needed for it to succeed (Guo, 2003). Umoh (1997) posits that visions are the ability to create or invent what does not exist; it is the ability to achieve what we have not become. Vision clarifies purpose, gives direction, empowers us to perform beyond our resources, bonds people together, becomes the constitution of a country, a criterion for decision-making, gives a sense of unity and purpose, and provides great strength in times of uncertainty. The concept of vision is encapsulated in different ways and notions from country to country; we observe the American vision, the Russian economic plans, the Chinese vision, and the Nigerian vision, to mention a few. The fact is that these countries have set specific guidelines and principles based on their values to launch their countries into a state of rapid economic development and progress.

The communist leadership of the country champions the Chinese vision with the aim of the overall development of the nation-state. It makes specific projections of economic prosperity, increasing the country's gross domestic product and fortifying the socialist state. Its vision has been designed based on the ideologies of past and present leaders. Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and Xi Jinping's visions have all been fused into one central vision for the Chinese state. On the other hand, Vision 2020 was conceived by Nigeria to guarantee the country embraces and institutionalizes a culture of long-term planning. Its plans focus on ensuring that the government becomes the safest, fastest-growing, and fastest-emerging market. They aimed to use specific, clearly defined parameters to facilitate this objective. Its goal of becoming an emerging market economy hinges on its ability to conquer and use key emerging markets as its benchmarks for further economic growth.

From the above, we can assert that political leadership exists to create visions and guarantee the rights of their citizens to life, safety, and possessions through the proper distribution of state resources. Nigerian and Chinese economies are the largest within their geographical zone, with potential to explode even higher in the future. However, with a burgeoning population, resources become strained and even scarce, plunging the nation into a catastrophic stream of poverty, unemployment and gross underdevelopment (Banwo, 2019).

This study, therefore, attempts to fill the gap in political leadership by showing that leadership exists to facilitate the modernization of their societies. It hinges its arguments on formulating a policy like the Chinese Vision or the Nigerian Vision 2020 that will be the harbinger of transformation and rejuvenation of the nation-state. Hence, it finds a meeting point between leadership virtues, ideologies, visions, policy formulation, implementation, and execution. This study aims to identify leadership strategies among two unique countries and discuss how they have influenced people's lives, created wealth opportunities, and eliminated poverty and unemployment in their polities. Specifically, this work examines the Chinese vision crafted by the Chinese leadership and the Nigerian Vision 2020 designed by the Nigerian government. In pursuing these goals, the study explores the Chinese and Nigerian political leaderships and the Chinese and Nigerian vision towards achieving the modernization of their countries. Following this introduction, the second section discusses the theoretical framework, and the third section discusses the methodology. The fourth section presents the research results, the fifth is the research implication, and the last section concludes the work.

2. Theoretical Framework: Developmental State Theory

The Developmental State Theory is a concept in political economy that emerged from studying post-World War II economic development in East Asia. This theory posits that a proactive and strategically interventionist government can effectively stimulate national economic growth and industrialization. The term "developmental state" was coined to describe countries like Japan and South Korea, where the state assumed a central role in directing economic development through disciplined planning and market-friendly policies (Johnson, 1982). The key characteristics of developmental states share several defining characteristics that differentiate them from other state governance models.

1. Autonomous and Capable Bureaucracy: A skilled, autonomous bureaucracy is crucial for the developmental state, operating without excessive political or private sector influence and crafting and implementing detailed economic policies and interventions (Evans, 1995).

2. Embedded Autonomy: Evans (1995) also introduced the concept of embedded autonomy, where the state maintains a close yet autonomous relationship with the private sector, allowing it to gather crucial information for informed policy-making.

3. Long-term Economic Planning: Developmental states prioritize long-term economic planning, focusing on strategic sectors to enhance national economic status globally, unlike neoliberal states that prioritize short-term gains (Woo-Cumings, 1999).

4. Market Conforming Interventions: The state's role is not to replace the market but to shape and create conditions for industrial and technological advancement through policies like targeted subsidies, technology transfer, and competition management (Amsden, 1989).

The developmental state theory challenges neoclassical economics' belief in minimal state intervention in the economy. It suggests that well-executed state intervention can lead to successful economic outcomes, surpassing laissez-faire approaches under certain conditions. This model has been influential in explaining East Asia's rapid industrialization and serves as a blueprint for other nations aiming for similar transformations (Johnson, 1982; Woo-Cumings, 1999). However, critics have argued that the model requires specific political and institutional contexts and may need to be more easily replicable in different socio-political environments (Haggard, 1990). Additionally, concerns about cronyism, corruption, and suppression of democratic elements have been raised due to the heavy-handed governance style associated with developmental states (Hutchcroft, 1998).

3. Methodology

Data were collected from two primary sources. The Nigerian and Chinese visions, as depicted in its economic blueprint, were downloaded from Nigerian and Chinese databases through the internet. The purposive random sampling method selected relevant information related to the subject matter. Economic policies were downloaded from the internet, specifically on how they facilitate national development, sustainable growth, wealth generation, and national rejuvenation. Hence, the data for this work were considered representative of how they expedited development through economic policies as engraved in the Nigerian and Chinese visions. The data used for this work were analyzed through content analysis, which aims to compare two government policies embedded in their policy frameworks, whose main objective is to develop their respective states.

4. Research Results

This section explores the role of political leadership in the economic development of China and Nigeria, contrasting their approaches and outcomes within the framework of the developmental state theory. We analyze the distinct visions and strategies employed by each nation's leaders, evaluating how these have shaped their respective paths to modernization.

4.1. Chinese and Nigerian Political Leaderships

4.1.1. Chinese Political Leadership

The leadership of the People's Republic of China (PRC) rests on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which is vested with the power to control the affairs of the state through the constitution and the established laws of the country. Specifically, the Communiqué of the 3rd Plenum of the 11th Central Committee of the CCP held in December 1978 set the goals of constructing and re-establishing the legal system in China. The Communiqué stated that it is imperative to strengthen the socialist legal system so that democracy is systematized and written into law in such a way as to ensure the stability, continuity, and full authority of this democratic system and these laws; there must be laws for people to follow. These laws must be observed, their enforcement must be strict, and lawbreakers must be dealt with: '**有法 可依, 有法必依**, 执法必严, 违法必究' (The laws must be observed, there must be rules to go by, Law breakers must be

prosecuted). The legislative work should have an essential place on the agenda of the National People's Congress (NPC) and its Standing Committee. Procuratorial and judicial organizations must maintain their independence as is appropriate; they must faithfully abide by the laws, rules, and regulations, serve the people's interests, and keep to the facts; they must guarantee the equality of all people before the people's law and deny anyone the privilege of being above the law." Since then, these statements have become the PRC's legal reform guidelines (Brodsgaard & Yongnia, 2006).

The CCP is more than the traditional notion of a party; it controls society and social life in every aspect, from top to bottom, through its organizational cells. The influence of the Party in society is immense, and its role is critical. Since the law governs social life, it is inevitably influenced or, more precisely, directed by the Party (Zou, 2006). Formally established in Shanghai on July 20th, 1921, the CCP began as an underground Marxist-Leninist party organized into smaller groups that operated on "democratic centralism." In theory, the CCP's democratic centralism allows for debate and policy discussion among party members but requires unquestioning policy support once a decision is made. In practice, democratic centralism has created a hierarchical political dynamic where senior Party officials expect disciplined compliance from junior officials. Still, junior officials are allowed to comment on policy proposals before making decisions. The Party's most influential policy and decision-making entity is the Politburo and its Standing Committee, comprised of the Party's two dozen or so most potent senior officials. The rest of the Party's formal structure consists of layers of local, municipal, and provincial party congresses and committees. The most crucial body in this structure of congresses is the National Party Congress, a critical meeting that the Party convenes in Beijing once every five years to set the country's overall policy direction and choose the members of the Party's Political Bureau (Politburo) and other senior Party officials. Lower-party organizations are subordinate to higher-party organizations, but lower-party committees select the members of higher-party congresses. The result is an interactive relationship where senior party officials obtain and retain political power by maintaining the loyalty or support of lower-party organizations. The contemporary CCP is organized into an expansive, hierarchal network of organizations that reach into many aspects of society; their presence exists in universities, schools, think tanks, state-owned enterprises, private corporations, and foreign-owned companies (Dumbaugh & Martin, 2009). Chinese politics is characterized by a fusion of the official ideologies of Marxism, Leninism, Maoism, and Chinese Imperial ideological orthodoxy; it also emphasizes military power. Its structure shows a high degree of correspondence with that of the traditional imperial state, in which power is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals without institutional constraints on that power, such that the domination of the Party-State over all of China is immersed and comprehensive. Therefore, it uses the law as a penal tool of the rule to govern the populace and maintain its power (Fu, 1993).

In essence, the CCP was formed based on strict compliance with the rule of law, maintenance of stability and continuity, and serving the people's core interests. They also safeguard the people's lives and ensure that everybody is equal under the law. They are also expected to impact directly the lives of its citizens and enforce the Marxism-Leninism-Maoism ideologies. Furthermore, the urban growth model in China, driven through local-state actions on property, demonstrates the use of the developmental state but highlights problems for the regulator and broader areas of policy objectives to address socioeconomic issues (Cao, 2009; Knight, 2014).

The Chinese government therefore is a system of government that has the full control, authority and power of the political, social and cultural aspects of the society to ensure that people's interests are served, kept and protected.

4.1.2. Nigerian Political Leadership

The leadership of the Federal Republic of Nigeria rests with a democratically elected president, a judiciary, and the legislative arm of government. Before independence, Nigeria had different entities with their own

customs, traditions, organizations, and social functioning; however, when Britain took over government, such practices became no longer profitable. It designed a federalist system of government that was based on ethnicity, and as such, the north was dominated by the Hausa, the east by the Igbo, and the west by the Yoruba. Unobtrusively, the British gave more power and autonomy to the south, while the north was vested with federal power (Chang, 2007). Nevertheless, despite these three major ethnic groups, they all resolved to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation under God, which is dedicated to promoting inter-African solidarity, world peace, international cooperation, and understanding. This oath was solemnly enshrined in the constitution, which is the legally binding document for the country. The constitution was created to promote the good government and welfare of all persons in the country on the principles of freedom, equality, and justice, as well as to consolidate the unity of the people (Ikime, 1985).

Nigeria as a federation, a colonial heritage necessitated by her multi-culturalism, has 36 states, a Federal Capital Territory (Abuja), and a 774 local government area structure. It adopted the United States presidential system in 1979, replacing the British parliamentary system of government. It has three tiers of government: legislative, executive, and judiciary, as provided institutionally, working in tandem for the growth and development of the country through the instrumentality of checks and balances and separation of powers. There is a bicameral legislature, the Senate and the Federal House of Representatives (lower house or chamber), commonly referred to as the National Assembly, under the leadership of the Senate President and the Speaker, respectively. While the National Assembly is the legislative arm under the Senate President and Speaker, the executive is under the President, and the judiciary interprets the laws initiated by the executive and made by the legislative arm. This structure is replicated at the state and local government levels. While the governor/chairman (executive), House of Assembly/councilor (speaker/leader) (legislature), and judiciary. With time, the centre becomes overconcentrated with power, while the component units are appendages relying on their share of the "national cake" (Chikendu, 1987).

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a sovereign nation based on the principles of democracy and social justice. Its sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria and its government; its government derives all its power and authority from the constitution. The primary purpose of the government is to provide security and welfare for the people, as well as facilities for and encouragement of free mobility of the people, goods, and services throughout the Federation (Chimakonam & Ogar, 2015).

The Nigerian government, in essence, practices democracy and derives its power from the constitution. The government is expected to ensure unity of the state, freedom, equality, justice, and welfare and provide a thriving environment where people can be safe.

4.2. The Chinese and Nigerian Visions

4.2.1. The Chinese Vision

The Chinese vision provides the impetus for a great rejuvenation of the Chinese nations, which would be powered by socialism with Chinese characteristics, patriotism, prosperity, and a more decisive and assertive China. Every government's core interest is maintaining stability within their societies; with stability, a government can formulate and implement policies that can propel the nations to greater heights. China is no exception (Banwo, 2015). The Chinese vision itself is not a new economic policy for China. It has had economic blueprints in the past, such as the Deng Xiaoping economic reform in the early 1980s. His core thesis is hinged on the premise known as 致富光荣 (to become rich is glorious), which is used to justify the establishment of affluent entrepreneurial households. The Xi Jinping Chinese vision is designed around three steps of development strategy which has its historical origins in the nineteenth century when China encountered the Opium Wars. The first step aims to strategically increase and leapfrog the country's GDP tremendously from 2000 to 2010. The second step was to commence from 2010 to 2020, aiming to achieve

a moderately prosperous society for the citizenry. This era was dubbed a period of walking towards the grand vision in which the middle class would have the Chinese vision fulfilled. The third and final stage of the economic process encapsulated in the Chinese vision is for China to be a rich and powerful socialist nation by 2050. The Chinese vision is linked with China's modernization drive, which, in modern times, scholars have dubbed a new Sino-Renaissance era within the global community. Xi Jinping emphasized the need for a peaceful international environment and a stable international order as factors that will facilitate the success of the Chinese vision. Some economic strategies towards realizing the Chinese vision include the establishment of the New Silk Roads, a.k.a. the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to create an overall development for China and nations worldwide. The BRI serves as a geopolitical and geoeconomics game-changer, a foreign policy concept, and a driver towards China's modernization and development up to 2050 (Bakken, 2018).

The Chinese vision is rooted in the firm belief that politics drives the country's economic development. This concept has been promoted as a national goal, which has been reiterated and emphasized by different regimes of the state. The concepts of communist society, substantive democracy, modernization or harmonization, and commitment to the long term are consistent with Chinese political philosophy. Thus, scholars have opined that it is embedded in the following:

Firstly, the international dimension aims to reshape the global balance of power and advance a counterweight to the international liberal order. In doing so, the government promoted the New Development Bank (BRICS Bank) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB); these institutions are both elements of this strategy. The political dimension, which advocates that China's modernization process must be attainable through the power of the Chinese communist leadership, emphasizes the infusion of its historical and modern policies together. Hu Jintao, the former Chinese premier, called for a strategy which pushes for a moderately prosperous nation. Xi Jinping advocated the "Four Comprehensives," which bridge previous historical ideologies. Likewise, Mao Zedong thought, the Deng Xiaoping theory, the three representations of Jiang Zemin, and the scientific outlook on development promoted by Hu Jintao all promoted the same ideologies.

Secondly, there is the economic dimension, which is built on long-term goals that aim at maintaining an initial average growth rate of 6.5 percent and then pushing towards a higher GDP rate. Likewise, restructuring the economy was driven by low-quality exports and public investments in an economy with a more vital role for services, domestic consumption, and high-quality goals. Furthermore, it provides job opportunities by redesigning its industrial structure, promoting new sectors, and closing up non-productive industries.

Thirdly, there is the ideological dimension, which aims to revive Chinese culture and traditions from Confucianism. This emphasizes harmony, a better society for peace, and the importance of family ties. The ideological implications of humanity are human obligation, rational thinking and taking actions, flexible ways to change with changes, and prudent consideration in dealing with challenges and risks (Goldstein, 2016).

The Chinese vision has a central thought: political leadership drives economic development, which is perhaps why its vision is founded on all the economic blueprints of the great communist leaders of China. Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao's economic ideologies have been merged together. It also believes that culture and economic development are closely linked. While it is imperative to develop, society must not forget its culture and traditions. Its economic vision of a prosperous society has been championed globally through certain institutions the state has created.

4.2.2. The Nigerian Vision

The Nigerian vision represents the government policy and blueprint discussed in the NV20:2020 document. This blueprint aims to improve the standard of living of its people, revive its economy, and transform the nation into a prosperous entity. What, then, makes NV20:2020 unique or different from other economic policies? The simple fact is that this economic plan is a vision and an economic blueprint whose basic tenets are all embedded in other strategies that preceding administrations had instituted previously. This plan offers a holistic approach to transforming the Nigerian polity through a social, economic, institutional, and environmental dimension. It aims strategically to improve the citizenry's living standards while recognizing the nation's enormous resource endowment. The economy is a crucial sector that plays a dynamic role in actualizing this vision; hence, the policy planners intend to strengthen the domestic industry while making the country less oil-dependent. The National Planning Commission described this vision as a policy document to optimize the critical sources of economic growth. To achieve the vision of the economic policy, it aimed at stimulating primary production, increasing production of processed and manufactured goods for export, stimulating domestic and foreign trade in value-added goods and services, and strengthening the linkages among the key sectors of the economy (Thomas & Brycz, 2014).

Nigeria's vision is to revitalize its economy by boosting its primary production by developing the natural mineral industry to increase output and efficiency. It also aims to improve agriculture by producing more raw materials such as citrus and palm oil and expanding irrigated areas to 25% in 2020. The oil and gas industry will also be advanced to stimulate local value added. By 2020, it is hoped that steel production will be 12.2 million tonnes. A major thrust of its economic plan is also to boost its production for export. To achieve this, the government has set some guidelines and will import technology, increase industrial parks, exports of non-oil goods, processed goods for exports and the research and development sector. In order to stimulate domestic and foreign trade, the government aims to increase the trade of domestic and foreign non-oil production and increase trade through South-South integration with BRIC. Likewise, the government aims to bolster the production of small and medium sized firms through credit access and regional specialization of the industry (Asaju & Akume, 2012). The Nigerian Vision 2020 can be summarized into four dimensions, they are:

• Firstly, the social dimension stipulates that Nigeria should be a just, peaceful, equitable, and harmonious society where its citizens can be supported with a healthcare and educational system for all that sustains a life expectancy of nothing less than 70 years.

• Secondly, the economic dimension specifies that Nigeria should become a viable, resilient and diversified global economy with an internationally competitive manufacturing sector that is lightly integrated and contributes only 25% to the GDP.

• Thirdly, the institutional dimension hypothesizes that Nigeria should be a stable and functional democratic society where the rights of the citizens are guaranteed to choose their leaders with a market-friendly institution through the provision of the basic infrastructures to provide a globally competitive business environment.

• Fourthly, the environmental dimension conjectures that Nigeria should have a high level of environmental consciousness that enables and supports sustainable management of its resources and natural endowments to ensure equitable representation for the benefit of its citizenry in the present and the future (Bature, 2013).

The overall theme of the vision is to unleash economic prosperity and wealth creation while bridging the infrastructural gap in the country. Likewise, it intends to optimize the sources of economic growth to increase productivity and competitiveness. Furthermore, it aims to build a productive, competitive, functional human resource base for economic growth and social advancement. Additionally, the vision

states the need to improve governance, security, law and order, engendering more efficient and effective use of resources and promoting social harmony and a conducive business environment for the emergent economy. Lastly, it intends to develop a knowledge-based economy within the polity (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2010).

The Nigerian vision was a vision and prototype designed by the government to ensure prosperity for all while ensuring that the nation's natural resources were used competitively by reviving the ailing manufacturing industry. The government also focused on making Nigeria an internationally competitive market that would encourage foreign investment and entrepreneurs into its dwindling business terrain.

4.3. Developmental State in China and Nigeria

Regarding creating and managing a developmental state by political leaders, China's model shares many similarities with the broader East Asian approach. However, it has unique characteristics tailored to its specific needs and conditions (Baek, 2005). It has underpinned the model with state-control finance and government support for state-owned enterprises, which will heavily rely on exports and domestic savings. It is a hybrid between the dynamism of the private sector and the vital role of the government, urging an able state to regulate and foster economic development. Guided by centralized political control and economic management, it takes care of severe principal-agent problems, allowing for fiscal decentralization (Bolesta, 2007).

China's practice of the Developmental State model has been instrumental in achieving the "Chinese Vision," which encompasses economic modernization, global competitiveness, and improved living standards for its citizens. The model's emphasis on state-led solid development, strategic industrial policy, and centralized planning has facilitated this vision in several significant ways, which include the following:

• Economic Modernization and Growth: Throughout 2018, China's real annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth averaged 9.5%, making it one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. The World Bank called this rate of growth "the greatest sustained increase by a significant economy in recorded history. Owing to this prosperity, China has been able to quadruple its GDP every 8 years and contributed to the estimated 800 million individuals who were lifted out of poverty (Morrison, 2019). China's rapid economic growth, driven by its Developmental State policies, has been foundational in transforming its economy from primarily agrarian to a leading global industrial power. According to Naughton (2007), the government's focus on heavy investment in infrastructure and prioritization of key sectors like manufacturing and technology has spurred this modernization. Key sectors where China's Developmental State model has led to significant economic growth and modernization include manufacturing and technology, with heavy investment in financial capital, policy incentives, and special economic zones. China also prioritizes innovation, R&D, and financial sector reform.

• Industrial Upgrading and Technological Innovation: China's high-tech sector has grown dramatically. From 1995 to 2008, China's high-tech product exports increased by 33% yearly, from $10 billion to $416 billion in US dollars in value. High-tech exports have increased far faster than overall exports, currently accounting for around 29% of total exports (Wang et al., 2020). The state's active role in promoting research and development and its support for high-tech industries has propelled China into a leading position in various technological domains. This strategy aligns with the Chinese Vision of becoming an innovation-oriented society. According to Brandt and Rawski (2008), the Chinese state policies have brought development into the electronics, green energy, and biotechnology sectors.

• Social and Economic Equity: China has accomplished amazing things in the last several decades in terms of social and economic changes. Reform efforts to eliminate sociopolitical and economic solutions that offer financial empowerment and opportunities to end poverty in the nation have escalated, particularly

since the 11th Five-Year Plan (2006–2010) (Zhou & Zhu, 2019). One of the pillars of the Chinese Vision is social harmony and equity, which the Developmental State model has addressed through programs aimed at reducing poverty and improving access to services. Ravallion and Chen (2007) document how economic growth under this model has significantly reduced poverty rates, enhancing social stability and equity. The scholars reveal that economic growth and job creation, rural development and agricultural reforms, social safety nets and subsidies, urbanization and infrastructure development, and education and skill development are all offshoots of the Chinese practice of the Developmental State model.

• Global economic integration and influence: China's developmental state strategy has also focused on integrating the country more deeply into the global economy. Kennedy (2010) highlights how China has used state strategies to protect its industries and expand its influence in global trade, aligning with its vision of being a significant global player. China's global strategy includes export- led growth, foreign direct investment policies, participation in international institutions, development of global brands, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and currency internationalization. China capitalizes on its rapid economic growth by establishing special economic zones for foreign enterprises. China also supports domestic firms by promoting technology transfer and local capabilities. These strategies aim to enhance China's economic sovereignty and reduce its dependency on the US dollar.

• Sustainability and long-term planning: the Five-Year Plans, a series of social and economic development initiatives, illustrate China's commitment to sustainable development. These plans reflect the developmental state's emphasis on long-term goals and sustainability, which is crucial for realizing the broader Chinese vision of a harmonious society. The plans focus on economic restructuring, environmental policies, social welfare, innovation, urban planning, and global integration. They aim to balance economic growth with environmental sustainability and social welfare, reducing environmental impacts and increasing economic resilience. The plans also emphasize renewable energy use, healthcare, education, and housing, promoting global integration and cooperation (Wang et al., 2020; Wong, 2012).

These comprehensive plans align with the Developmental State model, ensuring economic advancement does not lead to environmental degradation or social instability.

Developmental state models have been less common in Africa, including Nigeria, though many initiatives aim to emulate aspects of the East Asian model. Political instability, corruption, and lesser bureaucratic autonomy have often hindered similar success. However, efforts in countries like Ethiopia and Rwanda show potential. With its strategic visions like Vision 2020 and more recent plans, Nigeria aims to harness solid political leadership to drive development, although outcomes have been mixed due to the issues mentioned. Therefore, the potential practice of the Developmental State model in Nigeria, particularly in line with its Vision 2020, presents a complex scenario. The vision encompassed improvements in socio-economic development, infrastructure, and a stable democracy. Implementing a Developmental State model in Nigeria to achieve these goals involves several challenges and opportunities.

1. Economic Diversification and Industrial Policy

One of the primary facets of the Developmental State model is the strategic creation of robust industrial policies that focus on economic diversification. Nigeria's economy has been heavily reliant on oil, which makes it susceptible to global oil price fluctuations. Efforts to diversify the economy have been articulated in various national plans, including Vision 2020.

i. Opportunity: Diversification into agriculture, manufacturing, and services can create jobs and reduce economic volatility.

ii. Challenge: Implementation has been inconsistent due to fluctuating commitment from successive governments and challenges such as corruption and inadequate infrastructure.

2. Infrastructure Development

Significant investment in infrastructure is crucial for a developmental state. Nigeria's infrastructure in terms of power, roads, and communication needs substantial improvement to support economic growth.

i. Opportunity: Nigeria could leverage its large population and regional position to develop a robust internal and regional market.

ii. Challenge: Financing such infrastructure projects is a significant hurdle, compounded by issues of project mismanagement and corruption.

3. Institutional Capacity and Governance

A successful developmental state requires a capable, efficient, and autonomous bureaucracy. Governance in Nigeria has been hindered by inefficiencies and corruption, which undermine the effectiveness of public institutions.

i. Opportunity: Reforming public institutions to make them more autonomous and accountable could help in the effective implementation of policies.

ii. Challenge: Political will and public trust are needed to drive such reforms, which have historically been lacking.

4. Human Capital Development

Investing in education and healthcare is crucial for developing the human capital necessary for economic development.

i. Opportunity: Nigeria's young population could be a significant asset if well-educated and healthy.

ii. Challenge: Currently, public education and healthcare systems are underfunded and poorly managed.

5. Political Stability and Economic Management

The developmental state model requires a stable political environment and sound economic management, areas where Nigeria has faced significant challenges.

i. Opportunity: Establishing political stability could attract more foreign investment and encourage local entrepreneurs.

ii. Challenge: Nigeria's political landscape has been characterized by instability, which affects long-term economic planning and implementation.

While the Developmental State model provides a promising framework for achieving the goals outlined in Nigeria, its implementation may face considerable challenges. Institutional reforms, improved governance, and sustained economic policies are crucial for this model to be successfully adapted to Nigeria's context.

5. Research Implications

The political systems of China and Nigeria differ significantly; while China practices communism, Nigeria practices democracy. Nevertheless, they exist to provide for the welfare of the people and champion ideologies or visions that can impact the general society at large. According to the theory of the Developmental State, effective governance involves the state actively formulating and implementing policies and visions that drive national development. Every great leader has conjured a vision for his state; nations craft and implement visions successfully. Every country has successfully witnessed some form of modernization with the thoughts, ideas, and philosophical connotations being designed.

Likewise, China's and Nigeria's political leadership differ significantly in their contexts; however, they both champion their modern states' modernization, progression, and development. Chinese political vision aims to make China a prosperous country practicing socialist democratic system with Chinese characteristics that meet the country's historical and national needs (Shi & Chen, 2020; Das, 2016; Ning, 2008). The vision also hinges its premises on directly assisting people to fulfill their dreams. It firmly believes that politics and economics are interwoven and that the country's political leadership drives the economy (Ferdinand, 2016; Qing-feng, 2009). While it has long-term goals of economic growth, it also aims to revive ancient Chinese culture and traditions among the people while fostering ideologies that promote harmony, obligations, and rational thoughts (Li-jie & Yushan, 2015).

On the other hand, the Nigerian economic plan aims to transform all areas of the economy; it offers an economic, institutional, and environmental approach to its solution to Nigeria's underdevelopment. It also aims to directly impact the lives of its citizens by improving the state of security and the use of the enormous and vast resources of the nation-state. The plan has also mentioned the need to engage in international collaborations and alliances to boost its development; emphasis on foreign trade, research, technology, and industrial centers are some of the specificities.

While China has developed sporadically due to its consistency of ideas and visions, Nigeria's vision of economic development over the years has been riddled with poor policy planning, which affects its execution (Agbazuere, 2020). Nigeria's vision also has not been consistent with previous administrations, and the instability of the polity affects economic planning and development. Adeyemi (2001) opined that the preponderance of policy lapses compounded by the high incidence of poorly implemented projects in the public sector investment program led to the failure of earlier economic plans.

Furthermore, the developmental state theory discusses the essence of initiatives and why they work in our societies. The Chinese and the Nigerian governments have initiated creative policies that would engineer their respective countries on the development path. These initiatives have to be realistic and attainable. Obadan (2003) observes that policymakers with overly ambitious plans that seek to achieve too many objectives with unrealistic targets coupled with conflicts in objectives, as seen in some poor economic planning end up achieving nothing.

The Chinese vision also emphasizes promoting its culture and traditions (Zhai, 2018), while the Nigerian government has not done that in its plan. The essence of a national culture cannot be overemphasized because it gives the people a sense of identity and belonging (Kirloskar-Steinbach, 2010). Nwankwo (1986) states that the absence of a national culture can influence Nigeria's genuine formulation of an economic plan, and attitudes toward productivity, social values, and priorities embedded in the national culture impact work ethics and economic discipline, which control sustained and stable economic growth.

Also, following the developmental state model, the Chinese leadership vision has hinged development on certain traits: solid political leadership, consistent ideologies and development plans, and long-term agendas and initiatives (Fan, 2006; Gu et al., 2009). It has also crafted developmental policies around China's

engagement with the rest of the world. It firmly believes that its modernization and progression are linked with the events of the world. While according to Bello & Neba (2023), Nigeria has made strides in engaging with the global economy, but its development policies have often been influenced by short-term political agendas rather than a coherent, long-term vision. Unlike China's integrated approach, Nigeria's development efforts are often fragmented, leading to slower progress in achieving sustained economic growth and modernization.

6. Conclusion

Governments serve the interests and welfare of the people and create realistic plans for their nation-states. The Chinese government emphasizes the importance of political leadership in economic planning and development, while the Nigerian government must champion its policies and not rely solely on market forces. Both societies focus on their markets, with the Chinese vision concentrating on emerging markets and engaging citizens in the age of globalization.

The Nigerian vision aims to revitalize the agricultural economy, refocus the economy away from oil dependency, and create more industrial and manufacturing parks. The government emphasizes regional integration and economic globalization through strategic alliances. The Chinese vision emphasizes local consumption as a driver of economic growth while defining the government's role in the market, including market price control and credit lowering.

Economic planning and development require a stable political institution, environmental considerations, and the preservation of traditional cultures and traditions. Stability ensures the nation's prosperity and the development of consistent ideas that create wealth and economic prosperity. Governments must also respect the environment and preserve traditional cultures and traditions to maintain their values and philosophies.

The Developmental State model underlines the role of the government in steering economic activities through informed, strategic interventions rather than leaving the market forces entirely to their own devices. This model supports the argument that Chinese and Nigerian political leaders must have it as their vision to actively guide economic development while integrating traditional values and environmental considerations to prevent cultural erosion and environmental degradation.

This description in this work is limited by the broad scope of political and economic variables across two vastly different countries. Future research could focus on comparative case studies that detail the implementation of the Developmental State model in similarly diverse contexts, assessing the effectiveness of specific governmental interventions in promoting sustainable development.

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Maternal Health-Seeking Process of Dalit Women in Dhaka

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Abstract

This research explores the maternal health-seeking processes of Dalit women in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It has been conducted with intensive fieldwork at the households of Jagannath Hall 4 class staff. The Dalit women of this area like to seek treatment from their nearest hospitals. This study analyses maternal health- seeking processes of Dalit women through the theories of authoritative knowledge, biopower and therapy management groups. Their households are located inside Jagannath Hall, Dhaka University and in a restricted area. They are living here because of their ancestral job positions. It is easier for women to go to the nearest hospitals in their pregnancy period. In this locality, hospital is the central place for child delivery. Doctors keep control of women's bodies through medical knowledge. The role of kin members and generational influence matter a lot for pregnant Dalit mothers. This research investigates how the hospital has become a key arena in the locality and the influence of family members on Dalit women during their maternal phase. During pregnancy, Dalit women follow the rules and advice learnt from their female kin members. In Dhaka, they do not face discrimination as Dalits.

Keywords: *Dalit women, health-seeking, hospital, pregnancy*

1. Introduction

Bangladeshi people are diversified based on age, religion and ethnic background. In a complex society, stratification is very apparent. Dumont (1980) argues that the central concept of the caste system is a religious ideology based on purity and pollution in Hinduism. To set the opposition between pure and impure, the religious division of labour goes side by side with the permanent attribution to certain professions based on the supposed level of impurity (Dumont, 1980). Among multiple minority groups of Bangladesh, the Dalits are one of the most marginalised, vulnerable and socially excluded communities. Studying the Dalit community bears significance. Dalit people have historically been subjected to discrimination and vulnerability which is the result of the concept of 'untouchability' or of being 'impure.'

Dalit people experience massive discrimination and subordination in every sphere of life. For the notion of 'untouchability,' 'impure' or 'unclean,' they are assigned to do some specific jobs (Parvez & Islam, 2013). They cannot choose their occupation willingly, rather they get their occupation through heredity. Their work is restricted to the service sector. Their occupations are bounded up with sweeping, manual scavenging, gardening, tea garden labouring, drum beating, shoes and leatherwork, burying the dead and processing of certain oils. We know the Dalits as Horijon, Rabidas, Rishi, Cobblers, Jaladas, Nomoshudra, Dhopa, Bormon, Bagdi, Kayputro, Kornidas, Malo, Bahera. They are always deprived of choice; for example, the free selection of occupation, access to housing, treatment and education. In Dhaka city, most Dalit people live in Alubazar, Bongshal, Nababpur, Gonoktuli, Rayerbazar, Wari and Mirpur areas. Though public perception towards the Dalit community is still framed by the concept of 'untouchability,' Dalit women face more discrimination, violence and exclusion as a combined result of caste and gender. It is estimated that around 6.5 million Dalit people live in 64 districts of Bangladesh (International Dalit Solidarity Network, 2021). 66% of Bangladeshi females marry before 18 years. However, many Dalit girls are forced to marry at 10 to 12 years old and just 5.9% of Dalit girls complete secondary level education (International Dalit Solidarity Network, 2021).

Maternal health is a very significant phase of a woman's life cycle. Strategies, norms, beliefs and cultural practices are associated with it. An alert and healthy mother is more likely to give birth to a healthy baby.

Family members consciousness about maternal health helps to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates and ensure the healthy upbringing of a baby. There exist different stages of life associated with the reproductive health of women, such as menstruation, pregnancy, fertility, cervical screening, contraception and menopause. Bangladesh has achieved remarkable progress in the health sector recently. The maternal and neonatal mortality rate has also declined in recent years. Besides this, the immunization system has also produced higher life expectancies. However, unfortunately, unprivileged people did not pay special attention to these kind of health facilities. The healthcare issues of Dalit people have always been largely neglected. This context sets the background against which the maternal health-seeking processes of Dalit women is articulated in this article. This research examines the available options for Dalit women in an urban setting to fulfill the healthcare needs of the maternal period. It explores Dalit women's preference for seeking treatment during pregnancy. It is important to see the role of relations with each other and decisions of authority. It illustrates the role of the therapy management group during maternal health. The findings of this research are significant in numerous ways for anthropologists, policy-makers, government organization (GO) & non-government organization (NGO) workers. This research seeks to explore the maternal health-seeking process of Dalit women in Dhaka. The objectives of this study are associated with the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The United Nations adopts SDGs to help end poverty and to promote good health around the world. To be specific, this article investigates the maternal health-seeking behaviour of Dalit women.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this paper, the theoretical framework has been fitted from anthropological lens. To understand the maternal health-seeking process of Dalit women, the author used the concept of therapy management group, biopower and authoritative knowledge to frame this research.

Janzen and Arkinstall (1978) introduced the concept of therapy management group in the book "The Quest for Therapy: Medical Pluralism in Lower Zaire." "Therapy management invites analyses of transactions that are influenced by cultural values, social roles and institutions, power relations and economic circumstances that influence how illness is responded in context over time (Nichter, 2002:82)." To study therapy management, it is important to inspect the social mechanism of households, kin groups and larger social networks as they influence each other. They are also influenced by political economy and globalization. Therapy management leads to envisaging the social relations of sickness in the context of poverty (Nichter, 2002). The afflicted and members of the therapy management group engage in a variety of illness-related works that originate through time (Nichter, 2002). The writer also states: "Studies of therapy management provide insights into priority setting within households, the manner in which gender and generational relations influence resource allocation, circumstances that foster competition and cooperation, process of negotiation and accommodation as well as resistance and assertion (Nichter, 2002:82)." This paper explores the social relations, priority among kin members and household dynamics of Dalit women during their pregnancy in the study area. Family members' cooperation and negotiation of illness identities while dealing women's pregnancy are visualized in the study area.

Among the many contributions of Michel Foucault, the theory of biopower has gained wider applicability. Foucault (1975) describes the existence of power in a clinical background in his renowned book "The Birth of the Clinic." Foucault shows that power relations exist in every sector of society. Power relations are observed in the family, hospitals, schools and other institutions. Power appears to provoke, purify and disseminate force for the purposes of management and control (Cisney & Morar, 2015). It is reflected that medical knowledge itself is a mechanism of power (Foucault, 1975), who then states: "The knowledge of diseases is the doctor's compass. The success of the cure depends on an exact knowledge of disease (Foucault 1975:8)." It works through the relationship between doctors and patients. Medical professionals practice their authoritative position through their surveillance on patients. Foucault focuses on the process in which power and knowledge are linked (Foucault 1975). Foucault explains that in hospitals, medical

professionals monitor and discipline the human body. In this way, monitoring helps to set up the control of medical knowledge over the human body (Cisney & Morar, 2015). Foucault's idea of biopower reveals how a specific medical system becomes dominant. This theory facilitates understanding the existence of a particular medical system in a locality, how it becomes dominant and how women are monitored by doctors and hospitals during their pregnancy. This paper explores how Dalit women prefer biomedical treatment to handle pregnancy and the dominance of biomedical treatment in the study area. Hospital has become a central place for child delivery. Dalit women remain in medical surveillance during pregnancy. Doctors keep monitoring their body with their medical knowledge. Thus, doctors and medical professionals set up the control of medical knowledge over the pregnant women's body in the study area.

Brigitte Jordan's (1992) theoretical contribution to authoritative knowledge is also used in this research as its theoretical framework. She described authoritative knowledge as rules that carry more weight than others. It is due to their association with a stronger power base (structural superiority) (Jordan, 1992). She also states authoritative knowledge derives from the fact that it is consensually constructed (Browner & Press, 1996). This is used to examine the patterns of birth. Jordan (1977) argues that authoritative knowledge examines the situations in which pregnant women in the United States facilitated biomedical expansion by accepting the advice offered by their prenatal care providers (Browner & Press, 1996). Women incorporate biomedical knowledge as inherently authoritative knowledge. Jordan (1992) illustrates that one form of knowledge gains authority and medical obstetrics becomes legitimized and authoritative.

This paper uses Jordan's theory of authoritative knowledge to analyze how doctors and elder members of a family possess authoritative knowledge and how their knowledge generates power. This idea helps to identify how authoritative knowledge shapes Dalit women's maternal health-seeking process. In the study area, Dalit women accept the instructions of medical professionals and their elder family members. It is seen that biomedical knowledge gains authority to deal with pregnancy among Dalit women in the study area. The authoritative knowledge of medical professionals and the generational influence of elder kin members shape women's maternal health.

3. Methodological Approach

This paper applies qualitative methods that consist of in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, observation and secondary sources. Intensive fieldwork has been conducted for a month at the households of Jagannath Hall 4 class staff, Dhaka, where Dalit women live. Jagannath Hall is the oldest male dormitory of Dhaka University. Except for the time of religious festivals of the Hindu religion, females are not allowed inside this dormitory. With the help of a resident student of that dormitory, I was allowed to enter inside the Jagannath Hall. He helped me to get access there. The fieldwork took place in May, 2024. Rapport build-up was established first with the community to have a trusting relationship. The research objectives were explained simply and clearly. The first few days of fieldwork were spent in establishing rapport with the people of the community. Thereafter, it became easier for author to know the locality.

Among many sampling methods, I used purposive and snowball sampling for this research. Informants were selected according to their available time as well as their willingness to talk about the research topic. As this study is on maternal health-seeking behaviour, I selected informants based on their marital status and parental status. Informants' informed consent was established first. Thirty married women participated in this study. They are all from different age groups. This helped me to get an overview of the maternal health-seeking process of Dalit women from different timespans. Pseudonyms are used in this paper to ensure the anonymity of the respondents. Twelve women participated in the focus group discussion. A semi-structured interview guide was followed. This interview guide allowed informants to talk more easily about their experiences. In the study area, everyone speaks in the Bengali language. Informants' language is one of the important things of fieldwork. Spradley (1979) stated that language is more than a medium of

communication about reality. All of the people in my research use the Bangla language in their day-to-day activities. So, I also talked with them in Bangla during fieldwork. All the guidelines of ethical consideration provided by the American Anthropological Association (AAA) have been strictly maintained.

Reflexivity allows for a form of conversation by which we come to know about ourselves and others, the positions from which we speak and the political, social context in which the conversations take place (Haynes, 2012). Accordingly, I tried to be non-biased in terms of gender issues. Being a student of anthropology, I gave them proper recognition and respect as well as their community. I was always careful that not a single thing associated with my research could hurt their feelings and beliefs.

3.1. Context of the Study Area

The 4th class staff members of Jagannath Hall live inside Jagannath Hall, University of Dhaka, with their families. They are followers of the Sanaton religion. Households are located in the segregated corners of the dormitory. Informants reported that it is a better place for them in comparison with any other place in Dhaka. Their quarter is called *mohalla* among the community. The literacy rate of the people is very low. Dalit families are living here because of their ancestral occupation. It is observed that their marriages also take place inside the *mohalla*. There are 130 people who live inside the 4th class staff quarter of Jagannath Hall and there are 60 households in total. In the research area, every household head is a 4th class staff member of Jagannath Hall, University of Dhaka. All of them do their jobs because of inheritance. From the secondary sources, I have read about the household conditions of Dalit people which are very much congested and unhygienic, with poor living conditions. The same scenario was observed in the study area. The 4th class staff members work as cleaners, gardeners, peon s, electricians, health-workers and security guards of Jagannath Hall. Most of the women of the mohalla are homemakers. Women working outside are hardly seen here. All the women live here with their husband's family. An informant, Anjali Rani Ghosh explained:

> "My father-in-law was the cleaner of this hall. He retired. After his retirement, my husband joined him here. I live in this *mohalla* with my in-law's family."

All the houses of the locality are built with tin and the ceiling is also made of the same material. Each house consists of two or three very small rooms. Households have a supply of electricity. Household members share a common kitchen and washroom. They have supply of water.

Informants indicated that they do not face problems as Dalits at local dispensaries or nearby hospitals. Dalit women of the study area mentioned that they live in Dhaka city. They do not face barriers for being untouchables while seeking treatment in hospitals. According to them, in Dhaka no one knows each other. Even outside of their locality, no one wants to know their social status or profession. An informant named Shiuly Rani Saha claimed:

> "In Dhaka, we do not face problems as untouchables. I am talking with you and you are sitting beside me. If I lived in a village area, I would not have imagined that a mainstream person would sit beside me."

5. Findings

The findings of the research present multiple issues for discussion. Firstly, the selection of health care services has been discussed. Secondly, it illustrates the accessibility of treatment in the study area. Next, it explored how hospital has become a key arena for child delivery. Finally, the role of family members is discussed.

5.1. Selection of Health Care Services

To deal with their reproductive health, Dalit women of the study area prefer to seek treatment from Dhaka Medical College and Azimpur Maternity Hospital. Biomedical treatment plays a central role among the Dalit people of the 4th class staff quarter of Jagannath Hall. It is due to their location of residence. The location of both of these hospitals is very close to their place of residence. Owing to the walking distance from their living area, they can go there by foot. Informants reported that they prefer to seek treatment from Dhaka Medical College Hospital rather than any other place. They reported that they had to spend extra money in order to take treatment from anywhere else. It gets difficult to bear the treatment expenditure of any of the other hospitals of Dhaka. An informant named Shiuly Rani Saha, mother of two children, reported that her husband took her to Dhaka Medical College when she conceived her first child. This hospital is nearest to their home. According to her, the cost of this hospital is less than any other hospital. Shiuly noted:

> "It is true that the service of Dhaka Medical College Hospital is not so good. After buying a ticket for BDT 10[2] at the outdoor of the hospital, the officer referred me to a doctor and I had to go there. I went there for my regular check-up during both of my pregnancy times. I heard that private hospitals are much better but they are also expensive. We are poor and we cannot afford everything we want."

Dalit women of this area acknowledged their preference for seeking treatment from nearby hospitals. Some women also choose Azimpur Maternity Hospital for their treatment during pregnancy. According to them, Azimpur Maternity Clinic is also near to their residence and the hospital expense is quite low. This is also confirmed by informants. Another informant, named Deepa Rani Sarker, said that her elder sister suggested her to go to Azimpur Maternity Hospital for pregnancy and childbirth. She asserted that she listened to everything her gynecologist suggested during her pregnancy and delivery time. Deepa expressed her satisfaction with Azimpur Maternity Hospital. This hospital is also near to their residence. She said:

> "I did my pregnancy test there. I used to go there for check-ups. When I was admitted there for delivery, doctors and nurses were also good. It is also near to our home."

Another informant, Anjali Rani Ghosh, mother of two children, shared her satisfaction with the treatment from Azimpur Maternity Hospital. She reported that she went to that hospital for a routine check-up every month. Whenever her doctor gave her the date for the check-up, she came on that date. She mentioned that the doctor checked her weight, blood pressure and the position of the baby. After her delivery, whenever she faced any problem, she went to Azimpur Maternity Hospital. Anjali further added that she preferred to receive services from there in both of her pregnancy terms. She preferred this clinic because all the staff and nurses are female. She added:

> "I have heard from my neighbours that in Dhaka Medical College they lie down pregnant mothers here and there. Then, males also stay around. As everyone is female in Azimpur Maternity Hospital, I felt comfortable there."

Informants reported that check-up during pregnancy mean checking blood pressure, checking weight and checking the position of the baby in the womb and this happens on a date set by the doctor.

Informants also said that they listened to the doctor's instructions during their pregnancy and in post-pregnancy. Whenever they faced any complication, they went to gynecologists of Dhaka Medical College or Azimpur Maternity Hospital.

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[2] 10 Bangladesh taka = UF$0.08, approximately.

5.2. Accessibility of Treatment

Based on the fieldwork, Dalit women of the study area indicated that they live in a secure, restricted area of Dhaka city. Accessibility is the key factor to facilitate decisions to seek treatment (Young & Garro, 1982:1453). Informants reported their accessibility towards their preferred treatment during pregnancy. They mentioned their preferred two hospitals located very near to their residence. Informants also asserted that they buy medicines from nearby dispensaries of Dhaka Medical College and Azimpur Maternity Clinic. Usually, if there are no serious complications, doctors prescribed them iron and multivitamin tablets. Sometimes, medicines are also bought from dispensaries of Changkharpul, Bakshibazar area of Dhaka. Dalit women of this area also say that their husbands buy medicines for them according to doctor's prescriptions. An informant named Shathy Rani Das reported that her brother is a cleaner of Jagannath Hall. She stayed at her brother's home during her pregnancy. She reported:

> "My brother managed treatment for me at Dhaka Medical College. He relayed my problems at the ticket counter and bought a ticket for me with 10BDT. They referred me to a gynae doctor and wrote the room number of the doctor on the top of the ticket."

The Dalit women of this area depend on biomedical treatment from the nearest hospital or clinic because of their household location and because they live in a restricted area.

5.3. Hospital Birth

In the study area, the involvement of midwife (*dai*) is not found. Dalit women prioritize being in hospitals for child delivery. Dalit women of this locality go to nearby hospitals when their delivery time arrives. They choose the hospital for delivery. All of the informants reported that their family members and in-law's family also prefer hospital birth. Informants justified their opinions about hospital birth because, according to them, it is better and safer to go to the hospital during the delivery period.

The Dalit women of the study area mostly prefer the normal delivery process. They have support to deliver normally from their family and in-law's family. They also indicated that they choose Dhaka Medical College Hospital and the Azimpur Maternity Hospital for delivery because these hospitals are very close to their residence. Informants reported that if there are no complications during pregnancy and delivery time, they as well as their family members emphasize the use of the normal delivery process at hospitals. Anjali Rani Ghosh noted,

> "My in-laws' family prioritize normal delivery in my delivery time."

Dalit Women of this locality admitted that they can easily bear the cost of a normal delivery. It is inexpensive and safe. An informant named Alo Rani Sarker, who is 47 years old, first became a mother 26 years ago. She explained:

> "In my delivery time, there was no caesarean delivery. People were scared of these. At that time, however much labour pain, however much hardship there was, women gave birth normally."

Nilima Rani Das added that she first became a mother in 1986. At that time, she lived in Hajaribagh, Dhaka. Nilima said that they have been living in Jagannath Hall since 1993. When she lived in Hajaribagh, she gave birth normally at her home with the help of a dai. Nilima also added that after moving to this locality, she used to go to Dhaka Medical College hospital for any gynecological problem. She further added that her grandchildren were also born in Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Nilima suggested her daughter-in-law to seek treatment from Dhaka Medical College during her pregnancy. According to her, it is safe.

The group discussion and in-depth interviews with informants reveal Dalit women's acceptance of biomedical treatment and hospital birth. They reported their preference for unproblematic normal deliveries. It is observed that taking hospital treatment and delivering babies in hospitals makes them satisfied. The hospital has become the central place for seeking treatment during the reproductive phase of Dalit women in the study area.

5.4. Role of Family Members

Janzen (1978) states that a therapy management group refers to a set of kinfolk, friends, acquaintances and community members. They confer with the healer and representatives of his or her support structure in the healing process (Baer *et al.*, 1997). Informants reported the role of the kin group as well as their support structure during pregnancy time. They mentioned that they received support from their family members and neighbours. Family members helped them financially, provided them with food and medicines and helped with household chores. Choice of treatment was also decided by their family members within the households. Informants reported that their neighbours advised them regarding maternal health. An informant named Champa Rani Das asserted that her father is a cleaner of this dormitory. She got married inside that locality. Her husband is a gardener of Jagannath Hall. She said that after her marriage she moved into a separate household with her husband. Her parents also live inside this locality. She noted that her father and mother arranged everything for her during her pregnancy as they lived nearest to her. She mentioned her husband's support. Champa Rani Das said:

> "As my father and mother live nearest to me, so whenever I faced any problem, difficulties during pregnancy and after delivery my mother always took care of me. Parents' minds do not keep calm in their children's difficult time I always used to follow her"

Another informant, Deepa Rani Sarker explained that her doctor suggested iron tablets in her pregnancy. Her husband bought this medicine from a dispensary of Chankharpul during her antenatal and postnatal period. She added that her elder sister was with her during her pregnancy and child delivery time. As she said that her elder sister was the nearest person to her and Deepa used to follow her elder sister's advice. She mentioned one of her neighbours suggested her to have nutritious food during pregnancy and post-pregnancy. All the informants reported that they were influenced by their mothers, mothers-in-law and elder sisters to deal with the maternal phase.

6. Discussion

Dalit women of the study area choose to seek treatment from the nearby hospital of their residence during pregnancy. The reason for choosing this treatment is due to the easy accessibility. The selection of treatment is shaped by their kin network and social relations with family members. Power relations and hospital surveillance are also identified in this research. Doctors and medical professionals maintain their power and status by monitoring and time to time checking-up of pregnant women during pregnancy. Dalit women consider doctor's knowledge and the knowledge of elder family members as authoritative knowledge. They try to follow their instructions. The instructions from them appear as authoritative knowledge. In this research, there is the presence of power hierarchy between doctors and pregnant women. Hospital is the central place for child delivery in this locality. However, Dalit women receive health support with their kin network. Overall, these are related to the concept of therapy management group, biopower and authoritative knowledge.

7. Conclusion

This research discloses maternal health-seeking process of Dalit women in an urban setting through the insight of Michel Foucault's biopower, Brigitte Jordan's authoritative knowledge and Mark Nichter's

therapy management groups. The findings of the study indicate that the households are located in a segregated area for the Dalit community. The inside of the Jagannath Hall is a restricted area. Women depend on their male counterparts. Their health-seeking processes largely depend on their financial condition, environmental factors and sociocultural factors associated with reproductive health. The Dalit women of Jagannath Hall 4th class staff quarter rely on biomedical treatment rather than any other treatment due to the location of their residence. It highlights their preference for biomedical treatment because of its easy accessibility. Dalit women in this area mostly choose hospitals to deliver babies. They prefer to seek treatment from Dhaka Medical College Hospital and Azimpur Maternity Hospital in their pregnancy because of the easy accessibility of these hospitals to them. They prefer to handle their reproductive phase with doctors and hospitals because, according to them it is better and safe. This research finds that Dhaka Medical College and Azimpur Maternity Hospital are the central places for Dalit women's health-seeking in their pregnancy and post-pregnancy time. They rely on these hospitals because of their household location and their financial conditions. Hospitals are the key places for child delivery. This research visualizes the role of a therapy management group among pregnant Dalit women. The roles of kin members and generational influence matter a lot for a pregnant Dalit woman. During pregnancy, they follow the rules and advice which are learned from their female kin members and neighbours. Power structure is apparent in this research. Doctors monitor and keep control pregnant women's body with medical knowledge. With the existence of a power hierarchy, Dalit women of the study area receive health facilities with the support of family and social networks. The knowledge of doctors and elder kin members appears as authoritative knowledge.

In this research, male members of the study area were not interested in participating in the interviews and group discussions. So, they did not participate directly to talk about women's reproductive health. However, male members talked about other informal issues with me during my rapport build up time. It would be better to gain Dalit male's insight into women's maternal health in future. It would be an interesting research project in the future to observe the maternal health-seeking process of Dalit women in rural areas of Bangladesh.

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Effects of Body Shaming on the Behaviour of University Students in Dhaka, Bangladesh

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Abstract

Body shaming occurs when individuals are judged by people to not fulfill their expectation in terms of physical appearance. Weight shaming, skinny shaming, skin tone shaming, hair shaming and shaming for other parts of the body are found in this study. This study has tried to find out the effects of body shaming on the behaviour of university students in the city of Dhaka according to three objectives: how body shaming affects an individual's self-image; how body shaming affects an individual's interpersonal and social behaviour and, finally, how the victims of body shaming cope with the experience. This study is based on qualitative research. Data was collected through in-depth interviews of 40 (20 males.20 females) students from different public and private universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh. A purposive sampling technique has been selected to choose respondents. At the end of the study, some recommendations have been suggested for the victims to overcome the experience of body shaming and also some suggestions are given for how it can be prevented.

Key Words: *behaviour; body shaming; interpersonal behaviour; self-image; social behaviour*

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Globalization brings various new and interesting topics to our society. It brings different types of media contents and creates certain standards to measure almost everything against, for example in fashion or in the context of beauty. The standard of beauty has been a changing term through the years. Nowadays, both men and women have a massive interest of the standards of beauty. Beauty standards are influenced by race and country (Laarhoven, 2018). In Japan, having pink blush under the eyes is considered as being cute, innocent and youthful (Magnusdottir, 2015). On the other hand, in western countries, women having bigger breasts with a thin body are considered as attractive and young-looking (Laarhoven, 2018). Beauty standards are now a subjective judgement in every society. Every age, society and culture has different beauty standards. But generally, people label a female person beautiful when she is tall, has a nice figure, white skin and long hair (relative to others). A male person is labeled handsome if he is tall, has an athletic body and white skin (again, relative to others) (Damanik 2018). Usually, society treats people as special if they can fulfill the required beauty standard and undervalue those who cannot reach the standards of beauty. Recently people are more likely to talk about these differences of physical appearances and this leads to the occurrence of body shaming terminology (Sugiati, 2016:16).

Many people in every society are concerned about talking about body shape. This is now an important phenomenon for them to judge others by their body. It happens in almost all places: schools, colleges, universities, work places and even also in people's own homes. Media and also some books objectified the beautiful body image and policed a standard of beauty in the media, newspapers and books. Some books for children even send messages about the importance of body appearance and media is often used to target children in this way. This effects their interpersonal behaviour and communication. Many video games also tend to judge the body which is not attractive to be evil, ugly and also unsocial.

In Bangladesh, a student from Ideal School and College's Banasree Wing faced continuous bullying for his weight from other students and teachers. He was overweight at 93kg. He started to eat less and lost 33 kg in weight. However, he then faced physical changes like weakness and swollen ankles. He was physically sick for a long time and he also suffered from mental illness. His sleeping, eating and behaviour were all changed. Subsequently he was taken to hospital where he said that he was afraid to eat because of gaining weight and then his school will be angry with him. He could not eat much. After eating, he vomited. He lost weight by maintaining a well-known diet for weight loss available on the internet and his weight dropped to 29kg. He was supervised and given special treatment but he nevertheless died on June 26[th.], 2021. The BBC said that school and other institutions are continuing to bully students for weight, height and body appearance (Bdnews24.com, 2021). Another preparatory school, Mohammadpur in Dhaka, provides a rule that children not of standard weight and height children cannot be admitted to the school. This is discrimination against children. Authorities claim that overweight children are naughtier than others. They break the rules and disturb other students. Principal Belayet Hossain told Prothom Alo, one of the renowned newspapers in Bangladesh that their goal is to create a healthy environment in which they do not take these children (Akhter, n.d.). Also, in universities, students face body shaming. Sometimes they get depressed and avoid social interaction. In 2019, in India, a 21 year-old woman committed suicide because of her husband's constant harassment of her for her dark skin. There are many cases like this where women have committed suicide because of skin tone shaming. In 2018, a young girl committed suicide because of classmates bullying her about her dark skin (Pandey, 2019).

Body shaming happens in almost all societies. However, most of the time people do not consider it to be a serious issue. Teo *et al.* (2017) claimed body shaming to be a form of verbal bullying. From the research of neurologists and psychologists, it is found that body shaming can create psychological problems. The after effects of body shaming can include anxiety and depression in severe cases (Brewis & Bruening, 2018). Body shaming also create stress, vulnerability and fragility, feelings of inferiority and, sometimes, anti-social disorders (Thahir, 2015).

University students are among the most serious sufferers in this context. Body shaming has become a severe phenomenon in society. This study has tried to explore the effects of body shaming on the behaviour of students from different public and private universities in Dhaka. In this paper, section 1 includes the introduction where background, objectives of the study and operational definition are found; section 2 includes the literature review; section 3 concerns the methodology employed; section 4 features the findings; section 5 has the discussion; section 6 is the conclusion, where limitations and recommendations are found and, finally, section has the references.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

To explore the effects of body shaming on an individual's self-image.

To find out the effects of body shaming on an individual's interpersonal and social behaviour.

To identify how victims of body shaming cope with the body shaming experience.

1.3. Operational Definition

Body Shaming: body shaming is a feeling of shame which occurs when an individual is judged by people not to fulfill their expectations in terms of physical appearance (Damanik, 2018). Generally, body shaming is considered as an expression of bullying or mockery about someone else's bodily appearance.

Fauzia and Rahmiaji (2019) categorises body shaming in four types: fat shaming, skinny shaming, body hair shaming, and skin tone shaming. When someone hurts someone else by using negative words

describing him or her as fat, this is known as fat shaming. The second category is skinny shaming which occurs when someone criticises others for having too thin an appearance. The third one is body hair shaming which refers to the action of someone insulting others for having more hair on their bodies. The last type is skin tone shaming. This body shaming occurs when someone criticises someone else for having a different skin tone. The categories of body shaming are not limited to these four types. There are also many categories of body shaming. Height shaming, shaming of less hair, appearance shaming and masculinity shaming are other examples. In conclusion, body shaming is when people cannot fulfil the beauty standards of any body part and they are shamed for this physical characteristic by other people.

Behaviour: behaviour is considered to be how someone acts. It may be in a private place or a public place. It refers to a reaction to things that are happening: internally - thoughts and feelings - and externally - the environment, as well as other people.

Self-Image: self-image refers to the personal view or an "internal perception" that defines the characteristics of the self, considering such things as intelligence, beauty, ugliness, talent, selfishness and kindness.

Inter Personal Behaviour: inter personal behaviour refers to when people communicate with others who are close to them, for example their family members, peer groups and so forth.

Social Behaviour: social behaviour refers to when a person is communicating and interacting with other members of society.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Bullying

Sugiati (2019) discussed the influences of body shaming on behavioral pattern of FISIP Airlangga University students. He claimed the term body shaming is related to the globalization era. According to Sugiati (2019), body shaming itself has a meaning as a physical assessment of someone who generally makes negative comments and the person will feel shameful for their body appearance. Most of the respondents of his research take body shaming as a joke and they consider it normal because they have no intention to hurt other people. Sugiati (2019) did not find serious impact on FISIP Airlangga University students. However, in this paper, respondents not only take body shaming as a joke, but also said that the people who perform body shaming behaviour feel themselves superior to others. Several kinds of bullying and abusive behaviours are discussed in this paper.

2.2. Gender Differences

Gam *et al*. (2020) observed in their paper that boys having below normal body mass index (BMI) had to face mocking and harassing behaviour more than other boys. But girls had to face harassing behaviour for having above average BMI. This paper adds not only skinny shaming but also other body shaming behaviours faced by both male and female respondents.

Bullying behaviour is found in both male and female persons but it is influenced by socialization processes and not because of the differences in physical appearance (Nanda, Banerjee &Verma, 2020). Hidayat, Malfasari and Herniyanti (2019) claimed that female persons get more body shaming treatment (64.1%) than male persons (35.9%). It was found that women are more vulnerable for body shaming. But this paper finds out that in some specific body shaming cases, males get more mocking behaviour than females do.

2.3. Effects of Body Shaming

Body shaming is considered as appearance-based harassment and can be described as the the act of humiliating or mocking someone because of their physical appearance. Body shaming can lead the victim to low self-esteem, low body satisfaction and depressive symptoms that have harmful effects on young people. It was found that body shaming can affect both psychological and physical health. It also disrupts the immune system (Gam *et al*., 2020). But this paper adds not only the effects of body shaming on physical health but also how these led to changes in social behaviour. This paper also adds the effects of body shaming on victim's own self and analyses the effects through Cooley's Looking Glass Self-theory (1902).

2.4. Role of Social Media

Social networking sites play a part in creating and increasing body shaming behaviour. Various social networking sites where neighbours, peer groups, colleagues and also other people can communicate with each other. Through comments to each other they can are take important roles in creating body image expectations and thus can become involved in body shaming (de Vries *et al.*, 2016). But this study finds some positive roles for social media and other technologies through which people have got positive feelings about their body image. While it was found that from various documents and videos people get positive attitude about their body image, other people are talking against body shaming in various social media such as Facebook, Instagram and others.

2.5. Possible Solutions

Barnes (2021) described some strategies to cope with shaming and seeing one's own body positively. These included body mindset movement, body positivity, body acceptance and body neutrality, which are terms for avoiding self-body shaming. Body positivity refers to loving one's own body truly. Body acceptance means respecting one's body. Body neutrality refers to have neutral feeling about the body and realising that all bodies are different. To promote positive thinking, body movement thinking can be useful for the victims of body shaming (Barnes, 2021). This paper finds some ways to create body positivity and how to grow confidence.

2.6. Theoretical Framework

The Looking Glass Self theory (Cooley, 1902) can be used in the field of body shaming study. This theory is that a reflection of what we think or we perceive that we appear in front of other members of society is dependent on how they have viewed us. Cooley explained the socialization process in this theory. He examined that self-identity and the sense of self are not grown through the thoughts of oneself alone. It also comes from the perceptions of and examination by other members of society's viewpoints. In this issue, social interaction and communication play an important role in self-identification process.

An individual is influenced by social interaction and takes it as a mirror to observe his or her own worth, values and behaviour. This happens in three phases. First, individuals consider how he or she has to present oneself to others, whether it be family, friends or any other person. Second, individuals consider how she or he can be evaluated by other's observations. For example, an individual may be examined as being intelligent, funny or cunning. Third, an individual's self- development depends on the basis of these judgements by others (Cooley, 1902).

Cooley explored how the observation of others towards oneself is not solely responsible for developing self-identity, although it helps to influence the development of self-image. These perceptions and comments of others may be correct or incorrect. However, the individual is always trying to join the internal feeling with the external perception of others (Cooley, 1902).

3. Methodology

This study is based on a qualitative research method. As it is related with social phenomena and with the experience of body shaming, so it was determined that a qualitative research method to collect and analyze data would be appropriate.

3.1. Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data are used. For primary data, the researcher has talked with respondents. For secondary data, the researcher has used online newspapers, research articles, books, documents, reports, seminar papers and other available sources on the internet.

3.2 Study Area and Study Population

Data was collected from different public and private university students (20 males, 20 females) in Dhaka city. They all are around 20-24 years old.

3.3. Sampling Technique

As this study is based on the victims of body shaming, a purposive sampling method is used to pick respondents. Respondents who can fulfill the research criteria are invited to participate in this study.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected through in-depth-interviews. Since this is a sensitive issue and people are emotional about their experiences of body shaming, the researcher needed to explore the depth data and experience of the victims with sensitivity and according to ethical standards.

An organized checklist and a dairy were used for this study. Also, a mobile phone for recording and some digital instruments have been used in the research. Networks with university students helped in collecting data and they talked freely, sharing their experience. With the permission of the respondents, the data have been noted and recorded on a confidential basis.

3.5. Data Processing and Analysis

After taking all interviews, researcher transcribed all the information from the recordings. As all interviews were conducted in the Bengali language, these were transcribed in an organized way deducting the unnecessary information. Subsequently, these were translated into the English language. The researcher did not include the original names of the respondents or any identifiable information for maintaining anonymity.

The researcher has analyzed the data through content analysis to determine the themes that fulfil the objectives of the study.

4. Results

4.1. Respondents' Perceptions about Body Shaming

Most of the respondents explained that body shaming is a humiliating activity concerning another person's body appearance. Some of the respondents said that body shaming is an act to judge others by their body shape. It happens when people throw comments to others for their weight, skinny body appearance, short height or dark skin tone. They spoke of body shaming with terms such as mocking, trolling or bullying.

One of the respondents explained that body shaming is a way of making one person feel superior to another. Another respondent said that members of society perceive that there should be a standard body appearance and that should be maintained by everyone. It is an idealistic perception of society.

Respondents explained that weight shaming, skinny shaming, height shaming, hair shaming are included in body shaming. Some of them added that they also faced body shaming because of the size of their breasts, hips and nose.

Some people have faced weight shaming for having more weight than others. They have randomly heard these words, for instance:

"How much do you eat a day?"

"Which rice do you eat?"

"You should wear a loose dress."

They have been compared with pregnant women and people have mocked them by saying that:

"In which month are you due?"

Skinny shaming is used against some people who have less weight than others. Both male and female respondents have faced skinny shaming. This is totally opposite attitude from weight shaming. They have heard the opposite comments from the comments of weight shaming. For instance:

"You look like a stick!"

"Doesn't your mother give you any food?"

"This dress does not suit you."

The male respondents who have faced skinny shaming said that they even been asked:

"Do you take drugs?"

Female respondents have been compared with other girls in a way that questions their femininity.

In this study female respondents have faced skin tone shaming more than male respondents have. They have been criticized by others for their dark skin. The people involved regularly compare them with other girls who have whiter skin tones. They have heard comments such as:

"Who will marry you?"

"Drink *haldi* milk every night to become whiter."

"Do not wear this dark colour dress, it does not suit you."

Height shaming is another type of body shaming where people mock others for having less height than the height standard perceived by society. The victims of height shaming are mostly male respondents. They have heard such comments as:

"Short boys have no market value."

"Girls do not like short boys as their husbands."

"You look like a baby."

Hair shaming happens when people are mocked for having more hair on their body. Some of the female respondents of this study have faced this type of body shaming. They are threatened that they will not be able to marry and are told to use herbal medicine to remove the hair. Another form of hair shaming happens when people have less hair on their head. This type of shaming is mostly faced by male respondents. They have heard various forms of mockery from others:

"You look older than us."

"No one will be ready to be your girlfriend."

"Wear a cap."

There is another type of body shaming some of the female respondents have faced, which is body shaming resulting from the size of their breasts. They have heard comments such as:

"Wear a large dupatta."

"Does anyone touch your breasts [to make them bigger]?"

"Do you have asthma?"

Most of the respondents of this study said that they have experienced body shaming from childhood. As people were more sensitive in childhood, they were more vulnerable in that period. Most of the victims said that they face body shaming by neighbours and relatives more than from unknown people. Peer group and family members are also perpetrators.

Most of the respondents agreed that they felt hurt more when peer groups or other people close to them tried to mock them for their body appearance than when other people did. This is because peer groups are the people from whom they expect support and good behaviour so it is more hurtful when they do it. Strangers are people who they will not meet again most of the time so their comments are less damaging.

4.1. Victim's Interpersonal and Social Behaviour with Other Members of Society

This study has found different categories of body shaming victims and each of them has experienced a particular type of body shaming. Most of the respondents said they are more comfortable to talk with close friends and family rather than relatives, neighbours and other people. As the close people are supportive, they can interact frankly with them. But when close friends mock them for their body appearance, it is more hurtful. Some of the respondents have experienced body shaming by their peer group and after that they cannot easily mix with them and said that they trying to stay on their own.

To communicate with relatives and neighbours and attend a function are not easy tasks for the victims. They added that they try to avoid to joining social gatherings and if they did have to attend, then they would feel uncomfortable the whole time. Relatives and other people are always ready to talk about their body appearance. Even some of the respondents who live away from the family home did not always feel ready to visit their parents.

4.2. Inequality Faced by the Victims of Body Shaming

Most of the respondents said that they have faced some inequality because of their body appearance. Respondents of skinny shaming shared that in school teachers always did not let them take part in displays. The teachers directly cut them and said that you do not look beautiful when moving your body in a display. Also, some respondents who have faced weight shaming during school said that their teachers cut them out from scouting as they were, they said, too heavy.

Another respondent added that while at college, one of the teachers asked questions to a particular student as she had white skin tone. However, the victim was not asked questions by the teacher because of having dark skin tone.

One respondent who has faced weight shaming said that she has started photography because she did not like to see her own appearance in a photograph, so she wanted to stay behind the camera. But in her photographic journey, she has faced some inequality. When two or more than two photographers have been asked to record an event, she was avoided by the guests. The guests had a tendency to stand in front of the photographers who looked best to them.

In job interviews, male respondents of height shaming have faced inequality. Though they had ability and fulfilled the requirements for the post applied for, they were rejected because of height. Also, a male victim of skinny shaming said he was rejected from a radio station because of his appearance. He was asked to take a drugs test.

4.2. Strategies Followed by Victims after Facing Body Shaming

All of the respondents have followed some strategies in a particular period of their lives. The victims of weight shaming have tried exercise and maintained a strict diet. In some cases, they have taken medicine to lose weight. However, some respondents said that because of these diets they have fallen sick, suffered from gastric problems and other medical conditions. The victims of skinny shaming said that they have taken protein shakes on a daily basis. They have tried to eat meals more than their capacity to do so and, because of this, they have suffered from vomiting and eating disorder problem. Some respondents said that they do not like ghee, butter and sweet items but nowadays they are trying to eat these foods to gain weight. One of the male respondents of skinny shaming said that he has tried to maintain going to the gym for increasing his musculature and has tried to eat a large portion of chicken and protein shakes daily. Some of them have taken medicine for gaining weight. Victims of skin tone shaming said that they have used various types of herbal products and beauty products to make their skin whiten. Some of the respondents who have large breast said that they have used tight inner dresses and done exercises. Respondents of height shaming said they have tried to do exercises, such as cycling. Other respondents who have less hair on their head tried to wear caps and have also used some herbal products. A female respondent with a lot of hair on her body has used medicine to remove the hair. However, they all said that they have followed these strategies only because of being body shamed by other people. They felt insecure.

Nowadays, they have not tried too much to adhere to the standard of body shape because they have started to love their bodies. Their confidence and self-respect have increased from what they had been previously. Some of them said that they are maintaining some exercises to keep themselves healthy, while others cannot escape from insecure feelings and keep trying to make themselves look beautiful to others.

The victims of body shaming have faced crucial experience at a particular period of their lives. Some have faced it while at school, others while at college period and some are still suffering at the moment. Some respondents said that they have grown more confident about their own bodies. Their self-respect has developed when they came out from their houses and tried to discover the world. They have got motivation

from celebrities; for instance, one respondent was motivated by Khloé Kardashian who also faced fat shaming and stood up for the victims (Ritschel, 2021). One of the victims of skin tone and weight shaming explained that she was motivated by Robyn Rihanna Fenty, who is a Barbadian singer, actor and businesswoman. In an interview, Rihanna shared her experience of body shaming online and she explained that she loves her own self whatever her size or how she looks. She always tries to keep a sense of body positivity in herself (Lang, 2018). This example helps the respondent to cope with the experience of body shaming. Her self-love and confidence have grown and she explained:

"In the present world, confidence is the real beauty, not the body appearance."

Another respondent said that after exploring documents and visiting various places she felt that there are not only her but also many other people like her with different sizes and body structures. It is not that there is a given body standard in society that is considered beautiful but she thinks that every person has his or her own beauty. She added that now she can perceive that she is not a plate of biriyani to please others with her body appearance. If one feels satisfied with his or her own body shape, then that will be okay. Some respondents said that they still cannot cope with the experience of body shaming. They just try to forget the experience.

5. Discussion

This portion of the paper explores the data that obtained from the in-depth interviews, which is analysed in the context of Cooley's (1902) Looking Glass Self-Theory. It also discusses some possible means of remedying the body shaming behaviour.

5.1. The Attitude of Body Shaming Behaviour of Others Affects the Self of the Victim: Looking Glass Self-Theory

When an individual is judged by others for his or her body shape, she or he may feel demotivated and regretful about their own body appearance. This person can assume the judgement of others is the right way to think about their own body image. When a person has heard from others about his or her fatness or thinness; height or skin tone, he or she may feel insecure about their body. According to Cooley's looking glass self-theory, it is because the victim of body shaming takes the external attitude of others with his or her own inner feeling. It may affect his or her behaviour. The victim of body shaming may lose self-esteem and confidence. They try to avoid interaction with others sometimes.

Most of the respondents said that they have felt not completed with their body appearance because of the body shaming attitude of others. They felt that they cannot achieve the required beauty standards and so they are not suitable in this society. Some feel so low when in front of others. They think their bodies are a curse. Because of body shaming, most of the respondents have faced depression, anxiety and some respondents have even thought about suicide. One of the female respondents who has faced body shaming for having large breasts said that in her teenage years she tried to cut them with a knife.

Their experiences are related with Cooley's looking glass self-theory in which an individual tries to look at their own self through other's viewpoint. Members of society play the role of a mirror. The victims of body shaming have also faced low self-esteem because of other peoples' perceptions. They have felt insecurity and incomplete because other people judged them. One of the respondents said that he has joined a gym because of people make fun of his body. He did not join it by his own choice. Society forced him to lose weight.

5.2. Some Possible Means of Remedying Body Shaming Behaviour

Several suggestions came from the respondents as possible means of remedying body shaming behaviour. Some said that it is high time to take steps to overcome the experience of body shaming. One of the respondents explained that self-love is necessary at any stage and it may come from the motivational videos or from the life styles of a particular celebrity or model. Another suggested that the victim has to grow confidence in every aspect of his or her body appearance. The individual has to believe that confidence is the real beauty whatever you wear or how much your weight is. Some suggested that university authorities may organize effective seminars against the body shaming attitude; several animation posters and short videos can be included to persuade the people who body shame others not to do so. These videos may include the theme of anti-body shaming attitude. Lastly, all respondents agreed that they need their family's support. Those who got the support suffer less than the others who did not.

6. Conclusion

This paper explores the effects of body shaming on the behaviour of students from different public and private universities in Dhaka from a micro perspective. The study has employed a qualitative methodology and has gathered data from multiple secondary sources. It shows that how body shaming affects an individual's own self: the victims of body shaming do not feel confident and this behaviour has created a negative perception of one's own body appearance. Some victims have even tried to harm themselves because of facing body shaming. The victims mostly avoid social gatherings. Some of them quit their favourite activities because of body shaming. Because of body shaming, the victims took medicines and herbal treatments and went to the gym to try to fulfil the societal standard of body image. They do not want to hear any more about their body appearance.

In the modern world, people are more conscious of body shaming. Those who were once so broken about their own body appearance because of body shaming have responded with body positivity and how they got motivation from various documents and models. Several suggestions for remedying the body shaming behaviour have come from the respondents.

6.1. Limitations and Recommendations

A qualitative research method is used in this study. In-depth-interviews were conducted for collecting primary data. It is not actually based on a quantitative method which can generate a large amount of data. The researcher cannot obtain a larger number of respondents' interviews because of time constraints. So, it is quite difficult to generalize the experience of body shaming from these forty in-depth-interviews. This paper only discussed the experiences of university students who have faced body shaming. People in other age groups are not included in this study. In this paper, gender differences are not included as a main objective. It can be discussed in further research. This paper is beneficial for readers and authors interested in body shaming, effects of body shaming and the strategies followed by the victims of body shaming.

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Peer-Reviewed Research Papers: Education

Secondary School Teachers' Awareness of, Access to and Adoption of Artificial Intelligence for Teaching in Ilorin-West, Nigeria

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) in education refers to the ability of a computer system to perform human tasks, such as thinking and learning. Benefits of AI for teaching are yet to be explored in the Nigerian educational system because there are substantial socio-cultural and organizational challenges. The study hence investigated secondary school teachers' awareness of, access to and adoption of AI for teaching. Specifically, the study: (i) assessed teachers' awareness of AI fo r teaching; (ii) determined teachers' access to AI tools for teaching; (iii) examined factors that affected teachers' adoption of AI for teaching and (iv) assessed public and private school teachers' access to AI f or teaching at secondary schools in Ilorin- West, Kwara State, Nigeria. A descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted. A total number of 200 computer studies teachers participated from fourteen secondary schools where information and communication technology facilities are available. Descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentages and means were used to answer the research questions. T-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Findings established that secondary school teachers:

• are not aware of AI for teaching;

• did not have access to AI tools for teaching;

• lack of funds and infrastructural facilities are some of the factors that affect teachers' adoption of AI for teaching and

• there was no significant difference between public and private secondary school teachers' access to AI for teaching .

The study concluded that 59.8% of teachers in secondary schools are not aware of AI and do not adopt it for teaching. This has great implications for raising the awareness of the benefits of implementing AI in the teaching process. Hence, the study recommended, among others, that teachers should be enlightened about the benefits of new technologies for smart teaching.

Keywords: *access, adoption, artificial intelligence, teachers' awareness, teaching*

1. Introduction

Research and development have heightened the discovery and invention of different innovations through science and technology in every facet of human endeavour. This 21st century world is in a state of flux, change is not only imminent but also so fast that there is a need to stay at alert in order to keep pace with developments in the world of technology.

Technology has influenced almost every aspect of life and education is no exception (Abdulla, 2023). Moreover, technology is an integrating activity, which draws on many different disciplines; it has practical and experimental elements. It depends on fusing the qualitative with quantitative aspect of design. By this activity, our world is fashioned and it determines much of the quality of our life. Technology can be a powerful tool for transforming learning. It can help affirm and advance relationships between educators and students, reinvent our approaches to learning and collaboration, shrink long-standing equity and accessibility gaps, and adapt learning experiences to meet the needs of all learners (Obielodan *et al*., 2021). Ng et al. (2023) stated that the COVID-19 pandemic has catalyzed a significant shift to online/blended teaching and learning where teachers apply emerging technologies to enhance their students' learning outcomes.

Consequently, the integration of emerging technologies in the teaching and learning process increases the interest of learners and the quality of outcome in educational process. It brings about innovations, creativity, and flexibility to learning, thereby equipping both the educators and the learners with necessary problem-solving and survival skills in a digital world (Edah, 2019). Further, Oliveira *et al*. (2019) carried out a review of literature on emergent technologies from the field of science education. The study showed that emergent technological artifacts such as computer simulations, virtual labs, mobile devices and robots are increasing the experience of learners. This study, therefore, shows that emerging technologies have revealed a wide range of potential possibilities for teachers' improvement. Thus, introducing smart teaching, which is the adoption of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for teaching the twenty first century generation via the use of artificial intelligence has become a priority.

Popenici and Kerr (2017) observed that John McCarthy offered the first and most comprehensive definition of artificial intelligence (AI). AI is based on the assumption that every aspect of learning or any other feature of intelligence can be described precisely as a property of a machine or program; the intelligence that the system demonstrates. Moreover, AI can also be defined briefly as the "… branch of computer science that deals with the simulation of intelligent behavior in computers and their capacity to mimic, and ideally improve, human behavior (Naqvi, 2020)."

Studies conducted by Joshi (2019) and Batta (2018) revealed AI in two different categories: (i) strong or generalized AI - which is capable of understanding, improving, and solving problems, usually using machine learning. Machine learning is the scientific study of algorithms and statistical models that computer systems use to perform a specific task without being explicitly programmed; and (ii) weak or applied AI that is limited to performing specific tasks such as recognizing, searching, or analyzing certain components. Currently, the generalized AI exists in theory, but only the weak or applied AI like Cognii, Socrative, Gradescope, ChatGPT, Duolingo, Amazon Alexa, Replika, Why2-Atlas, ETeacher and Google Assistance, among others, have been developed.

Consequently, AI is one of the essential driving forces of the 21 Century as it is rapidly transforming almost all human endeavours. In this sense, it would be naive to conclude that the technology will not have an impact on education given the fact that the possibilities are profound because there have been mind-blowing developments in the evolution of AI and the remarkable role it has played in human lives (Holmes, Bialik & Fadel, 2019). Yeruva (2023) also stated that AI has been transforming various industries and education is no exception.

AI is evolving at an accelerated pace, influencing the deep essence of higher education services. In applying AI in education, the teacher can become free from certain routine tasks and can concentrate on establishing links with students, getting to know them, and mastering skills that will accompany them on their journey towards their human development (Ikedinachi *et al*., 2019). Moving forwards, Seo *et al*. (2021); Mercader and Gairín (2020) and Vazhayil, et al., (2019) asserted that AI systems offer effective support for online learning and teaching, including personalizing learning for students, automating teachers' routine tasks and powering adaptive assessments. `

Consequently, teachers' awareness of AI utilization has only been investigated by a few scholars. This has resulted from an overall lack of experience of teachers regarding how AI can be utilized in the classroom, as well as nonspecific ideas of what AI-adopted tools would be like. This state-of-the-art technology has also considerably influenced educational practices, and efforts constantly made to incorporate AI into teaching. Because of this, public and private school ownership has vital roles to play. For three decades, educators have utilized AI techniques to advance learning management systems, assessment instruments, and other learning support tools in various STEM subjects (Hwang & Tu, 2021). This has not taken place in the research site and, hence, the study examined teachers' awareness of, access to and adoption of AI for teaching in Ilorin-east Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria.

2. Review of Related Literature

Various studies were reviewed in the process of the research. For example, Incerti (2020) stated that, the crucial role of teachers in the teaching and learning process could not be overemphasized; therefore, their awareness of AI is also extremely important for AI integration for smart teaching. This becomes more evident when new ideas are to be introduced to students in the secondary school educational level. Luckin *et al*. (2016) reported that teachers had been influenced by the concept of AI disseminated through the media and science fiction. Hence, this caused them to consider AI to be an occupational threat that would replace them in their jobs rather than to support the enhancement of teaching and learning.

Teachers' awareness of AI in another study according to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2019) is shown by the number of countries that have developed a national AI strategy, which is increasing. France, China and, lately, the United States are examples of the kind of comprehensive strategies that, despite a huge focus on research and development, assign a major role to the development of an AI-capable workforce. In all these three cases, most attention is given to higher education, because of its obvious links with research and development, but also to technical and vocational education. Finland, meanwhile, has chosen a different pathway by creating a national platform to achieve rapidly the goal of 1% of the total population being AI-literate.

A study conducted by Nam and Min (2022) on awareness of teachers about AI revealed that efforts have constantly been made to incorporate AI into teaching and learning; however, the successful implementation of new instructional technologies is closely related to the attitudes of the teachers who lead the lesson. Furthermore, Aldosari (2020) believed that transferring smart products to countries will not work without awareness of many great roles played by AI, in terms of its advantages or disadvantages in academic processes, whether that be administrative procedures or teaching and learning processes.

However, Panigrahi (2020) study contributed to raising teachers' expectations for significant changes in the educational field, such as the implementation of AI in different educational settings. Despite several initiatives regarding curricula, tools, professional development and pedagogy, there is a lack of effective access to technical tools that also acts as a major barrier to the successful adoption of technology in education as expressed by Bingimlas (2009). The successful implementation of new instructional technologies by teachers are, hence, related by the attitude of the teachers that lead the lesson (Fernández-Batanero *et al*., 2021).

Consequently, teachers need to learn not only how to use technology but also, how to adopt it successfully into their curricula. In addition, in order to be open to adopting advanced technology into their teaching, teachers need to understand the importance of educational technology and the affordances that it can bring to instruction. In the same vein, when it comes to AI, a great number of teachers and school officials have not yet experienced AI-based learning support and might simply recognize it as just a slightly more advanced educational technology (Kim & Kim, 2022).

The International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Education, organized by UNESCO and China, May 16-18 , 2019, recommended encouraging fair and comprehensive adoption of AI in education. The continuous development of technology has led to more interest in AI (UNESCO, 2019). Moreover, studies have revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an unprecedented adoption of technology for education. It has also turned a crisis into an opportunity, and catalyzed a shift to AI-driven smart teaching and learning (Green et al., 2020).

Adoption of AI for instruction have shown promise for supporting teachers in various way for teaching. For example: providing instruction in mixed-ability classrooms; providing students with detailed and timely feedback on their writing products and freeing teachers from the burden of possessing all knowledge and giving them more room to support their students while they are observing, discussing, and gathering information in their collaborative knowledge-building processes (Hrastinski *et al*., 2019).

Consequently, the adoption of AI for teaching complex concepts in secondary schools in Nigeria, and the essential role AI plays in the technological advancement of the society, cannot be overemphasized (Edidiong & Jude, 2022). However, importantly, Alkanaan (2022) stated that careful planning of the adoption of AI by educational institutions requires starting with science teachers. Therefore, it is high time to prepare teachers for the adoption of AI for teaching (Nazaretsky *et al*., 2021). However, not all teachers can be asked to become experts in AI, but they must at least be prepared to work in the schools of the future, to have awareness of adopting AI at the same time.

3. Statement of the Problem

The relevance and importance of AI in education is emphasized by the adoption of AI tools to improve mobility and the production of knowledge capacity among teachers. Nwile and Edo (2023) opined that, the adoption of artificial intelligence tools enhances the efficiency of the educational system. These great values cannot be harvested or implemented in Nigeria because there are substantial socio-cultural and organizational challenges that undermine the adoption and implementation of AI across the country.

Manasi, Panchanadeswaran and Sours (2023) claimed that the adoption of AI is currently occurring at an unprecedented pace in this present era of technology advancement. Wogu *et al*. (2018) stated that amidst this unprecedented adoption of AI, teachers worry that relying too much on AI systems might compromise the student's ability to learn independently, solve problems creatively and think critically. Teachers may not have rich technical knowledge to use AI educational applications to facilitate their teaching, not to mention developing students' AI digital capabilities. As such, there is a growing need for teachers to equip themselves with adequate digital competencies to adopt AI in their teaching environments (Ng *et al*., 2023; Kiemde & Kora, 2020, 2021).

The fear of job loss poses threats and Korinek and Stiglitz (2017) asserted that the advancement in AI technologies would bring about job losses or job polarization. These have manifested in different studies as it was revealed that science teachers might have a low level of awareness about the use of AI, and there is a need to raise that awareness in order to understand the general characteristics of AI and how to adopt it for teaching (Alkanaan, 2022; Shin & Shin, 2020). Therefore, to make a successful transition to knowledge-based education, the introduction of AI would be a necessary tool to shift Nigerian education from analog

to digital (Alimi et al., 2021). The study, therefore, explored teachers' awareness of, access to and adoption of artificial intelligence for teaching in Ilorin-east Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria.

4. Objectives and Research Questions for the Study

Specifically, the study:

1. assessed teachers' awareness of AI for teaching in secondary schools;

2. determined teachers' access to AI tools for teaching in secondary schools;

3. examined the factors that affect teachers' adoption of AI for teaching and

4. assessed public and private schools' teachers' access to AI for teaching in secondary schools.

The study provided answers to the following research questions:

1. Were teachers aware of AI for teaching?

2. What is teachers' access to AI tools for teaching?

3. What are the factors that affect teachers' adoption of AI for teaching? and

4. What is the level of public and private schools' teachers' access to AI for teaching?

The following hypothesis was formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H1: There is no significant difference between public and private secondary school teachers' access to AI for teaching

5. Research Design

This study employed descriptive research of the survey type. It was a study designed to represent the interest of the participants in an accurate way. This method was considered the most suitable design for this study because it involves selecting a chosen sample from a large population. The population for this study comprised all computer studies secondary school teachers in Ilorin-west local government area of Kwara State, Nigeria. The researcher involved two hundred (200) respondents available and an adapted questionnaire was employed from various researcher like Alimi *et al*., (2021); Ayanwale *et al*., (2022); Nuhu and Onojah, (2021); Schroer, (2020); and Zhao, Xiaofan and Heng (2022) with a 97% return rate. The data obtained from the administer questionnaire were subjected to descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage and means to answer the three research questions. T-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

6. Data Analysis and Results

Table 1 revealed that 86 (43.0%) of the respondents were male while 114 (57.0%) of the respondents were female.

Gender	Frequency	%age
Make	86	43.0
Female	114	57.0
Total	200	100

Table 1: Distribution of the Participants; source: Original Research

Table 2, showed the participants' distribution based on school ownership. The table showed that 116 (58.0%) of the participants are from public school while 84 (42.0%) of the respondents are from private schools.

School Type	Frequency	%age
Public	116	58.0
Private	84	42.0
Total	200	100

Table 2: Distribution of the Participants Based on School Ownership; source: Original Research

Research Question One: What is teachers' awareness of AI for teaching in secondary schools?

Table 3 showed the teachers' awareness of AI for teaching in secondary schools. It is also revealed that 40.2% of the sampled secondary school teachers indicated they are aware of AI for teaching, while 59.8% of the sampled secondary school teachers indicated that they are not aware.

Item	Aware (n (%age))	Not Aware (n (%age))
Cognii	88 (44.0)	112 (56.0)
Socrative	78 (39.0)	122 (61.0)
Gradescope	83 (41.5)	117 (58.5)
ChatGPT	93 (46.5)	107 (53.5)
Duolingo	57 (28.5)	143 (71.5)
Amazon Alexa	94 (47.0)	106 (53.0)
Replika	46 (23.0)	154 (77.0)
Why2-Atlas	65 (32.5)	135 (67.5)
eTeacher	96 (48.0)	104 (52.0)
Google Assistance	104 (52.0)	96 (48.0)
Overall	40.2	59.8

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage of Teachers' Awareness of AI for Teaching in Secondary Schools; source: Original Research

Research Question Two: What is teachers' access to AI tools for teaching in secondary schools?

Table 4 shows the teachers' access to AI tools for teaching in secondary schools. It revealed from Table 4 that 35.7% of the sampled secondary schools' teachers indicated that they have access to AI tools for teaching while 64.3% of the sampled secondary school teachers indicated that they do not have access to AI for teaching.

Item	Aware (n (%age))	Not Aware (n (%age))
Cognii	66 (33.)	134 (67.0)
Socrative	95 (47.5)	105 (52.5)
Gradescope	61 (30.5)	139 (69.5)
ChatGPT	88 (44.0)	112 (56.0)
Duolingo	51 (25.5)	149 (74.5)
Amazon Alexa	75 (37.5)	125 (62.5)
Replika	37 (18.5)	163 (81.5)
Why2-Atlas	63 (31.5)	137 (68.5)
eTeacher	93 (46.5)	107 (53.5)
Google Assistance	85 (42.5)	115 (57.5)
Overall	35.7	64.3

Table 4: Frequency and Percentage of Teachers' Access to QI Tools for Teaching; source: Original Research

Research Question Three: What are the factors that affect teachers' adoption of AI tools for teaching in secondary schools?

Table 5 shows the factors that affected teachers' adoption of artificial intelligence for teaching in secondary schools. All the items received a mean score above the benchmark of 2.45 with limited access to AI tools that affect the adoption of AI for teaching. Insufficient funding and resources allocated to support the implementation of AI technology in classrooms having the highest mean score of $\bar{x}$ = 3.45 while resistance from colleagues or administrators towards adopting AI in teaching with lowest mean score of $\bar{x}$ = 2.65. Based on the value of the Grand Mean 3.11out of 4.00 maximum value obtainable, which falls within the decision value for Positive, it can be inferred that there are factors hindering the integration of AI tools for teaching.

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
Lack of training and professional development opportunities related to AI in teaching is a challenge.	110	60	20	10	3.35
Limited access to AI tools affects the adoption of AI for teaching.	110	70	20	0	3.45
Resistance from colleagues or administrators towards adopting AI in teaching.	40	50	110	0	2.65
Insufficient funding and resources allocated to support the implementation of AI technology in classrooms.	100	90	10	0	3.45
Lack of awareness or understanding of AI tools and their potential benefits in teaching.	110	60	20	10	3.35
Perception of AI as replacing the role of teachers or diminishing the importance of human interaction.	40	70	90	0	2.75
Uncertainty about the effectiveness and reliability of AI in improving teaching and learning.	30	100	70	0	2.80
Overall Mean					3.11

Table 5: Frequency and Mean Score of the Factors that Affect Teachers' Adoption of AI for Teaching; source: Original Research

Hypothesis One (null format): There is no significant difference between public and private secondary school teachers' access to AI for teaching.

Table 6 indicates that Df (198), t= 0.458, p= 0.648 and so the formulated null hypothesis was not rejected. Thus, the stated null hypothesis established that, there was no significant difference between public and private secondary school teachers' access to AI for teaching.

School	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Public	116	16.5	2.77	198	0.458	0.648	Not rejected
Private	84	16.3	2.19				

Table 6: T-test for Difference between Public and Private Secondary School Teachers' Access to AI for Teaching; source: Original Research (n = 200).

7. Summary of Findings

The findings of this study based on the formulated research questions and the hypotheses were summarized as follows:

1. Secondary school teachers in Ilorin-west are not aware of AI for teaching;

2. Secondary school teachers in Ilorin-west do not have access to AI tools for teaching;

3. Lack of funds and infrastructural facilities are some of the factors that affect teachers' adoption of AI for teaching and

4. There was no significant difference between public and private secondary school teachers' access to AI for teaching.

8. Discussion

This study investigated teachers' awareness of, access to and adoption of AI for teaching in secondary schools. Research question one seeks to investigate teachers' awareness of AI for teaching in secondary schools. The result of the data analysis was that secondary school teachers in Ilorin-west are not aware of AI for teaching. The findings of this study agreed with the result of Ghasemizad, Mohammadkhani, and Saadatrad (2019) which stressed that the awareness of the ability of AI in education and its adoption by institutions and individuals vary greatly but are are generally low. Moreover, it is revealed that teachers do not understand the fundamental concepts, such as big data structures, computational thinking concepts, or ubiquitous computing approaches, which further indicate a poor awareness state in the potential of AI among teachers (Vazhayil *et al*., 2019).

The result of this study also confirmed the observation of Alkanaan (2022) that "… there is a low level of pre-service science teachers' awareness of employing AI in science education, with a marked decrease in awareness of how to employ AI in science education." Aldosari (2020) further revealed that there is a decrease in the level of awareness of the mechanisms of applying AI and that there is a need to spread awareness across educational environments on the possibilities of using AI applications in education. Incerti (2020) concluded by expressing that it is important to increase the awareness of specialists of the requirements of adopting AI in education.

This study further affirmed that secondary school teachers in Ilorin-west do not have access to AI tools for teaching. The results confirmed the assertion of Mercader and Gairín (2020) that despite the great potentials of AI-enabled learning; the pervasive use of technology in education does not guarantee teachers' ability to

access technology in classrooms. This means that, despite the teachers' prior knowledge about technology - smartphones, tablets, laptops and so on - in their domain, this does not guarantee accessibility to AI tools for teaching.

Nazaretsky *et al*. (2021) agreed with the findings of this study through the quotation that teachers are reluctant to accept AI-based recommendations when it contradicts their previous knowledge about their students. Therefore, teachers do not have access to AI applications for instruction. Nevertheless, accessibility to AI is crucial because the availability of AI in instruction enables students to work to the successful conclusion of problem-solving and other great benefits of AI (Nuhu & Onojah, 2021).

The finding of this study equally found that there are factors that affect teacher's adoption of AI for teaching. Factors like uncertainty about the effectiveness and reliability of AI, insufficient funding and resources; perception of AI as replacing the role of teachers and limited access to AI are all important. This is in agreement with Motahhare *et al*. (2019), which stated that theories and beliefs, whether accurate or not, shape the nature of user awareness, interaction and experience of AI. Other hindrances are speculation that AI will replace teachers in the field of education (Hrastinski *et al*., 2019); lack of access to digital infrastructure, education, inadequate data, public policies and funding (Kiemde & Kora, 2020, 2021). Misunderstanding, misleadingness, limitations, and hidden ethical issues behind different platforms have been identified. In disagreement with the findings of this study, Akgun & Greenhow (2022); Korinek and Stiglitz (2017) asserted that the advancement in AI technologies could bring about job losses or job polarization.

9. Conclusion

The study concluded that teachers in Ilorin-west LGA are not aware of AI tools, which affected access to it and therefore resulted to non-adoption of it for teaching in secondary schools. A very large number 59.8% of teachers have never heard about AI at all. Teachers' awareness of AI is the first thing that must be addressed in order to achieve a technology oriented educational experience in Nigeria's secondary schools. The lack of awareness of and access to AI tools or technologies resulted in the lack of adoption and lack of skill in using them. Therefore, there is a need to create more awareness about AI for teaching in every aspect, either physically in workshops, Seminars, staff meetings and so on or virtually, as for social media platforms.

9.1. Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study have great implications on raising the awareness of the magnanimous benefits of implementing AI in the teaching process for teachers in secondary schools. This study advocates that AI tools be available and accessible to teachers. The awareness and accessibility to AI will motivate, prioritize and encourage the teachers to adopt and utilize AI tools. Its adoption will positively influence teachers' attitudes towards these technologies for teaching in order to improve efficiency, efficacy, productivity, quality of instruction delivery and interactive engagement with their students. Eventually, it will help learners to gain better learning experiences, thereby improving their performance academically and in other ways.

9.2. Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to computer studies teachers' awareness, access and adoption of AI in Ilorin-east, Kwara State, Nigeria and thus the results cannot be generalized. Future researchers may consider other variables and subject teachers in secondary schools for further studies.

9.3. Recommendations

Based on the findings, these recommendations are provided:

1. Constant awareness in secondary school teachers about new technologies in the field of education, through seminars and workshops by education stakeholders should be encouraged;

2. Stakeholders in charge of secondary school education should provide teachers with necessary tools and devices alongside digital skills, policies and infrastructures that would provide access to adopting AI for teaching and

3. Lack of access to AI tools and technologies should be addressed by the educational stakeholders, ranging from the provision of adequate funding and provision of digital literacy skills for teachers irrespective of their departments.

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Influence of Virtual Learning on Secondary School Students' Academic Performance during the Pandemic in Nigeria

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Abstract

Virtual learning involves instructional delivery using all available online technological tools, thereby bridging the barriers of distance and time. Learners in this case have the opportunity to learn curriculum-based contents remotely, which made teaching and learning activities possible during the pandemic era. However, learners in the developing world are still facing certain challenges around the implementation of such methods. Hence, this study investigated the influence of virtual learning on secondary school students' academic performance during the pandemic era in Ilorin south by examining the virtual learning tool(s) that was utilized for learning during the pandemic; learners' attitude and academic performance. 419 respondents participated in the descriptive study design while the data was being gathered. The results showed that Moodle and other virtual learning technologies were utilized for instruction. The academic performance of secondary school students was positively impacted by virtual learning environments. The study came to the conclusion that virtual learning could encourage educational institutions to adopt a 21st-century curriculum. When virtual learning is incorporated into the classroom, gender has no discernible impact on students' academic achievement. Given that virtual learning platforms help students overcome time and distance limitations, it was suggested that school pupils receive training in their use.

Keywords: *academic performance, internet, pandemic, virtual learning*

1. Introduction

Education is the delivery of knowledge, skills and information from teachers to students. Teachers in most cases are given discretion in selecting appropriate modes of delivery, which can contribute to nation-building. The significance of education, particularly in a developing country like Nigeria, has increased in order to catch up with the developed world in areas of global competitiveness and best practice. This is because 21 century education aims to make learners global citizens as the world grows into innovation in teaching practices, leveraging the rapid development in Information Communication Technologies (ICT).

ICT have become one of the basic building blocks of modern society. Several countries of the world now use ICT in teaching the mastery of basic skills and concepts. In addition, organizations, experts and practitioners in the education sector increasingly incorporate ICT in supporting educational improvements and reforms via e-learning, blended learning and distance learning approaches.

Blurton (1999) asserted that it is imperative for schools to incorporate a diverse set of ICT into the curriculum in ways that communicate, create, disseminate, store, and manage information in order to be a part of the 21st century world. When teachers are digitally literate and trained to use ICT, these approaches can lead to higher order thinking skills, provide creative and individualized options for students to express their understandings, and leave students better prepared to deal with ongoing technological changes in society and the workplace. As a result of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19, secondary education has been affected around the world, particularly in Nigeria, wherein mid-March of year 2019 the state of alarm was declared, with the state and federal academic authorities decreeing that, for the remainder of the 2019/2020 academic year, teaching and learning processes had to be carried out using online technology.

Although teaching and learning processes in education were already in continuous evolution in relation to the influence of emerging technologies leading to incorporation of newer methodologies, the truth is that due to the confinement caused by the coronavirus, it seems the full use of ICTs in methodological adaptation has been enforced and its inclusion accelerated, as a test of organizational agility (Wu, 2020).

Monroy Garcia *et al*. (2020) identified that education faced certain challenges in the process of transforming learning models to satisfy new demands. In its continuous scientific and pedagogical actualization, secondary education is the processing of mastering new methodologies using ICTs, specifically the internet, to achieve instructional processes which lead to improvements in digital competence among teachers and students. These allowed teachers and students to hold virtual class sessions thereby solving the barriers of distance and time caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through these means, virtual learning gained more popularity among secondary schools as it became prominent among stakeholders and was fully adopted for learning experiences. This also led to enhanced utilization of internet-enabled computers and smartphones, among others, within and outside the facilities of educational organizations.

In addition, the pandemic influenced activities at primary, secondary and tertiary levels on the modus operandi which made the need for innovative solutions to optimize educational endeavors paramount. Thereby, making educational institutions become proactive in embracing an online education system through the introduction of virtual classes is the best solution for the continuation of learning processes (Mishra, Gupta & Shree, 2020). Online video technologies such as Zoom, Google Meet, Slack and Edmodo had to be incorporated for virtual class sessions. A great deal was achieved by adequate provision of these technologies. This was corroborated by Surkhali and Garbuja (2020), who observed that with the availability of technology, online learning can be advantageous and effective in numerous ways since they can offer a great deal of content, interactions, flexibilities and reinforcements. Learners can keep themselves engaged from any place using devices such as mobile phone, laptop or computer at their convenience. In general, online learning was beneficial in accelerating learning and reinforced students and teachers in the comfort of home during the time of global crisis.

People all throughout the world were affected by the COVID-19 lockdown. Despite the drawbacks, this situation provided fresh experiences and insights, as well as propelling educational advancements forward like never before. Instructors of all topics and levels of education were immediately relocated to a virtual environment. People all throughout the world were affected by the COVID-19 lockdown. Despite the drawbacks, this situation provided fresh experiences and insights, as well as propelling educational advancements forward like never before. Within a few days, something that appeared unreal became a universal reality.

In the current dispensation, educators have realized that traditional educational techniques no longer equip students with all of the abilities needed in work places. The 21 century is driven by a competence-based content that will enable learners to be able to become self-sustaining. The pandemic, coming with its many challenges, led to a massive shift in the education sector whereby students and teachers had to leverage available technology tools to achieve educational objectives by shifting from physical classroom settings to virtual learning environments.

Studies like Chick (2020) among others claimed that the use of virtual learning has tremendously influenced the academic performance of student during the pandemic era as well as enhancement of teaching and learning processes. Huber and Helm (2020) stated that the concept of virtual learning was brought out vividly by many researchers in reaction to school lockdowns confronting teachers, students and parents with an entirely new situation, which has given birth to a new educational form. You can sit in the comfort of your own environment and listen to lectures. You can participate in the lab exercises, ask questions and

effectively interact with the teacher as if the action taking place in a conventional classroom but it is done with the convenience of technological gadgets connecting to a desktop that has an internet and phone connection.

According to a review performed for this study, virtual learning, which became popular during the pandemic, affected student academic performance from a gender perspective. Having said that, if properly applied in the teaching of the subject, it would enhance the teaching and learning posture of the teacher and the secondary school student. However, this inquiry will look into how virtual learning platforms affected junior secondary school students' academic performance during the pandemic era and what might be done to make virtual learning more appealing in the future. The affected regions should practice the use of educational technologies at scale and install ICT infrastructures (Chick, 2020). Also, schools should enable the students to access educational websites and applications without charge because the resources are zero-rated, in other words when the student access educational websites and applications they do not have to pay data charges, using universal service funds to scale internet access for students, teachers, and societies. Access to online learning content from free open educational resources provided by non-profit publishers and private companies should also be considered, as well as increasing the accessibility of educational resources on mobile phones. Parents should keep track of their children and avoid bad practices in mobile learning. They should use the radio and television teaching approach, particularly where students cannot access other technologies at home. It would be better to install ICT infrastructure and educational technologies to reach students in rural and the most challenging areas (Tiruneh, 2020), while using virtual classes to promote the progress and educational achievement of students. This helps to know about what works, and what does not when it comes to the virtual class.

In spite of the benefits of ICTs and its infiltration into all human endeavours, including health and education among others, Nigerian university systems still lack the prowess to adopt fully the use of virtual learning platforms for learning. To this end, as in the studies of Wu (2020), Monroy Garcia *et al*., (2020), Mishra *et al*., 2020), Huber and Helm, (2020) and Chick (2020) which established that the use of virtual learning has tremendously influenced the academic performance of students. However, looking at available ICT infrastructures, educational technologies had been greatly affected by various issues. It is on this note that the study seeks to examine the influence of virtual learning on secondary school students' academic performance during the pandemic in Nigeria

1.1. Purpose

The study specifically examined:

(i). virtual learning technologies utilized during for teaching and learning during COVID- 19;

(ii). attitude towards the use of virtual learning technologies during the pandemic; and

(iii). students' academic performance having utilized virtual learning technologies.

Hypothesis one: H01 There is no significant difference between male and female secondary school students' academic performance based on the influence of virtual learning.

2. Literature Review

2.1. COVID-19 and Education

The accelerated expansion of the pandemic resulted in strict steps taken to shut down schools and universities across the country. This affected the entirety of the populace, including health workers and

elders also leading to a delay in the reopening of schools and a pause in academic activities including examinations. The shift from face-to-face class to virtual class had a serious impact on assessments and evaluation. This was dependent on the course nature and the assessment type applying assessments and evaluation online is a challenging task which made teachers change their assessment types to fit the online mode. Another is on monitoring students in order to curb students from cheating (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020). Additionally, laboratory tests, practical tests, and performance tests are impossible to conduct online. Moreover, students who do not have internet access will suffer to take assessments and evaluations (Sahu, 2020). Even for students, teachers, and parents in countries with reliable ICT infrastructure and internet access, the rapid transition to online learning has been challenging. Students, parents, and teachers also require training to deliver online learning effectively, but such support is particularly limited in developing countries.

Everyone has a right to education which is the best weapon in terms of national policy to enhance skills. Human rights organizations emphasize creating uninterrupted schooling activities in a bid to protect children's right to education by leveraging technological equipment. This led nations to design best policies to maintain the continuity of education and has since then become part of a nation's education system. The school closure brought difficulties for students, families, and teachers of developing countries. Students from poor families with lower educational levels and children with poor learning motivation suffered most during COVID-19. The children may have higher dependence than younger students on parents and they need guidance in their learning process, internet access, and usage of digital devices and applications (Tzifopoulos, 2020). Furthermore, poor and digitally-illiterate families' children are further suffering (Tiruneh, 2020). There were already inequalities before coronavirus in access to quality education between students in urban and rural areas, and students from families with higher and lower socioeconomic status. Education inequalities are a threat to education system continuity at a time of unexpected educational system closures. Since there are a limited number of computers, internet access, mobile network access, and lack of ICT trained teachers in developing countries (O'Hagan, 2020), even if online teaching and learning are a good opportunity to continue education during the pandemic it is challenging for developing countries (Sun, Tang & Zuo, 2020).

However, more expertise and competencies in the area of ICT management are required to guarantee high-quality education. Regarding the purpose of such technology, researchers and educators concur by highlighting the necessity of a shift from a teacher-centered learning model to a student-centric learning strategy where learners can set their own goals and track their progress. The response to the coronavirus has demonstrated how technology can help transform how we teach and learn. But the push for change started long before the pandemic struck, and it went on even after the threat subsides. For years, policymakers have been exploring new transformative approaches to education in terms of having online lessons.

As lockdowns eased and schools started to reopen in some places across our region, schools saw the future of education as technology usage took centre stage. New data-based technologies are opening up ways to transform practices, structures, and even cultures in schools. Real-time data, innovations like artificial intelligence (AI), and a range of new devices and tools have transformed the roles and relationships of students, teachers, and parents. Students have been empowered to learn for themselves in flexible individually and collaboratively ways, within and outside physical classrooms. Teachers have access to individualized real-time data on students' progress so as to offer appropriate support to learners.

According to a study by Di Pietro *et al.* (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic affected schools, students, teachers, and parents which increased social inequalities in schools and society at large. Students from more advantaged parents attend schools with better digital infrastructure and teachers have higher levels of digital technology skills. While some schools were better equipped in digital technology and educational resources. The report showed a significant difference between private and public schools in technology and

educational resources with private schools having better technology. Students' have not equal access to digital technology and educational materials. The physical school closure also birthed implementation of distance education.

Some challenges spring up as result of the mode of studying. The paper posited that studying from home commonly requires greater self-discipline and motivation to follow through online lessons, particularly in the earlier period when students are getting used to the new system, which might affect the feeling of an increase in study obligations. On the other hand, lecturers unfamiliar with the new mode of delivery could overload their students with study materials and assignments. In the study, students were asked to compare their workload before the onsite classes were cancelled with the new circumstances after the lockdown. Although online learning has many difficulties and weaknesses, but there was no choice but to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Studying online had to be encouraged. Here, teachers and students were equally challenged in creating an active online learning environment. In Nigeria, some of the most important challenges are the stability of the internet network, inadequate devices or computers, inaccessibility to applications, and issues around sustainability.

These aforementioned challenges are prominent in developing countries like Nigeria such as lack of the necessary ICT infrastructures. However, virtual learning is a solution to achieving an uninterrupted educational system. Access to internet enabled computers is basic to successful virtual or online learning but not guaranteed for all students in developing countries (Zhang, 2020).

The pandemic forced people to spend more time with themselves than ever, which is called the new normal. Maru (2020) declared that the emergence of COVID-19 as a global pandemic with its social and physical distancing consequence had affected educational practices. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced educators to convert their lessons to online versions in real-time. There were many difficulties faced in the global pandemic, so it became something interesting for researchers to research and analyze, especially in online learning. Previous studies have also researched and provided statements relevant to online learning and pandemics. Online learning means a learning process on a virtual basis such as the internet. Online learning is learning that is a trend amid a pandemic. There are lots of media and applications offered to support online learning. The massive spread of the Coronavirus in various countries forced us to see that the world is changing. We can see the changes in technology, economy, politics, and education amid the crisis due to Covid-19 (Rondonuwu, 2022). These changes require us to be prepared and respond with attitudes and actions while constantly learning new things.

The COVID19 pandemic has forced many educators to need urgently to teach online, which provides an opportunity to reshape education, teacher education and educational institutions declared by Cucinotta & Vanelli (2020). In this case, education cannot stop the process of transforming knowledge and academic activities. Because many students and teachers cannot carry out the online teaching and learning process, a support system such as technology requires high technology. In big cities, high technology capacity is not a big challenge, but in areas with limited technology and network capacity, it will be a big challenge for teachers in the learning process. Since the emergence of the coronavirus outbreak, various problems have arisen, because the virus does not only attack humans but also has an impact on the world economy and affects social life in various countries.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

The advent of the internet and online platforms provided access to a lot of views and opinions of a wide range of people from around the world. This also provides opportunities in every sector with education not an exemption. Instructors and learners have the avenue to send and receive curriculum-based contents irrespective of time and distance. This is further ensured by the connectivism theory of learning as regards the arousing interests of learning towards the use technologies for learning. This was discussed extensively

in the study of Kop and Hill (2008) leading to provision of answers to questions specifically on a new theory that encompasses new developments in digital technology be more appropriate, and would it be suitable for other aspects of learning, including in the traditional class room, in distance education and e-learning? It was further established that connectivism theory has basic elements that match the 21st century education demands.

3. Method

This study adopted a descriptive survey design of the survey type. A researcher-designed questionnaire and validated was used to gather data. The instrument was piloted in a location outside the research area. Cronbach alpha was used for a reliability test and a 0.93 internal consistency result indicated valid use of the questionnaire.

Senior secondary students formed the population, with an estimated total of 2,498 across 72 senior secondary schools in Ilorin South. A purposive sampling technique was used to select schools based on the availability of internet enabled computer laboratories while a random sampling technique was used to acquire 419 respondents. The data collected was analyzed using SPSS 23.0 using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency counts, percentages, and means and these were used to answer research questions.

4. Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed to answer the research questions and to test the research hypothesis respectively. The Four hundred and nineteen (419) copies of questionnaire that were administered were all retrieved. This gave a response return rate of 100%.

4.1. Analysis of Demographic Information

From table 1, the result shows that the male respondents are 43.0% (181) while the female respondents are 57.0% (238) which makes the total number of respondents 419. The result implies that female respondents are more than the male respondents.

Gender	Frequency	%age
Male	181	43.0
Female	238	57.0
Total	419	100

Table 1: Gender Distribution of the Respondents; source: Original Research

4.2. Results

This part presents the result of the analysis of the influence of virtual learning on undergraduate students' performance in University of Ilorin, Kwara state, Nigeria.

P1: Learning tool(s) utilized during the process of teaching and learning?

Item	Mean	Item	Mean
Moodle	3.49	Google Classroom	3.14
Edmodo	3.45	Blackboard Learn	2.86
Zoom	3.36	SkyPrep	1.60
Whatsapp	3.26	ATutor	1.47
Microsoft Teams	3.21	Canvas	1.39

Table 2: Mean Score of Learners' Utilization of Virtual Learning; source: Original Research

Table 2 showed the response on the virtual learning tool(s) that was utilized during the process of learning. As reflected in the table, majority of the respondents Moodle, followed by Edmodo and least used Canvas. This inferred that the virtual learning tool(s) that was utilized the most during the process of learning are Moodle, Edmodo, Zoom, WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom and Blackboard Learn. The overall mean was 2.72.

P2: Learners' attitude towards the use of virtual learning during the pandemic?

Table 3 showed the response on the learners' attitude towards the use of virtual learning during the pandemic. As reflected in the table, all the items were agreed upon by the respondents with grand mean score approximately 3.14 which was above the benchmark mean of 2.5. Hence, there is positive learners' attitude towards the use of virtual learning during the pandemic.

Item	Mean
Using virtual learning tools can make understanding of a concept faster	3.52
Using virtual learning tools, I can freely interact with my instructor	3.38
Virtual learning tools help me in keeping good records of my lectures	3.21
Using virtual learning tools can make learning easier	3.16
Virtual learning tools make learning accessible and adaptive	3.12
Using virtual learning tools can improve my academic performance	3.12
Virtual learning tools help me to prepare for my tests and examinations	3.08
Misconceptions on learning concepts can easily be corrected using virtual learning tools	3.08
Marking attendance on virtual learning tools platforms is easy for me	3.04
Using virtual learning tools, I can freely interact with my course mates.	2.65

Table 3: Mean Score of Learners' Attitude towards the Use of Virtual Learning; source: Original Research

P3: Influence of VLPs on the academic performances of learners during the pandemic

Table 4 showed the response on the academic performances of learners through the usage of virtual learning during the pandemic. As reflected in the table, all the items were agreed upon by the respondents with grand mean score approximately 3.44 which was above the benchmark mean of 2.5. Hence, the academic performances of learners through the usage of virtual learning during the pandemic enables them to improve their study motivation, perform better in examination, and increases their studying hours.

Item	Mean
Virtual learning tools help to improve my focus	3.66
Virtual learning tools help me to study better on my own	3.56
Virtual learning tools help to improve my study motivation	3.40
Virtual learning tools help me perform better in my examination	3.37
Virtual learning tools help me increase my studying hours	3.19

Table 4: Mean Score of the Influence of Virtual Learning on the Academic Performance of Learners; source: Original Research

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between male and female secondary school students' academic performance based on the influence of Virtual learning.

As shown, the calculated t-value was 0.32 while the critical t-value is 1.96 (0.00 < 0.05 level of significance). Since the calculated t-value is less than the critical value, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

This implies gender has no significant influence on the academic performance of students when using virtual. It further means that both male and female students have the potential to excel when virtual learning is implemented in school.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. T-value	Crit. Value	P
Male	181	17.53	4.40	93	0.32	1.96	0.74
Female	238	17.19	5.55				

Table 5: Mean, Standard Deviation and T-Value on the Influence of Virtual Learning on Undergraduates' Academic Performance based on Gender; source: Original Research

4.3. Summary of Findings

The following are the findings from this research:

• The findings revealed that the virtual learning tool(s) that were utilized during the process of teaching and learning are Moodle, Edmodo, Zoom, Whatsapp, Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom and Blackboard Learn;

• The findings indicated that there is positive learners' attitude towards the use of virtual learning during the pandemic;

• The study found that, regardless of gender, students' academic achievement during the epidemic improved their study motivation, helped them score better on exams, and increased the amount of time they spent studying.

5. Discussion

The results of this study revealed that the virtual learning tool(s) that were utilized during the process of teaching and learning are Moodle, Edmodo, Zoom, Whatsapp, Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom and Blackboard Learn. This corroborated the study of Zhu and Liu (2020) that virtual learning is a good opportunity for teachers, students, and families to develop actions such as introducing online learning platforms, use Blackboard, Zoom, TronClass, Classin, and Wechat group platforms, and conduct online training, and collect information about all courses. Online teaching and learning are not a new mode of delivery for developed countries and some developing countries. However, shifting from face-to-face class to online learning was challenging for teachers, students, families, and the countries government due to lack of finance, skill, ICT infrastructure, internet access, and educational resources (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020).

The result of the finding indicated that there is positive learners' attitude towards the use of virtual learning during the pandemic. This is in line with the study from Abidoye (2015) that technologies improve the academic performance of students and get them interested in school subjects. Virtual learning enables learning to take place according to the elements present in the learning, based on a continuous scale ranging from the elements specified in the to the elements emerging from use. (Zitter *et al*., 2011). All aforementioned literature is in agreement with the fact the virtual learning is a panacea to creating better learning condition for learners and that, therefore, should be encouraged.

Regarding gender, this study's findings are consistent with those of Chick (2020) and Huber and Helm (2020), who found that the use of virtual learning significantly improved teaching and learning processes while also having a significant impact on students' academic performance during the pandemic. These are all better for women. Pupils might participate in lab exercises, ask questions, and have productive interactions with lecturers while lounging in their own comfortable surroundings and listening to lectures.

6. Conclusion and Implications

We may conclude that, among other virtual learning platforms, Moodle, Edmodo, and Zoom were used for instruction during the pandemic. Students demonstrated a good attitude and the ability to learn remotely, as seen by their improved performance. Furthermore, virtual learning has the power to encourage schools to adopt a 21st-century curriculum. This suggests that virtual learning improves students' academic performance. Both male and female students benefitted from the increased quality and efficiency of teaching and learning brought about by the use of computers and internet technology.

6.1. Limitations of the Study

The limitations in this study are pointers to the fact that:

• This study only focused on influence of virtual learning platforms on academic performance of secondary school students;

• The sample for this study was focused primarily on secondary school students;

• Only public secondary school students within the north central region of Nigeria were selected for the conduct of this research, so results may not be generalizable to the wider educational system and

• This study only considered gender, as a moderating variable, other researchers could consider variable like age of students, level of academics among others.

6.2. Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the outcomes of this study, the following were suggested for future research on the influence of virtual learning on students' performance;

• Secondary school students' self-efficacy and competence on the use of virtual learning platforms

• Undergraduates at Universities, monotechnics, polytechnics and colleges of education can also be researched

• Secondary school students in other regions of Nigeria most especially private universities can also be investigated.

6.3. Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that:

• The government (at all levels, federal, state and local) should provide adequate ICT facilities in secondary schools. However, this software should be affordable or be free for school use. Through this, the problem of insufficient computers and facilities will be minimized and

• Students should be trained on how to use the virtual learning technologies provided effectively.

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Peer-Reviewed Research Papers: Religious Studies

Comparative Studies of Gender Discrimination in Ancient Israel (Numbers Chapters 1-11) and Contemporary Nigeria

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Abstract

A study of the book of Numbers (chapters one to eleven) revealed that only males who are twenty years and above are reckoned with in Ancient Israel. The demographic population of Israel in 2020 reveals that the male to female ratio in Israel was 99.1 males per 100 females. Not making the voice of majority of any economy count is a colossal waste that needs immediate intervention. The study thus is a comparative study of gender discrimination of women in ancient Israel and contemporary Nigeria respectively. The research design was descriptive. 120 questionnaires were administered to the leaders, workers and worshippers of the Redeemed Christian Church of God Ebute-Meta and Christ Redeemer Fellowship University of Lagos, Nigeria. 84 copies were retrieved back and subjected to analysis, representing a return rate of 70%. The research engages production/property relations theories. The study revealed that Ancient Israel and Nigeria have similar cultural attitudes to women. Both are patriarchal societies where women are denied access to decision-making and agenda-setting processes and, beyond that, opportunities for leading these processes. This results in the invisibility of women as public actors and violates their rights to equal participation. The church must be dedicated to unapologetic interpretation of the several ambiguities surrounding previous interpretations made on gender issues and be bold to declare the correct and culturally unbiased Biblical ethical stance on gender issues. Likewise, governments must properly and productively engage their constitutionally endowed legislative power to remedy any form of gender discrimination enshrined in laws. Government must put in place policy and laws that will stop child marriage and forbid sexual harassment. All genders should be given a level playing field f or equal protection under the law.

Keywords: *gender discrimination, gender inequality, national development, women's advancement*

1. Introduction

In Nigeria women are more or less seen as second-class citizens, hence, there is the popular belief that, the best place for women is in the 'kitchen.' This inclination is a gross distortion of the true picture of what should be the right position of women in the family and in society at large. Nigerian society is male-dominated, which is a foremost feature of a traditional society (Stacey, 1993; Kramarae, 1992; Aina, 1998). Women are, therefore, differentiated upon in most cases and are prevented from acquiring formal education, mistreated and perpetually kept as house-help; the average Nigerian woman is seen as an available object for prostitution, may be forced into marriage or engage in street-hawking as means of raising money for the training of their siblings who are male, an instrument of wide-range trafficking and a misfit in society generally (Makama, 2013). Thus, women's voices are absent in decision-making processes that affect their lives; this is a problem for women and a sign of unjust power relations.

A study of Numbers (chapters one to eleven revealed) that only males who are aged twenty years and above are reckoned with when it comes to taking the census in Ancient Israel. This is done because it is a way of measuring their military competence (Numbers 1:1-3) Although this intent may be justified in measuring the military competence of Israel, the same parameter is not suitable for measuring educational, political and social strength. The excluded people, when the population is taken in ancient Israel, are the women and

children and these actually constitute the largest section of any society, all over the world. The prophet Isaiah 's prophecy in Isaiah 4: 1 quoted below indeed implies that there shall be more women than men.

> "And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, we will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach."[3]

Also, in Numbers 3:11-12, in Egypt when God destroyed all the firstborn of both the Egyptians and their animals, God spared the Israelites firstborn and their animals, they were to be set apart and separated for the work of the Tabernacle. The spared male animals are to be used as sacrifices in the Tabernacle. However, in Numbers 3: 11-12, God later on reiterated his choice of the Levites among the children of Israel instead of the entire first born that opened the womb: "Every male Levite is to be dedicated to do the service of the Tabernacle. They are set apart and separated unto God as people who are to help Aaron and his sons in the service of the Tabernacle." In Numbers 3:2, while taking the census of the generations of leaders, women are not included. Also, when the Levites were given to Aaron as helpers, only the male Levites were mentioned in Numbers 3:3-10. Even before God chooses the Levites, God had earlier on chosen the first-born males of the Israelites.

The census of the males Levites is to include boys from a month old, according to Numbers 3:3-15. It was only when the issue of defilement was talked about in Numbers 5:11 that women were mentioned. The law is hostile to women alone. There is gross gender inequality in the law against the women, for example in Numbers 5:12-16, where it is only the husband that seems to have right to be jealous over his wife 's sexual misconduct. It is only on one condition that the Hebrew Law advocated gender equality.

In reference to the issue of men and women voluntarily offering to make a vow that they will both pass through the process of purification in case of defilement, it is inferred that God seems to be taking the spirituality of male and female to be equal in Numbers 6:1-7.

The United Nations Millennium Summit of the year 2000 with 189 member states made a pledge in their Millennium Declaration to achieve eight goals, tagged the Millennium Developmental Goals (MDGs). One of those eight goals, specifically goal 3, is to promote gender equality and to empower women. That goal in itself would be of benefit to national infrastructure and growth. The dedication is for this goal was to be reached by 2015. It is important to know that there is conversation around the need to empower women.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

In Mesopotamia and in some other parts of the world, including Nigeria, women are highly discriminated against and sometimes they are perceived as inferior beings when compared to their male counterparts. This might be because they are seen as inferior beings and thus have nothing to offer towards national and economic development. The researchers are of the opinion that for any society to advance, the role played by women must not be trivialized if there is to be development or serious advancement. This is because women constitute half or more of the entire population of any society. Consequently, to disregard the contributions and inputs of women in any society is a colossal waste of resources that are needed or necessary to foster development. Thus, for proper advancement to take place, women must be given opportunity to make their inputs in all sectors of the economy. The study will thus investigate how the Church and the government can be can used as instruments towards ameliorating the age-old challenge of gender discrimination and fostering national development.

This paper will answer the following questions:

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[3] Biblical references are taken from the King James version, which is widely available online.

1. Clarify the modes of discrimination against women in ancient Israel and Nigeria

2. What are the consequences of discrimination against women?

1.2. Definition of Terms

Women's advancement: this is machinery put in place to promote and support women or strategies to retain women from all backgrounds, including women with disability, in all the profession over the course of their careers, and encourage and promote their career progression into the highest possible leadership cadre.

Gender discrimination: the situation where a person is denied an opportunity or misjudged solely on the basis of their gender. It is any unequal treatment based on gender and may also be referred to as sexism.

1.3. Theoretical Framework: Production and Property Relations Theory

Theories having to do with women's status originated within socialist thought. Socialism blames the existing material inequality in society for most or all of its ills. Socialists assume the feasibility of the elimination or great reduction of this material inequality and with it, the elimination of almost all social inequalities as well as status hierarchies. Property relations, in which women may also be considered to be a form of property, is the source of the emergence of inequality in society, which has been observed in various contexts (Nugent, 1993).

2. Literature Review

No human society can be exempted from having consequences of gender issues for as long as men and women interrelate. Hence, the interactions between males and females within the family, economy, politics, religion and education is often tainted with dominance, marginalization, intolerance and ill-treatment. The prevalence of gender domination is a peculiar attribute that tilts to patriarchy in Nigeria (Makama, 2013; Okpe, 2005). Science and technology have taken gender discrimination to higher levels as it makes it possible to predict the sex of a fetus before it becomes a baby. Consequently, a fetus predicted to be female can be destroyed and the male fetus left to continue to develop. Gender selection (also called sex selection) is a medical technique used by prospective parents who wish to choose the sex of their offspring. Gender selection is performed through sperm separation or genetic testing. The embryos with the desired sex are then implanted into the woman's uterus (Schenker, 2002).

Even though there is a set of time-bound targeted goals towards ensuring gender equality and advancing opportunities in diverse sectors of the global economy, the gap between the MDG for promoting gender equality and its actualization in Nigeria is almost an impossible order to the Nigerian government, for the following reasons: the Nigerian government is known for bad governance, lacking political will, the existing patriarchal way of life, false public investment and the absence of adequate productive capacity that will create the opportunities for women empowerment and development (Ejumodo, 2008).

In Nigeria, gender issues affect all facets of human life. They impact on personality traits, gender role behaviour, social status, acquisition of property, inheritance, occupation and responsibility in the family and society. Since traditional Nigerian society is patriarchal, it is assumed that the women are subjugated and relegated to the background. This situation has created tension and unhealthy relationships between males and females in Nigerian societies because of the seeming undue advantage the men have over the women. The Nigerian population census of 1999 reveals the country's population stands at 140 million, out of which 80.2 of them are women and girls (Nigerian CEDAW-NGO Coalition, 2012). Enabling equal access to public and economic opportunities for both men and women is critical to achieving sustainable economy and improving national well-being of the citizens and failure will result to losing the human capital of the

citizens, compromising countries' full potential for growth and national development (Cuberer & Teignier, 2013).

Men are often valued and respected more than women in society, independent of the achievements of the latter. This discrimination is often characterized by emotional, physical and spiritual stigmatization of women that often leads them to feelings of misery, shame and even death. This ugly practice of sexual discrimination is also prevalent in the church, taking into consideration that the Church is acclaimed as the arbiter of justice and fairness, the refuge for oppressed people and victims of injustice. Yet, it accommodates gender domination and discrimination (Ali, 2011).

Gennrich (2014) opined that many senior church leaders will no longer accept the arguments that some churches advanced that women are emotionally unsuited to be ordained, as a result the insistence of some churches that women should focus on the home affairs because of their natural roles as caregivers, since they give birth. She noted that many of these points of view and attitudes about women still continue today. Often this may not necessarily be a deliberate attempt to undermine women but the result of non- critical acceptance of social misunderstanding about women and men. She posited that there are still ways in which these narrow interpretations of Scripture undermine the equality and dignity of both men and women in churches. She argued that this happens with any of the following occurrences:

1. Exclusion of women from leadership position, just because they are women;

2. Use of language in the church liturgy and official pronouncements that refers to God's people as male;

3. Defining God entirely as male, despite other ways of describing God that are evidenced in the Bible;

4. When women are paid less for the work they do and when they are expected to take on service and nurturing roles just because they are women and

5. Sexual violation of women by men of the clergy or when the church is not frowning at sexual abuse of women among their members or in society (Gennrich, 2014).

Collins (1972) argues that in the Ten Commandments "… the wife is clearly regarded as equivalent to a piece of property," as she is listed along with her husband's other belongings (Exodus 20:17). Women were seen as an inferior species to be owned like cattle (Olusola, 2018). In Old Testament scriptures, women are mostly described as being inferior in relationship to men: only a few women have names, and most women are named according to their husband, son or father, Women are often described as victims: courageous survivors' stories are omitted.

Collins (1972) further argued in connection with Exodus 22:16-17, that when a man violates a virgin, it is regarded as a property offence against the woman's father. Israelite laws of inheritance (Numbers 27:8- 11) similarly reveal the patriarchal nature of that society. It is stated that if a man dies, his son inherits the estate; his daughter inherits only if there is no son. If there are no children, the consideration is for male relatives, not the female ones (Kirk-Duggan, 2012). The Deuteronomy account reveals that only the husband has the right to initiate divorce (24:1). In Judaism, there were firmly established customs to the effect that women by themselves could not conduct an official worship service, but could only come together for prayer, whereas a service in the synagogue required the presence of at least ten men. A girl of the non-elite classes was educated primarily in household duties by her mother and other female kin. She was expected to marry a man of her parents' choice in her late teen years. The marriage arrangements included a dowry, probably consisting of the household items she would need, like linen and kitchenware, prepared by the young woman and her female kin.

The unfavorable treatment to anyone as a result of their sex, race and so on is what is called discrimination. This poses an obstacle towards the accomplishment of the targets of equality, growth and peace. Nigeria has a large population of about 140 million, out of which a huge proportion are women.

Women in Nigeria are also burdened with certain customary duties and procreation efforts. They have the requirement to nurture sick members of the family, as well as contributing at the local, state or national levels through their mostly unrewarded economic strength, organizational skills and single-minded focus to surmount obstacles posed by the environment, culture and partners (Akosile, 2010). Women, especially mothers, plan, organize, direct and coordinate resources at home to the benefit of all members of the family (Awe, 1990). Half of the population of the world consists of women, who to a large extent are still discriminated in different phase of life directly or indirectly, though there are some differences in each country, religion, society or ethnicity (Pokharel, 2008).

The ancient Jews prayed every morning saying "Thank you lord that I was not born a woman ." Christian boys are taken to the special room of the church but the girls are not during the name giving ceremony; women are not supposed to be priests or fathers of the temples and churches (Waltke, 1995). The situation of gender discrimination has been worsened with the development of science and technology as it predicts the sex of a fetus before it turns to a baby. In 1978 and 1983 alone, seventy-eight thousand fetuses were aborted in Mumbai, as they were known as female fetuses (Bastola, 2007).

3. Methodology

The study was carried out among the Pentecostal Churches (PC), Mainline Churches (MC), Evangelical Churches (EC) and African Independent Churches (AIC) in the three Senatorial Districts of Lagos State.

Lagos state was specifically chosen because of the presence of a multicultural city where people from diverse cultures in Nigeria are domiciled. The choice of Lagos State brings to reality the problems of cultural diversity on gender discrimination against women. It is made up of three senatorial districts which cover twenty local government areas. The senatorial districts are: Lagos Central Senatorial District, Lagos East Senatorial District and Lagos West Senatorial District. Lagos Central Senatorial District is made up of six local government areas: Eti–Osa, Apapa, Lagos–Island, Lagos Mainland, Surulere and Somolu. Lagos East Senatorial Districts is made up of four local government areas: Ibeju–Lekki, Epe, Ikorodu, and Kosofe. Lagos West Senatorial Districts is made up of ten local government areas: Ikeja, Amuwo-Odofin, Agege, Ajeromi-Ifelodun, Alimosho, Mushin, Oshodi-Isolo, Ifako-Ijaye, Ojo and Badagry.

In terms of demographic characteristic, most respondents were male (51%) with the remainder female. Most respondents were aged 20-30 years old (35.7%), followed by 31-40 years (26.2%), under 20 years (21.4%), 41-50 (9.5%) and 50 years and above (7.1%). Most respondents were single (54.8%), followed by married (39.3%), single parent (3.6%) or widowed (2.4%). In terms of occupation, the largest group was students (45.2%), then civil servants (31.0%), business owners (20.3%) and apprentices (3.6%).

4. Findings: Nature of Discrimination against Women in Ancient Israel

Nine statements were created based on the literature review above and respondents invited to state whether they agree or disagreed with them. The results are shown in Table 1 below.

Research Question 1 probes the natures of discrimination against women in ancient Israel.

Item No. 1: stated that only male above twenty years get counted officially, Women were not. The above was supported by majority of the respondent (70.2%). Guarneri and Poston (2008) alluded to the prevalence of the patriarchal form of family existence in the Old Testament that assumes that women are meant to live

in the shadow rather than in the light of life. The subordination of all aspects of a woman are found in several scriptures such as Numbers 1:1-3, 3:11-12 and 5:12-16).

Statement (n (%))	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Only males above twenty years get counted officially, women were not.	15 (17.9)	10 (11.9)	20 (23.8)	39 (46.4)
Only firstborn sons of man and beast that opened the womb are sanctified unto God.	10 (11.9)	15 (17.8)	39 (46.4)	20 (23.8)
Only human males that opened the womb were consecrated to take parts in the work of the Tabernacle.	21 (25.0)	10 (11.9)	23 (27.4)	30 (35.7)
Only husbands have right to be jealous over their wives' sexual misconduct	18 (21.4)	20 (23.8)	26 (31.0)	20 (23.8)
Only males get circumcised and females do not as circumcision is a sign of the covenant.	13 (15.5)	13 (15.5)	40 (47.6)	18 (21.4)
A woman 's essence is linked with her function as a companion to man.	6 (7.1)	25 (29.8)	33 (39.3)	20 (23.8)
Only Levite's male lineage is dedicated to perform service of the Tabernacle.	8 (9.5)	6 (7.1)	40 (47.6)	30 (35.7)
Women were not reckoned as generations of leaders.	10 (11.9)	29 (34.5)	40 (47.6)	5 (6.0)
Women were rated the property of their father or their husband and thus have no right to inheritance.	10 (11.9)	17 (20.2)	47 (56.)0	10 (11.9)

Tabe 1: Respondents' Responses to Various Statements; source: Original Research

Item No. 2: affirmed that only firstborn sons of man and beast that opened the womb are sanctified unto God. First born daughters were excluded. 70.2% percent of the respondents agreed or strongly with this assertion in agreement with Exodus 13:1-2.

Item No. 3: A majority (63.1%) of the respondents agreed with the fact that only human males that opened the womb were consecrated to take parts in the work of the Tabernacle while first daughters that open the womb were excluded. God also latter reiterated His choice of the Levites among the children of Israel instead of the entire first born that opened the womb. Despite of the choice of the Levites, God was particular as to the choice of every male Levite as those to be dedicated to do the service of the Tabernacle (Numbers 3: 11-12).

Item No 4: 57.8% of the respondents agreed that only husbands have the right to be jealous over their wives' sexual misconduct, while a minority of 45.2% of the respondents disagreed with the assertion. This decision of the majority of the respondents agreed that there was gross gender inequality in the law against the women folks (Numbers 5:12-16), Jesus subtly challenged this tradition of gender inequality in the way he handled the case of a woman that was brought to Him whom they accused of having been caught in the act of adultery and they expected that Jesus will rubber-stamp their stoning her according to their tradition. However, Jesus refused to rubber-stamp the stoning because He knew that it took two people to commit adultery, and that their law was not fair on the woman because the man with whom she was accused of having committed adultery was not apprehended by their law.

Item No. 5: stated that only males get circumcised and females do not, since circumcision is a sign of the covenant. 69.1% of the respondents agreed that though a woman does not possess any sign of the covenant, as did the males in circumcision, a minority of the respondents (30.9%) disagreed with the assertion. Nakhai

(2019) agreed with majority of the respondents by affirming that a study of the history of Israelite religion had ignored the existence of women in Iron Age Israel (1200–587 BCE).

Item No. 6: a majority of 57. 1% agreed that a woman's essence is linked with her function as a companion to man. Meanwhile, a minority of 31 respondents representing 36.9% disagreed with the assertion. The decision of the majority was confirmed by Jehovah himself in the book of Genesis 2: 18 & 20.

Item No. 7: 83.3% of the respondents agreed that only Levites' male lineages are dedicated to perform service of the Tabernacle. A minority of 16.7% respondents disagreed with the assertion. The decision of the majority was confirmed by Numbers 3:3-10.

Item No. 8: most (53.7%) of the respondents agreed that women were not reckoned as generations of leaders. The decision of the majority was confirmed by Numbers 3:2.

Item No. 9: a majority of 67.9% respondents agreed that women were considered the property of their fathers or husbands and thus have no right to inheritance. A minority of 32.1% respondents disagreed with the assertion. The decision of the majority confirmed the subordination of all aspects of women 's lives. This was somewhat symbolized by the fact that though she was a member of the covenant community, she possessed:

1. No sign of it as did the male in circumcision.

2 This stance of woman under man meant that her "essence as a human being is linked with her function as a companion" to him (Beer & Tubingen, 1919).

5. Conclusion

Women are said to make up half the world's population but it is unfortunate that they generate only 37% of global GDP, which is far below what they are capable of generating when we reflect on the fact that women do not have equal access to labour markets, opportunities and rights. Therefore, gender inequality is not only a pressing moral and social issue but also a critical economic challenge. When it is also considered that there are 655 million fewer women in the labour force than men, women spend three times the amount of time as men on unpaid care work in the home, 195 million fewer women than men are literate, 190 million fewer women than men have a bank account, and there are only 22 women in ministerial and parliamentary positions for every 100 men. McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) research in 2015 found that fully closing gender gaps could add as much as $28 trillion to annual GDP in 2025 (Woetzel *et al*., 2015). Even in a more attainable scenario in which each country matches the progress towards gender parity of the best performer in their region, an additional $12 trillion could be added to GDP in this time frame. Every region studied has the potential to increase its GDP by 8 to 16% between 2015 and 2025.

The untapped - and unmeasured - contribution of women is enormous. 75% of the world's total unpaid care is undertaken by women, including the vital tasks that keep households functioning such as childcare, caring for the elderly, cooking, and cleaning. MGI estimates that unpaid work being undertaken by women today amounts to as much as $10 trillion of output per year, roughly equivalent to 13% of global GDP (Woetzel *et al*., 2015).

6. Recommendations

1. To prevent gender discrimination, the church must be committed and dedicated to unapologetically interpret and clarify the several ambiguities surrounding previous interpretations made on gender issues and be bold to declare the correct and culturally unbiased Biblical ethical stance on gender issues.

2. The church should not in any way directly or indirectly accommodate any form of gender domination and discrimination as the arbiter of justice and fairness, the refuge for oppressed people and victims of injustice

3. The church should play the lead in modelling gender in-discrimination to the world by ensuring they give all genders equal access and platforms to serve in the church knowing fully well that Holy Spirit at work in a woman is not inferior to the one at work in a man.

4. The leadership of the Church should maximally use their position to help eradicate the mindset of their members' male superiority syndrome. Thus, it will encourage and grant equal opportunity of empowerment to all genders. All genders can be judged on merit and not on sentiment.

5. Government must put in place policy and laws that will stop child marriage and forbid sexual harassment.

6. Government must be seen to have educated and empowered women to make right choices in their lives and to ensure they come out of schools as citizens who can shape a more equal society.

7. Government must launch various schemes proven useful in the removal of gender gap in the society.

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An Exploration of UNILAG Students' Perceptions of Church Fellowships in Mental Health Support

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of church fellowships on mental health support for students at the University of Lagos (UNILAG), utilizing a mixed-methods approach combining surveys and interviews. Grounded in Social Support Theory, the research emphasizes the role of social networks in providing emotional, informational, and practical support. The findings reveal that 87% of respondents find religious activities effective in managing stress and anxiety, while 89.5% believe religious support positively influences mental health. Additionally, 96.5% of respondents value the sense of community offered by church fellowships. Interviews with church leaders indicate that while direct suicide cases are rare, depression, academic pressure, and family issues contribute to suicidal thoughts among students. Although churches provide emotional and financial support, the lack of formal mental health training limits their effectiveness. The study confirms the relevance of Social Support Theory by demonstrating how church fellowships reduce mental stress through fostering strong social connections. However, it also highlights the need for structured mental health training for church leaders and recommends partnerships with mental health professionals to improve intervention strategies. Suggestions for enhancing support systems include expanding community-building activities and support groups. A noted limitation of the research is its relatively small sample size focused on UNILAG students, potentially affecting the generalizability of results. Future research should involve larger, more diverse populations to better understand the role of church fellowships in supporting student mental health across various contexts. The church program significantly improves students' mental health, with both church role and program jointly influencing religious support (R² = 0.423, p<0.005).

Keywords: *church fellowship, mental health support, mental well-being, peer support networks, religious support*

1. Introduction to the Study

Suicide has been a serious problem throughout history and remains a major concern today. Despite the efforts of governments, schools, and organizations to address the issue, suicide rates among Nigerian teenagers, especially university students, are rising at an alarming rate. Research by Olibamoyo *et al*. (2019) shows that men and women in Nigeria tend to use different methods for suicide, with hanging being more common among men and poisoning more frequent among women.

University students face a variety of pressures that can affect their mental health. These include academic stress, peer pressure, and the constant need to perform well in their studies. As Bilsen (2018) highlights, these factors can lead to feelings of hopelessness, depression, and, in some cases, suicidal thoughts. Despite the support provided by educational institutions, mental health professionals, and community organizations, the issue persists, and suicide rates among Nigerian university students remain high (Muhammad, Abdukareem & Chowdhury, 2017).

Religious institutions, particularly churches, can play a key role in helping to tackle this problem. Churches often provide much-needed support through fellowship groups, which offer spiritual guidance, a sense of

community, and counseling services. These fellowship groups are especially important on university campuses, where they create a safe and supportive environment for students.

Students can connect with others, share their struggles, and find comfort in their faith during difficult times (Fasogbon, Akinbo & Oke, 2019a).

Church fellowships are essential in promoting mental well-being among students. These groups give students a place for worship, community involvement, and personal growth. By providing both emotional and spiritual support, church fellowships can play a significant role in preventing suicide. This study seeks to explore how students at the University of Lagos view the role of church fellowships in supporting mental health and preventing suicide. Understanding these perceptions will help improve church-based support systems and contribute to better student well-being overall.

The study explores the significant yet under-researched role of church fellowships in supporting mental health among students at the University of Lagos (UNILAG). Mental health issues are increasingly prevalent among university students, yet the contribution of religious institutions, particularly church fellowships, to mental well-being is not well understood. While many students actively engage in church activities, there is limited knowledge about the effectiveness of these programs in addressing mental health needs. Moreover, the relationship between religious support and mental health outcomes remains inadequately explored, particularly in environments where mental health challenges are often stigmatized and misunderstood. This gap in understanding is concerning, given the potential for church fellowships to offer both spiritual and emotional support to students facing mental health challenges. The study aims to fill these gaps by investigating UNILAG students' perceptions of the role of church fellowships in mental health support, evaluating the effectiveness of church programs in promoting mental well-being, and analyzing the broader impact of religious support on students' mental health. By addressing these issues, the research seeks to provide insights that could enhance the role of religious institutions in fostering a supportive environment for students' mental health at UNILAG and similar contexts.

This study will focus on understanding the perspectives of UNILAG students regarding the role of church fellowships in supporting mental health. It seeks to assess how effective church programs are in promoting mental well-being among these students and to analyze the broader impact of religious support on their mental health. By exploring these aspects, the study aims to uncover the contributions of spiritual and community-based interventions in addressing the mental health challenges faced by students, particularly in preventing issues such as depression and suicide. This paper will answer the following Research Questions:

1. What are UNILAG students' views on the role of church fellowships in mental health?

2. How effective are church programs in promoting mental well-being among UNILAG students?

3. What impact does religious support have on students' mental health at UNILAG?

This gives rise to the following hypotheses:

H1: There is no significant relationship between effectiveness of UNILAG Church programs in promoting mental wellbeing and impact of religious support on students' mental health.

H2: There is no joint influence of Church role and Church program on impact of religious support on students' mental health.

This study benefits several groups, starting with the students at UNILAG. They will gain a deeper understanding of how church fellowships can support their mental health and provide them with emotional and spiritual guidance. This can help them access more effective mental health resources within their religious communities. Church leaders and fellowship organizers at UNILAG also benefit from this study as it offers insights into how they can better support students' mental well-being. The findings may help them design programs and workshops that address the specific mental health needs of students, making their efforts more impactful. University counseling services stand to benefit by learning how to collaborate more effectively with religious organizations, creating a more integrated support system for students. Finally, policymakers and mental health professionals can use the study's insights to develop strategies that reduce mental health stigma and promote well-being within the university community, ensuring a supportive environment that addresses both psychological and spiritual needs.

The scope of this study is centered on exploring the perceptions of students at UNILAG regarding the role of church fellowships in supporting mental health. The study specifically focuses on understanding how these fellowships contribute to the mental well-being of students, assessing the effectiveness of various church programs in promoting mental health, and analyzing the broader impact of religious support on students' mental health outcomes. The research involves qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, including surveys and interviews with a diverse sample of UNILAG students who participate in church fellowships. Furthermore, the study examines the collaborative efforts between church fellowships and university counseling services, as well as the role of peer support networks within these fellowships. While the primary focus is on Christian fellowships, the study may also consider insights from students engaged in other religious or non-religious mental health support systems on campus. By concentrating on the experiences and perceptions of students within this specific academic environment, the study aims to provide actionable recommendations that could enhance the mental health support provided by church fellowships at UNILAG and potentially other similar institutions.

1.1. Limitations of the Study

The study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research is limited to students at UNILAG, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other universities or regions with different cultural or religious dynamics. Additionally, the study primarily focuses on Christian church fellowships, potentially overlooking the experiences of students from other religious backgrounds or those who do not engage in religious activities. The reliance on self-reported data through surveys and interviews may also introduce biases, as students might underreport or overreport their experiences with church fellowships and mental health support. Furthermore, the study's cross-sectional design limits its ability to assess the long-term impact of church fellowships on mental health. Lastly, logistical constraints, such as time and resource limitations, may affect the depth of data collection and analysis.

1.2. Operational Definitions of Terms

1. Church Fellowship: organized religious gatherings at UNILAG where students engage in worship, prayer, and community activities, fostering spiritual and social support.

2. Mental Health Support: services and programs provided by church fellowships, including counseling, prayer groups, and workshops, aimed at promoting emotional well-being.

3. Peer Support Networks: groups of students within church fellowships trained to offer emotional guidance, share experiences, and refer peers to mental health resources.

4. Religious Support: emotional and spiritual assistance provided by church fellowships through prayer, counseling, and community activities, helping students cope with stress and anxiety.

5. Mental Well-being: the overall emotional and psychological health of students, improved through participation in church fellowship activities and access to religious support.

2. Review of Relevant Literatures

2.1. Theoretical Frameworks

Social Support Theory (SST): SST originates from sociology and psychology, with significant contributions from Sidney Cobb (1976). Cobb emphasized that social support plays a crucial role in protecting individuals from the harmful effects of stress. This theory is highly relevant to the study as it examines the impact of social networks, such as church fellowships, on mental health. Church fellowships offer emotional, informational, and sometimes material support, which can reduce stress and improve mental well-being. Applying SST allows for an exploration of how students perceive the supportive roles of these fellowships and how this support influences their mental health. The theory justifies the study's focus on understanding the communal and spiritual dimensions that church groups provide, which are integral to the mental health support systems within the university context.

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB): TPB was developed by Icek Ajzen (1991). It builds on the Theory of Reasoned Action, adding the concept of perceived behavioural control to predict deliberate actions. TPB is appropriate for this study as it helps understand the students' intentions and behaviours related to seeking mental health support from church fellowships. The theory suggests that students' perceptions of the supportiveness of these fellowships, their attitudes towards mental health, and their perceived control over accessing such support will influence their behavior. By applying TPB, the study can explore the factors that motivate or deter students from engaging with church fellowships for mental health support, providing insights into how these perceptions shape their actions.

2.2. Review of UNILAG Students' Views on How Church Fellowships Help with Mental Health

At UNILAG, many students think that being part of a church fellowship helps them manage their mental health. These fellowships provide students with a sense of belonging, where they can connect with others, feel supported, and talk about their problems. For some students, attending fellowship meetings gives them a safe place to share their worries and challenges, especially when they are feeling stressed, anxious, or overwhelmed with schoolwork.

According to a study by Adeyemi (2023), students who participate in church fellowships often feel less anxious and stressed. This is because these gatherings allow students to talk openly about their problems and receive comfort and advice from their peers and fellowship leaders. Being part of a supportive community helps them feel like they are not alone in dealing with challenges, which can significantly improve their mental health.

Okoye (2022) adds that church fellowships not only provide spiritual support through prayer and Bible study but also help students cope with everyday struggles. The social activities within these fellowships, like group outings or events, give students the chance to make friends and bond with others, reducing feelings of loneliness. Many students reported that the combination of prayer, spiritual counseling, and social interactions gives them peace of mind and helps them stay emotionally balanced, even during difficult times.

However, some students think church fellowships are not enough when it comes to handling serious mental health issues. Adebayo (2021) found that some students feel the fellowships focus too much on prayer and spiritual solutions but do not offer professional help, like counseling from trained experts. These students

believe that while spiritual support is good, it should be combined with professional mental health care to better address the deeper issues they face, such as depression, trauma, or severe anxiety.

In conclusion, most students at UNILAG see church fellowships as a positive influence on their mental health, offering them a place to feel supported and connected. However, some students believe that fellowships should also include professional counseling services to provide more complete mental health support.

2.3. Church Programs Effectively Enhance Emotional, Spiritual, and Social Support for UNILAG Students' Mental Well-Being

Church programs are highly effective in promoting mental well-being among UNILAG students by offering emotional, social, and spiritual support. Pastoral counseling, prayer sessions, and support groups provided by churches play a critical role in assisting students facing depression and suicidal thoughts (Fasogbon, Oguntashe & Olowookere, 2019b). Church fellowships create a sense of belonging, allowing students to connect with others who share their values and beliefs, which helps reduce feelings of isolation and alienation (Koenig, 2015a). This social support network acts as a buffer against mental stress and reduces the risk of suicide ideation (Omomia, 2017).

Religious teachings in these fellowships emphasize the sacredness of life and offer spiritual guidance that fosters resilience by encouraging students to see challenges as temporary and manageable (Adewuya & Oladipo, 2021a). This spiritual support is particularly valuable for students who may feel hopeless or overwhelmed. Some church fellowships collaborate with mental health professionals, referring students to psychologists and psychiatrists, when necessary, thereby providing more comprehensive care (Esan, Ajayi & Olowookere, 2019).

In addition to spiritual support, church fellowships address students' financial and academic pressures by offering material assistance, such as tutoring, career counseling, and financial aid. This helps alleviate stress and reduces the likelihood of mental health crises (Okoro & Eze, 2022). Religious activities like prayer, meditation, and group worship further contribute to emotional stability, helping students manage stress and avoid negative behaviors associated with suicidal thoughts (Koenig, 2015b). Overall, church fellowships at UNILAG significantly contribute to students' mental well- being by integrating spiritual, social, and practical support.

2.4. Review of Impact of Religious Support on Students' Mental Health at UNILAG

Religious support plays a significant role in improving the mental health of students at UNILAG. Many students face stress due to academic pressure, financial difficulties, or feelings of isolation, which can lead to serious mental health issues. Religious groups and church fellowships help by offering emotional and spiritual guidance that reduces these pressures.

Firstly, church fellowships give students a sense of community. When students feel alone or overwhelmed, being part of a fellowship where they share common beliefs helps them feel connected and supported. This connection reduces feelings of isolation and prevents thoughts of depression or suicide (Koenig, 2015b). Religious groups also provide counseling and prayer sessions, which give students comfort and hope, helping them deal with stress or personal challenges (Fasogbon *et al*., 2019c).

Moreover, these fellowships teach values that emphasize the importance of life. Religious teachings encourage students to stay hopeful even when facing difficult situations, showing them that life's challenges are temporary (Adewuya & Oladipo, 2021b). For students dealing with mental health crises, some

fellowships even work with mental health professionals, referring students to psychologists or psychiatrists when needed (Esan *et al*., 2019b).

In addition, religious fellowships often offer practical support, such as financial help, career advice, or tutoring, which helps ease some of the stress students experience due to financial or academic pressures (Okoro & Eze, 2022a). Activities like prayer and meditation also help students relax, manage their emotions, and develop a positive mindset, reducing the risk of developing mental health problems (Koenig, 2015b). In short, religious support at UNILAG offers students emotional, spiritual, and practical assistance, which helps them cope better with stress, prevents feelings of isolation, and improves their overall mental health.

3. Methodology

The study "Exploring UNILAG Students' Perceptions of Church Fellowships in Mental Health Support" utilizes a descriptive survey design to collect and analyze students' views on the role of church fellowships in supporting mental health. This approach is effective for obtaining data from a large group and identifying patterns in responses. The research targets full-time undergraduate students at the University of Lagos (UNILAG) from various faculties, including Arts, Sciences, and Law.

A sample of 200 students was chosen through stratified random sampling to ensure diverse representation across different faculties and academic years. In addition to the student survey, the study involved interviews with 10 church leaders, including 3 lead chaplains from major campus churches - Catholic Church, Methodist Church, and Redeemed Christian Church of God - each serving 1-2,000 students. Furthermore, 7 student fellowship presidents were interviewed, selected both randomly and purposively from large fellowships (200-500 members) and smaller fellowships (50-150 members).

Data collection included self-designed questionnaires distributed via Google Forms and physical methods, resulting in 200 responses. The questionnaire comprised seven sections with a 4-point Likert-type scale to assess demographics and research questions. Qualitative insights were obtained through recorded interviews. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to generate descriptive statistics and presented in tables. Qualitative data from interviews were examined using thematic analysis. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, it was reviewed against relevant theories and pre-tested with 50 students in a pilot study. The study's tools and methods were also reviewed by the project supervisor for accuracy and completeness.

4. Results of the Thematic Analysis of the Interviews

The role of the church in preventing suicide among university students encompasses a range of supportive, educational, and intervention strategies. Based on interviews with various church leaders, including Josiah Adesola from Christ Apostolic Church Youth Fellowship (CACYOF), Father Frederick Obananya from Saint Thomas More Catholic Chaplaincy, and Sunday Owolabi from the Methodist Church, a comprehensive understanding of church involvement in suicide prevention has emerged.

4.1. Prevalence and Contributing Factors

Across the board, church leaders acknowledge that while direct cases of suicide within their congregations may be relatively rare, the issue is not negligible. Josiah Adesola noted a personal encounter with a suicide case but emphasized that the church had not experienced similar incidents within its own community. Father Frederick Obananya and Samuel Olowookere, on the other hand, indicated that they have not encountered significant suicide cases in UNILAG, the institution where he serves. The common factors leading to suicidal thoughts among students, as identified by the interviewees, include depression, academic stress,

family issues, and a lack of support. Josiah Adesola highlighted the role of isolation and lack of love as significant contributors. Father Obananya pointed to peer pressure, poor academic performance, and drug abuse as contributing factors. Similarly, Sunday Owolabi emphasized that unaddressed depression often escalates to suicidal tendencies. These findings appear similar to that of Nock *et al.* (2008) who observed the abuse of drugs as one of the predictors connected with suicide among students and Amare et al. (2018) reported that students who were disappointed in their academic results were more likely to have suicidal ideation than their peers.

4.1.1. Church Programs and Initiatives

The church employs several strategies to address and prevent suicide among students. It is possible to describe the role of groups within the Foursquare fellowship, which provide a support network where students can openly discuss their challenges and receive emotional and academic encouragement. This approach aims to combat isolation and foster a sense of community. This finding is in line with Koenig (2015b) that social support from religious communities reduces the risk of suicidal thoughts and acts as a buffer against the negative consequences of stress.

Father Frederick Obananya mentioned that the Catholic Church focuses on charity, education, and providing a listening ear. Through initiatives such as the Nigerian Federation of Catholic Students (NFCs), the church educates students about mental health and provides professional advice. The confessional and counseling services also offer spiritual and emotional relief, indirectly supporting mental health.

Sunday Owolabi outlined various programs in the Methodist Church, including skill development initiatives, bursary schemes for financially struggling students, and general counseling services. These programs are designed to provide financial assistance, engage students in productive activities, and offer emotional support. This is in agreement with Ajibola and Agunbiade (2021).

4.1.2. Collaboration and Training

The level of collaboration between churches and educational institutions varies. While there is no formal collaboration with UNILAG, churches like the Methodist Church offer support to students through financial aid and anonymous sponsorships. Father Obananya mentioned some informal interactions but indicated a lack of formal partnerships. The findings contradict the study that says it is important to acknowledge that negative attitudes towards mental health disorders exist among traditional and religious leaders, as well as other healthcare providers.

Training for church leaders on handling suicide tendencies is another area of focus. While there are no specific training programs, general pastoral training includes elements of mental health awareness. According to Pastor Tolu Obadofin of RCF, training for handling suicide tendencies is informal, derived from experience and observation, with a need for more structured training programs. This is contrary to studies that calls for proper training. This training is crucial in equipping church leaders to recognize and address mental health issues effectively. Igbinomwanhia, James and Omoaregba (2013) were concerned with those with known mental health problems who were engaging in suicidal behaviour, not those who were suicidal but not physically 'insane.' They asserted that proper training would help faith-based care providers understand that mental disorders include not only psychotic disorders, but also depression, acute stress disorder, anxiety, and many others.

4.1.3. Recommendations and Improvements

The findings suggest that while churches are actively involved in supporting students and preventing suicide, there are areas for improvement. Increasing awareness about mental health within the church

community, enhancing communication strategies, and expanding targeted support programs could further strengthen the church's role in suicide prevention. Additionally, establishing formal collaborations with educational institutions and developing specialized training programs for church leaders could enhance the effectiveness of suicide prevention efforts. This contradicts the notion of Marxian perspective and Freudian irrational neurosis that the comfort and support provided by religious communities should be seen as merely temporary relief.

4.1.4. Conclusion

Churches play a significant role in preventing suicide among university students by providing emotional support, educational resources, and community engagement. The strategies employed by various church leaders highlight the importance of a holistic approach that combines spiritual guidance with practical support. By continuing to refine their programs and collaborate with educational institutions, churches can further enhance their impact on preventing suicide and supporting the mental health of students.

4.2. Recommendations from the Interviews

1. The interviewees unanimously agreed that Churches should collaborate formally with universities like UNILAG to create joint programs for mental health support and suicide prevention. This collaboration could include offering counseling services, peer support networks, and educational workshops on mental health for students.

2. The interviewees unanimously agreed that structured training programs focused on identifying and addressing mental health issues, including suicidal tendencies, should be provided to church leaders. They are of the opinion that this would equip them with the necessary skills to recognize early warning signs of mental health struggles and offer appropriate support to students.

3. The interviewees unanimously agreed that Churches should expand their existing emotional, spiritual, and financial support programs to address not only spiritual concerns but also practical issues like academic stress and mental health. They also avowed that initiatives could include mental health education, skill development workshops, and financial aid for at-risk students.

4.3. Summary of Findings from the Interviews

The church plays an active role in suicide prevention among university students by offering a combination of spiritual, emotional, and financial support. However, while the church leaders acknowledge the prevalence of suicidal thoughts caused by factors such as depression, academic pressure, and peer influence, they note that direct suicide cases are rare in their congregations. Churches employ various strategies, including group counseling, financial aid, and mental health education. However, there is a need for more formal collaborations between churches and universities, as well as structured training for church leaders in mental health issues.

The role of the church in preventing suicide among university students involves a mix of support, education, and intervention strategies. Church leaders like Josiah Adesola from Christ Apostolic Church and Father Frederick Obananya from Saint Thomas More Catholic Chaplaincy emphasize that while suicide is not common in their congregations, depression, academic stress, and family issues often contribute to suicidal thoughts. Churches like the Methodist Church offer programs that provide emotional and financial support to struggling students. Peer pressure and drug abuse were also mentioned as factors leading to suicidal ideation.

Church programs such as group support, counseling services, and educational initiatives help students feel more connected and less isolated. Churches like Daystar collaborate with university medical centres to offer outreach programs. Although there is no formal collaboration with schools like UNILAG, church leaders stress the need for more structured training to address mental health issues. With better training and partnerships, the church's role in suicide prevention could be more effective.

4.4. The Interviews Provide Contributions to Knowledge

This study highlights the significant role that churches can play in suicide prevention by addressing both spiritual and mental health needs.

It provides insights into the importance of formal partnerships between religious institutions and educational bodies for a more coordinated approach to mental health support.

The study underscores the need for specialized training for church leaders to better equip them for mental health intervention and suicide prevention.

5. Analysis of Qualitative Data (Questionnaire)

5.1. Demographical Characteristics of Participants

Targeted Responses	Responses Obtained	Invalid	Valid
N =200	n = 200	0	200
100%	100%	0%	100%

Table 1: Field Performance of the Research Instrument; source: Original Research

The table above shows the performance of the research instrument in the field. Links to the questionnaire were targeted at undergraduate students at UNILAG. However, we were able to gather responses from the targeted 200 respondents which formed the basis of analysis and interpretation for this research work.

Gender Option(s)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	57	28.4
Female	143	71.6
Total	200	100
Age Group		
16-20	40	19.9
21-24	116	58.2
25-30	38	18.9
31+	6	3.0
Total	200	100
Educational Level		
200	49	24.5
300	44	22.0
400	81	40.5
500	26.1	13.0
Department		
Arts/Law	65	32.5
Sciences/Environment	54	27.0
Social Sciences	54	27.0

Engineering	27	13.5
Total	200	100

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents; source: Original Research

The survey results show that most respondents were female (71.6%). Most respondents were aged 21 to 24 years old (58.2%), which is typical for university students. The next largest age groups were 16- 20 years (19.9%), 25-30 years (18.9%), and 31 years and older (3%). In terms of academic level, the majority were in their 400 Level (40.5%), followed by 200 Level (24.5%), 300 Level (22%), and 500 Level (13%). This suggests that more senior students were more likely to participate. Finally, most respondents came from the Arts/Law departments (32.5%), with the Sciences/Environmental and Social Sciences departments each contributing 27.0%, and Engineering accounting for 13.5%.

5.2. Research Question 1: UNILAG Students' Views on the Role of Church Fellowship on Mental Health

Findings from Table 3 reveal that a vast majority of respondents (92%) agreed or strongly agreed that church fellowship plays a crucial role in supporting students' mental health at UNILAG. This indicates that church fellowship is widely seen as a vital part of mental health support for students.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	60	30.0
Agree	124	62.0
Disagree	14	7.0
Strongly Disagree	2	1.0
Total	200	100

Table 3: Church Fellowship Plays a Crucial Role in Supporting Students' Mental Health at UNILAG; source: Original Research

Findings from Table 4 reveal that a significant majority (86.5%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that regular participation in church fellowship helps improve their mental well-being. This suggests that regular engagement with church fellowship is beneficial for many students' mental health.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	74	37.0
Agree	99	49.5
Disagree	25	12.5
Strongly Disagree	2	1.0
Total	200	100

Table 4: Regular Participation in Church Fellowship Helps Improve My Mental Well-Being; source: Original Research

Findings from Table 5 reveal that the majority of respondents (87%) agreed or strongly agreed that church fellowship at UNILAG addresses mental health issues relevant to students. This suggests that church fellowships are seen as relevant and important in addressing mental health concerns.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	46	23.0
Agree	128	64.0
Disagree	24	12.0
Strongly Disagree	2	1.0
Total	200	100

Table 5: Church Fellowship at UNILAG Addresses Mental Health Issues Relevant to Students; source: Original Research

Data drawn from Table 6 suggest that a significant majority (96.5%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that church fellowship provides a supportive community for mental health. This indicates a strong perception of church fellowship as a supportive environment for students' mental health.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	95	47.5
Agree	98	49.0
Disagree	3	1.5
Strongly Disagree	4	2.0
Total	200	100

Table 6: I feel that Church Fellowship Provides a Supportive Community for Mental Health; source: Original Research

5.2.1. Discussion of Findings for Research Question 1

The findings above demonstrate that church fellowships at UNILAG are widely perceived as effective in addressing mental health issues and providing a supportive community. Specifically, 87% of respondents agree that church fellowship at UNILAG addresses mental health issues relevant to students. Furthermore, an overwhelming 96.5% agree that church fellowship provides a supportive community for mental health. These high levels of agreement indicate that church fellowships play a crucial role in mental health support. However, the small percentages of disagreement (13% and 3.5%) indicate that there is room for improvement to ensure that all students feel adequately supported. This underscores the importance of continuously evaluating and enhancing the mental health initiatives within church fellowships to better serve the diverse needs of the student population.

The findings reveal that many students at UNILAG view church fellowships as beneficial for managing their mental health. These fellowships provide a supportive community, where students feel connected, share problems, and receive comfort. Studies by Adeyemi (2023) and Okoye (2022) highlight that participation in these fellowships reduces stress and anxiety, offering spiritual support through prayer and social interactions that ease loneliness. However, Adebayo (2021) notes that some students feel the fellowships focus too heavily on prayer and lack professional mental health care, suggesting that combining spiritual support with expert counseling would be more effective.

5.3. Research Question 2: Assessing the Effectiveness of UNILAG Church Programs in Promoting Mental Well-Being

Data drawn from Table 7 shows that a majority of respondents (89.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that church programs effectively promote mental well-being among students. This suggests that the church programs are perceived as successful in fostering mental health.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	49	24.5
Agree	130	65.0
Disagree	19	9.5
Strongly Disagree	2	1.0
Total	200	100

Table 7: UNILAG Church Programs Effectively Promote Mental Well-Being among Students; source: Original Research

Findings from Table 8 reveal that a significant majority (88.5%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the mental health workshops and seminars organized by the church are beneficial. This highlights the effectiveness of these programs in supporting students' mental health.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	42	21.0
Agree	135	67.5
Disagree	22	11.0
Strongly Disagree	1	0.5
Total	200	100

Table 8: Mental Health Workshops and Seminars Organized by UNILAG Churches Are Beneficial; source: Original Research

Table 9 indicates that the majority of respondents (79.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that the counseling services provided by the church have positively impacted their mental health. This indicates that the counseling services are perceived as valuable and effective.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	43	21.5
Agree	116	58.0
Disagree	34	17.0
Strongly Disagree	7	3.5
Total	200	100

Table 9: UNILAG Church Counseling Services Have Positively Impacted My Mental Health; source: Original Research

5.3.1. Discussion of Findings for Research Question 2

The results indicate that church programs, workshops, seminars, and counseling services are generally effective and beneficial for students' mental well-being. Specifically, 89.5% of respondents believe that UNILAG church programs effectively promote mental well-being among students. Similarly, 88.5% find the mental health workshops and seminars organized by the church to be beneficial, which can be linked to the study of Koenig (2015b), which found that these activities support stable emotions and constructive thinking, both of which are essential in averting negative behaviours linked to suicidal thoughts. Furthermore, Ottuh and Jemegbe (2020) say religion supports societal cohesiveness and order by unifying individuals around common beliefs and values through worship and other religious events. This study has confirmed the result of the 79.5% of respondents that feels the church's counseling services have positively impacted their mental health. The high level of agreement suggests that these initiatives are well-received and make a positive impact on students' mental health. However, evidence on church programs' impact on mental health is limited according to Beyerlein (2004) backed up by minority of respondents that still feels the services are not effective, indicating potential areas for improvement in program delivery or content.

This suggests the need for regular feedback and adaptation of programs to ensure they meet the evolving needs of students.

Findings from a review of relevant literatures reveal that Church programs at UNILAG are vital in supporting students' mental health by providing emotional, social, and spiritual aid. These initiatives, including pastoral counseling, prayer sessions, and support groups, are particularly effective in helping students dealing with depression and suicidal thoughts (Fasogbon et al., 2019d). They create a sense of belonging, which reduces feelings of loneliness and stress (Koenig, 2015a). Additionally, church teachings encourage resilience by helping students view challenges as temporary (Adewuya & Oladipo, 2021c). Some church fellowships collaborate with mental health professionals for more comprehensive care and offer practical support such as tutoring and financial aid to alleviate academic and financial pressures (Esan et al., 2019b; Okoro & Eze, 2022b). Overall, these church programs provide a holistic support system that greatly enhances students' mental well-being.

5.4. Research Question 3: Assessing the Impact of Religious Support on Students' Mental Health at UNILAG

Table 10 suggests that a substantial majority (89.5%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that religious support from the church has a positive impact on their mental health. This demonstrates the perceived value of religious support in enhancing students' mental well-being.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	63	31.5
Agree	116	58.0
Disagree	14	7.0
Strongly Disagree	7	3.5
Total	200	100

Table 10: Religious Support from UNILAG Churches Has a Positive Impact on My Mental Health; source: Original Research

Table 11 indicates that the majority of respondents (89.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that spiritual guidance from church leaders contributes positively to their mental health. This suggests that spiritual support is highly valued by the students.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	73	36.5
Agree	106	53.0
Disagree	17	8.5
Strongly Disagree	4	2.0
Total	200	100

Table 11: The Spiritual Guidance Provided by UNILAG Church Leaders Contributes to My Mental Health; source: Original Research

Findings from Table 12 reveal that a majority of respondents (87%) agreed or strongly agreed that religious activities and fellowship play a significant role in managing their stress and anxiety. This indicates that these activities are effective in helping students cope with stress and anxiety.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	56	28.0
Agree	118	59.0
Disagree	19	9.5
Strongly Disagree	7	3.5
Total	200	100

Table 12: Religious Activities and Fellowship at UNILAG Play a Significant Role in Managing My Stress and Anxiety

The findings suggest that religious support, including spiritual guidance and participation in religious activities, has a significant positive impact on students' mental health. Specifically, 89.5% of respondents agree that religious support from the UNILAG churches has a positive impact on their mental health. Additionally, 89.5% believe that the spiritual guidance provided by church leaders contributes to their mental health As Omomia (2017) astutely pointed out, "… the unique privilege of reaching a wide and diverse audience with messages of hope and joy" is a powerful asset of religious institutions and organisations in Nigeria. These results are in line with Fasogbon et al. (2019a) that religion has a tremendous positive impact on people's lives in Nigeria. Furthermore, 87% feel that religious activities and fellowship play a significant role in managing their stress and anxiety, which is supported by Koenig (2012) that religious practices reduce stress and promotes mental health. These high levels of agreement highlight the importance of religious activities in students' mental well-being. However, there is a small proportion of respondents who do not share this view, indicating that some students might not fully benefit from or engage with these religious supports. This underscores the need for the church to find ways to make its religious support more inclusive and accessible to all students.

A summary of the findings from the literature reveals that religious support significantly enhances the mental health of UNILAG students. Church fellowships play a key role by providing a sense of community, which helps reduce feelings of isolation and prevents depression and suicidal thoughts (Koenig, 2015b). These fellowships offer emotional and spiritual guidance through counseling and prayer sessions, giving students comfort and hope during stressful times (Fasogbon *et al.*, 2019b). Additionally, religious teachings promote resilience by encouraging students to view life's challenges as temporary and manageable (Adewuya & Oladipo, 2021a). Some fellowships collaborate with mental health professionals to ensure students receive comprehensive care when needed (Esan *et al.*, 2019). They also offer practical support such as financial aid, career advice, and tutoring, which helps alleviate academic and financial pressures (Okoro & Eze, 2022c). Activities like prayer and meditation further support emotional stability and a positive mindset, reducing the risk of mental health issues. Overall, religious support at UNILAG provides crucial emotional, spiritual, and practical assistance that helps students manage stress and improve their mental well-being.

6. Interpretation of Hypothesis Testing

H1: There is no significant relationship between effectiveness of UNILAG Church programs in promoting mental wellbeing and impact of religious support on students' mental health.

Table 13 shows the correlation between the effectiveness of UNILAG church programs in promoting mental well-being and the impact of religious support on students' mental health. A Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) test was run to determine the relationship between church programs and impact of religious support on students' mental health. There is a significant, positive correlation (r= 0.597, p < 0.001). This implies that as churches and fellowships organize different programs for students, they boost their mental health. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected which means that the original hypothesis is accepted.

Variables	Mean	SD	N	R	P
Effectiveness of UNILAG Church programs in promoting mental well being	9.9774	1.51553	199	0.597**	0.000
Impact of religious support on students' mental health	10.5000	1.88999	197		

Table 13: Relationship between Church Programs and Impact on Mental Well Being; source: Original Research

H2: There is no joint influence of Church role and Church program on Impact of religious support on students' mental health.

The linear regression analysis was used to test the joint influence of Church role and Church program on Impact of Religious Support on Students' Mental Health. Tables 14a and 14b show there is joint influence of the two variables on the impact of religious support on students' mental health (R = 0.423, Adj. R = 0.417, p < 0.005). This shows that the regressor variables jointly cause 42.3% change in the impact on mental health. This implies that the role of the Church fellowship in preventing suicide among UNILAG students and the effectiveness of UNILAG Church programs in promoting mental wellbeing jointly influence the impact of religious support on students' mental health in the UNILAG.

Variables	Mean	SD	N	R	P
Role of church fellowship in preventing suicide	13.1622	3.01300	199	0.601**	1
Effectiveness of church program	9.9774	1.51553	197	0.478	
Impact on mental health	10.5000	1.88999			

Table 14a: Correlation Analysis of Influence of Church Role and Church Program on Impact of Religious Support on Students' Mental Health; source: Original Research

Model	R	R^2	Adj R^2	SE of Est	DF1	DF2	R^2 Change	F	Sig
Constant					2	193	0.423	70.827	0.000**a
Church Programs Church Role	0.651	0.423	0.417	1.43990					

Table 14b: Regression Analysis of Influence of Church Role and Church Program on Impact of Religious Support on Students' Mental Health; source: Original Research

a: dependent variable: impact mental
b: predictors: (constant), church role, church program

6.1. Summary of Quantitative Research

This study investigates how students at UNILAG view church fellowships as a resource for mental health support. Many students face significant stress from academic pressures, financial difficulties, and feelings of isolation, which can lead to mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety. Church fellowships are seen as a valuable source of support, offering emotional, spiritual, and practical assistance to help students cope with these issues.

The study found that students appreciate the sense of community and belonging provided by church fellowships. Being part of a fellowship where members share similar values helps students feel less isolated and more supported. This connection is crucial in reducing feelings of loneliness and preventing mental health crises. Participants reported that church fellowships offer emotional comfort through counseling and prayer sessions, which help them manage stress and personal difficulties.

Furthermore, the study highlights that religious teachings within these fellowships emphasize resilience and hope, encouraging students to view challenges as temporary and manageable. Some fellowships also

collaborate with mental health professionals, providing students with referrals to psychologists and psychiatrists for more specialized care when needed.

In addition to spiritual support, church fellowships offer practical aid such as financial assistance, career guidance, and academic tutoring, which helps alleviate some of the stress associated with financial and academic pressures. Activities like prayer and meditation also contribute to emotional stability, helping students maintain a positive outlook.

6.2. Recommendations for the Study

For the study Exploring UNILAG Students' Perceptions of Church Fellowships in Mental Health Support, the recommendations are as follow:

1. The study recommends the regular organization of church-led mental health workshops that integrate both spiritual and psychological support for students.

2. We advocate for the establishment of peer support networks that offer spiritual guidance and facilitate mental health referrals.

3. We suggest fostering collaboration between churches and university counselling centers to create effective referral systems and joint mental health initiatives.

4. The research encourages partnerships between churches, school fellowships, and mental health professionals to offer faith-based workshops that address depression, anxiety, and suicide prevention.

5. We advocate for collaboration with mental health experts to train church leaders in recognizing and addressing student mental health crises.

6. It promotes collaboration between churches, campus fellowships, and university counseling teams to co-develop tailored mental health support for students.

7. Finally, the study calls for integrating mental health education into church activities to reduce stigma and foster a supportive environment for students.

7. Conclusion

The study highlights the significant role that church fellowships play in supporting mental health among UNILAG students. Facing academic pressures, financial struggles, and feelings of isolation, many students experience stress that can lead to mental health challenges like depression and anxiety. Church fellowships offer essential support by creating a sense of community and belonging, which helps students feel less alone and more connected. This sense of connection is crucial for reducing feelings of loneliness and preventing mental health crises.

Church fellowships provide emotional support through counseling and prayer sessions, offering students comfort and guidance. The religious teachings within these groups promote resilience and hope, encouraging students to view their challenges as temporary and manageable. Additionally, some fellowships collaborate with mental health professionals, referring students to psychologists and psychiatrists when necessary for more specialized care.

Beyond emotional and spiritual support, church fellowships also address practical needs. They offer financial aid, career advice, and academic tutoring, which help reduce the stress associated with financial

and academic pressures. Activities like prayer and meditation further aid in maintaining emotional stability and a positive outlook. Overall, church fellowships at UNILAG offer a comprehensive support system that integrates emotional, spiritual, and practical assistance, significantly enhancing students' mental well-being and providing valuable support in managing their stress and mental health.

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Unique Idiosyncratic Style in Túndé Kèlání's Movies

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Abstract

Idiosyncrasy denotes a peculiar or unusual characteristic or mannerism that is unique to an individual or a group. Diverse works from a sociological and cultural point of view have been conducted on Kèlání's films but they have not been seen from the stylistic point of view. This study examines style and idiosyncratic ability in Túndé Kèlání's movies viewing them as idiosyncratic uniqueness. We critically explore three of Túndé Kèlání's movies, Dazzling Mirage, White Handkerchief and The Narrow Path, which constitute our source of data for this paper. The selected films are subjected to tenets from Wilson and Sperber's (1986) Relevance Theory. It was understood from the study that, cultural renaissance and globalisation of Yorùbá culture, mass awareness and conservationism vs progressivism are the cogent styles that distinguish this director from other film makers. He hardly embarks on movies without the traits of public awareness and sensitisation as central focal points. This study recommends juxtaposition of more of Kèlání's traits and styles with other African film writers so as to ensure that society as well as individual are sensitised better while being entertained by the movies. It is also established in this study that style goes beyond examining the phono-aesthetic or photo-aesthetic tropes.

Keywords: *aesthetics; films; idiosyncrasies; movies; stylistics*

1. Introduction

Túndé Kèlání (b.1948) is a veteran filmmaker and award-winning producer of films that are not only rich in cultural values but also serve as medium of correcting anomalies in the society. The distinct style of his films distinguishes him from other film makers who may be more motivated by popularity, fame and funds. Whenever something is done recurrently in such a way that that thing becomes the peculiar identity and style of a person and when ideology, subject matter or a particular inclination is central to one's work of art, it becomes idiosyncrasy. In this study, effort is made to establish some features as style, identity and peculiarity of Túndé Kèléní.

Stylistics is mostly seen from language point of view but there is one elaborate and all-encompassing school of thought that see stylistics beyond analysis of linguistic components in a work (Òjó, 2020, 2023). This study adopts the tenets of this school of thought by looking out for the manner of approach that distinguishes a work from another, as Sriraman, 2012:37) states:

> "Stylistics, as the name suggests, is the study of style. While "style" is a general term which can refer to the way or manner anything is done (e.g. "We don't like so-and-so's style of functioning"), or designed (e.g. "a building in the Moghul style of architecture"), stylistics in particular examines the style of written or spoken texts. Even more specifically, stylistics attempts to study the style or language of literary texts."

This implies that stylistics can explore the manner and approach that is dominant in a writer's work beyond mere consideration of the linguistic element. To Sriraman (2012:37), style[4] is a term that can be applied to a wide range of fields, including building, textiles and architecture among others, though it is routinely

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[4] Stylistics, according to Òjó (2013) and Ọlátéjú (2016), is a conglomeration of style + linguistics. But some scholars have attributed stylistics to the general study of manners of doing something. Yet, the derivation of the name remains.

accepted to be the study of the language of literature from a linguistic orientation, where both phono-aesthetic or photo-aesthetic tropes are dominant or foregrounded in a work of art. In other words, even when we accept than stylistics deals principally with the language of literature, it can be broadened to encompass areas other than language. Hence, we see cultural renaissance, mass campaign and sensitisation, and a voice against bad cultural practices as the style of Túndé Kèlání[5] works. Ọlátéjú's (2016) assertion has justified this when he says: ''The effort of the above-mentioned scholars are mere description or approaches which can be harmonised into four schools of thought or four approaches, namely: style as language, style as choice, style as deviation and style as individuality.''[6] We opine that from this reiteration of Ọjó (2005) and Ọlátéjú (2016), justification for taking style beyond language alone is established because style can be of language, a choice, deviation or identity in a particular work for which an artist is known. Consequently, while an aspect of stylistics deals primarily with language use, others are applied to wide varieties of disciplines and undertakings. This is in line with Bello (2020:57), who says; "Style whether seen as sartorial (fashion) style, literary style, performance style, musical style, or other kind of style, is defined as embellishment or ornamentation– that is embellishment or ornamentation that results in deviation from norm." For example, Túndé Kèlání does not choose a legendary or historical style or approach for his film writing approach as his style, despite these being hitherto popular in Yorùbá or Nigerian movie industry; he chooses public enlightenment, lending voice to cultural renaissance and campaigns against stigmatisation and other cultural practices as his style. These along with fabulous entertainment and educational masterclass are legacies, as long as they are not monotonously presented. We therefore explore Túndé Kèlání's films *White Handkerchief* (2000), *The Narrow Path* (2006) and *Dazzling Mirage* (2015) as our data sources. While the themes cum-style observed in Kèlání's works reverberate conspicuously in almost all his movies, we cannot explore all his numerous films in this paper. The choice of these three movies is two-fold. Firstly, the years of production are not wide apart. Secondly, the selected three are few of the films in English language where little or no translation would be needed in this paper for spatial reasons.

1.1. Biography of Túndé Kèlání

Born in February 1948, during the colonial era in Nigeria, Chief Túndé Kèlání is a Lagos born veteran who started schooling in Òkè-Ọnà Modern Primary School at Ìkijà in Abéòkúta, Ògùn State. Although, he was born in Lagos, the rigorous nature of the work of his father as a railway worker and ever-busy nature of his mother necessitated his migration to his grandfather's place at Òkè-Ọnà in Abéòkúta so that he could acquire uninterrupted education. His grandfather was a farmer who seldom went to the farm with him during weekends. Túndé Kèlání so much enjoyed the variety of foods at the farm that he could not even remember his biological father and mother who resided in the city of Lagos. Apart from his grandfather being a farmer, he was also a member of the Ògòdò group that later became involved with Àpàlà music. Túndé Kèlání was a Muslim at that time but he had a good grounding in Yorùbá oratures[7] such as Àrùngbè and èṣà-egúngún that helped him move to the theatre when he was in Abéòkúta Grammar School, which he completed in 1965. During this time, his grandfather was made Balógun of Ìjàyè kúkúdi and he enjoyed inviting masquerades from Ìdàhòmì, Ọyó-Ìgbòho, Òkeehò and Òtà, among other towns, to entertain him during festivals. It was during this time his interest in theatre intensified. When Túndé Kèlání finished his secondary school, he joined Western Nigeria Television (WNNTV), where he learned cinematography. He also had access to watching Ògúndé's stage plays and had a keen interest in *Palmwine Drunkard* by Amos

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[5] Túndé Kèlání is a veteran filmmaker and director of films in Yorùbá and English language. Even when the language is changed to English language for easy access for a non-Yorùbá audience, his uniqueness persists.

[6] We agree that these four approaches are good domains of stylistics, although we recognise propositions by other scholars as domains of styles such as style as a geographical location or style as a temporal phenomenon, among others.

[7] Yorùbá orature is derived from oral + literature which comprises of all the verbal arts that are passed from generation to generation.

Tutùọlá. Túndé Kèlání embarked on schooling abroad for three years from 1968 to 1970. He studied cinematography in London. He came back in 1970 to join BBCTV as a cinematographer. He left BBCTV for the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and he was there when he went to Ethiopia and Zimbabwe to represent NTA during their independence ceremonies.

In 1972, Túndé Kèlání directed the movie that is based on the life history of Reverend Father Micheal, which was written in Yorùbá language by Adébáyọ̀ Fálétí called *Ìdààmú Páàdì Mínkáílù.* Adébáyọ̀ Fálétí, Lọlá Fàní-Káyọ̀dé, Alhaji Làsísì Oríẹkùn, Wálé Fánúbi and Yẹmi Fáróunbí were part of the crew with Kelani then. Kèlání's success earned him the popularity that caused Ògúndé, Ìṣọ̀lá Ògúnṣọlá, Akin Ògúngbè and others to choose Túndé Kèlání as their cinematographer. Some of their works that ensued were *Taxi Driver*, *Aníkúrá*, *Ogun Àjàyè*, *Ìyá ni Wúrà* and *Fópomọ́yọ̀*. In 1990, Túndé Kèlání having gained expertise in film directing, started work for American Drama Films (ADF), which produced a film adapted from a Joyce Cary novel *Master Johnson.* Túndé Kèlání himself established Òpómúléró (Mainframe) Film Production in 1991-1992, where numerous films were produced, including *Ti Olúwa ni Ilẹ̀, Ayọ̀ ni mo fẹ́, Narrow Path, The White Handkerchief, Arugbá, Agogo Èèwọ̀ Màámi, Àbẹ̀ní, Campus Queen, Saworoidẹ* and *Kòseégbé,* among others.

2. Theoretical Framework: Relevance Theory

Relevance theory is seen as a framework that demonstrates that all verbal and non-verbal communication have intended meanings. It is based on the principle of recognition and expression of intentional action (Grice 1989). Grice (1989) is the foundational interpretation model of communication as an alternative to the classical model. According to the code model, a communicator encodes an intended message into a signal that is directly decoded by the decoder using an identical copy of the code. According to Grice's (1989) concept of inferential meaning, an addresser makes available evidence of an intention to relay a certain message and meaning into a signal which is referred to the audience on the basis of evidence provided. An utterance is systematically coded linguistically as evidence, so that verbal comprehension involves an element of the coding of the linguistic meaning transmitted and recovered by decoding as just one of the inputs to non-demonstrative inference process, which yields an interpretation of the speaker's acceptance of the message.

Wilson and Sperber (1985) propounded the theoretical term of relevance theory. Other advocates of this theory are Wilson and Sperber (1985) and Grice (1989), among others. The goal of the inferential pragmatic is to emphasise how the decoder infers the speaker's meaning based on evidence provided. Grice (1989) is of the opinion that utterances create expectations automatically in the hearer's mind in diverse ways. This involves the co-operative principles and maxim of quality, quantity (informativeness) and maxim of relation (relevance). Looking at the tenets of relevance theory, one can say that there is an emphasis on inference and evidence. While some of the messages Kèlání passes in his movies are known by large sections of society, codifying it through films makes them very relevant and effective in society. Hence, life will be saved, society will be transformed and enlightenment of the larger society would be made easy.

The interpretation a decoder will choose to unravel or digest the information is the one that best satisfies those expectations of relevance (Wilson & Sperber 2002; Grice, 1989). Wilson and Sperber (2004) highlight two pillars of relevance of an input to individuals that we find most suitable for this study. Firstly, they posit that:

> "Other things being equal, the greater the positive cognitive effect achieved by processing by an input, the greater the relevance of the input, the greater the relevance of the input to the individual at that time."

It is evident here that when a certain input (message) coded by language and encoded by the addresser to the addressee is of positive impact, the effect will be felt much more than the one that does not have a positive impacting. This is the reason some themes propagated through Mainframe Production are evergreen. This inference is usually raised by evidence of the experience of the hearer so that the input becomes relevant and it receives ultimate attention from the decoder. Secondly, they go further to assert that "Other things being equal, the greater the processing effort expended the lower the relevance of the input to the individual at that time." This version of the relevance of an input to an individual is the most suitable for this study because Òpómúléró, Mainframe Production, assumes the role of advertiser who through movies promotes the cultural practices, ideas and habits to the audience as decoders. Using too much official or extended metaphor and euphemism that occurs within the basic linguistic convention of Yorùbá will make the experience too alienating for the audience but the use of movies which people are already accustomed to makes it possible to convey this information to the audience of films in Yorùbá. This is the reason why Kèlání makes use of his experience. Through the message from the films, via television, society is transformed because, as Fiske and Hartley (1978:24) opine:

> "The world of television is different from our real social world, but just as clearly related to it in some ways ... television does not represent the manifest actuality of our society, but rather reflects, symbolically, the structure of values and relationships beneath the surface."

Invariably, films bring first-hand experiences to the proximity of the audience and they related to them appropriately because the evidence is manifested for all to see. It makes them relate to the daily occurrences in society. It is not surprising that campaigns against stigmatisation of people who have sickle cell anaemia in *Dazzling Mirage* and victimization of ladies who have lost their virginity in *The Narrow Path* and *White Handkerchief* are immediately effective, as Túndé Kèlání intended. This approach is appropriate for this study.

3. Films in Yorùbá Society

Films, just like other work of art, are an extension of historical forms of entertainment that transform masques and stage plays to movies. The primary motive of films is the same as that of stage plays and masques before the invention of films. Film is now seen as a kind of literature that people can use to ease themselves of tension after rigorous daily routines. Walter and Gioglio (2014:333) observe: "Filming is one of the works of art in which entertainment is highly presented and also giving information about news in our societies." What film does is not too different from what is obtainable in other literary works. It prioritises narration, entertainment, education and humour[8] as the intended message. The rate at which people find succour in personalized home videos instead of drama and novels intended for everyone is alarming. Consequently, it is easier to channel communications that are beneficial to society through movies in the Túndé Kèlání style. Adélékè (1995:171) says that:

> "It has emerged in our analysis [of 4.1.6] that the Yorùbá film audiences were mainly Yorùbá. This is so because the Yorùbá films dwell largely on cultural re-evaluation and restitution of Yorùbá culture from foreign desecration. It would then appear as that cultural tendency."

While it is plausible to say that Yorùbá were the dominant audiences of Yorùbá films in the past, it is no longer true as Yorùbá film audiences have grown beyond the Southwestern area of Nigeria where Yorùbá people are indigenous. Also, cultural re-evaluation may result in positive or negative reactions towards the filmmakers. Cultural renaissance and the restitution of cultural values are one of the main aims of many

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[8] These are some of the key functions of literature, of which Yorùbá films are a part.

Nigerian movies. Some would say, we tell our own story instead of it being told by others. Adélékè (1995:264) writes:

> "From the audience's assessment of the contents of Yorùbá films, there are six dominant elements: crime/horror/violence, cultural/historical, love/sex, political, comic and tragic."

The dominant elements in Yorùbá films are the six highlighted above by Adélékè (1995) but there are much more to them than that, because the style and path that Túndé Kèlání takes differ from the one pinpointed. Although they may be historical or culturally-related, nevertheless his incorporation of mass enlightenment, public awareness and sensitisation constitute his style, which is unique compared to other film producers.

Adágbádá (2005:5) states that:

> "Film is set to totally achieve what the written drama has not - to effect the purported changes that the playwright desires in the society on the page. Feature films can be seen as the literature which walks and talks. A form of literature that has life."

Adágbádá's (2005) observation about films is very germane here. The setting of the film and its mode of presenting facts is appealing and less strenuous compared to other work of arts. The desired message is now very easy for the audience to access. Just a click away in the comfort of one's abode, this is a veritable literary genre that is entertaining, educative, humorous and enlightening. Hence, accessibility is coupled with edification.

4. Synopsis of Selected Films

In this section of the paper, we present the synopsis of the selected films, *The White Handkerchief, The Narrow Path* and *Dazzling Mirage* so as to outline their content.

	Name	Producer	Director	Year
1.	*Dazzling Mirage*	Túndé Kèlání	Túndé Kèlání	2014
2.	*The White Handkerchief*	Túndé Kèlání	Túndé Kèlání	2000
3.	*The Narrow Path*	Túndé Kèlání	Túndé Kèlání	2006

4.1. Synopsis of *The Narrow Path*

Lápàdé is a cloth merchant who regularly comes to Àgbèdè village to sell his cloth even though he is not a native there. He is interested in marrying Àwèró but an incident that almost claims his life leaves him seriously disabled and he cannot be seen in public again because people think he is dead. Ọdéjìmí, who mistakenly shot him, shows interest in Àwèró and he is accepted as the groom-to-be. While Àwèró is being courted by Ọdéjìmí, with her bride price paid and wedding date fixed, she is also being courted by Dáúdà who is not based in Àgbèdè village but lives in Lagos. Dáúdà buys a lot of gifts for Àwèró and eventually lures her to the outskirt of the village where he rapes her. This makes Àwèró withdrawn and unhappy until the day of her wedding, although everyone thinks it is this is just the usual, unhappy state of all brides-to-be prior to their weddings. When Àwèró and Ọdéjìmí do get married, Àwèró is no longer a virgin as tradition demands. As a result of this, she is sent back to her father's house and Ọdéjìmí and his family suffer because they are considered failures according to tradition. Ọdéjìmí is mocked everyday by his colleagues outside and so wages a war against the family of Àwèró. But when the war is already set to take place between the two warring families, Àwèró intervenes that she should be killed instead. She said it is barbaric to kill a lot of people through war because of the crime only she committed. Her intervention and act of rhetoric stops the war and it puts an end to the culture of virginity in Elérin and Àgbèdè villages.

5.2. Synopsis of *The White Handkerchief*

Àwèró is a beautiful young woman who is attracted to many men of marriageable age. Àwèró chooses Ọdéjìmí numerous suitors to be her husband but continues to receive gifts from a stranger who also admires her. Her friends warn her several times but she will not heed their warnings. The secret admirer of Àwèró subjects her to an act of sexual violence and her virginity is lost. She becomes very downtrodden and unhappy but her people do not look in her direction. She attempts suicide but is saved by one of her friends. Àwèró refuses to tell her parents about her plight because of the societal shame that is attached to her situation. She gets married to Ọdéjìmí, her heartthrob but the wedding leads to chaos because Àwèró has lost her virginity before the wedding. War ensues between Àwèró and Ọdéjìmí village and many lives are lost in the war.

5.3. Synopsis of *Dazzling Mirage*

Fúnmi is a carrier of sickle cell anaemia. She is engaged to Sànyà but his mother detests her so much that she another girl for him to marry. Fúnmi learns from her parents that she is not their biological daughter. She attempts suicide but she is saved by two fishermen at the river bank. Sànyà stands by Fúnmi truly and he wants to be with her but his mother will never agree that they get married. Fúnmi is a flourishing and very versatile employee in her place of work. She successfully obtains contracts for her company but the work becomes too hectic for her to the extent that she suffers a series of sickle cell-related attacks. This makes her boss doubt if she will be able to continue at work. However, one of her male colleagues vows that she will come out stronger as a result. After her suicide attempt, she joins a non-governmental group that campaigns against stigmatisation and champions awareness about sickle cell anemia and its prevention. She later becomes famous through the organisation as the spokesperson who has led the campaign in print and electronic media. This endears her to her boss at work who then does everything possible to make Fúnmi his own. While Sànyà gets engaged to his personal assistant at work, as arranged by his mother, Fúnmi and her boss become husband and wife. The marriage produces a child that they both love and nurture. The film portrays Fúnmi as a sickle cell carrier and a person with unlimited potential who can blossom with adequate care and self-worth and self-awareness.

6. Idiosyncrasies of Túndé Kèlání's Movies

Idiosyncrasy connotes an identity relating to an individual that acts as making a distinction from others. Idiosyncrasy can be an aesthetically distinguishable trait that is unique to a particular artistic work, ornament or architectural design. So, when an idea, style or inclination is deemed someone's style, it becomes part and parcel of that person under any circumstances. Túndé Kèlání has an enviable vision which is a marker of his identity in almost all his films. The marker reverberates emphatically throughout his work, although only a few films are considered here. In the surveyed films, we found cultural renaissance and globalisation, sensitization and mass awareness and conservationism vs progressivism as the unique idiosyncrasy of Túndé Kèlání that has set him aside from other film producers and directors. The manifestation of these features is explored in this study:

6.1. Mass Sensitisation and Awareness

African society is developing and needs freedom from misinformation for so many phenomena, ideas and new inventions to emerge. The concepts and ideas in question are those that are very germane to the existence of communal harmonious living. Túndé Kèlání, judging from his background and exposure to society, as previously noted, adopts this task as one of his preoccupations not in one, two or three of his works but virtually in all his films both in English and indigenous language, Yorùbá. Awareness and mass sensitisation like this become *sine qua non* if society is to be peaceful and attain intellectual freedom. Such phenomena that Kèlání has been so fixated in getting across to the masses include sickle cell anemia, gender balance and

equity, conservation of natural resources, corruption and others. This is the input targeted by Wilson and Sperber (2004) in relevance theory because the greater the influence of films on people, the greater the relevance to them. Films are not just impactful when they entertain but when they sensitise people the way Kèlání adopts his films to impact lives positively.

He envisages that masses need information so as not to be handicapped and he takes it upon himself to use the widest avenue that people are conversant with, films, to get across the messages to them in the best possible form and, thereby, limit the crisis of abject societal catastrophe people are wallowing in hitherto. This aligns with what the advocates of Relevance Theory hold, that all available avenues be utilised to achieve one's desire. Kèlání seizes the opportunity provided by Nollywood to educate and champion the renaissance and globalisation of African cultures.

In *The White Handkerchief*, Àwẹ̀ró's mother adheres to the views about how tradition should change as African societies change when she says:

> Àwẹ̀ró's Mother: "I want my daughter back alive but this one is impossible. Soon, there would be a war between our families. Does this tradition mean it is worth the unhappiness and fighting? Our women remain the sacrificial lambs in this part of Africa. Our continent is changing, our traditions must also change."

This is a clear protest from Àwẹ̀ró's mother after the death of her daughter who committed suicide because she was not a virgin on the evening of her wedding. It can also be said to be an attempt to change people's opinion about a tradition that demands that a bride and her parents must be humiliated if the bride is not a virgin. She is of the opinion that the tradition is not worth the stress, fighting and communal crises it generates in society. This implies a clear message that the writer rather than the character wishes to communicate to the audience so as to change their orientations about some cultural beliefs. This aligns with the precepts of Relevance Theory. The cognitive behaviours of people are positively impacted.

In *Dazzling Mirage*, Kèlání's major motive is sensitisation of the masses about sickle cell anemia. He employs every possible medium to pass this message to the audience through virtually all the characters. Sickle cell anaemia is a public menace and disorder that affects so many people. It was confirmed that marriage without the prior test for genotypes is the reason for the untimely death of many children wrongly termed *àbíkú*[9] but they are actually sickle cell carriers. As stated in *Dazzling Mirage*, "Each year in Nigeria, 150,000 children are born with sickle cell disorder. Many die before they are five. Others live in pain with no hope of cure. Know your genotype, attend sickle cell counselling support."[10]

To minimise the rate of this untimely death and pain the parents subject their children and themselves to in Nigeria, there is a dire need to sensitise people who may fall into this trap unknowingly. This is the mantle taken upon by the director to help society. One of the nurses in the hospital Fùnmí was admitted to asks the doctor thus:

> Nurse: Excuse me sir. Can a sickle cell patient live long?
> Doctor: Of course, with adequate care and if they believe they can. Healing is not about doctors and drugs. It's about accepting yourself, loving yourself, including the part of you that is a sickler. There is no shame in carrying sickle cell.

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[9] People in Africa, specifically in Yorùbá land, were made to believe that the incessant deaths of children after a long period of pain was the result of a spiritual problem. A child called *àbíkú* was believed to belong to a secret spiritual group who would not allow the child to live long until research proved that they actually had a genetic disorder and were not spiritually possessed.

[10] The end notes by Mainframe Production after the film reveal its purpose. This shows that the film is indeed a campaign to increase awareness.

The impression here is to correct the erroneous views of people about sickle cell patients and what the patients think about themselves. People think that sickle cell patients cannot attempt some rigorous activities. They segregate them or stigmatise them once their condition is publicly known. According to the film, this is not accurate. The patients too look down on themselves, perhaps because of fear of the unknown or the public humiliation that may follow their sudden breakdowns. This is why the prayers of patients of sickle cell in the film attempted to address the issue:

> "Let's rise up and be thankful for if we didn't learn a lot, we learned a little. And if we learn a little, we didn't get sick and if we got sick, at least we didn't die. So, let's be thankful."

The prayer of the sickle cell patients formulated by the playwright address a lot of things. The sickle cell carriers need to appreciate their self-worth, they must know their limits and they should know that they can do everything within that limit. So, stress is the major cause of breakdown for the patients; to avoid constant breakdown, they must avoid too much stress. If this is done, they will be far from the crisis that may lead to public humiliation. This kind of enlightenment and public awareness that liberates people from calamity means that suicides like the one Fúnmi attempts in *Dazzling Mirage* people may be minimised. Kelani, through his characters, is a communicator who encodes an intended message into a signal that is directly decoded by the decoder using an identical copy of the code (Grice, 1989). An addresser makes available evidence of an intention to relay a certain message and encode the meaning into a signal which he refers by the audience on the basis of evidence provided. This constitutes the priority, recurrent theme and preoccupation in Túndé Kèlání's films, which this paper has called idiosyncrasy. One of the idiosyncrasies of Kèlání is projected in the foregoing. The study affirms that Kèlání's style can be seen beyond linguistic dexterity but that this is combined with thematic style to form his idiosyncrasy. Consequently, sensitisation of the masses becomes one of his idiosyncrasies.

6.2. Conservationism vs Progressivism[11]

Conservatism denotes the quest to keep existing natural phenomena from encroachment or extinction. There is usually a presentation of two schools of thought about any concept that Kèlání wants to justify. One school of thought has a soft spot for traditional beliefs and principles. The pro-traditional school may be called conservationism and it defends and justifies why it must be held while the second school of thought, progressivism, insists that the tradition or existing principles be abolished and replaced with the new and contemporary assumptions and stances.

The focus on society of Túndé Kèlání moves gradually from the one which believes in the *àbíkú* phenomenon to one that believes premature deaths are avoidable. However, people, especially those who are semi-literate or illiterate, still do not get themselves tested. Kèlání uses *Dazzling Mirage* to enlighten people that it is necessary to do the test as follows:

> Ṣadé: "My name is Ṣadé Sànúsí. I have been living with sickle cell anemia for a long and there is nothing wrong about it. It's just a disorder not a disease. I am even fine and getting taller. Although, there have been a whole lot of bad experience and hurdles but life still goes on. People living with sickle-cell should learn to appreciate themselves."

Ṣadé represents the modern and contemporary voice who see nothing wrong in someone that carries the sickle cell gene. She dispels the notion that sickle cell is a disease that can even spread, hence the stigmatisation. She goes further to advise the sickle cell patients that they should love themselves so as to live long because the fear of no cure in sight for something that can inflict one with abject pain may be terrifying. She is directly

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[11] These are the two contrasting ideas. Conservatism intends to preserve the existing traditions or stances while progressivism argues in favour of contemporary ideas or phenomena.

opposite in thought to Sànyà's mother who thinks sickle cell patients like Fúnmi cannot do anything because they are always liability. She:

> Sànyà's Mother: Who are they trying to fool? We can do anything? They can't do anything!

Sànyà's mother is a pessimist and a personification of the old generation, who hold negative thoughts and biases against Fúnmi, her son's fiancée. She did everything to ensure Sànyà and Fúnmi did not get married. It is a constant theme in Kèlání's work to show situations which might lead people to change their opinions, hence his style and the idiosyncratic features that are hardly absent from Kèlání's work. To justify Túndé Kèlání's obsession with the theme in question, let us see how he makes jokes out of such theme in *Dazzling Mirage*:

> Sànyà: Hi Bukky!
> Bùkọ́lá: I said I am not Bukky. I am Bùkọ́lá. Bukky is for a dog.

This is just a causal exchange of greetings between Sànyà, who represents progressivism, which holds that a name can be altered, modernised or changed to acronyms whether the meaning is still retained or not. Bùkọ́lá, Fúnmi's friend, does not see her name as something one can tamper with at all. She quickly opposes the name Bukky as a supposed abbreviation for Bùkọ́lá by Sànyà that it belongs to a dog not a person. This a case of progressivism vs conservationism in a lighter mode.

In *The White Handkerchief*, Àwẹ̀ró protests against the notion of testing women alone for virginity, while men are left unchallenged about this. She cannot help it but Túndé Kèlání, through Àwẹ̀ró, protests thus:

> Àwẹ̀ró: But, why has no one tested Ọdéjìmí to see if he is a virgin? Why are there different rules for the men? Our society is dominated by men. It has always been so. Will it be so forever?

These are questions begging for answers from progressivists who think that women being tested for virginity is suppressive against women who are dominated by men in the society. It's clearly unequal to test women for virginity while men who are the culprits of removing that virginity move freely and protest when their brides are not virgins. To feminists, whatever that not applicable to men should not be held against women because gender equality is sacrosanct. This is a clear case of conservationism and progressivism and another example from *The White Handkerchief* is given below:

> First Man: What's all this?
> Second Man: You are fighting the poor woman out of distress.
> First Man: But we are following the demands of the tradition.
> Second Man: Does tradition demand life in such a situation? This is death in protest.

The conversation happens after Àwẹ̀ró has committed suicide for not being a virgin on the day of her wedding. If she had not committed suicide, there would have been war between the families of Ọdéjìmí and Àwẹ̀ró because the latter gives the hand of a 'broken pot' in marriage to their son. We can clearly see the case of two opposing schools of thought here. One fights for the continuous sustenance of the virginity culture that has disadvantages such as wars between families, suicide, lifelong dented image of women and their families and others outweigh the advantages it serves to pursue. By exploring the two sides of the coin, Kèlání has passed the relevant message by changing the cognitive reasoning of the audience. Hence, relevance theory tenets are operational.

Similarly, in *Narrow Path*, there is the presentation of two schools of thought. One is clamouring for preserving the culture of women not talking or having close contact with a man they will not marry. The second school of thought holds the belief that casual or sexual advances towards women by men is not a crime

as long as the two involved are consenting adults. Having a date with a man, having courtship and close contact with women that are not your future spouse is forbidden in traditional Yorùbá society. Dáúdà, who lives in the city but occasionally comes to Oríta's village, says:

> Dáúdà: "In one of the photographs, two girls were sitting on my thighs and the other was putting a glass of lager beer in my mouth.
> Villager: These girls are not even your wives and you have not paid dowry for them.
> Dáúdà: Who has time for that? Listen, anytime you want to play love with a girl. You just walk up to her and say, 'Baby, I love you. You want to play love. Let us play love.' That is all.
> 2nd Villager: Here in Oríta Village, if you touch a girl's hand or you look at her new-plaited hair too long, you will be in trouble."

Dáúdà and city life represent the contemporary culture where men and women of adult age move, interact or become involved in sexual escapades at will but the villagers and Oríta Village represent the conservationism that preserves the culture that holds that women who are not married are sacred. In the city, where Dáúdà gets his experience, a virginity test is of no importance but in Oríta village, a girl must be a virgin till the day of her wedding, otherwise she and her parents will suffer humiliation. That is why Ọdéjìmí says to Àwẹ̀ró: "Your parents have failed to do their duties. They will suffer for this."

Film	Voice of Conservatism	Voice of Progressivism
Dazzling Mirage	Sànyà's mother,	Ṣadé, Fúnmi, Bukola
The White Handkerchief	Ọdéjìmí	Àwẹ̀ró
The Narrow Path	2st Villager, 2nd villager, Odejimi	Dáúdà, Awero,

Table 1: Different Viewpoints in the Films Studied; source: Authors**6.3. Cultural Renaissance and Globalisation**

Túndé Kèlání, despite his experience and the international tutelage he underwent, is very inclined towards the promotion of good traditional practices in his films. He presents this theme in such a way that people are fully enlightened about the subject matter that is the cultural heritage of Africa, most especially for the Yorùbá people. He promotes and globalises good and credible cultural values like marriage, belief system, charms and amulets, naming, virginity and the political and economic undertakings of Yorùbá so as to dispel misinformation about these cultural values. This is another facet of his idiosyncrasy that hardly eludes any of his films and thereby make him unique among directors and producers.

The cultural heritages of Africans and Yorùbá in particular are highly valuable to him and he makes his films the avenue to propagate, globalise and promote African cultures. Phenomena such as divinity worship, thunderbolts, virginity, marriage, politics, hairstyles, naming, clothing and literature which Ìṣọ̀lá (2010) refers to as tangible and intangible cultural heritages, are constantly promoted and globalised in Túndé Kèlání's films. The constant exhibition of these also constitutes the style dominant in Mainframe films. For example, in *Narrow Path*, Túndé Kèlání, through Àwẹ̀ró's mother, globalises two Yorùbá cultural heritages for those that do not know them:

> Àwẹ̀ró: I just don't like *Kòlẹ́sẹ̀*. It makes my face fat and ugly.
> Àwẹ̀ró's Mum: Look at you. When did you come into the world to know which hairstyle suits your head and which does not?
> Àwẹ̀ró: I just don't like *Kòlẹ́sẹ̀*, it is for old women. All the other women now do modern style.
> Àwẹ̀ró's Mum: I know. That is why I am giving you *Kòlẹ́sẹ̀* style. I want you to look different so that when I finish, all the men, even the boys and half-man-half-boys will have eyes on your beauty.
> Àwẹ̀ró: Half-boy-half-man? Who are those
> Àwẹ̀ró's Mum: They are the men who have passed the age of marriage.

There are two concepts that Kèlání wants to educate people about in the above excerpt. Firstly, he wants people to have knowledge of the symbolism attributed to each hairstyle. Kòlẹ́sẹ̀ symbolises carefree women who do not take adornment seriously but do not want to leave their hair unkempt. That is why Àwẹró protests about the hairstyle. We have other hairstyles that would have suited her like *Korobá, Sùkú, Pàtẹ́wọ́, Àdìmọ́lẹ̀, Ìpàkọ́ Ẹlẹ́dẹ̀, Ààfin Ọba* and *Mọrèmi*,[12] among others. This is the culture that Kèlání passes across here. One does not just make a hairstyle but chooses the one that suits one's level. Young ladies have their best hairstyles, newly married wives have their best styles, old women also have the styles that are appropriate for them. In the same climate, Túndé Kèlání also explains the nomenclature, half-boy-half-man in Yorùbá cosmology and marriage setting. Men are those ones who are capable of marrying a woman, boys are the male gender who are not married yet but still not too old to get married. The half-boy-half-men are those Yorùbá refers to as àpọ́n who are far beyond marriage age but not married. There is little regard for such men because they refuse to fulfil what society demands from them or because they are indolent. This concept is explained well with only this scene.

In *Dazzling Mirage,* Túndé Kèlání also use the avenue of screenplay to exhibit Yorùbá values in the naming ceremony. In the Yorùbá cultural setting for naming, ingredients would be gathered and prayers will be said symbolically with each of those ingredients by the elders. One of such ingredients used for prayers is *Epo* (palm-oil) as follows:

> Ìyá Àgbà: "Ayé ẹ á rójú, ayé ò ní i yọ ẹ lẹ́nu. Gbogbo nǹkan tí a bá ti fepo sè, tó o bá ti ń jẹ ẹ́, á máa bá ọ lára mu. Ara á tù ọ́ nítorí pé, bí ata bá ń tani lẹ́nu, bí a bá ti fi epo sí i, ara á máa tu ènìyàn ni. Ní gbogbo ọjọ́ ayé rẹ, ara ò ní i ni ọ o!

> Old Woman: Your life will be meaningful and terrestrial power will not disturb you. Everything with which palm oil is made, when you eat it, it will be appropriate for your system. Yours will be comfortable because, when something is too peppery and palm oil is added, one will experience comfort, in your entire life, you shall not experience discomfort (translation by the authors)."

This is just an example of symbolic prayers during the naming ceremony in Yorùbá communities. Epo (palm oil) symbolises comfort and softness. Such is the case for others too like Orógbó (bitter kola), atare (alligator pepper), obì (Kola-nut), iyọ̀ (salt), ìrèké (sugar cane), ẹja aborí (catfish), ọtí (alcohol) among others that are naming ingredients. Kèlání wants these to be communicated to people through films most especially people who are born into the Abrahamic religions, to whom such traditions may be unknown.

Similarly in *The White Handkerchief,* Túndé Kèlání choose to use the film to educate us about the marriage rites that the man and woman should perform on the very day of the marriage, while everyone is waiting outside the groom's room. A groom must enter the room with a white handkerchief and have intercourse with his bride, no matter how exhausted either of them might have been. When Àwẹró complains of being tired, Ọdéjìmí reminds her that:

> Ọdéjìmí: "I am sorry Àwẹró. I know it has been a long day but you know it's our tradition, it has to be tonight. My people are waiting."

It is not that Àwẹró does not know this culture but the playwright subtly educates the masses or the would-be novices of Yorùbá culture that it is a must that husband and wife consummate their marriage on that day and show the general populace that she is a virgin. The act is intentional and so must be shown so as to globalise the moribund Yorùbá culture. The same attempt is made in *The Narrow Path*, in which one of

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[12] These are some Yoruba female hairstyles. Most of them have been modernized but their identity remains. Some of these hairstyles are symbolic in Yorùbá society. See Adiji, Oladumiye. and Ibiwoye (2015:2).

Àwẹ̀ró's siblings educates her at the same time the general audience that:

> "The virginity mortars are taken to husband's house after the marriage sleep. The husband will show the handkerchief to her people and then they will use the virginity mortar to pound yam for the people to eat to celebrate the virginity night."

This clearly accounts for how Yorùbá people view and attach value to the virginity rite. Any parent who fails in the daughter's upbringing will suffer the humiliations instead of the privileges given to parents who have performed their responsibilities well to ensure their daughter is intact on her wedding day. Cultural globalisation is hereby affirmed as Túndé Kẹ̀lání's style and one of his idiosyncratic features that hardly eludes any of his works.

7. Discussion and Analysis

In *The White Handkerchief* and *The Narrow Path*, which are the 1st and 2nd communication models, virginity is the variable that people consider relevant to society. The occurrence attests to the fact that virginity is highly paramount for keeping society serene because young ladies keep themselves safe from immorality and the presence of children outside wedlock is reduced. However, given that the culture is inimical only to women and not men and the fact that lives are lost when the expectation is not met, he asserts that the disadvantages of the culture outweigh its advantages. Hence, Túndé Kẹ̀lání finds the message important for positive cognitive effects and he becomes the agent of change who observes cognitive principles (Wilson & Sperber, 2002) that human cognition is geared to the maximisation of relevance.

In *Dazzling Mirage* which is the 3rd communication model, stigmatisation against sickle cell patients that they are limited in all ramifications is the bone of contention. Through Túndé Kẹ̀láni's *Dazzling Mirage*, we are able to see the operation of the ostensive stimulus,[13] that once the sickle cell carrier knows his/her worth and can manage his/her health properly, then the sky is their limit. That is why he portrays Fúnmi as a heroine who everyone eventually embraces in spite of her health condition.

At the end of everything, the cognitive behaviours of people are impacted and they lean towards change. Consequently, the idiosyncrasy of Túndé Kẹ̀lání is change. He achieves change through mass sensitisation, conservatism vs progressivism and the globalisation of culture. His target is change and it is the same that is projected in relevance theory that the communicative principle that utterances create become expectations of optimal relevance.

The table below show spheres of conception and change as contained in three films of Tunde Kẹ̀lání examined in this study:

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[13] See Deirdre Wilson & Dan Sperber (2002:256) on the use of ostensive stimulus to decode the covert message passed by the encoders.

Communication Models (Principles)	Variable	Ostensive Stimulus	Cognitive Relevance	Positive Cognitive Effects
The White Handkerchief	Sacrosancy of Virginity	Virginity is worth nobody's life	Villagers and audience suffer after the death of Àwèró	The end of virginity ritual occurs
The Narrow Path	Sacrosancy of Virginity	Women alone should not be blamed for loss of virginity	Ọdẹ́jìmí and his people support Àwèró	The end of virginity occurs
Dazzling Mirage	Sickle Cell Anaemia	Sickle cell is an illness not incapacitation	Fúnmi becomes a heroine with sickle cell anaemia	She excels in her career, gets married happily.

Table 2: Vectors of Change in the Films Studied; source: Authors

The three identified idiosyncrasies of Túndé Kèlání cut across the three sampled films. The styles in questions are awareness and sensitisation, conservatism vs progressivism and the globalisation of Yorùbá culture.
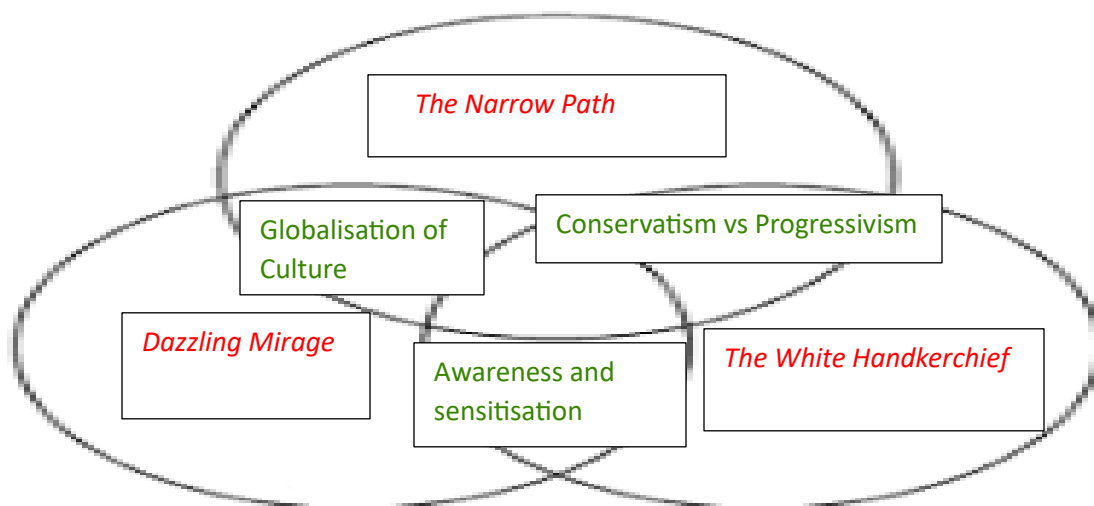

Figure 1: Venn Diagram of the Occurrence of Three Idiosyncrasies in the Three Films Studied; source: Authors

These are the subsets of his idiosyncrasy not only in the three films studied but also in other numerous films he directed and produced under Mainframe Productions. Hence, they become his style and identity optimally pursued to achieve positive cognitive effects termed change.

7. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study reveals that stylistics is seen as being beyond linguistic explorations. Style is a recurrent manner in which something is done or is a dominant feature that is constantly observable in a particular work. The style may be involving design, art, artistic works or the manners in which something may be done. Túndé Kèlání's recurrent themes are seen as his idiosyncrasy in this study. We claim in this paper that globalisation of cultural heritages, mass awareness and enlightenment and conservatism and progressivism are the

idiosyncrasy of Túndé Kèlání but his major target is changing stereotyped beliefs. He sees arts as something beyond creativity to entertain but also educate, enlighten and globalise. The films of Kèlání are the communication models, the existing culture and behaviours are the variables. The inputs of Túndé Kèlání are the products of the films while the cognitive relevance is the manner of reception of the audience and larger characters. The cognitive effects are the positive change which Relevance Theory target and which is in line with Kèlání as a producer. He intentionally adopts this style which makes him unique among film producers and directors. The research is limited on the bases that it adopts a qualitative approach and sampling of the films are limited to three out of a number of others produced by Kèlání, hence, the analysis is subjective but it is reliable and valid to the best of our knowledge. The film producers and directors are then admonished to adapt their style to that of Kèlání's or else create a distinct style that will distinguish them from others so as to have tangible brand recognition. Future researchers should investigate others of Kèlání's movies or those of other producers with a similar quest for their idiosyncrasies.

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Book Reviews

Migration of Metaphors: Making Sense of Music in the Lives of the Urban Poor in Dhaka

Sumon Rahman

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220 pp.
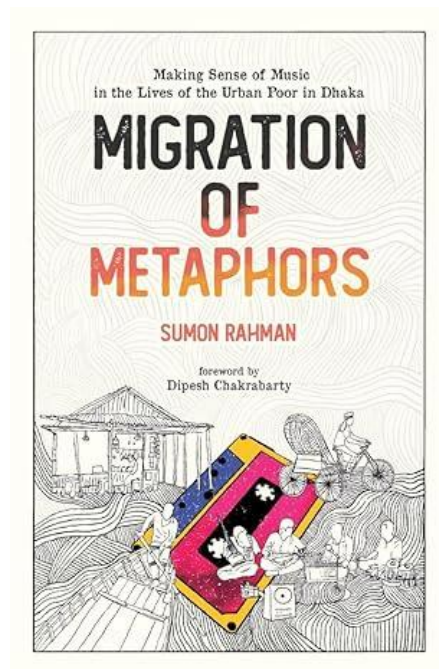
Whenever we think about slums and the poor people living in the slums, we often associate them with poverty, malnutrition, and many other negative connotations. In his book "Migration of Metaphors: Making Sense of Music in the Lives of the Urban Poor in Dhaka," Sumon Rahman explores the cultural identity of the urban poor beyond these connotations through their musical tradition. Though the urban poor is not a homogenous category, Rahman focuses on the folk musical experiences of the poor people who migrated from rural areas to Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. Rather than perceiving the cultural identity of the urban poor as static and fictional, he considered it "… situational and performative." While focusing on the identity formation of the urban poor of Dhaka, it primarily deals with the historical revival of folk music in Bangladesh, which can be traced to the late 1980s. To explore the processes by which the cultural identity of the urban poor was produced, the author focuses on three cultural locations:

• A case study of an organization including a large number of urban folk musicians

• The musical contents of selected urban folk songs

• Ethnographic exploration of a television reality show

Migration is one of the most effective phenomena in the urban poor's cultural identity, which largely shapes their lives and livelihoods. By analyzing the lyrics of popular folk songs, Rahman shows that the massive changes they have to endure in their lives due to migration are also reflected in the metaphors of the folk

music they practice. For instance, while the river and the boat have signified human activities on the Earth in the Bengali folk tradition for a long time, the automobile (bus) replaced these in the urban folk as the lives of the urban poor are closely associated with that vehicle.

Despite the dominance of the urban folk genre in terms of the increased number of consumers and performers in the music industry, the authority of urban folk does not remain unchallenged. The author identified ideological warfare between two classes by analyzing the visual contents of selected urban folk productions of the educated class and the subaltern class. While the educated middle class tends to impose their taste on their 'subordinated class' by creating such content, the urban poor creators tactfully reject this moral superiority by showing strict moral standards and passivity.

The author also depicts the politics of producing the images of the urban poor by ethnographically exploring a music idol show named "Tin Chaka" on television, wherein rickshaw pullers were the contestants. Though the idea for this music competition originated from two 'ordinary men,' it was later usurped by the corporate media. They also shaped the presence of the urban poor in the competition by selecting the songs they could perform on the stage and imposing their moral standards on the contestants, eventually influencing the judgment. Moreover, the show appeared to be more of a charity than a competition. However, the contestants utilized their agency by occasionally deviating from these imposed values. On the other hand, the audiences belonging to the urban poor were very much aware of its classist nature and did not find any interest in watching it.

However, the processes by which the cultural identity of the urban poor as the performer, producer, and audience are formed in a specific location, become evident in chapter 4 of this book. Every Thursday night, the urban poor gather in numerous small groups where performers and audiences are present. At the courtyard on that Thursday night, music functions as a form of resistance against all forms of inequality. On the other hand, the urban poor, who migrated from rural areas, tend to have a passion for music and often use music to express their agony related to migration. During the performance, no demarcation between the performers and the audiences can be identified. Another prominent characteristic of such musical events is: that the shrine of Shah Ali works as a space of salvation where they feel empowered. Unlike white collar professionals, the urban poor do not have regular days off on Fridays. Still, they feel a spiritual responsibility to attend the gathering at the gathering where they perform music according to their spiritual traditions. A significant number of folk musicians from the urban poor follow the Baul tradition.

However, they do not want to become engaged in the extreme rituals of traditional Bauls[14] whose lifestyle and musical content makes them vulnerable to the attacks of fundamentalists, which also questions their authenticity as Baul musicians. As a result, just like the hybrid nature of urban folk, the identity of urban folk musicians has been constructed as 'in-between.' On the other hand, despite enormous demand, the mainstream music industry often downplays the needs of these Baul musicians. However, they negotiate with the industry, utilizing their agency.

The book is methodologically nuanced. Rahman investigates how the cultural identity of the urban poor is produced across different tangible and intangible sites, including Karail slum, the biggest slum in Dhaka, the lyrical content of the urban folk songs, visual content about the urban poor and television programs, which Marcus defined as "following the metaphors" of the multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995). On the other hand, Rahman utilizes a unique method named "Rhythmanalysis," an approach for critical analysis wherein the researcher dives into different fields of knowledge, including psychology, sociology, anthropology and economics to adopt a transdisciplinary approach while emphasizing the spatial rhythms. In other words, it can provide insightful guidelines for empirical research (Lefebvre, 2004).

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[14] Ed: Bauls are mystic minstrels or itinerant musicians who profess a syncretic form of spirituality.

Apart from the methodological stances, the representation of the urban poor was quite impressive. Unlike most of the literature that deals with the problems the urban poor face in their everyday lives, the author describes how a significant number of urban poor, who migrated to Dhaka from the rural areas, expressed their feelings about the changes, challenges, and pain of the urban lives and livelihoods through music that eventually contribute to creating the dominance of the urban poor in the music industry and shaping their cultural identity. Naturally, the elite-dominated protests against this dominance utilize different tactics. In this context, the author ethnographically explored how they used their agency to resist such attempts. In this way, the author sheds light on another unnoticed dimension of our urban life.

Besides, this book can be used as a useful resource for studying the intangible cultural heritages in Bangladesh because it explores the significance of urban folk as a popular genre of music, in forming the cultural identity of the urban poor of Dhaka.

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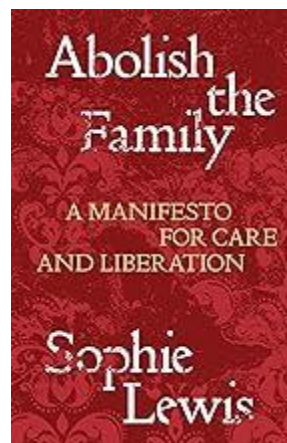
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Abolish the Family: A Manifesto for Care and Liberation

Sophie Lewis

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That family structure and nature is problematic has been part of arguments about the ordering of society since at least Socrates wrote about it in The Republic. He pointed out the unfairness of family arrangements, both between different families but, also, within individual families. Older siblings, plainly, received more attention than younger ones. Perhaps this is a contributory factor to the very diverse range of different arrangements in the animal kingdom. After all, if it is a good thing to have a mother, then surely having several mothers would be better? If being a parent makes a person better, in some way, then biology should

not be a barrier to having that experience. These are among the arguments deployed by Sophie Lewis in her polemical About the Family, a sequel in some aspects to her earlier Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism against Family (2019).

From the beginning, there is something of the defensive about the text, as Lewis almost immediately mobilises the arguments that are liable to be used against her. These include the difficulty that most people face in trying to imagine what a society without families would be like – what would replace them? Nothing, is her answer. There just would not be anything. Children would be born and then, presumably, well-intentioned people would come forward to start providing care. This seems to be problematic – I acknowledge her right not to have all the supposed answers ("I am not prepared to hammer out policy interventions in this chapter (48/70)") since it becomes too convenient to start haggling about these when the arguments behind them have not yet been fully established. Yet something is surely necessary. What we are missing becomes obvious in her treatment of Alexandra Kollontai in her chapter on the historical development of the abolitionist argument. Kollontai, of course, was convincingly able to describe in detail how children would be reared and, indeed, how people would live with each other because, as a Communist, she was able to call on the full means of the state to make things happen (theoretically, at least, since Lenin was not the only one to think that family restructuring could wait until more urgent matters had been settled). Lewis, despite her clear-eyed understanding of the nature and extent of capitalism, is not willing to commit herself to a specific revolutionary movement that has a full manifesto in place. Consequently, there is imprecision in the heart of the book:

> "The family is a shield that human beings have taken up, quite rightly, to survive a war. If we cannot countenance ever putting down that shield, perhaps we have forgotten that the war does not have to go on forever (24/75)."

It is certainly true that better lives and a better society are possible but they will not just be given to us, they will need to be fought for and people will need to know what they are fighting and why. However, I am also guilty of blaming the author not for what she has written but what she has not written.

Lewis copes with the various counter-arguments likely to be made against her reasonably well. She then adds a chapter aiming to cover the historical background of the abolitionist proposition, in which we are given Socrates, as noted above, as well as Marx and Engels. However, she also includes the work and thought of Shulamith Firestone, who was new to me and seems to have been a (righteously) challenging figure. Firestone called for the abolition of the labour force, they tyranny of work and the taboo of incest, as well as the diffusion of childbearing throughout society, involving both women and men through the use of ectogenesis (the machine uterus). She then makes the connection with the campaigns for LGBTQ+ equality and freedom, with whom abolition of the family has some common cause. However, the rise of queer campaigning has been accompanied by the rise in identity politics to the detriment of class-based politics and has led to a contemporary focus on queer-oriented family and household structures within society rather than attempt to create a radical rupture with the past.

The book is a short one, although it contains big ideas. Necessarily, therefore, the history chapter is limited in space. It does not venture outside North America and Europe, which is disappointing, especially given recent work that has been done in internationalizing the history of feminism.

The final chapter concerns the nature of 'abolition' itself – the meaning might seem clear enough but Lewis reaches back to an etymological source with Hegel's *Aufhebung*, which she describes as "… the ideas of lifting up, destroying, preserving, and racially transforming, all at once (45/70)." This formulation enables her to complexify somewhat her reasoning and to draw on the work of Ruth Wilson Gilmore:

> "The abolition of prisons and of the police, rather than constituting a simple deletion of infrastructure, is better understood as a world-building endeavour, a collective act of creativity without end (45/70)."

This is all very well but it is not what people understand by the term and it does not help to persuade people to embrace and demand radical change when meanings become unmoored from their common usage. It undermines the seriousness of the argument.

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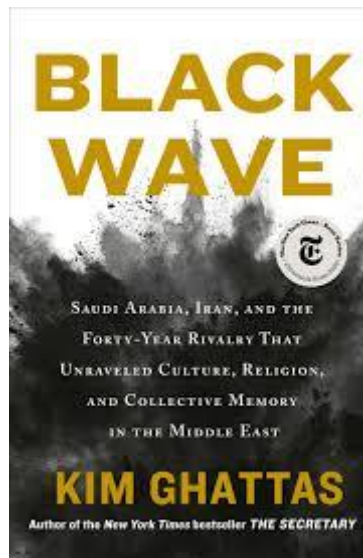
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Black Wave: Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the Forty-Year Rivalry That Unraveled Culture, Religion, and Collective Memory in the Middle East

Kim Ghattas

New York, NY: Henry Holt and Co., 2020

ISBN: 978-1-250-13120-1

378 pp.

At the time of writing, the Middle East seems to be not far from an even more intense phase of mayhem and misery. Most eyes are on the continued Israeli onslaught on Gaza but bombing continues in Yemen and generations of people are facing up to blighted lives in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and elsewhere. Meanwhile, open warfare between Israel and Hezbollah on the border with Lebanon threatens even more violence. The issues involved are complex and reasons for conflict are overdetermined. How should understanding the situation be approached? According to Kim Ghattas (or maybe her editor), the 40 years of rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia is influential in shaping contemporary political and socio-cultural structures in the

region. That aspect of her overall argument is not very persuasive but there are benefits from reading the book. It is, as one might expect from a journalist, made quite easy to read and certainly the text is dense with telling details and it encompasses a wide range of people – it is curious and somewhat disappointing that the numerous footnotes are presented at the end of the book and are not directly linked to the text; indeed, the relevant text is highlighted from the original page and the explanatory material follows. Presumably this must appeal to some readers but it is not very helpful in trying to determine how well supported the text itself is. Since the book is aimed at a general audience, who might be expected to be put off by a forest of footnotes, perhaps this is a suitable approach.

Ghattas ranges from Egypt in the west to Pakistan in the east but rarely mentions the United Arab Emirates, for example, as well as most of the Gulf States. The actions of outside states, the USA in particular, are strangely absent. Instead, the story begins in 1979 with the Islamic Revolution in Iran, which is considered the seminal event in the contemporary age (she claims, for example, that before this, Sunni-Shia relations were generally quiescent (p.334)). This event sparked into life the longstanding desire within the Iranian state to control the holy sites of Islam, which have fallen under the management of the House of Saud (who named the country after themselves) with a measure of fortune that can appear to some people to be incongruent with the sacred nature of the duty they have assumed. Further, they have encouraged the rise of a brand of Islam that is antithetical to that material according to the ruling elites of Iran. If there is one thing to be learned from the book, it is that there are innumerable sub-divisions of Islamic practices just as much as there are a similarly large number of ethnic minority people, people with their own preferred linguistic and culinary preferences and so forth. Some of these people are not practicing Muslims at all but come from other religious traditions. Historically, states had been mostly tolerant of this diversity and, consequently, people had tended to find their own niches in local economies. However, the 1979 revolution marked a sea change in this policy and increasingly intolerance became the norm, leading to different forms of contestation and accommodation.

Ghattas's approach is to move from one country to another in each different chapter and lead with the story of an individual. Generally, the person selected is presented in an attractive light as an individual with a specific identity and agency, whose life is inevitably going to be ruined by an inevitable intolerant turn to politics. The first person is then compared to the bad people or rotten institutions which bring about their downfall and the concluding state of mind and emotion is what a shame it all is and what a waste of human potential it represents. Poets, dancers, philosophers and philanthropists are all treated as if butterflies upon the wheel as men, overwhelmingly, do bad things for their own purposes. This is all information that is quite well deployed but it is much better at explaining what happened rather than why it might have happened. That technological progress has taken place in the years since 1979 is just about discernible as those who used to listen to cassette tapes of religious sermons by their favourite clerics now can access them via the internet. There is no consideration of what such changes might mean for politics and the way it is conducted. There is precious little consideration of oil, apart from the fact that it enables both Saudi and Iranian elites to fund their various projects at home and abroad. The role of international agents is also curiously absent, not just that of the USA but also of Russia and China. A reader of this book alone would have been surprised to learn about the collapse of the Soviet system. This is not to criticise Ghattas for writing one thing and not another but to indicate that insufficient effort has been put into trying to understand what has happened and why. As a result, it all appears to be, as the saying goes, one damned thing after another. This is rather a bleak view and if translated to the current day, would suggest that the misery will continue without cease because that is just what happens these days. Even in the rather brief conclusion, when one might have hoped that author would demonstrate some insights into the obviously substantial amount of research she has conducted, we just get more of the same.

Overall, then, there is a lot to learn from this book and it feels (notwithstanding the citations issue) as if it is a credible work that can be trusted in its details. However, its claim that the Saudi-Iranian rivalry helps explain the last four decades of Middle Eastern politics fails to reach the level required.
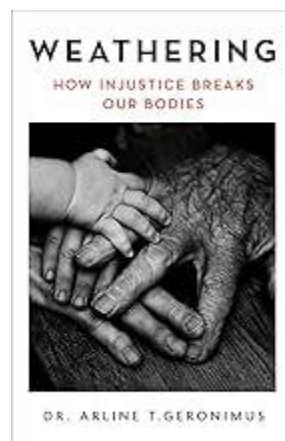
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Weathering: The Extraordinary Stress of Ordinary Life on the Body in an Unjust Society

Arline T. Geronimus

London: Virago Press, 2023

ISBN: 978-0-369-01515-6

349 pp.

Why is it that, in the USA, so many poor, especially people of colour, suffer such poor health? Is it just because of the ruinously expensive and inefficient health service? To some extent that is a contributory factor but there are deeper factors at play. According to author Arline T. Geronimus, a good deal can be explained by a phenomenon she calls 'weathering,' which is "… a process that encompasses the physiological effects of living in marginalized communities that bear the brunt of racial, ethnic, religious, and class discrimination (p.3)." The constant stress of living in a country in which discrimination is endemic and relentless (it is not the only such country, of course) physically takes a toll on people and they succumb more commonly to heart disease, cancer hypertension and other chronic conditions. This is an argument that Geronimus supports scrupulously with data from the field of public health, wherein she has established a career as a formidable researcher. It makes for a compelling and persuasive piece of work.

People subject to persistent and traumatic stress are subject to negative effects both mentally and physically. Geronimus describes the impact of it on short-term memory and ability to learn, together with heightened vulnerability to anxiety and depression (p.42). Meanwhile, physically, stress triggers the presence of hormones, glucose and fatty acids in the bloodstream which leads to reduced flows of oxygen to other parts of the body and hence long-term risks of cardiovascular problems and higher risk of diabetes, obesity and other metabolic disorders emerge (pp.69-70). These are all objectively measurable phenomena which have been found to be valid in a wide range of contexts. What causes this stress? Toni Morrison said that one of the main problems of racism was the distraction it caused – all the time required to deal with slight and abuse that prevents people from getting on with the process of trying to achieve their goals. It can be seen in the way Donald Trump is attempting to focus on Kamala Harris' identity as the main theme of his ad hominem attacks on her. So much time and effort will be expended on the scandalous claim that she is a

diversity hire or that she is somehow not a real American that her ability to explain her policies and her approach to the various tribulations she is likely to face will be significantly constrained. Geronimus includes a telling detail from one of the many studies with which she has been involved that migrants to the USA who face discrimination become less happy and less healthy the longer they live there. This applies to people who a reasonable level of wealth just as much as it does to the working poor. This helps demonstrate that no matter how used people can get to their circumstances and no matter how adroit they may become in developing strategies that help sidestep some of the worst excesses of bigotry, they are still subject to the constant stress that living such a life causes. Some of the effects are second order in nature. Marginalized people are paid less and they employment may be more precarious, which has direct results such as lack of sleep but also indirect results such as having to live further away from workplaces, schools and other public institutions and having to travel further and longer to get there. American culture, of course, fetishizes the car and people who have to rely on buses find even more of their time occupied in waiting, transferring from one mode of transport to another and so forth. This in turn means less time is available for fostering social and familial relations and in self-care. The low level of unionization in the country means that workplace conditions can be fraught and underpaid and so second or even third jobs are required to make ends meet, It is not surprising that people fall into poor health relatively early in life.

Living with families where people are unwell and who may die early leads to some unexpected outcomes. The author works with a number of women who have decided that they are better off having their children young, while they themselves are in their late teens, since if they wait any longer it is quite possible that they will not be around to take care of them or even to be able to watch them grow up. This situation she contrasts with her own children, who can see lives of opportunity and experience ahead of them and plan to have children much later in life if at all. It can be easily imagined which of the versions of a reasonable expectation of the future is regularly portrayed in all forms of cultural productions. The young women who do go for early pregnancies then face the opprobrium of society, which blames them for fecklessness and also looks askance at their family arrangements, misidentifying lack of care when what is really present is the pragmatic response to where work is available and to what extent can various family members provide care and support. Misidentification of this sort also contributes to the weathering process.

Even successful women – in terms of wealth and status – are subject to often outrageous ill-treatment. The tennis player Serena Williams, for example, who a claim to be one of the greatest athletes ever, very nearly died because of neglect:

> "Despite showing clear signs that she was haemorrhaging internally – which may have been partially facilitated by having blood vessels weakened by weathering – doctors let her lie helplessly for ten hours before getting her into surgery, even while her family was pleading for assistance (p.96)."

This comes from ignorance as well as malice. Black women are routinely believed to be stronger and less likely to be in pain or discomfort than is the case and, therefore, they are not offered the medical care they need. This is not just a one-off example but rather one in a long line of such events. Insofar as governmental action can mitigate these problems, it is the less likely to occur as the relentless attempts at voter suppression continue (and have been aped by the UK Conservative party in the 2024 election), then the voices of people wanting change are diminished and a consensus is based on those people like the author's children for whom the gardens are rosy. However, it is possible to make some small improvements in the world around us: actions that reduce "… stereotype threats to underrepresented group members in integrated settings such as schools lead to better life prospects for those individuals, while also paving the way for a better future for the people who follow in their footsteps (p.232)." So, there are some things that can be done.

This is a remarkable book that is properly based on a solid mass of carefully constructed data. There are obvious lessons for people in all parts of the world and an implicit call on each of us to try to limit the damage that inequality causes.
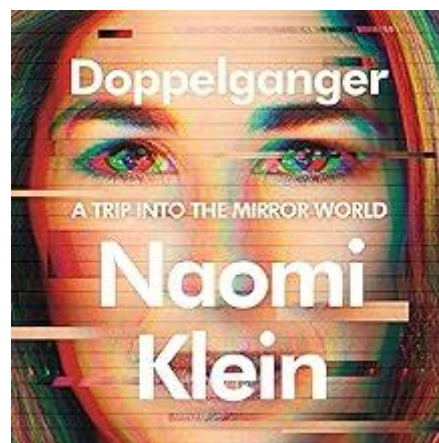
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Doppelganger: A Trip into the Mirror World

Naomi Klein

London: Allen Lane, 2023

ISBN: 9-780241-621318

401 pp.

Naomi Wolf is a prominent American intellectual well-regarded with books that contributed to the feminist understanding, such as The Beauty Myth (1991), Fire with Fire (1993) and Promiscuities (1997). However, her book Outrages (2019) made a number of mistakes in the process of historical research which were debunked live on a Radio 4 programme (I remember listening to it, probably in the form of a podcast). Since then, she has increasingly embraced an unorthodox interpretation of reality that has led to her becoming a favourite on the Fox television channel and a supporter of various conspiracy theories commonly associated with the alt-right faction. It must be a little dispiriting and disconcerting to be regularly confused with her but this is the fate of Naomi Klein, who is herself a prominent Canadian writer with a number of books influential in the progressive politics tradition, most particularly No Logo (1999). She introduces the premise of this book, which analyses the various ways in which doppelganger figures might interact with reality, by describing an overheard conversation in which two women in a public toilet actually did confuse the two while she waited in her cubicle to have the chance to correct them. She has clearly exerted a great deal of effort in extending this conceit to 400 pages, a fifth of which is given over to scholarly endnotes.

There are various ways in which the mirror world can insert itself in our daily lives. The first of these is the presence of a double, such as may have been brought to mind by Dostoyevsky's short story of the same name. In that story, Yakob Golyadkin finds his life being ruined by the presence of his double, which is a seemingly faultless replica but manages to be more sociable, more interesting and generally more successful. This drives him to distraction and the need to confront his own inadequacies becomes crippling. This would, I think, be a common reaction but it is not the only one. Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray, after all, starts with a painting of himself which is a replica but his power is to be able to retain his own appearance

while his counterpart begins to show the ravages of time and indiscretion. Meanwhile, in Philip Roth's Operation Shylock, the other Roth (the one who is not the narrator) is a scoundrel who is using his doppelganger nature to traduce the character of the original, who feels compelled to track him down and put matters to rights. However, as the action complexifies, Roth finds himself wondering whether the other Roth might have a stronger claim to be the real one. Roth, of course, was Jewish, as is Klein and this identity is used several times to interrogate the nature of reality. It concludes with a chapter made more tragic by contemporary events in which the Jews of Israel consider their own doppelgangers of Palestinians. Klein writes in shadow of an earlier version of 'genocide' (which is her word) – would she now conclude that the result of that consideration of the self-other has convinced many that the only reasonable approach is to annihilate the other.

A second means by which the mirror world can make itself known is through the (mis)interpretation of events which leads to what is now generally called conspiracy theory. Since much of the book was written during the lockdown period of COVID-19 and its aftermath, it is not surprising that the issue of vaccination plays a prominent part. Anti-vaxxers, of whom there were quite a few in North America, believe various claims about the vaccines available, including that they provide a means by which ill-intentioned people would find part of the vaccine injected shedding off them with disastrous consequences for anyone in the vicinity. Many of these people also believe in other conspiracies mouthed by such as former president Trump that the Democrat party is going to ban cows and windows in buildings and that immigrants are the cause of all the problems faced by the country, whether real or imagined. One response to this form of belief is to laugh it off or to despair that people could fall for anything so obviously lacking in credibility. Klein, though, manages to avoid such shallowness and goes on to argue that such people do have a point, although it is not the point they think they have. The common point of the conspiracies is that a certain group of people – identities vary – are treating the majority unfairly and withholding resources of some sort. And this is in fact true, it is called capitalism. It is capitalism and the forces driving it that have been stripping us of the commons and forcing us to pay for what we once had for free. It is capitalism that forces us to work harder and longer for less and less while the captains of industry make off with ever greater tranches of the proceeds of our labour. It is capitalism that is destroying the environment and forcing the mass migrations of people that will destabilise all societies. The comedian Mark Steel has a nice and also relevant joke in which he surveys the damage done to the British economy by so many years of Tory party austerity, corruption and incompetence and then says it is clear who the real culprits are – libraries, which is why it is good so many of them are being closed down. It is the same situation. A third aspect of the doppelganger effect is its ability to repeat history, generally in the form of tragedy but sometimes as farce. An example of this, Klein shows, occurred in Canada with a protest by truckers reacting to revelations of the treatment of the country's indigenous people, which has too often been disgraceful. The protest was named We Stand in Solidarity and aimed to build awareness in every community of what had happened. Yet knowledge of this convoy was almost completely eradicated by its rapidly assembled successor, the Freedom Convoy, which took the strapline Every Child Matters, by which they meant their own, who were apparently facing a 'second genocide' in the form of mask and vaccine mandates. This was not, of course, an isolated incident. Klein has, as mentioned above, worked hard to bring all this together in a single book. Individual sections are interesting and can also be quite moving, as when she describes the progress of her son. However, it is difficult to avoid the sense that it does not quite all cohere into a whole. It is more of a form of movement through various facets than a systematic approach to a theoretical framework. No doubt some readers. Perhaps most, will prefer it this way but it becomes a little unsatisfying at the end, where there is a powerful exposition of the circumstances faced by Palestinians but no firm conclusion as to what it all might mean.

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