

ETHICAL VALUE OF ENERGY AND ENERGY RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

One of the most serious challenges that every nation faces is energy or power management. Without energy, it isn't easy to grow and develop the economy. Without energy, citizens will live in darkness and many human activities that need light will not take place. Every government must prioritize harnessing and providing power for its citizens or creating an enabling environment for energy or power generation. This paper argues that effective energy management is a human and environmental value. It is a value for energy is essential to human life and when not well managed it has economic implications and the environment is negatively affected. For every unit of energy wasted more energy has to be produced and this involves the use of more resources. When energy is well managed, it frees up financial resources that could be used for other development projects to enhance human life. Prudent use of resources is a vital value. Energy management is a core issue that every government should be concerned about. The development projects and the good life that the government should provide are incomplete and cannot be achieved without efficient energy management. Through critical hermeneutics and analysis, this paper an essential human value and indices for which to recognize a good government is efficient energy management. The paper finds that there is much waste of energy in Nigeria and other African countries. The paper concludes that the definition of good governance should never neglect the dimension of energy management.

Introduction

Managing energy for economic development and the people's welfare is an important value. It is something worthwhile, desirable, and most appropriate for the good of society. Governments in Africa and elsewhere have a duty/responsibility to ensure ethical and right management of energy and all energy resources. While to a certain degree, there is good management of energy resources in many Western countries, that cannot be said of many countries in the global South. In many countries especially in Africa, there is poor management or misuse of energy resources. Mayhew (2009) writes that: "Mature economies tend to be more energy efficient, perhaps because technology improves and the emphasis shifts to service industries" (p.156). With adequate and sustainable management of energy resources, there should be an adequate electricity supply, equitable distribution of income from energy resources, wise use of natural resources, and no room for waste in the use of energy resources.

The methods adopted in this research are critical hermeneutics and analysis. The basic concepts in the paper shall be interpreted and deciphered for better understanding. The issues in the paper shall be carefully analysed and dissected to unravel the issues in the paper. The paper shall proceed by making some conceptual clarifications, and this will be followed by an examination of the state of energy and energy resources management in Nigeria. The issue of energy and energy resource management as an ethical value will also be looked at. The implications of these issues for good governance in Nigeria will then be taken up before the paper concludes.

Conceptual Clarifications

The basic concepts that define this paper are ethical value, energy, management, and good governance. US Energy Information and Administration (USEIA) (2023) states that energy is the "ability to do work" and without energy, no human civilization can work, make bicycles, use cars, use boats in the water, cook their food, use home appliances, manufacture products, and carry out astronomical matters (p.1). The USEIA (2023) states that forms of energy include light, heat, motion, electrical, gravitational, and chemical; energy is also potential or stored energy that can be transformed into kinetic or working energy; and for energy sources, they are either renewable or non-renewable. Another definition of energy by Mayhew (2009) states that: "The physical capacity for doing work. Nearly all our energy derives from the sun, and technical progress has

reflected more and more sophisticated uses of energy, from wind and water, through fossil fuels, to nuclear power”(p. 156). This paper is not only concerned with energy but also the sources from which the energy is generated, called energy resources. Novakovic and Nasiri (2016) opine that: “Energy resources are all forms of fuels used in the modern world, either for heating, generation of electrical energy or for other forms of energy conversion processes. Energy resources can be roughly classified into three categories: renewable, fossil, and nuclear.” Whatever can be used to create or generate energy can be called an energy resource. These resources can either be renewable (can be replenished, reused, or even recycled), or non-renewable (cannot be renewed when depleted). Renewable resources are such things as wind, solar, and hydro; while non-renewable are fossil fuels, plutonium, uranium, etc. Non-renewable resources, such as fossil fuels, are exhaustible and cannot be replaced once they have been used up. They take millions of years to form again e.g. fossil fuels, uranium & plutonium, etc. Renewable resources, on the other hand, are replenishable and include sources like solar, wind, and hydro. Nelson (2015) defines energy and energy resources stating that the work capacity is what energy is, while energy resource is anything that produces heat, moves objects, powers life, and produces electricity.

What is management? IEduNote (2023) writes that management has to do with planning, organizing, making decisions, motivating, leading, and controlling human persons, finances, and resources such as information and physical infrastructures to achieve the goals of the organization or group. Lawal (2012) states that management is having things done to accomplish the goals of an organization, and it equally involves organizing, planning, leading, staffing, and controlling resources. Reciou (2019) states that energy management concerns planning and executing energy production, and consumption, and also attending to conservation issues, protecting the climate and ensuing cost savings. Kelley (2019) writes energy management is ensuring that there is a reduction in energy usage while saving costs, and meeting environmental requirements and conservation efforts. NTPC School of Business (2023) writes that: “Energy management is the process of monitoring, controlling, and optimizing energy use and consumption. The goal of energy management is to ensure that energy is used in an efficient, effective, and sustainable manner”(par. 2). Pedro-Egbe (2021) states that: “Energy management is defined as the process of optimizing the peak energy demand and energy consumption in a building”(par.2).

Energy management refers to processes and procedures of prospecting for energy and energy sources and seeing to their use in an organization, group, or country. This involves planning, deciding, organizing, and utilizing energy sources for society. Every group or country that is using energy has goals and objectives to be met. Energy is managed for the well-being and welfare of people, and the development of society taking into consideration also environmental health and good. The term energy management will be used in this paper in a broader sense. It is more than cost-saving in the use of energy in buildings, industries, and factories. It is inclusive of the use of energy sources and how energy is created and utilized. And so how the sun, water, wind, etc are harnessed to create energy is part of energy management. The reality is that the creation, production, and process of generating energy from the sun, water, wind, and fossil fuels involve the use of energy. You cannot tap solar energy from the sun and use it inside facilities without using energy. To use wind energy you have to have facilities to tap the wind. To dig, excavate, or drill for fossil fuels you have to make use of energy. This is why the talk about saving energy must move beyond cost-saving energy to its generation and creation in its natural environment. If a company or country were to insist on using coal to generate energy because it is less costly and cares nothing about environmental concerns, that would not be wise ethical energy management. Energy management should move beyond saving financial costs to saving the environment.

This paper names energy and energy resource management as an ethical value. What is an ethical value? Eneyo (2020) states that ethics is concerned with issues of bad, good, right, and wrong, what is praiseworthy or blameworthy in human conduct, and specifies how human beings ought to behave in society. Ikeke (2014) writes that: “Ethics is the critical study of right and wrong behaviours. It deals with the normative criteria of how to measure human morality. What is the basis of human customs, rules and regulations” (p.112). The principles arising from ethics called ethical principles can be applied to all areas of life and so you have personal ethics, social ethics, business ethics, political ethics, bioethics, family ethics, environmental ethics, medical ethics, etc. Gbadebo (2021) states that: “value can be defined ...as the principles judging the worth of things or actions and also standards of measuring the virtues or goodness thereof. Therefore value is the scale of calculating the goodness, desirability, and worthwhileness of things, actions, and situations” (p.87). Values are what human beings hold to be of high esteem, praise, and worthy of emulation. There are universal values but there are also values that are peculiar to some society.

To speak of ethical value is to say that a certain behaviour or thing held in high esteem and of praise is worth following as good or right. According to Chukwujekwu (2007) ethical values or moral values refer to things or actions regarded as morally good, worthy of possessing or performing for they are following the best of human nature. Examples of values are kindness, generosity, honesty, hard work, diligence, filial piety, good governance, environmental care, etc.

Good governance concerns the purpose for which government is established. The government exists for a purpose and it is to provide a good and optimal life for the people, secure their peace and wellbeing, and enable people to enjoy happiness and their human rights. Whatever helps to secure the purpose of government becomes the concern of government. Adeyeye and Fasakin (2015) cite the United Nations to say that governance comprises popular participation, consensus, rule of law, accountability, transparency, responsibility, equitability, inclusiveness, and effectiveness and efficiency in the organization of the state (p. 110). It is using public political power for the common good. Good governance truly acts to develop the people, efficiently use resources for their betterment, and promote environmental health and harmony. Good governance is the antithesis of bad governance, bad leadership, and corrupt inept leadership. In the modern world, it is difficult for a state or country to develop when there is no adequate and sustainable power supply or electric energy. Good governance in the modern world will require that those in governance facilitate efficient management of energy and energy resources for the good of society. This is why this paper is drawing the implication of energy and energy management for good governance. A government that cannot sustainably manage energy for the good of its citizens leaves much to be desired. Ojo (2018) writes that “good governance means the manner in which power is exercised by governments in the management and distribution of a country’s social and economic resources. The nature and manner of this distribution makes governance a bad or good one” (p.54) Government is here understood to mean the body of men and women assigned the task of organizing the political society or any group for that matter. The concern here is with political society. Part of the resources of the state that the government should manage are energy resources and also natural resources.

The State of Energy and Energy Resources Management in Nigeria

It can be argued that the state of energy management in Nigeria is either very poor or grossly undeveloped. Take the state of electricity energy supply in Nigeria. Nigeria is notable for its poor power supply. The state of the power supply is epileptic. Many Nigerian citizens have been in darkness for more than a year in the places they live. You wonder if the power stations function at all. Not enough electricity is generated. Even when it is generated its distribution is another thing. The Nigerian government has invested billions into the electricity industry but little has been achieved from it. Oyedepo (2012) notes that it is a big challenge in the African continent to have clean modern energy which is necessary for poverty eradication and socio-economic development, and in a country like Nigeria more than 60% of persons in the country have no access to electricity, Nigeria's energy and energy resources have not been adequately managed for the good of the people, social development and environmental sustainability. Without an adequate supply of electricity power, it is difficult for factories and industries to develop rapidly. Many small and medium-scale businesses cannot function for they require power. If they function at all, it is at a high cost for they have to generate power for themselves.

This is a serious issue that affects energy management. If the electricity companies and power stations cannot generate and supply adequate electricity to the people, a lot of developmental projects are affected. People cannot adequately run their factories that depend on electricity. There is poor management of the electricity companies and poor management of the public funds that have been invested in the sector. There is hardly any Nigerian annual budget in which money is not budgeted for electricity, yet not much is achieved. Take for instance, as Pedro-Egbe (2021) writes one of the highlights of the 2021 budget was the amount devoted to achieving an uninterrupted power supply. Today, not much can be shown regarding this. The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) was established to ensure that there is an effective power supply. However, one aspect of the electricity industry Nigeria is yet to explore fully and incorporate into its sustainable goals is energy management.

Another issue that concerns energy management in Nigeria is the refineries. Nigeria has three refineries in Ekpan near Warri, Kaduna, and Port Harcourt. Billions of naira have been pumped into the refineries but they are not producing, if there is any production at all it is grossly below

capacity. Nigeria produces crude oil and still imports refined petroleum products. This is very shameful for a nation that produces crude oil. Corruption is rife in the petroleum industry. How come with the billions pumped into the oil industry there is little or nothing to show for it? Once in a while, petrol is scarce and Nigerians are stranded in petrol stations. Because of poor management of the country's refineries and gross underdevelopment of the energy sector coupled with corruption that takes away vital income needed for development, there is unemployment, youth restiveness, and ethnic militancy in the land. Mismanagement of Nigeria's oil wealth had led to violence and conflicts. In 2024, the price of petroleum products has drastically risen to an astronomically high level. The price of transportation and to transport agricultural products has risen also. All these affect the lives of the people. Many Nigerians are groaning in pain.

Gas is a vital source of energy. Gas is used in cooking and to power various industrial equipment and facilities. In Today's Nigeria, gas is still flared in the process of oil production. Though many deadlines have been given by the government to end gas flaring, it is still taking place. Painfully enough the multinational oil companies prefer to flare gas and pay fines as it is easier for them. You go to many places in the Niger Delta such as Ekpan, Otu-Jeremi, and some Ukwuani towns, you see gas being flared. There is mismanagement of Nigerian gas resources. Ikeke (2017) cites Amnesty International to state that the practice of gas flaring has taken place in Nigeria for decades causing environmental degradation and wastage.

When it comes to energy management in Nigerian households this paper doubts if the story is a very good one. A trip through the roads of many Nigerian villages and rural places reveals there are piles of firewood that have been felled for cooking purposes. Then there is also illegal felling of trees to create timber for the wood industry. Okula (2021) writes that clean and efficient energy promotes economic growth and aids comfortable living, but it is painful to note that Nigeria is inefficient in generating and managing power and there is little concern for the environmental impact of energy generation. Nigeria's energy resources are not only oil and gas. Oyedepo (2012) writes the use of fuel wood has caused desertification and associated problems. By and large, Nigeria's energy and energy resources have not been well managed for the wellbeing of all Nigerians, the good of society, and environmental sustainability.

Energy and Energy Resources Management as an Ethical Value

An essential argument of this paper is that energy management is an ethical value. Ethics as known concerns issues of what is right and wrong in human society. Ethics calls on human beings to live and behave rightly and morally. Ethics shuns evils and anti-social acts. When energy, whether renewable or non-renewable is well and rightly managed for the good of society and environmental conservation, a sustainable society and human civilization are created. The right thing to do is to manage energy well. When energy is misused, abused, mismanaged, wasted, and degraded it harms human beings and the ecosystems. The use of energy raises environmental ethical questions. Kimmins (2001) writes that: “Environmental issues raise a whole set of fundamental questions about what we as human beings value, how we conceive a meaningful life, how we perceive our place in nature and the kind of world we wish to bequeath to our children”(p. iii).

The ethical principle of sustainable development should never be ignored in the management of energy resources. The United Nations (1972) is clear that human should use the resources of the earth being mindful of the ability of future generations to meet their needs also. Energy sustainability is a vital necessity today more than ever. Nigeria has crude oil as a major source of energy. This should be used taking into consideration that it is non-renewable and there are future generations of Nigerians. Wood is renewable. But are there enough efforts at re-afforestation in the country to ensure both sustainability and environmental protection?

Think of the many consequences of energy mismanagement, misuse, and wastage. Non-renewable energies are crucial for human survival and future generations. When they are wasted they cannot be brought back. This is why they need to be used sustainably. Managing non-renewable energy sources does not mean that human beings should continue to exploit them. Rather it implies that because of the disadvantages associated with them, human beings should move away from them to clean energy. Non-renewable energy cannot be replenished and many of them come from fossil fuels such as natural gas, petroleum, coal, etc. Morse (2023) rightly notes that the use of fossil fuels such as natural gas, coal, petroleum, etc pollute the environment, land, and marine resources and contribute to climate change.

About gas management in Nigeria, it is a serious ethical issue. It is an ethical issue for the adverse effects of gas flaring affects human beings and also the ecosystems. The World Bank

Group (2023) states that: “The flaring of gas contributes to climate change and impacts the environment through the emission of CO₂, black carbon and other pollutants. It also wastes a valuable energy resource that could be used to advance the sustainable development of producing countries”(p.1). The Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (2006) states that: “Gas flaring is associated with atmospheric and thermal pollution, and the depletion/destruction of vegetation and wildlife. Damage to buildings, acid rain formation, depletion of the floral periodicity, discomfort to humans and danger of pulmonary disease epidemic are other environmental problems arising from gas flaring. The soil, rivers and creeks of Niger Delta, which used to be alkaline in nature 17-40 years ago have now become dangerously acidic” (p. 120). Human health is affected, ecosystems are destroyed and biodiversity is depleted. All these make the issue of management of gas resources an ethical issue. Gas flaring is unethical and immoral. Carrying out oil business activities and flaring gas which destroys people and kills organisms in the soil and atmosphere is unacceptable. It is not the right way for companies to behave. There is a need for it to stop. Ikeke (2017) states that: “Human beings have a moral responsibility to act and end it. This is imperative to contribute to ending climate change, and land degradation, and foster better security and health for humans and non-humans. When humans rise to this responsivity of ending gas flaring, it will help in creating a better and harmonious sustainable region in the Niger Delta.” (p.103).

Issues of energy use and management are vital questions in ethics. Ethics is concerned with how human beings ought to live their lives among themselves and concerning one another. The human use of energy affects human health and wellbeing. Your use of energy affects the lives of others. It is more than a matter of individual choice. If one were to say that because she has the money he can waste electricity, what about his obligation to humanity? If you own a company, your waste of energy depletes the resources that you can contribute to corporate social responsibility. Present human beings have obligations to future generations. If present humans were to deplete all the non-renewable energy resources then there would be none for future generations to use. Macmillan Encyclopedia of Energy (2019) states that:

Continuing dependence on fossil fuels raises several major ethical issues. Ethical questions concerning our responsibilities to future generations are raised by the fact that fossil fuels are a nonrenewable energy source so that every barrel of oil or ton of coal burned today is forever lost to future generations. Further, the by-products

of fossil fuel combustion pose hazards to both present and future generations (par 2).

Implications of Energy and Energy Resources Management for Good Governance in Nigeria

Government has a great role to play in the energy management in a country. Because of the importance of energy to human society and the ecosystems, a government that cannot efficiently manage its energy resources should not be considered a good government. It is the government that has the responsibility and power to make policies that govern the management of energy resources. In many African nations, due to weak environmental governance and bad leadership, many extractive industries mine energy resources without caring for the health of the people and the environmental well-being. Macmillan Encyclopedia of Energy (2019) states that: “Although important questions of individual morality can be involved with energy issues, the production and use of energy primarily raises questions of social ethics and public policy” (par 7). This is why it is a vital question for the government. The government for the common good must regulate some aspects of how energy is used and managed. If some companies were to buy up all the energy generated from the power stations and thus deprive individuals and others of energy, this would be unacceptable. Energy is a public good that the government ought to be concerned about.

One of the responsibilities of a good government should be to foster energy management effectively and efficiently. Within a nation or country, there are many organizations, institutions, industries, factories, and households that make use of energy in the form of electricity from power plants, and gas. To power many electronic and electrical equipment in households and industries electricity is needed. Factories need electricity to power their production equipment. Cars, buses, trains, boats, and other means of transportation need electricity to run. The government cannot just allow individuals or other organizations to create energy in any manner they like without caring for social welfare and environmental wellness. If individuals or groups were to just raise electric poles and dig along the streets to raise or lay wires to generate electricity the government should be concerned. Without clear guidelines from the government individuals and groups in the bid to generate electricity can constitute a public nuisance and health hazards. This is a vital reason why government should be interested.

As noted previously energy comes from various energy sources. The way the energy is generated from these energy sources should matter to the government. People can generate energy from coal to power households and factories. But coal also has many disadvantages and negative impacts on the environment. Will the government allow organizations to generate energy from coal without restraint? The government should care for the common good. People can generate energy from firewood. But this causes deforestation. A good government should care about the environment. The government is set up to enable people to experience the good life. Whatever threatens the good life should be of concern to the government. Deforestation, climate change, and other environmental problems such as flooding, droughts, and famine all inhibit the provision of the good life. One of the sustainable development goals of the United Nations has to do with mitigating climate change. Abuses and mismanagement of energy and energy sources create enormous environmental problems. More energy consumption in homes and industries means power companies have to generate more energy which requires using more resources from the earth. Energy efficiency and saving have a way of helping to conserve resources.

In today's world, one of the most crucial energy sources that almost all nations depend on is crude oil. The exploitation and exploration of crude oil have also caused a lot of environmental problems. Presently many nations are trying to move away from oil as a source of energy. Oil is a non-renewable energy source. In the meantime, the government should not just allow oil companies to pollute and destroy the environment in the name of prospecting for oil. There should be high standards that companies should follow to ensure minimum damage is done to the environment and human beings. This also is part of energy management. Abdullah (2006) writes that efficient management of the resources of a country (Nigeria) requires the proceeds from oil should be used to diversify the economy and the proceeds from oil should be judiciously used. The oil industry is filled with corruption. Take a country like Nigeria, with the enormous wealth accruing from oil the nation is still grossly underdeveloped. Managing the income from oil revenue should also be seen as part of energy management. This applies to all other sources of energy. The more there is underdevelopment the more there is exploitation of more natural resources, as the money needed for development projects is taken away by corruption.

The foregoing shows clearly that without energy no human person or society can function. Energy is what is needed to work and move human civilization forward. This energy must be not only

managed but the energy resources from which energy is derived. Without the energy resources, there is no energy. Because of the challenges associated with non-renewable energy resources in that they deplete and cannot be replaced and also their negative impact on the environment; it is vitally important that renewable energy sources are developed and invested upon. A government that fails to realize this need and gradual movement to non-renewable resources is doing a great disservice to its people. Efficient energy management should not only be the concern of the government but also energy resource management. This should also be the concern of individuals and other groups in society.

Governments in Nigeria and elsewhere must intervene in the energy economics and economy for the good of all and not just leave it to the realms of the market. The way forward for proper and ethical management of energy and energy resources in Nigeria should be guided by the following as proposed by Kimmins (2001). The proposals are accessibility and availability of energy to the people at an affordable price, development of renewable energy sources, observance of the precautionary principle to avoid irreparable damage from any changes adopted, fostering environmental responsibility in energy use and management, promotion of education and public information on these uses and fostering international collaboration in energy use.

The oil and gas sector in Nigeria is inundated by massive corruption. Olujobi (2022) notes that corruption negatively affects good governance, socio-economic rights, and the welfare of citizens. This is an issue that the government should not ignore. It is both an ethical and economic issue. There is massive oil theft in the oil industry. Some quantities of oil produced are unaccounted for and so the profit goes to unknown sources. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2021) has enacted the Petroleum Industry Act. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that it is effectively implemented for effective management of the industry and sector.

Conclusion

This paper has examined energy, energy resources, and management in Nigeria in light of the need for good governance. The paper vividly shows that energy and energy management are necessary for the economic growth and development of any nation. The paper showed that the government has a responsibility to ensure that energy is available and accessible, and also to ensure that energy resources are well managed. Energy management is an important aspect of good government. The

paper also showed that you cannot speak of energy and energy management without environmental discourse for the way that energy is used and managed has implications for environmental sustainability. Energy should be used and managed in such a way that it does not cause deforestation, desertification, or health challenges. etc. If energy is well managed it will help to enhance the standard of human life and ecosystems in Nigeria.

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ROLE OF CHRISTIAN ETHICAL PRINCIPLES IN ADDRESSING CORRUPTION IN THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Christian ethical principles in addressing the pervasive issue of corruption in Nigerian society, analyzing its socio-cultural, economic, and political impacts. Although previous research examines various anti-corruption efforts, few have considered the intersection between Christian ethics and secular strategies. This research fills that gap by evaluating how Christian organizations contribute to combating corruption through moral advocacy, ethical education, and community engagement. The core issue lies in the normalization of corruption within Nigerian society, despite numerous secular anti-corruption reforms. Thus, this paper examines how Christian organizations can collaborate with secular efforts to create a more integrated approach to addressing corruption. This research employs a mixed-method approach, incorporating theological, historical, and phenomenological perspectives to offer a multidimensional analysis of corruption. This approach is justified by its ability to capture both the religious and socio-political aspects of the issue. The findings reveal that while Christian organizations have made notable contributions their efforts are often fragmented and under-leveraged. The thesis argues that a more integrated approach, combining Christian ethics and secular strategies, could strengthen efforts to foster integrity and accountability in Nigeria. Key five recommendations include strengthening collaboration between faith-based and secular entities, promoting ethical education, advocating for policy reform, developing leadership capacity, and supporting whistleblower protection. The study concludes that integrating Christian ethical principles with secular anti-corruption strategies can significantly bolster efforts to enhance integrity, accountability, and governance in Nigeria.

Keywords Corruption, Christianity, Christian Ethics, Ethics, Nigeria.

Introduction

This study investigates the pervasive issue of corruption in Nigeria, focusing on its deeply embedded socio-political, economic, and cultural aspects. Transparency International defines corruption as the abuse of power for personal gain (Wang & Rosenau, 2001, p.25-49), and in Nigeria, systemic corruption has led to declining infrastructure and a rise in corrupt individuals across various sectors (Nmah, 2017, p. 116-131). Fraud and corruption refer to dishonest actions designed to unlawfully strip

others of money, property, or legal rights. Although scholars and policymakers have made multiple efforts to combat corruption, many approaches have overlooked the role of Christian ethical frameworks in conjunction with secular strategies, and the primary concern is the normalization of corruption, which persists despite numerous reforms. Therefore, this paper aims to address this gap by exploring how Christian ethical principles, grounded in biblical teachings of honesty, integrity, and justice, can serve as a moral framework to address and mitigate corruption in a predominantly religious society like Nigeria.

Corruption severely hinders Nigeria's growth by depleting resources, stalling development, eroding public trust in government, and also diminishing human dignity (Umaru, 2020, p. iv). Undoubtedly, the Nigerian church has influenced societal values, yet its response to corruption has been inconsistent, with some leaders speaking out while others remain silent or complicit. Nonetheless, this research examines how Christian organizations can strengthen secular anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria, offering a more comprehensive solution, and emphasizing the impact of faith-based initiatives in fostering integrity and accountability to achieve lasting socio-political reform. Social ethics examines the ethical dimensions of decision-making in human behavior (Devon & Van de Poel, 2004, p. 461-469), and aligns with virtue ethics by highlighting the need to cultivate moral character and virtues like integrity and accountability within social systems. This study adopts the theoretical framework of virtue ethics, emphasizing the importance of moral character and the cultivation of virtues such as integrity, honesty, and accountability. with a mixed-method research approach, combining historical, theological, and phenomenological analyses to

explore how Christian ethics influence behavior and institutions in combating corruption in Nigeria.

Overview of Corruption in Nigeria

Corruption in Nigeria has deep historical roots, beginning in pre-colonial times with bribery and nepotism among local leaders, and escalating during the colonial era as British practices prioritized personal gain over local welfare. After independence in 1960, corruption became further entrenched through military coups and weak governance, leading to significant embezzlement, especially following the discovery of oil in the 1970s. Fraud, deceit, and misrepresentation are closely associated with collusion, broadly defined as deceptive conduct (Fischer, Adams & Henry, 2022, p.1-40). Corruption poses a major challenge to all societies and is a primary driver of human suffering and deprivation (Murray & Spalding, 2015, p. 1), with its various forms present in all societies (Amundsen, 1999, p. 1-3), and its deviant behaviours encompass bribery, extortion, fraud, embezzlement, nepotism, cronyism, including the misappropriation of public assets, and influence peddling (Myint (2000, p. 33-58).

Historically, fraud and corruption have existed for centuries, but in the last two decades, they have become more prominent in Nigeria, drawing increased attention from policymakers and scholars (Imohiosen & Adeolu, 2024, p. 347). This history underscores the complexity of eradicating corruption, requiring not only governance reforms but also the integration of ethical frameworks, especially Christian teachings, into society. Promoting a culture of accountability and integrity is crucial for breaking the cycle of corruption and achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. Despite returning to democracy in the late 1990s, corruption continues to obstruct socio-economic development across politics, business, and public service, perpetuated by a lack of accountability, weak legal frameworks, and ineffective law enforcement, alongside institutional complicity that erodes public trust. Significantly, corruption is a major issue worldwide, including in Nigeria, hindering sustainable development and growth in both the country and Africa as a whole (Kalama, 2018, p. 177).

The cultural and socio-political factors surrounding corruption in Nigeria are interconnected, with societal norms often prioritizing personal connections and patronage over ethical conduct. This

environment fosters a culture of impunity, making corrupt practices seem acceptable and diminishing trust in public institutions. Moreover, socio-economic challenges, such as poverty and unemployment, further worsen corruption, pushing individuals to engage in unethical behavior for financial reasons. Corruption is a pervasive societal issue that has deeply rooted itself in Nigeria (Bello-Imam, 2005, p. 45-66), Transparency International regularly ranks Nigeria among the most corrupt nations globally (Goodling, 2003, p. 997-1023), and it continues to dominate public discussions (Smith, 2007, p. 33-45). Additionally, the merging of traditional values with modern governance promotes tribalism, resulting in selective enforcement of anti-corruption laws. Consequently, addressing corruption effectively in Nigeria requires not only legal reforms but also a cultural transformation toward transparency, accountability, and ethical governance.

While various anti-corruption initiatives have been introduced, systemic corruption persists, highlighting the need for comprehensive reforms to tackle the underlying socio-political and economic factors. The historical trajectory of corruption in Nigeria illustrates its entrenched nature and the complexities involved in eradicating it. In Nigeria, like many African nations, ethnic and linguistic divisions affect peasants' behavior, creating barriers that prevent them from organizing for their interests (Declan, 2008, p. 32 -50). These divisions play a crucial role in shaping individuals' attitudes, behaviors, and values. Addressing this challenge requires not only robust governance reforms but also a concerted effort to integrate ethical frameworks, particularly those rooted in Christian teachings, into the fabric of society. Ultimately, fostering a culture of accountability and integrity will be essential for breaking the cycle of corruption and promoting sustainable development in Nigeria.

Corruption in Nigeria is driven by socio-political factors, including weak governance, political patronage, and a lack of accountability. The concentration of power among political elites, coupled with widespread nepotism, undermines merit-based systems and perpetuates corrupt practices. Since Nigeria's post-colonial era, successive governments have pledged to fight corruption, recognizing its detrimental impact on governance, development, and democracy (Oarhe, 2013, p.111-134). Unfortunately, the intersection of politics and ethnicity often leads to favoritism, hindering efforts to achieve transparency and good governance.

Additionally, the ineffective enforcement of anti-corruption laws and the inadequacies of the judicial system encourage individuals to engage in corrupt activities without fear of repercussions. In many African countries, including Nigeria, it is expected that public officials will use their positions to amass wealth and assist their relatives, often leading to corrupt practices (Oguejiofor, 2001, p. 36). Moreover, political instability and competition for scarce resources further fuel corruption, as leaders often prioritize personal or regional interests over national development. Meanwhile, the political landscape obstructs governance structures, imparting policy implementation and political decisions (Adekoya, 2024, p. 93-108). These socio-political dynamics contribute to a cycle of corruption that significantly impacts governance, erodes public trust, and disrupts the fair distribution of resources in Nigeria.

Corruption in Nigeria severely undermines economic growth by eroding public trust and deterring investment, leading to the misallocation of resources from critical sectors like education and healthcare. African society is patriarchal, characterized by personalized political power and a self-recruiting oligarchy that ensures permanent leadership (Seteolu, 2005, p. 34-42). Corruption in Nigeria has become a social epidemic and economic pathology, with those who claim to be its healers ironically becoming victims themselves (Ahmed, 2017, p. 214). Hence, this perpetuates poverty, exacerbates inequality, and creates inefficiencies in public services while limiting opportunities through a lack of transparency and merit-based job acquisition. Moreover, to foster sustainable growth and equitable prosperity, Nigeria must implement effective anti-corruption measures that restore integrity in governance, unlock resources, and improve citizens' quality of life for national development.

Cultural perspectives on corruption in Nigeria are influenced by historical, social, and economic factors that normalize unethical behavior as a survival strategy in a resource-scarce environment. Corruption is a key factor behind Nigeria's persistent issues of poverty, disease, hunger, and overall developmental challenges (Ogundiya, 2009, p.281-292). Sadly, many consider corruption acceptable for personal gain, reinforced by a patronage culture prioritizing loyalty over ethics, leading to public apathy and a sense of powerlessness. Therefore, to combat this, it is crucial to promote accountability and integrity while emphasizing communal responsibility, particularly through engaging religious and community leaders in discussions on corruption's negative

impacts. Fundamentally, changing societal attitudes toward corruption is vital for creating a more transparent and accountable future in Nigeria.

Christian Ethics and Theological Reflections on Corruption

Christian ethical principles, grounded in biblical teachings, highlight values such as honesty, justice, compassion, and integrity, guiding individuals and communities to make morally sound decisions by their faith. At the heart of these principles is the concept of love, which inspires selfless behavior and emphasizes truthfulness and accountability, urging believers to denounce dishonesty and support marginalized groups. Christian spirituality is lived out through "spiritual practices," intentional disciplines shaping a way of life. Paradoxically, Wuthnow (2001, p. 306–320) distinguishes "between devotional practices enriching one's spiritual life, those expressing spirituality, and those rooted in one's relationship with the sacred". Furthermore, Christian ethics stress the importance of stewardship in responsibly managing resources for the common good, promoting active involvement in justice and anti-corruption efforts by cultivating a culture of forgiveness and reconciliation that enables communities to address past injustices and strive for a more equitable society.

The relationship between Christianity and morality is strong, as Christian teachings establish a foundation for ethical behavior based on love, justice, and compassion. These principles guide believers to make decisions that enhance individual and societal well-being while emphasizing the dignity of all people and the need to care for the marginalized. Emphasizing virtue and character helps Christian ethics comprehend the new life of grace. Although virtue ethics is criticized for perfectionism and personal moral focus, these concerns can be mitigated by anchoring virtuous living in love for God and neighbor (Meilaender, 1984, p. 74-88). The teachings of Jesus and the apostles encourage self-reflection and commitment to justice and integrity, underscoring Christianity's crucial role in shaping ethical behaviour and accountability in society.

Christian spirituality seeks to shift self-centered living to a theocentric existence, culminating in eschatological transformation, and the biblical narrative provides a standard for evaluating human actions as a fitting response to God's love and self-revelation (Dykstra and Bass, 2002, p. 13–32). The theological foundations of ethics assert that moral principles stem from divine authority and

religious teachings, emphasizing values like justice, compassion, and integrity to guide ethical decision-making. By drawing on sacred texts and doctrines, theological ethics provides a framework for navigating moral dilemmas, highlighting virtues such as love, humility, and forgiveness. This integration of theological principles fosters accountability and a deeper commitment to living in alignment with one's beliefs and values within the community.

Theological reflections on corruption stress the moral obligation of believers to uphold ethical responsibility as taught in the Scripture. Biblically, corruption is seen as a breach of God's mandate for justice and integrity, compelling individuals to honor God and serve the common good. Theological ethics aids believers in understanding the gospel's demands and refining their behavior for better communication with non-believers (Spohn, 2005, p. 269-285), and these insights also emphasise the transformative nature of repentance and forgiveness, fostering personal and communal restoration. Although no country can satisfy all the requirements for a successful anti-corruption effort meeting a significant number is vital for its effectiveness, and the successful initiatives rely on the involvement of all stakeholders, especially Christians, given the strong ethical teachings inherent in their faith.

Moreover, the theological perspectives emphasize community accountability, highlighting that believers are responsible for their actions and for fostering an environment that promotes ethical behavior. Christian churches that focus on comprehensive spiritual growth programs are well-positioned to thrive (Wuthnow, 2003, p. 35-66). This reinforces the church's role in moral education and advocacy, equipping members to confront corruption, while, Jesus' teachings on servanthood and humility guide leaders to understand that true authority comes from selflessness and serving the common good. Ultimately, these reflections support a holistic approach to ethics, encompassing personal conduct, communal responsibility, and a commitment to justice in the fight against corruption.

Christian Ethical Response to Corruption

Christian education is vital for ethical transformation, instilling values like integrity, honesty, and justice from an early age. By emphasizing biblical teachings and moral reasoning, it helps students recognize and resist corrupt practices. Biblical Humanism teaches that humans should view others

as God views them, and Christian education is called to address this need (Fernando et al, 2023, p. 265). Additionally, fostering critical thinking and ethical decision-making empowers individuals to apply their faith in real-world situations, enhancing accountability and transparency.

Prioritizing Christian education enables communities to develop morally upright leaders committed to combating corruption. Discussions on corruption's implications and the importance of ethical behavior further enrich this education. Christian education is designed to form Christian living, not just intellectual beliefs. Its purpose is to prepare students for a different way of life, not simply to present new ideas (Chandler, 2015, p. 314-332). Integrating service-learning and community engagement reinforces ethical conduct in daily life while involving parents and community members creates a supportive environment that values integrity. Ultimately, Christian education establishes a strong foundation for ethical leadership and societal change in the fight against corruption.

Religion is central to social life in Nigeria, affecting both the public and private spheres. Although its influence isn't always seen positively, many Nigerians believe that its significance should help curb corruption tendencies (Simbine et al., 2011, p. 239-276). The Church plays a crucial role in combating corruption by promoting Christian ethical teachings that emphasize integrity, accountability, and social responsibility. Through advocacy, education, and community engagement, it challenges corrupt practices and fosters a culture of transparency while empowering marginalized groups. Fragile states like Nigeria, Burundi, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Haiti, and Somalia exhibit high corruption, a breakdown of the rule of law, lack of legitimate power mechanisms, and weak institutions, all evident in Nigeria (World Bank, 2006, p. 15-34). Nonetheless, the church's collaboration with civil society and government in denouncing unethical behavior enhances accountability and promotes ethical leadership, positioning it as a key player in fostering a corruption-free society that upholds human dignity.

Strategies for ethical leadership based on Christian values emphasize servant leadership, prioritizing community needs over personal gain. This approach fosters transparency and accountability, with leaders expected to make integrity-driven decisions. Open communication and collaboration enhance diverse perspectives and collective responsibility in combating corruption. Leaders are responsible for managing organizational energy, influencing others by how

they handle their own energy and how they focus and renew the collective energy of their team (Gu & Day, 2013, p. 22-44). By embodying humility, honesty, and justice, ethical leaders build trust and commitment, contributing to a culture of integrity. Furthermore, mentoring future leaders in ethical conduct is vital, as it instills moral responsibility and awareness of corruption's impact. Encouraging accountability and reporting corrupt practices within organizations are key strategies for improving leadership effectiveness and fostering a more ethical, transparent society aligned with Christian values.

Practical Christian solutions to corruption in Nigeria focus on enhancing transparency and accountability in church and government, encouraging ethical behavior among congregants. In 1998, the World Council of Churches, at its Harare meeting, condemned corruption and called on member churches to advocate for government legislation against it (Beets, 2007, p. 69–85). Churches can promote awareness through outreach and education, while partnerships with civil society strengthen advocacy for good governance, and Christian leaders can mentor youth to foster integrity, civic engagement, and leadership accountability. By promoting transparency and a culture of prayer, the Church underscores the importance of ethical conduct, positioning the Christian community as a key player in fostering integrity in Nigeria.

Christian groups have made significant anti-corruption strides through advocacy, education, and community mobilization to promote transparency. Organizations such as the Christian Association of Nigeria lead campaigns to raise awareness and encourage ethical conduct, while churches mentor members in integrity and civic responsibility. The Nigerian Laity Council can mobilize the laity, especially the youth, for grassroots sensitization, as it did in the 1970s/80s. Groups like the Life Action Committee and Leaven Club International could be revived to lead grassroots anti-corruption campaigns (Ngwoke, 1991, p. 208). In partnership with civil society, they advocate for governance reforms and support whistleblowers. These efforts are vital in building a more just and equitable Nigeria, highlighting the influence of faith-based initiatives. Civil society organizations play a key role in combating corruption by advocating for underrepresented groups and addressing government shortcomings, using their community connections to mobilize those doubtful of the government's anti-corruption efforts (Tonwe & Oarhe, 2015, p. 16-30). However, a major limitation for civil society organizations is insufficient financial resources, which restricts their ability to fight corruption. They typically depend on external donors for support, as seen with

SERAP, which receives funding from groups like the National Endowment for Democracy and the MacArthur Foundation (Adetokunbo, 2010).

Secular efforts to curb corruption have seen limited success, as the issue persists. In contrast, from a theological view, lasting solutions lie in addressing the root cause, which is the human heart (Jere, 2018, p. 1-10). Invariably, faith-based interventions in Nigeria have achieved varying levels of success in fighting corruption, while, community mobilization and education have shown impactful effects, but challenges such as poor implementation, limited collaboration, and political resistance persist. Ultimately, these mixed results highlight the need for improved planning, inclusivity, and continuous evaluation to promote a more just society. In 1987, Ibrahim Babangida's regime launched MAMSER to address socio-economic challenges in Nigeria. In response, the Catholic Youth of Nigeria introduced a campaign for Religious and Spiritual Recovery, asserting that MAMSER would fail without it (Ojo, 1990, p. 22). Today's corruption crisis calls for a similar approach in enhancing dialogue between religious groups and civil society that can strengthen anti-corruption initiatives.

Corruption permeates politics, government, business, and every facet of social, economic, and political development (Munzhedzi, 2016, p. 1–8). This "virus of corruption" has deeply infiltrated the functioning systems of stakeholders both locally and globally (Majanga, 2015, p. 2374-2410; Treisman, 2000, p. 399–457). A comparative analysis of Christian and secular anti-corruption strategies highlights their distinct approaches to tackling corruption. Botswana's anti-corruption reform, regarded as Africa's best example, is attributed to its effective economic policies (Drielsma, 2000, p. 44-56). In contrast, Nigeria, despite having abundant human and material resources, ranks poorly on economic indices, prompting political actors to engage in rent-seeking rather than productive investment. However, Christian strategies prioritize moral imperatives derived from faith, promoting integrity and communal responsibility through grassroots mobilization and mentorship programs that encourage ethical conduct and civic engagement. There is growing support for using religion to combat corruption, as religious people are seen to prioritize ethics, despite many corrupt countries being highly religious (Marquette, 2012, p. 11-26).

Religious and faith-based organizations have been vocal in denouncing corruption worldwide. Yet, incidents such as a prominent footballer's church in Brazil being involved in money laundering (Azzoni, 2008, p. 7), and a pastor in Nigeria suspended for embezzling church funds (Friday, 2006) reveal inconsistencies. The calls for religious leaders to intensify the fight against corruption are easily undermined by such cases. Conversely, secular strategies emphasize legal reforms and institutional accountability, employing data-driven methodologies, transparency initiatives, and collaborations with civil society to monitor and prevent corrupt practices. Corruption's global presence is reflected in the creation of key international agencies to combat it, and these efforts have been institutionalized within major organizations like the United Nations, European Union, African Union, and various international anti-corruption bodies (Alabi & Fashagba, 2010, p. 1–2; Webb, 2005, p. 191–224). Although both strategies share the goal of combating corruption, they differ in their motivations and implementation methods, with Christian groups aligning their efforts with biblical teachings and secular strategies depending on empirical data and legal frameworks. Integrating both approaches could strengthen Nigeria's anti-corruption initiatives by merging ethical principles with effective policy measures, resulting in a more comprehensive response to corruption.

Advocacy and social responsibility within the Christian community play a crucial role in fighting corruption by promoting ethical standards and social justice. Churches and Christian organizations can mobilize their congregations to push for transparency, accountability, and reforms in governance. Civil society acts as a watchdog, holding the government accountable and actively monitoring initiatives and spending to ensure transparent and effective resource allocation, thus reducing corruption and mismanagement (Olowu, 2003, p. 41-52). By addressing systemic issues like poverty and inequality, the Christian community can combat the root causes of corruption and empower marginalized groups. Embracing social responsibility allows them to promote integrity, challenge corruption, and support ethical governance in Nigeria through public campaigns, partnerships with civil society, and participation in policy-making.

Religious leaders are not immune to corruption with clerics facing allegations of fraud and immoral behavior, implicating some Christian leaders in this issue (Nnorum & Abone, 2023, p. 252-253). In Nigeria, anti-corruption initiatives have largely focused on high-profile figures rather than the general populace (Paden, 2004, p. 17-37), while, corruption has impeded industrial

development in areas such as metallurgy, petrochemicals, and automobiles (Lewis, 2004, p. 99-124). Furthermore, the rentier structure of the Nigerian state has led to past leaders' inability to account for over \$400 billion in oil revenue since independence (Ikubaje, 2006, p. 3-15). Frederick Bird's theories indicate that social morality is linked to individual private morality, suggesting that African societies can improve probity and accountability through the moral regeneration efforts of religious communities, which should promote moral awareness and ethical behavior (Agbiji & Agbiji, 2020, p. 501-523). Therefore, grassroots initiatives can raise awareness of corruption's harms and the need for ethical conduct. Together, Christian communities can effectively advocate for legislative changes that uphold justice and integrity, addressing immediate corruption issues while fostering long-term transformation based on love, justice, and accountability.

Conclusion

This study explores the issue of corruption in Nigeria through Christian ethics and governance, highlighting how theological principles and church-led initiatives can foster integrity, accountability, and social responsibility. It demonstrates that promoting ethical behavior through community engagement and moral education empowers individuals and organizations to confront corruption. Ultimately, this research contributes to the academic discourse on religion's role in social transformation and provides a framework for incorporating ethical principles into governance for a more just society.

Recommendations

i. Strengthening Faith-Based and Secular Partnerships: Christian organizations and civil society groups should form stronger alliances to leverage their combined influence. This collaboration would unify efforts, drawing on faith-based moral authority and secular expertise to create a more cohesive anti-corruption strategy, ensuring greater reach and impact in the larger society.

ii. Integrating Ethical Education in Religious Institutions: Churches and Christian groups should integrate ethics and anti-corruption teachings into their sermons, Bible studies, and community programs. This is crucial to raise awareness among congregants about their moral and civic responsibilities, ensuring a faith-driven commitment to integrity and accountability.

iii. Advocacy for Policy Reforms: Christian organizations should advocate for reforms in governance and transparency laws, targeting policymakers and government institutions. By actively engaging in policy dialogue, these groups can help create stronger legal frameworks to curb corruption and hold public officials accountable.

iv. Capacity Building and Leadership Training: Christian groups should focus on leadership training for both clergy and lay leaders, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to actively participate in anti-corruption initiatives. This would empower local leaders to drive ethical governance and inspire their communities to resist corrupt practices.

v. Promoting Whistleblower Protection: Christian organizations, in collaboration with civil society, should push for policies that protect whistleblowers. This would encourage individuals to report corruption without fear of retaliation, strengthening accountability systems and fostering a culture of transparency across sectors.

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ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND POVERTY AS A CHALLENGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

Whether the human person as a moral agent defines the societal values or otherwise, is a major issue that confronts philosophers in the face of countless changes of the present world. This article highlights how humanity's quest for survival impacts the environment and raises questions about the moral and rational agency of the individual in the face of poverty. It underscores the need for a harmonious coexistence between humans and their environment through sustainable practices. It also emphasizes the necessity of environmental education, policy development, and ethical awareness in addressing these issues. By examining cultural, socio-economic, and political factors, it offers a multifaceted approach to combating environmental degradation and promoting a sustainable and equitable future. With the methods of analysis and hermeneutics, this paper looks at the dignity of humans about their values as moral agents. In the end, the paper proffers a solution where humans will be at peace with the environment as every change will be the procreation of a better human, which never finishing rather a bundle of possibilities in a better world.

Keywords: Environment, environmental ethics, poverty, environmental degradation, sustainability, 21ST century.

Introduction

Today, critical analysis concerning our modern environment presents us with situations that question the relationship of the human person to his/her environment concerning his/her dignity

as an entity characterized by values that outside the society deprive the essence and quidditude of human life. The 21st century with its resultant effect of global change manifests in every sphere of human endeavour, especially in those areas that relate to the environment and human values. The failure of the human person to situate and affirm herself properly amid these situations gave rise to not just material poverty but has resulted in intellectual (mental) poverty which will soon affect every institution that upholds the dignity of his being.

Poverty and degradation of the environment are among the major problems confronting our world today. In the necessary quest to satisfy our human needs, human beings interact and engage with the environment. It is the desire of every rational person to live in a comfortable environment that provides clean water, hygienic food, breathable air, and the overall necessities of life. However, it is somewhat impossible to comfortably or conveniently live in our environment without having an effect, whether positive or negative, on its structure. It is to this end that the dictates of environmentalism hold that convenience and comfort can still be achieved within the ambience of sustainability, preservation, and conservation.

A major factor that influences the outcome of human being's interaction with the environment is poverty. It affects even the most rational and dignified human person, thereby, testing the human person's dignity and ability to cater to his/her environment amidst its presence. Thus, the human person's status as a moral and rational agent, capable of caring for himself/herself and his/her environment, is questioned in the face of poverty. And since it is a fact that Africa has the highest extreme poverty rates globally (Outreach International, 2023), environmental problems are more prevalent therein. This paper therefore aims to delineate the challenges compounding environmental ethics in our contemporary society with a major focus on poverty.

Conceptual Analysis

Environmental Ethics

Environmental ethics is the discipline in Philosophy that studies the interaction of human beings to and with the environment. It seeks to understand the moral relationship of human beings, and also the value and moral status of the environment and its non-human contents. (Brennan and

Norva, 2004). Environmental ethics explores the moral relationship between humans and the natural world. It considers questions about how we ought to interact with the environment, what responsibilities we have towards other living beings and ecosystems, and how we should balance human needs with the protection of nature. (Brennan and Norva,2004). And since it is the ‘ought’ of human behaviour about his/her environment, its study guides decision-making in various fields such as environmental policy, resource management, conservation efforts, and sustainable development. In other words, environmental ethics prompts individuals, organizations, and governments to consider the ethical implications of their actions on the environment and to strive for practices that promote ecological integrity and social justice.

Poverty

According to Chen (2024), poverty refers to a state or condition of financial insufficiency, where individuals or communities lack the resources to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing. It also encompasses a lack of access to education, healthcare, and other essential services, leading to social and economic disadvantages. For him, poverty is a socio-economic condition that is the result of multiple factors, not just income.

Poverty is both an individual concern as well as a social problem. At the former level, not being able to make ends meet can lead to a range of social, physical, and mental issues. At the latter level, a high poverty rate can damper economic growth and be associated with problems like crime, unemployment, urban decay, poor education, and poor public health. On a broader scope, however, poverty could mean more than just a lack of necessities. It could be an absence of genuine hope for a better life. It is in this sense that we speak of mental poverty.

Mental poverty is a term used to describe a state of lacking intellectual stimulation, creativity, or critical thinking skills. It can refer to situations where individuals or communities have limited access to education, exposure to new ideas, or opportunities for personal development, leading to a narrow worldview or limited capacity for problem-solving and innovation. It shows itself in the incapability of seeing oneself outside the current context (one cannot be more than what he/she currently is). Mental poverty fears change. Change is risk and risk is to be avoided at the peril of

mere survival. Even the hope of success can seem a risky venture; this says nothing of the path required to find that success. You see your survival as contingent upon your adherence to what has sustained your life to that point. (Olarenwaju, 2004).

Society

By “society”, we refer to Africa, precisely Nigeria. This paper proffers steps that could halt the inflicting causes of modernization as well as ameliorate the difficulties the poor man faces in his/her attempt to care for the environment. In Nigeria, education is not given the value that it once had. This itself, leads to mental poverty. Characterized by limited access to education and information, mental poverty can hinder individuals’ understanding of environmental issues and their ethical implications. Without access to quality education and awareness-raising initiatives, people may lack the knowledge and awareness needed to make informed decisions about environmental conservation and sustainability.

Factors Affecting Environmental Ethics

Several factors influence environmental ethics, shaping how individuals and societies perceive and act toward the environment:

1. **Cultural and Religious Beliefs:** Cultural traditions and religious teachings often influence people’s attitudes and behaviours towards nature and the environment. For example, some cultures view nature as sacred and emphasize harmony with the natural world, while others may prioritize human dominance over nature.
2. **Socio-economic Factors:** Economic status and access to resources can influence environmental attitudes and behaviours. People facing poverty may prioritize immediate survival over long-term environmental concerns, while those with greater wealth and resources may have the means to prioritize environmental conservation.
3. **Education and Awareness:** Knowledge and understanding of environmental issues play a significant role in shaping environmental ethics. Education and awareness-raising efforts can lead to a greater appreciation for the value of nature and promote environmentally responsible behaviours.
4. **Political and Legal Frameworks:** Government policies, laws, and regulations related to environmental protection can shape societal norms and behaviours. Strong environmental

regulations can incentivize sustainable practices and deter environmentally harmful activities.

5. **Technological Advancements:** Technological developments can both contribute to environmental degradation and offer solutions for environmental challenges. For instance, advances in renewable energy technologies can reduce dependence on fossil fuels and mitigate climate change.
6. **Globalization and Interconnectedness:** Globalization has increased interconnectedness among societies and ecosystems, highlighting the importance of international cooperation in addressing environmental issues. Pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change are examples of environmental challenges that require global solutions.
7. **Ethics and Values:** Personal values and ethical beliefs influence individual attitudes towards the environment. Some ethical frameworks prioritize human-centric perspectives, while others emphasize the intrinsic value of nature and advocate for environmental stewardship.

These factors interact in complex ways, shaping environmental ethics at individual, societal, and global levels. Promoting environmental sustainability often requires addressing multiple factors simultaneously and fostering a deeper understanding of humanity's interconnectedness with the natural world.

Environmental Care and Human Failure

Despite the vast socio-political, cultural, and individual differences, humans share one common ground and one common home (Earth). Just like any home, it is our responsibility to take care of Earth. Our failure to be good stewards and ambassadors of the environment often leads to devastating consequences.

From observation, humanity is failing to care for the environment in several ways. In the first instance, industrial and household activities have resulted in the release of pollutants into the air, water, and soil, leading to general harmful impacts on the ecosystems, wildlife, and human health.

Deforestation is another angle where humans are failing to care for their home (earth). Widespread deforestation for agriculture, urbanization, and logging purposes has led to habitat loss, decline in biodiversity, and disruptions to the ecosystem. Trees play an important role in regulating the Earth's climate by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. When these trees are cut down or burned, the stored carbons are released into the atmosphere, leading to global warming and climate change. The former refers to "a gradual increase in the overall temperature of the Earth's atmosphere caused by an increased level of carbon dioxide. While the latter means a significant change in global temperature, wind patterns, and other measures of climate that occur over several decades or longer." (Ufiofio, 2020). Also, tree roots help to hold the structure of the soil. When this natural protection of the soil is removed, it may lead to natural disasters e.g. flooding, earthquakes, etc.

Again, overexploitation of natural resources such as freshwater, fish stocks, and minerals has depleted these resources faster than they can be replenished, leading to scarcity and ecological imbalances. There is an uncontrolled habit and desire to harvest from earth's resources without a commensurate habit of replenishing. Undoubtedly, this will lead to an imbalance. It is an obvious reality that Africa struggles to deal with proper waste management practices. Improper disposal of plastic waste, electronic waste, and hazardous materials, have led to pollution of land, waterways, and oceans, posing threats to wildlife and human health. Addressing these failures requires concerted efforts at individual, community, national, and global levels to adopt sustainable practices, promote environmental stewardship, and mitigate the impacts of human activities on the planet.

Nexus Between Poverty and Environmental Degradation

Poverty has become a global issue. Many international communities have sprung up in a bid to eradicate poverty, setting out targets that could make life convenient for all or a significant majority of the earth's populace. Poverty and hunger can indeed force the hand of a very dignified human person to resort to practices that degrade the environment. With poverty, comes a sense of hoarding, which in turn leads to the act of overexploitation. This cycle of madness can only be understood from the lens of poverty and hunger. For survival's sake and for the uncertainty of

tomorrow, individuals, groups, and communities may prioritize immediate sustenance over long-term environmental sustainability.

In many cases, poverty is accompanied by limited education and awareness about environmental issues. Without understanding the long-term consequences of their actions on the environment, impoverished communities may engage in environmentally harmful practices out of necessity or ignorance, perpetuating a cycle of environmental degradation.

As Omotor (2000) rightly puts it, “The environment is the totality of all the factors and circumstances that surround, influence and direct the growth of individual beings, species, and communities”. The ways humans interact with the environment determine how friendly and beneficial the environment will be to them. The connection between poverty and environmental degradation is rather complex and multifaceted. Poverty often leads to unsustainable resource use as people prioritize immediate survival over long-term environmental concerns. There is little or no measurement or restriction on how to utilize the earth’s resources. This can result in deforestation, overfishing, pollution, and other forms of environmental degradation. Conversely, environmental degradation can exacerbate poverty by reducing access to clean water, fertile land, and other natural resources essential for livelihoods.

The environment-poverty nexus is a two-way relationship that affects each other. From careful observation, the environment affects poverty situations among individuals in three distinct ways: By providing sources of livelihood to poor people, by affecting their health, and by influencing their vulnerability. On the other hand, poverty affects the environment by forcing people to degrade the environment, by encouraging countries to promote economic growth at the expense of the environment, by inducing societies to downgrade environmental concerns, and by failing to channel resources to address such concerns. If humanity is ever going to live harmoniously with nature, proper and adequate concern should be placed on actions that pose a threat to environmental sustainability.

It seems humanity has not fully grasped that nature gives back to humans what humans give to it. In other words, whatever act we individually or collectively carry out on Mother Earth, she pays

back to us in a similar kind. Breaking this cycle requires addressing both poverty and environmental sustainability simultaneously through policies that promote economic development while conserving natural resources.

Steps to Combating Environmental Degradation

Combating environmental degradation would require a multifaceted approach involving different strategies at different levels. In the first instance, there should be a promotion of environmental education and awareness-raising campaigns that would serve to increase understanding of environmental issues and their impacts. This includes educating individuals, communities, businesses, and policymakers about sustainable practices and the importance of conservation.

Again, we must develop and enforce environmental policies and regulations at local, national, and international levels. These policies should address key environmental challenges such as pollution, deforestation, habitat destruction, and climate change as well as implement mechanisms for monitoring and enforcing compliance with environmental laws.

There must also be actions aimed towards protecting and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity through conservation measures such as establishing protected areas, wildlife reserves, and marine sanctuaries. Implement habitat restoration projects to rehabilitate degraded ecosystems and enhance their resilience to environmental stresses.

Individually and collectively, humans must encourage themselves and businesses to adopt environmentally friendly behaviours and practices in their daily lives and operations. Humans must promote a culture of recycling, waste reduction, energy conservation, sustainable transportation, and responsible consumption patterns to minimize ecological footprints.

By implementing these steps comprehensively and collaboratively, societies can effectively combat environmental degradation and work towards a more sustainable and resilient future for all.

Conclusion

We often speak of economic poverty as being a major factor affecting the health of the environment. But one must not forget that sometimes our actions or inactions put us in the gruesome arms of poverty; and since humans must exist and survive in the environment, it is pertinent that humans make judicious use of the resources within the environment. Humans must possess a positive mentality and think ecologically about the environment. This ecological way of thinking about the environment is not a herculean task meant to prevent the human race from reaping the fruits of nature. Rather, it is an ethical consideration of the obligations of mankind as he/she interrelates with nature. It shows the need for a symbiotic human-environment interaction and awareness that the environment and the resources therein should be valued logically.

Environmental ethics emphasizes the moral responsibility of individuals and societies to protect and preserve the environment for present and future generations. Mental poverty, rooted in a lack of awareness, education, and ethical consciousness, can lead to apathy, indifference, and neglect towards environmental concerns, undermining efforts to promote responsible stewardship of natural resources. Addressing mental poverty is therefore essential for fostering a culture of environmental ethics and promoting sustainable development. By promoting education, awareness, and empowerment, societies can empower individuals to understand, appreciate, and uphold ethical principles that promote environmental conservation, justice, and stewardship. By promoting environmental ethics, human beings, as moral agents, contribute to addressing mental poverty by fostering a sense of purpose, responsibility, and connectedness to the natural world, leading to more sustainable and equitable societies.

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THE CHTHONIC AND THE BIRTH OF NEW *TERRAPOLEIS*: COLLABORATIVE ECOJUSTICE IN N. K. JEMISIN'S *THE BROKEN EARTH* TRILOGY

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Abstract

This paper explores the existence of chthonic forces in N. K. Jemisin's *The Broken Earth* trilogy and how these chthonic forces and beings become agents of apocalyptic events. It employs posthumanist and ecocritical lenses in examining the story's portrayals of the debilitating effects of human interference and abuse of nature, the existence of chthonic monstrous others, and the trials of being 'Other'. It argues that the possibility of redeeming humanity's culpability in the Earth's destruction can only be possible via posthuman connections, ecojustice, and collaborations across racial, class, and interspecies lines leading to the establishment of new iterations of terrapoleis of existence. The paper also explores the ramifications of these new modes of existence on the emergence and the possibility of ecojustice in a new Earth.

The paper begins by exploring how Jemisin positions and identifies the inhabitants of the Chthonic as posthuman identities and how the politics of a manufactured signification and 'othering' of racial categories and minorities establishes and maintains anthropocentric superiority and dominance. It also examines the literary illustration of the 'Gaia hypothesis' and its implications in the literary portrayals and understanding of chthonic forces and beings. The paper concludes that the interconnections and interrelationships between the earth as a sentient, conscious being and other species living within and above its surfaces can lead to a more beneficial, sustainable, and ecologically just society.

Keywords: Chthonic, terrapoleis, ecojustice, Jemisin, Broken Earth, trilogy

Introduction

The events in Jemisin's *The Broken Earth* trilogy are set on a future Earth on a singularly massive continent called the "Stillness". The lone continent is beset by periodic apocalyptic disasters known as Seasons that last for generations and lead to constant and significant changes in the world and its inhabitants. Survivors constantly huddle into Comms which are protected communities to wait out the destruction, then crawl out to try rebuilding a constantly dwindling civilization before the next event. The inhabitants range from "Stone eaters" who are the remnants of an advanced civilization that persist throughout the destruction, to Obelisks; giant, crystals with incredible powers to the survivors of humanity called "orogenes," who can manipulate the Earth via the exertion of incredible magical power and a sentient powerful force known as "Father Earth". The orogenes are marginalized and shunned despite their invaluable ability to stabilize the earth and are often singled out for death from Stills, their non-magical counterparts. *The Obelisk gate* is the second book in the trilogy while *The stone sky* is the final book.

The Broken Earth Trilogy

N. K. Jemisin explores posthuman subjectivity by writing from the point of view of chthonic beings and forces. Her disruptive writing, filled with other-than-human thinking, reasoning, and agency pushes readers out of their anthropocentric comfort zones into the chaotic, cyclic, and often apocalyptic world of forces that constantly make and are remade themselves in a never-ending cycle of destruction and rebirth. N. K. Jemisin took the SF world by storm when in 2018 she broke existing records by being the first writer in the history of the Hugo Award to win Best Novel; three years in a row. One amazing fact was that all three consecutive awards were won by a single continuous story which she divided into three parts. This story was *The Broken Earth* trilogy and it ushered in a new era in SF history. What was it that made this story and her writing so captivating? Some critics have attributed its success to Jemisin's awe-inspiring ability to build new and alien worlds to the type of world-building previously seen in SF writing (Ingwersen, 2019). Some insist that it is the strange experimental way in which she writes her character's voices (Walter, 2019) and for others, like Iles (2019), it is her unique approach to social and ecological justice which tries to include some often ignored voices like that of the 'earth' itself.

Jemisin's novels narratively empower black female characters and other marginalized groups which are often ignored or underwritten in traditional SF. Her writing, especially *The Broken Earth* trilogy has been tentatively categorized as an iteration of ecocriticism and the New Weird SF by critics such as Ingwersen (2019) because "the planetary estrangements she depicts lend themselves to an ecocritical reading that may supplement and challenge recent receptions of both weird fiction and the Anthropocene" (p. 75). Jemisin's engagement with the environment reflects contemporary anxieties about climate change and the dangers of chthonic and planetary agency which manifests itself in counter-attacks and retaliations against anthropocentric destruction of the environment. In a critical exploration of the latent agency of chthonic forces, Haraway (2016) turns to the Greek mythology of the gorgons. The gorgons were chthonic females who were betrayed by their astral Titan relatives and condemned to live wretchedly vindictive lives defending themselves from humans who constantly hunted them for annihilation. Haraway employs the gorgon myth as a literary example of humanity's inability or unwillingness to understand or engage with chthonic others in mutually beneficial terms leading to usually devastating results. In a profoundly ironic take to the ubiquitously long-suffering myth, she muses over how; "The Gorgons turned men who looked into their living, venomous, snake-encrusted faces into stone" and wonders "what might have happened if those men had known how to politely greet the dreadful chthonic ones" (p. 54)?

The 'Chthonic' in literary, mythological, and scientific contexts, signifies the collective existence of the infernal, earthbound creatures and forces that inhabit and regulate the Earth's subterranean surfaces. According to Haraway (2016), "the Greek *chthonios* means 'of, in, or under the earth and the seas'" (p. 53). Chthonic creatures and forces of the earth have undergone many stages of perceptions and reception throughout the history of humanity (Haraway, 2016, p. 71; Coupe, 1997, p. 71; Ruse, 2013, p. 141). Chthonic or earthbound beings represent in mythological and fictional accounts, the primitive earthly creatures and forces of "Terra" or "Gaia" in contrast with the Astral or the sky-bound civilizations that have characterized the anthropocentric reign of humanity. Often considered dangerous and mysterious, these denizens of the dark earthly spaces along with their respective cosmologies and manifestations are presumed to defy reason and rationality and therefore beyond human ability for mutual cognizance. They instead simply became the source of humanity's internalized horror of the 'dark other', especially in Western philosophies (Cixous, 1976, p. 878). Chthonic others are not regarded as sharing parity with the Western astral "Homo" at least not in

Western configurations. They are considered as the lesser members of the hierarchical binary because, as Haraway points out, to Western understanding, chthonic ones show a seeming marked lack of ideology, are primal and irrational; constantly remaking and being unmade themselves (2016b, p. 2). Some non-western cosmologies do not share the same denigrating view of the Chthonic, however. For many writers of chthonic narratives like Jemisin, these very other-than-human qualities not only follow reasoning and worldviews that may be strange, illogical, and obscure to normative human sensibilities but like many marginalized categories, are worthy of representation in their own right.

In *The Broken Earth*, the main chthonic force, “Father Earth,” like the Greek gorgons, also turned some humans into ‘living’ stone. In this fictional version, however, it quickly becomes obvious that the chthonic force is coerced into doing so in a desperate bid to generate empathy from humanity; an emotion which is often sorely lacking in a selfishly anthropocentric world. This emotional and philosophical anthropocentrism which emphasised only the importance of humanity and its selfish ends gave rise to the destructive activities of humanity in a broad period increasingly referred to by scholars as the ‘Anthropocene’.

The “Anthropocene” is a proposed name by meteorologist Paul J. Crutzen to announce and describe a new geohistorical epoch in which humans began to affect the Earth’s climate and ecosystems, especially in widespread and often negative ways. Narratives before and during this unofficial period are heavily proliferated with accounts of earthbound forces and creatures which have inspired various reactions from humanity’s forbears and later contemporary civilized sensibilities, ranging from disgust to reverence; from a conscious respect for beneficial connections and inter-dependence; to sometimes unethical manipulations. Conversely regarded as gods or monsters or as contemporary materialist chthonic life forms, these earthbound forces and beings have had a presence that was only overshadowed by the astral non-materialist ideologies of the anthropocentric age of humanity. Informed by religion, especially the monotheistic ones, the creeping, slithering, digging, monstrous, many-tentacled and multiple-limbed denizens of the Earth or the subterranean underworld lost their terrible appeal and became instead, the shunned icons of evil and remnants of a more reprehensible, savage and darker past best forgotten or at least buried in the unearthed annals of the past (Coupe, 1997, p. 69-71).

Science fiction with its tendency towards the alien, the fantastic, and the uncanny, has traditionally been a site for the proliferation and portrayal of chthonic influences especially in negative ways. Contemporarily, a resurgence in ecocritical and posthumanist inclusivity for all of earth's inhabitants which repositions the human as no longer the central figure of existence but just one of many equally important elements has led to the possibilities of new "Terrapoleis"; variations of new earth(s) societies whose diverse citizens interact in deeper, much more interconnected ways than that contemporarily found in the Anthropocene. In a bid to record the tentative beginnings of an imagined ecologically egalitarian and inclusive future in which all of earth's inhabitants exist in much more harmonious interactions than what is presently obtainable, some scholars, scientists, and geohistorians have designated this futuristic and optimistic epoch, the 'Chthulucene'.

The word Chthulucene, coined from the Greek words *Khthom* (earthly) and *Kainos* (new) by Donna Haraway in her book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, (2016) describes an epoch signaling a return to the earth; not the traditional 'mother earth' whose nurturing benevolence we often take for granted, but an earth which while retaining its maternal and nurturing peculiarities, still contains and hides sinister forces under its surfaces which can and will collectively bring about an end to the arrogant excesses of the Anthropocene. She further describes the connection of the Chthonic past and present entities with the contemporary insurgence of "the webs of speculative fabulation, speculative feminism, Science fiction, and scientific fact" (p. 105). These entities often only fully realized in fictional representations are usually envisioned as tentacled and multi-stringed, endlessly forming connections, breaking apart and reconfiguring themselves in ways similar to Deleuze & Guattari (1987) rhizomatic branching model. The chthonic inhabitants of the chthulucene differ markedly from the anthropocentric fantasies of most traditional SF writers and according to Haraway, could not have been imagined by even H. P. Lovecraft, the famous Horror/SF author of *The Call of Cthulhu* and creator of the Chthulhu Mythos. Unlike Lovecraft's famous horrific literary creation, "Chtulhu"; chthonic creatures according to Haraway, "were terrible only in the patriarchal mode" (p. 174). These entities of the chthulucene as imagined in these emergent narratives, are very different from his "misogynist racial nightmare monster" but are named and conceived after "diverse earth wide tentacular powers and forces and collected things" (p. 101).

For Haraway the 'Chthulucene', is "neither sacred nor secular" but a harbinger of new and less destructive modes of existence for chthonic beings whose existence is currently "...at stake now" (p. 55). It is a gradual process of remaking the world through the activation of the chthonic forces; in a slow but sure process of composting (degradation) of the wanton waste of the Anthropocene. It also symbolizes the earth's resistance against humanity's centuries-long genocides, "speciecidess" and violent "extremism" which became even more prevalent in the contemporary geo-historic period of the Capitalocene (p. 36). In the chthulucene, connections are made and remade, generating entirely new relationships between humans and other actants in the natural environment; in essence, leading to a new Earth and new realities. This idea of a new terrapolis is often fictional and speculative. It is mostly a product of literary fabulation which exists mostly in fictional imaginations instead of scientific fact but like all posthuman becoming, it is constantly in the process of arriving. It is a futuristic "n-dimension", "a niche space"... for companion species and unexpected companionships, a fantastical world of storytelling "in which multi-specied players are enmeshed in partial and flawed translations across distance" (p. 10).

These fictional, projected multispecies connections which are used to mark the new materiality of the Earth are designated as an oddkinship by Haraway. Different from established biological kinships, these connections which cross the dividing lines between species and physical laws, hint at the arrival of posthuman beings. Going further, beyond the banality of the "posthuman" and other fantastic and chimeric genealogical and biogenetic family relationships, oddkin are unexpected collaborations and combinations. They are a "kind of material semiotics" that is always "situated someplace and not noplacess, entangled and worldly" (p. 4). These entanglements generate new ways of interacting with nature, interspecies realizations, and new ways of envisioning possibilities away from the ever-looming apocalyptic disaster and collapse which frequently characterize narratives about the anthropocentric destruction of planet Earth.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs Posthumanism as its theoretical framework. In its various iterations, Posthumanism as a philosophy and practice inclusively examines subjectivities that are not only often ignored and excluded by Western humanism, but could also be said to exist within or even outside the fringes of anthropocentric society by virtue of some genetic, cultural, technological

and even virtual markers. As a philosophy, it seeks to include a wide often bewildering range of persons within the accepted categories of the 'Human' (Gladden, 2018, p. 52). Essentially, the most important or overriding task for posthumanism as a critical discourse;

...is reflection on how the effects on and of contemporary techno-culture and biotechnology force through a rethinking of the integrities and the identities of the human: not forgetting, either, those of its non-human others, many of them of humanity's own making and remaking – gods, monsters, animals, machines, systems (Callus and Herbrechter, 2012, p. 241).

Posthumanism like many other contemporary criticisms which share the same prefix of 'post-', according to Ferrando (2013), is not only generated from postmodernism but also shares its "critique of objective knowledge and absolute truth"(p. 181). It is a mutable, dynamic and constantly shifting methodology which like postmodernism and other contemporary 'posts,' is a questioning of the basic tenets of traditional Western 'Humanism' and its anthropocentric principles.

The intersections of almost all aspects of human life have led to the questioning and revisions of all hitherto absolute 'truths' and certainties. Unlike postmodernist-generated anti-humanism, which posited itself against various aspects of traditional Humanism, posthumanism generally does not necessarily position itself against every tenet of Humanism but instead decries the often inflexible nature of humanist categorizations and concerns and "offers a revisitation of the being as 'transcendent immanence', disrupting one of the founding splits of Western thought....which traditionally relates to every other traditional dualism"(Ferrando, 2012, p.11). Thus it interrogates the often oppressive hierarchical ordering of life and traditional humanist dualisms and binaries such as "mind/body, subject/object, self/other, male/female, human/animal-alien-robot" by calling for more inclusive definitions and a greater moral/ethical response and responsibility to life in general; thereby discouraging indiscriminate exploitation and the subsequent eradication of life forms. This inclusive critical posthumanist thought "is often perceived as providing entangled networks of pluralities that are post-racial and post-gender" (Rahn, 2019, p. 83). Posthumanism undertakes an essential departure from established Humanist models of categorization and engagement with a world that has essentially been a reflection of the ideals of the Western European Enlightenment.

Posthumanism as a philosophy insists that the contemporary discoveries and re-discoveries of ancient myths, entities, and forces (Oziewicz, 2016) have necessitated a re-visitation of the insistence on reason, intelligence, and agency as the essential bases of global privilege. The Enlightenment scholars held the rather narrow view that the faculties of reasoning, intelligence, and even the ability to feel pain were a preserve of the human being; a distinguishing characteristic which they assumed was denied or limited for non-humans, animals for example. The scientific revolution heralded by the mechanistic worldview of Rene Descartes insisted on the superiority of the human mind (identity) to all 'others' generated from his famous dictum "ego cogito ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am). For Descartes, the ability to think was tied to the acquisition of an identity, a trait which included even the ability to feel pain and emotions, something which he and later scientists and philosophers denied to those they blindly and prematurely assumed was devoid of this all-important ability (Capra, 1975, pp. 41-48).

Posthumanism like other modern philosophies, seeks to come to terms with recent discoveries that collaborate with ancient mythological narratives that insist on the deep physiological and psychological interrelationships between humans, metamorphosed humans, and non-humans. It explores the possibilities of new and existing identities that escape the rigid categories that divide humans from all others by emphasizing the hybrid and concatenated nature of human existence itself. It also emphasizes the inability of humanity to ever truly separate itself from those different 'others' it constantly seeks to push out of its exclusivist understanding of the self. These new subjectivities/identities commonly referred to as 'posthuman' are therefore persons (human, non-human, ahuman, entities, beings, etc.) which exist in states which can be considered as being beyond human. The recognition of the posthuman subject in contemporary times opens up a myriad of questions about the qualities which have been hitherto exclusively ascribed to humans alone.

Posthumanism as a general methodology and approach is therefore explained by Ferrando (2013);

...an onto-epistemological approach, as well as an ethical one, generated as a philosophy of mediation which discharges any confrontational dualisms, as well as any hierarchical legacies. Historically, the posthuman can be seen as the philosophical approach which suits the informal geological time of anthropocene.....while the posthuman focuses on decentring the human from

the centre of the discourse, the anthropocene marks the extent of the impact of human activities on a planetary level, and so it stresses the urgency for humans to become aware of pertaining to an ecosystem which when damaged, negatively affects the human condition as well (p. 23).

Braidotti, a prominent posthumanist critic, on her part, examines the emergent rise of various forms of critical posthumanisms in contemporary times as critiques of the Western anthropocentric model through the multivalent lenses of Race, Class, post-colonial, feminist, Ecological/environmental, technological and even spiritual concerns. All these conflate into an uneasy recognition of how groups and individuals are considered and treated as being 'sub-human', inhuman, or non-human and therefore embodying the humanist justification for their exclusion from human societies; their indeterminable positions outside anthropocentric societal hierarchies, dehumanizing marginalization and exploitative subservience to those considered superior in their respective societies.

The 'Gaia Hypothesis and its implications for literary representations of chthonic consciousness

The 'Gaia hypothesis' is a speculative hypothesis propounded by British environmentalist James Lovelock and other ecocritical scientists who in contemporary times are increasingly turning towards the view that the Earth is a living "organism" with an agency of its own, "a self-regulating system" able to act and affect intended outcomes in the face of provocative conditions (Lovelock, 2000, p. 253-254). The 'Gaia hypothesis' according to Ruse, owes its coinage to the novelist William Golding, author of the *Lord of the Flies*, who as a good friend of Lovelock, got so enamored with the theory of the earth as a living organism that he suggested the name of the Greek goddess of the earth 'Gaia' to designate this new hypothesis. Coupe (1997) considers the adoption of this name as a shrewd move by the scientist who himself was an avid reader of Science fiction because the Greek creation myth's namesake personally encompassed "both life and death, both maternal affection and violent revenge, both reward and punishment" all elements which the Earth embodies too (p. 201). This anthropomorphic view of the earth as not just inanimate matter that we inhabit and exploit endlessly and carelessly was however not popular among scientists at the time Lovelock began to publish his findings.

As more independent research and collaborations from other highly significant scholars such as the American geneticist Lynn Margulis and the ecopsychologist Theodore Roszak, the ‘Gaia hypothesis’ moved from a homeostatic to an autopoietic worldview (Onori & Visconti, 2012), and slowly began to garner recognition and support in western academia. This recognition had profound interdisciplinary implications. It also brought about a renewed focus on the exploitative activities in what some scholars refer to as the Holocene, Capitalocene, and Anthropocene epochs and their destructive impact on the earth. One of the implications of these new interrogations into the relationship between human activities in the past century and the current and future states of the Earth meant that scientists and philosophers could no longer apply simple dualistic Cartesian divisions between the mind (*res-cogitans*), and matter (*res-extensa*). Humanity became implicated in the fate of the earth and all which existed on and within it. There began a heightened understanding of our inability to separate ourselves from our environment.

According to Capra (1975), the “...‘Cartesian’ division (had earlier) allowed scientists to treat the matter as dead and completely separate from themselves, and to see the material world as a multitude of different objects assembled into a huge machine” (p. 7). This had huge implications not only for science but also for philosophy and literary productions which told stories mostly from the point of view of humanity as a superior force that had the moral justification to exploit what it could of the earth to satisfy its incessant wants and ambitions. The rights of the earth had little to no literary or ethical considerations because humanity was constantly encouraged to distance itself psychologically from primordial connections with a prehistoric Mother Earth. With the resurfacing of the Gaia hypothesis in contemporary Western thinking, some scholars, Roszak in particular, according to Onori and Visconti (2012), established the link between the human psyche and the planet and between the soul and the earth. This in essence gradually drew attention to the fact that the “anthropos” (humanity) cannot escape experiencing internally, the damage it wantonly inflicts on the earth and it inhabits.

Posthuman ethics informed by ‘material ecocriticism’ seeks to inform humanity and its pretensions of an exceptional essentialism that there can be “no neutrality in experiencing, knowing and telling” (Iovino, 2018, p. 114), the stories of our existence on earth since according to Barad (2003), “we are a part of that nature that we seek to understand” (p. 832). Writing nature and more specifically, the earth and our connections to it becomes an act of interpretation which according to Iovino, also serves

as an act of mediation between human and non-human components of nature (Earth) and between text and cognition.

Human activity is thereby understood as a complex and interconnected geography of subjects and forces. This understanding enables not only new posthuman ethics advocating less destructive behaviour but also encourages us...

To *read* bodies and landscapes as the storied embodiments of countless intra-acting agencies - pollutants, political choices, non/human creativities, and natural dynamics - might indeed reveal unexpected proximities that prompt us to redesign the maps of agency and responsibility, thus creating a deeper awareness in the matter of 'sustainability' (Iovino, 2018, p. 114).

There have been many speculative/Science fiction literary productions before the Gaia hypothesis that have shown the important relationship between the Earth and every creature or being that resides within or above its surface. SF which have dealt with representations of chthonic elements and the complex relationship humanity has with the earth is Jules Verne's *Journey to the centre of the Earth* (1864), Robert A. Heinlein's *Stranger in a strange land* (1961), *The call of Cthulhu* (1928) by H. P. Lovecraft, Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965), Lewis Carroll's *Alice adventures underground* (1865), Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Pellucidar* series (1915), Umberto Eco's *Foucault's pendulum* (1988), Jeanne Duprau's *The city of ember* (2003), *The Underland chronicles* (2003) by Suzanne Collins and others. While most of these stories treated the subterranean as a site populated by chthonic forces, monsters, and creatures, both humanoid and non-human; entangled in the manner of Haraway's conception of the Chthulucene, other Science fiction writers such as Isaac Asimov in *Foundation's edge* (1982), David Brin in *Earth* (1990), Orson Scott Card in *Lovelock* (1994), John Varley in *Titan* (1979), Piers Anthony in *Being a green mother* (1987) and to a much more intensive degree, N. K. Jemisin in *The broken Earth* trilogy deviated slightly by writing the earth based on earlier or post Lovelock's 'Gaia hypothesis' which saw the planet as a living conscious entity with limited to unlimited levels of agency.

Chthonic monstrosity: *Orogenes*, Stone eaters, and the trials of being 'Other'

In Greek mythology, the fact that Medusa, a Chthonic goddess, was more of a victim of the rape and tyranny of the astral titans is far less addressed than the more belaboured issue of her monstrosity.

Banished to a life of obscurity and exile, the gorgon is constantly hunted by so-called heroes whose main ambition is bragging rights for finally destroying her perceived threat. Like Gaia herself (the earth mother goddess of the Greeks), Medusa's rage at the men who seek to destroy her seems justifiable. At least, that is the impression that a reading of the persecution inflicted on the race of an oppressed and powerful category of people in Jemisin's chthonic story gives. The Orogenes and the 'stone eaters' in N. K. Jemisin's *The Broken Earth* trilogy are not much different from Father Earth in the treatment they get from by humans and in their reactions to mostly unfair and unjust exploitation, especially in the case of the orogenes. They exist outside of what Nayar (2009, p. 20) calls "the immunity paradigm", a process of exclusion of groups of people as "bare life (*zoē*)" outside a safer "political life (*bios*)". Their humanity is never truly established and they are therefore subjected to inhuman and often torturous existence as a result. The entire societal systems are designed to keep them in the non-human status to deny them the same rights as the privileged humans. Their monstrous nature which manifests in their ability to tune into the workings of the earth to manipulate and change its workings, while agreed to be an invaluable help in surviving the terrors inflicted by Father Earth, is still feared as destructive and dangerous. Their lives are treated as "*homosacers*", Giorgio Agamben's term for those "who are so outside the pale of the human that to kill them would not amount to murder" (Agamben cited in Nayar, 2009, p. 12). As in many human societies, the treatment meted out to the Orogenes in the Stillness is backed by Law and a mythic/religious cum historical record simply known as "Stonelore", which not only serves as a record of past seasons and civilizations but also as a guide to existence itself. In a conversation in the first novel in the trilogy, Syenite explains the danger-filled status of the Orogenes to the childlike but ancient Stone eater, Hoa, thus; "They kill us because they've got stonelore telling them at every turn that we're born evil—some kind of agents of Father Earth, monsters that barely qualify as human" (Jemisin, *The fifth season*, 2015).

Orogenes are sometimes born to human families who have no orogenic abilities themselves as in the case of the protagonist Syenite/Essun. Others, such as another important character Alabaster are born in the Fulcrum, an institution which was established by the present Sanzed Kingdom/civilization for the control and training of the Orogenes. The genetic difference between the Orogenes and the non-orogenic human population known as the "Stills" also ensures that they will never be treated like other

humans and in extreme cases are even considered non-human and monstrosities to justify many of the dehumanizing degradations they are forced to endure and even perpetuate on each other.

The Orogenes who were born in the Fulcrum are shown in the course of the story to be products of forced sexual couplings, (very similar to the forced reproductive couplings of slaves by their masters) for the sake of producing more Orogenes to be enslaved and exploited without any concern for the feelings and lives of all involved. The Fulcrum is both a symbol and an enforcer of the terrible injustices that are visited on the orogenes. Led by the Guardians, it “functions as the control institution of the orogenes” (Walter, 2019, *para.* 28). They train and use orogenes for the dangerous work of controlling the Earth’s convulsions, but the orogenes are not allowed any autonomy or rebellion. This control is enforced by brainwashed Fulcrum-trained higher-up orogenes and a specially trained deadly *force* known as the Guardians. These Guardians who have unclear origins hunt down renegade orogenes to serve as ‘node maintainers’ where inhumane surgeries are carried out on them. Like the disastrous lobotomies of the 1950s in our world, parts of the rebellious orogene’s brain that enable autonomous thought are removed. During surgery, the magic-wielding Sessepinae is preserved to enable a continuous mindless and automatic ‘sessing’ and response to the earth’s movements while being permanently attached to node chairs until their bodies waste away and they are no longer usable.

Critics consider how they are treated as similar to that of a slave class bred for use and exploitation by the ruling class (Walter, 2019; Iles, 2019, p. 8). The orogenes also relentlessly face the unconscionable challenge of existing with the non-magical population, known as the Stills who are very much afraid of the terrible powers of the orogenes. This fear persists even though they know that whatever hope they have of survival is dependent on the orogene ability to calm the earth’s convulsions such as the incessant earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, and other strange deadly ways Father Earth takes his revenge. Interestingly, Jemisin gives a logical justification for this fear. In the story itself, we are made privy to the fact that stories abound of very young orogenes who in moments of distress or anger manipulated the earth’s forces to protect themselves or get back on their attackers. Entire communities (known as comms) were wiped away in an instant with little time for those not even involved to flee the disaster. So in a way, the orogenes shared similar negative references with the “evil earth” which has ensured that humanity only barely survived in the most extreme of situations for countless millennia. These incidences in their turbulent history have left an indelibly inherited mark on the Stills’ collective psyche. Instinctive fear leads to unbelievable acts of

cruelty that culminates too frequently in family members and communities murdering very young children in horrible ways unless they are rescued by the Fulcrum or Guardians on time.

The orogenes are viewed and treated as monsters, ‘othered’ and excluded from society in the same way humanity has always reacted to “entities that hover in the liminal state between life and death” (Satkunanathan, 2019, p. 524). This liminality and the difference it implies, has impressed on the orogenes an internalisation of the derogation inflicted on them after generations of being treated as sub-human. This internalization, like that witnessed among African Americans, has made them adopt and even refer to themselves with the same derogatory epithet “rogga” used to separate and denigrate them by the supposedly superior and uncontaminated Stills. The terrible ill-treatment inflicted on them is justified by psychologically reinforcing denials of the orogene’s humanity. “That we are not human is the lie they tell themselves so they don’t have to have to feel bad about how they treat us” (Jemisin, *The fifth season*, 2015).

This dehumanization and the inevitable culmination of generations of abuse, causes the orogenes to rebel from time to time which is usually brutally and effectively squashed. This time though, one of them, Alabaster, who has managed to achieve the almost impossible honour of becoming a ten ringer, the highest achievement an orogene could achieve, has become brokenhearted after years of being forced to produce more genetically superior orogenes to be further enslaved by the system. After witnessing countless numbers of his offspring whom by Fulcrum law he is not allowed to bring up or even form any relationship with, destroyed and sentenced to serve as node maintainers, he begins to question his existence and just like Father Earth, plan for the destruction of the entire human civilization in the Stillness.

By the end of the story, during the turbulence and destruction of another fifth season which threatens to be the worst with the emergence of the earth-controlled Stone Eaters who have been deployed to carry out Father Earth’s final cleansing of humanity, the lives of humans and every living thing is dependent on the favours of a few orogenes and Stone Eaters. These renegade categories who have defied the collective vengeance of their fellows share the belief that humanity was not a completely lost cause despite the horrific treatment they had received from said humanity. Orogene mother, Syenite/Essun, and her similarly powerful daughter Nassun whose still father had murdered her brother, forced her and her mother into separation and exile and awakened a vicious hatred for humans

in his daughter's psyche, fight each other at the end of the story for the privilege of ensuring mankind's survival or destruction. Each is buttressed by righteous but opposing beliefs about the justifiable fate of humanity and the earth.

The chthonic, ecojustice, and the birth of new *terrapoleis* in *The Broken Earth* trilogy

In the sense in which Cixous (1979) describes the feminine text, Jemisin's *The Broken Earth* story is volcanic and eruptive in its subversion of contemporary anthropocentric, dominant, masculinist ideologies. It forces readers to come to terms with the possible self-defensive reactions of the dark, demonized, and subjugated other in the face of oppression and total annihilation. Yet, as Haraway (2016) exhorts, "If there is to be multispecies ecojustice, which can also embrace diverse human people, it is high time that feminists exercise leadership in imagination, theory, and action to unravel the ties of both genealogy and kin and species" (p. 102).

If this scenario in which an ecojustice encapsulating all forms of life on planet Earth should be realized, it would give birth to new "Terrapoleis" of existence; a collaboration of societies in which the rights of everyone do not destroy anyone. While for some critics, this is an unachievable fantasy born out of irrational views and ideologies, social justice warriors (as they are often derogatorily called), ecocritics, and posthumanist scholars have championed the realization of new modes of existence across categories which are quite alien to the dominant anthropocentric worldview even in contemporary times. For Jemisin and many other Science fiction and ecocritical writers and critics, it seems that such a call for an ecologically just world is increasingly non-negotiable if humanity is to have any chance of survival in a world where the marginalized are increasingly vocal and sapient and the shared earth is slowly dying due to unrestrained anthropocentric activities.

Jemisin's writing is disruptive. Her authorial presence is heavy and sustained and effectively gives life to the middle-aged main character in the story, Essun. Although Jemisin claims in an interview given to PBS News Hour in 2019 that she did not deliberately choose to write that way, the pathos and frustrations of being a middle-aged female in a world that desperately tries to contain and destroy powerful women from marginalized populations finds its voice powerfully through the Jemisin/Essun voiceover narration. Essun, and later on in the story, her lookalike daughter who shares the same powers as her mother, gradually become apocalyptic versus renewal/change agents who seriously although briefly contemplate the destruction of humanity and the collateral damage of every living

thing on the planet as viable solutions towards ending the brutal and sustained pain humanity had wantonly and irresponsibly inflicted on the weak.

Many Western anthropocentric SF writers have always advocated the fear of and thereby justified the domination of the dark, dangerous, and mysterious other; and have used racist ideologies and dehumanizing portraitures to justify their mistreatment and exclusion. Jemisin on the other hand, presents the depths of hidden worlds and their realities in ways superficial narratives like that of Lovecraft, Conrad, Burroughs, and Haggard could not. These dark, mysterious others who have a very intimate relationship with the chthonic and its dark, ever-active, and frightening mysteries do not indulge in ideology. They just are. They make and unmake their realities and in so doing, constantly transform the earth and the lives on it in ways that make anthropocentric ideologues very uncomfortable (Haraway, 2016).

The prevalent humanist ideological indifference to human culpability in the face of earth-wide catastrophes like genocides, climate change, and multispecies extinction is indicted when such dark, chthonic others are faced with total annihilation. Like all living, sentient, and sapient beings, there is the understanding that life itself is a sacred, non-negotiable right. Even a constantly self-renewing earth that endlessly experiences the cycles of death and rebirth will not tamely accept a future where it can no longer renew itself, where death is total and inescapable. This is even more true of intelligent humans however marginalized and subjugated they may be.

This undeniable impulse for life even in the most abject servile beings is seen in the travails of the main character Essun. Essun is a middle-aged woman past her prime, suffering marginalization from multiple intersecting points of her existence. An aging female in a world where femininity is valued primarily for the ability to reproduce offspring in a constantly dwindling human population, an orogene in a world where people like her are treated worse than all others, and a runaway from the Fulcrum and the monstrosly malevolent Guardians who tirelessly track her from place to place; life to assumed life. She is also a mother whose son was brutally murdered by his father for his childish display of orogeny; an orogene who has to bear the company of a strange stone-bodied humanoid creature who latches on to her for its enigmatic ends and a woman who slowly realizes along the course of the story that she possesses great power which could decide the fate of an entire world.

Despite the often negative implications of her experiences, these same experiences are shown to bear upon Essun's final decision to save humanity and all life by symbolically birthing a new world, a new terrapolis where all life is sacred. Just like the Syl Anagists believe, she comes to understand that life is precious but unlike their strange dominant anthropocentric attitude towards how all life should always exist in servitude to humanity's wants and desires, Essun's travails as one of the marginalized enables her to understand life from multiple points of view. This posthuman hybridity which connects her to human and non-human modes of existence, her experiences with different types of creatures and even those who identified as human, is a pivotal reason in the story towards birthing a better world out of the terrible mess of the old. She realizes that ecojustice is the best way to end the collective misery of life in the Stillness.

As Jemisin gradually leads readers through the debilitating effects of the fifth seasons on most 'comms' in the entire storyline, one comes to the rather inescapable realization as Illes (2019) explains, that human survival is only possible through "comm-building, rather than by competition and exploitation" (p. 7). This model of collaboration and reparation instead of competition, marginalization, and exploitation which has been the hallmark of the Anthropocene is shown to be the logical way out of the inevitable trajectory of destruction humanity has embarked upon in modern times.

Conclusion

This paper examined the representation of posthuman characters derived from various chthonic actants (both material and animist) whose indeterminate categorization within the humanist hierarchies has ensured their existence on the fringes of human society and subsequent socio-political marginalization in Jemisin's *The Broken Earth* trilogy. It began by positioning and identifying the inhabitants of the Chthonic as posthuman identities and how the politics of a manufactured signification and 'othering' of racial categories and minorities establishes and maintains anthropocentric superiority and dominance. It also examines the literary illustration of the 'Gaia hypothesis' and its implications in the understanding of chthonic forces and beings, especially the interconnections and interrelationships between the earth as a sentient, conscious being and other species living within and above its surfaces. It investigates the negative consequences of human exploitation and destruction of these earth forces, beings, and resources as portrayed in the story.

This paper also examines the existence of chthonic forces and the arcane as well as how these chthonic forces and beings become agents of the ‘Apocalypse’. The existence of chthonic monstrosity in N. K. Jemisin’s *The Broken Earth* trilogy and the trials of being ‘Other’ as well as the possibilities of redeeming Humanity via posthuman connections and the possibilities of emergent modes and terrapoleis of existence are also explored in this chapter while the ramifications of these new modes on the emergence and the possibility of ecojustice concludes the chapter.

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MORAL DILEMMAS IN KIDNAPPING FOR RANSOM IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: A CONSEQUENTIALIST AND DEONTOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Kidnapping for ransom, particularly prevalent in Northern Nigeria, poses a profound moral dilemma for families and society. Families must grapple with the difficult choice of paying ransoms to secure their loved ones' release, knowing that doing so perpetuates a cycle of crime, or refusing to pay, which may endanger the victim's life. This dilemma reflects the clash between consequentialist and deontological ethical perspectives. Consequentialism suggests that while paying the ransom may save a life immediately, it causes more harm in the long run by encouraging further kidnappings. Conversely, deontology posits that individuals must prioritize the lives of their loved ones, regardless of the broader societal consequences. The problem statement centers on the gap between short-term moral obligations to protect life and long-term societal harms resulting from perpetuating criminal activities. This research seeks to explore the ethical complexities of kidnapping for ransom through the lenses of consequentialist and deontological ethics, assessing how families navigate these moral conflicts. The methodology is primarily qualitative, involving philosophical analysis and case studies of kidnapping incidents in Nigeria. Data will include interviews with affected families, security experts, and community leaders, alongside a review of existing literature on ransom policies and criminal justice approaches. The expected outcomes include a deeper understanding of the moral frameworks guiding families' decisions and the development of a conceptual model to reconcile personal and societal ethical obligations. The research aims to contribute to the philosophical discourse on moral dilemmas and inform policy decisions regarding ransom payment strategies in Nigeria.

Keywords: Kidnapping, consequentialism, deontology, moral dilemma, ransom, Nigeria.

Introduction

Kidnapping for ransom has become a major security challenge in Nigeria, particularly in the northern regions. Over the past decade, the rise in criminal activity related to kidnapping has led to significant social, economic, and psychological consequences. Criminal groups and insurgents have turned to kidnapping as a lucrative business, often targeting vulnerable individuals, travelers, and even school children. This alarming trend has led to increased fear and instability in the affected communities (Okoli & Agada, 2014). The complexity of the situation is further compounded by the involvement of multiple actors, including politically motivated groups, bandits, and local criminals (Onuoha, 2018).

This criminal phenomenon poses a moral dilemma for families and communities. On one hand, paying ransom can ensure the immediate safety of loved ones. On the other hand, it perpetuates the cycle of crime, funding further kidnappings and undermining societal stability. Many families, driven by desperation, opt to pay the ransom, but in doing so, they contribute to the sustainability of this criminal industry (Omale, 2020). The ethical implications of these decisions are significant, raising questions about personal and societal responsibility in the face of organized crime.

As kidnapping for ransom continues to threaten national security, it is crucial to examine the moral conflicts that arise from the dilemma of paying ransom. Analyzing these dilemmas through consequentialist and deontological ethical lenses provides a deeper understanding of the choices families must make, while also informing public policy on the ethics of ransom payment (Nwankwo & Okolie-Osemene, 2019). Kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria presents a profound moral dilemma for families of victims. When faced with the prospect of losing a loved one, many families must grapple with the difficult choice of whether to pay the ransom demanded by kidnappers. On the one hand, paying the ransom often ensures the immediate survival and release of the victim, providing short-term relief to families who are desperate to save their loved ones (Okoli & Agada, 2014). On the other hand, this act perpetuates a vicious cycle of criminal activity, as ransom payments incentivize further kidnappings, enabling criminal groups to expand their operations and endanger more lives in the future (Omale, 2020).

This moral conflict embodies the tension between short-term survival and long-term societal harm. While families may feel compelled to pay ransom to safeguard their loved ones, they also contribute to a system that destabilizes the nation's security and fosters lawlessness (Onuoha, 2018). The ethical implications of this decision are multifaceted: on one side, there is the deontological duty to protect family members, while on the other, there are consequentialist concerns about the broader societal impact of ransom payments (Nwankwo & Okolie-Osemene, 2019). This study seeks to explore the ethical dimensions of these decisions, offering a philosophical analysis of the moral trade-offs involved.

What are the ethical implications of paying ransom to kidnappers? The act of paying ransom involves complex moral considerations. On one hand, it fulfills a family's immediate obligation to protect and preserve the life of a loved one. However, the payment simultaneously fuels a criminal economy, perpetuates violence, and undermines societal security in the long term (Okoli & Agada, 2014). This question explores the ethical consequences of ransom payments from both consequentialist and deontological perspectives, examining whether the short-term benefit of saving a life justifies the broader societal harm caused by funding criminal activities (Nwankwo & Okolie-Osemene, 2019). How do families navigate this moral conflict? Faced with the dilemma of paying ransom, families must make difficult decisions that balance their emotional, moral, and practical concerns. This question seeks to understand how families in Nigeria, especially in the northern regions where kidnapping is prevalent, navigate the tension between protecting their loved ones and contributing to criminality. It also examines how cultural, religious, and social factors influence these decisions and the strategies families employ in responding to kidnappers' demands (Onuoha, 2018).

The objective of this study is to explore the ethical frameworks guiding decisions in kidnapping for ransom-cases. This study aims to delve into the philosophical and ethical principles, particularly consequentialism and deontology, that influence how families and society respond to kidnappings for ransom. By analyzing the moral trade-offs between paying ransom to save a life versus perpetuating crime, the study will explore how these ethical frameworks guide decision-making during ransom negotiations and their long-term effects on society (Nwankwo & Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Okoli & Agada, 2014). It is also to examine how these frameworks can inform policy and criminal justice. The study also seeks to investigate how the ethical analysis of

ransom payment decisions can inform criminal justice policy and law enforcement practices in Nigeria. The research will provide insights on how consequentialist and deontological approaches can shape strategies to combat kidnapping, from prevention to legal penalties while balancing human rights and societal well-being. This objective involves recommending policy reforms that reflect both ethical considerations and practical effectiveness in addressing kidnapping for ransom (Onuoha, 2018).

Ethical Theories and Moral Frameworks

There are two theories that the paper intends to examine. The first is Consequentialism. Consequentialism evaluates the morality of actions based on their outcomes. The core principle is that an action is morally right if it leads to the best overall consequences (Mill, 1863). In cases of kidnapping for ransom, consequentialist reasoning would focus on the long-term harm caused by paying ransom. While paying ransom may save the life of a loved one, it also encourages kidnappers to continue their criminal activities, perpetuating violence and insecurity in society (Nwankwo & Okolie-Osemene, 2019). Philosophers like Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill argue for the greatest happiness principle, where moral actions are those that maximize overall well-being. In this case, refusing to pay ransom may prevent future harm, even if it involves a short-term personal loss (Bentham, 1789; Mill, 1863).

The second ethical framework that the paper discusses is deontological ethics. Deontological ethics focuses on the morality of actions themselves, rather than their consequences. According to Immanuel Kant, moral actions are guided by duty and adherence to universal moral laws, regardless of outcomes (Kant, 1785). From a deontological perspective, the moral duty to protect one's loved ones may override concerns about the societal impact of paying ransom. Families might prioritize their duty to secure the immediate safety of the victim, considering it a moral obligation to save their lives (Onuoha, 2018). Kant's notion of duty emphasizes that some actions, like preserving life, are inherently right, regardless of their broader consequences. Thus, families may feel morally justified in paying ransom to fulfill their duty to protect their loved ones (Kant, 1785).

Incidents of Kidnapping for Ransom in Nigeria and Government Responses

Kidnapping for ransom has emerged as a major security challenge in Nigeria, particularly in the Northern regions. The practice became more prominent in the early 2000s, initially in the Niger Delta region, as a response to socio-political tensions and economic disenfranchisement. Over time, it spread to other parts of the country, especially Northern Nigeria, where armed groups have increasingly turned to kidnapping as a lucrative criminal activity (Onuoha, 2018).

The rise in kidnappings is linked to widespread poverty, unemployment, and political instability. Insurgent groups, such as Boko Haram, have also utilized kidnapping as a tool to fund their operations. Corruption and weak governance have further exacerbated the problem, making it difficult for security agencies to effectively combat the crisis (Adewale, 2020). Notable incidents include the kidnapping of school children from Chibok in 2014 and Dapchi in 2018, where large numbers of girls were abducted by insurgents. These cases drew international attention but also highlighted the vulnerability of civilians, particularly in conflict-affected areas (Duru, 2019). Families often face financial ruin as they struggle to meet ransom demands. Moreover, the psychological trauma experienced by victims and their families has long-term implications. Kidnapping also undermines community trust and social cohesion, leaving lasting scars on the affected regions (Umar, 2021).

In April 2021, armed bandits kidnapped 20 students from Greenfield University in Kaduna State, Northern Nigeria. The kidnappers demanded a ransom of ₦800 million (approximately \$2 million) for their release. Despite negotiations, five students were killed while in captivity. After several weeks, the remaining students were released, reportedly after a ransom was paid, though the amount remains undisclosed. This case highlighted the increasing frequency of kidnappings at educational institutions and the failure of security forces to prevent such attacks (Ogunmade, 2021). The incident deepened the sense of insecurity in the region and led to the temporary closure of several schools in Northern Nigeria. Families suffered both financially and emotionally, and many parents felt forced to pay the ransom, fearing the same fate as those who lost their children.

In July 2021, over 100 students were kidnapped from Bethel Baptist High School in Kaduna State. The bandits demanded a large ransom for their release. Despite government attempts to address the situation, negotiations dragged on for weeks, with students being released in batches

after the payment of ransoms. By September 2021, all remaining students had been freed, reportedly after collective ransoms totaling millions of naira were paid by parents and the school authorities (Sahara Reporters, 2021). The kidnapping sparked outrage across the country, with widespread criticism of the government's inability to secure schools. The case also reignited debates about the moral dilemma families face in paying ransom and the government's stance of not officially negotiating with kidnappers, despite reports of ransom payments being made.

In February 2021, armed men raided Government Science College in Kagara, Niger State, abducting 42 people, including 27 students. The bandits demanded ransom and negotiations ensued. The students and staff were eventually released after an undisclosed ransom was allegedly paid. This incident followed closely on the heels of other mass abductions in the region, such as the Kankara school kidnapping, demonstrating a growing trend of targeting schools (Sambo, 2022). The Kagara kidnapping further intensified fears of sending children to school in the Northern regions. It also emphasized the failure of security forces to protect vulnerable populations and led to calls for better government strategies to handle insecurity in rural areas.

The government has responded in different ways to kidnappings in Nigeria. The Nigerian government has adopted various measures, including military interventions, negotiations, and legislative reforms, to curb kidnapping. However, the effectiveness of these strategies has been limited by systemic issues such as corruption and inadequate resources (Onuoha, 2018). Security agencies face logistical challenges, such as limited personnel and technology, in addressing the vastness of rural areas where kidnappers often operate. Additionally, inadequate coordination between government institutions and communities further hampers the effectiveness of anti-kidnapping policies (Adewale, 2020).

Way Forward in Curbing Kidnapping

Cultural relativism suggests that moral values and ethics are shaped by local customs and traditions. In Nigeria, responses to kidnapping for ransom are often influenced by communal values, family loyalty, and social expectations. In many communities, there is immense social pressure on families to secure the release of kidnapped loved ones, even if it means paying the ransom, as family unity and protection are paramount in Nigerian culture (Igwe, 2019).

Additionally, local customs may prioritize the immediate safety of an individual over broader societal concerns, creating tension between personal and public interests in kidnapping situations.

In contrast, ethical universalism posits that certain moral principles, such as the rejection of criminal activity and the protection of human rights, apply across all cultures. From this perspective, kidnapping for ransom violates universal ethical standards, as it infringes on fundamental human rights, regardless of cultural context (Afolayan & Ikuenobe, 2020). Ethical universalism advocates for policies that discourage ransom payments to protect broader societal welfare, even if it conflicts with localized cultural practices. Reconciling these cultural traditions with global ethical norms remains a challenge, especially in regions where family loyalty and community obligations often take precedence over long-term societal considerations.

To navigate the moral dilemmas posed by kidnapping for ransom, a conceptual framework is necessary to balance conflicting ethical obligations. This framework would integrate both deontological and consequentialist perspectives, allowing policymakers to consider immediate moral duties—such as protecting life—while also addressing the long-term societal harms perpetuated by ransom payments (Okoye, 2022). This balance could inform new policies that recognize the moral complexities involved, ensuring that decisions prioritize both individual rights and broader societal stability.

Effective policy must also involve comprehensive reform of the criminal justice system. National security strategies should be designed to align with moral obligations, such as protecting the public without encouraging criminal behavior. This includes addressing the root causes of kidnapping—such as poverty, inequality, and corruption—through targeted interventions like economic reforms, education, and anti-corruption policies (Ajayi, 2021). Policies should aim to dissuade families from paying ransom while ensuring the government provides adequate protection and recourse for victims.

International collaboration can help local governments navigate these ethical dilemmas by drawing on global best practices and standards. International organizations can provide frameworks to guide national responses to kidnapping for ransom, helping local policies align with universal human rights norms while respecting cultural contexts (Afolayan & Ikuenobe, 2020).

Collaborative efforts can enhance the capacity of governments to implement ethical, effective strategies that prevent future kidnappings.

Conclusion

The ethical complexity surrounding decisions related to kidnapping for ransom is profound, as families grapple with the moral dilemma of paying ransom to save loved ones while recognizing the potential for perpetuating a cycle of violence and criminality (Khamis & Ayuba, 2022). This analysis reveals the necessity of balancing individual moral duties, particularly the instinct to protect the family, with the broader societal impacts of such decisions. Ethical frameworks, including consequentialism and deontology, provide critical lenses through which these dilemmas can be examined, offering insights into the ramifications of ransom payments on both individual lives and the fabric of society (Okwori, 2021).

Future research should expand the study to encompass other forms of organized crime, such as human trafficking and drug-related offenses, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of moral dilemmas in various contexts (World Bank, 2020). Additionally, investigating the role of international law and ethics in local conflicts may yield valuable insights into how global standards can inform and guide ethical responses to kidnapping and other crimes, contributing to more effective policy formulation and implementation (Rachels & Rachels, 2019).

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INDIGENOUS ECO-ETHICS AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examines how indigenous eco-ethics can contribute to poverty reduction in Nigeria by promoting a deeper connection between environmental stewardship, community responsibility, and sustainable development practices. The methodology applied in this research work is philosophical analysis. This methodology compares traditional indigenous eco-ethical views and practices with modern environmental ethics, demonstrating how African values like communalism and stewardship are uniquely suited to protecting the environment while also promoting economic growth. The findings show that traditional methods, like crop rotation, managing water wisely, and protecting forests, not only help the environment but also reduce poverty by improving local food security and managing resources for sustainable development. These methods allow rural areas to build self-sufficient and balanced lives. The study highlights the need to include indigenous eco-ethical ideas in national policies, suggesting a mixed and balanced approach that respects traditional knowledge while incorporating modern technology. The conclusion states that indigenous eco-ethics could be an effective way to achieve both poverty reduction and environmental health in Nigeria, and it may also be a useful example for other countries with similar social and environmental problems. This research adds to the discussion about sustainable development by focusing on the ethical and cultural aspects necessary for creating fair and lasting poverty alleviation strategies.

Keywords: Indigenous, eco-ethics, poverty alleviation, environmental stewardship, sustainable development, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, faces a significant poverty crisis, with approximately 40% of its population living below the poverty line (World Bank, 2021, p. 23). This persistent poverty is exacerbated by environmental degradation, deforestation, and climate change, which disproportionately affect rural communities dependent on agriculture. The growing environmental crisis, including desertification in the north and flooding in the south, has further marginalized the poor, reducing their access to arable land, water, and other essential resources for survival (Nwoke, 2020, p. 102). In discussions on poverty alleviation, ethics play a crucial role in guiding sustainable development policies that emphasize long-term well-being rather than short-term gains. Ethical theories, particularly those rooted in indigenous knowledge systems, provide moral guidance for balancing human needs with environmental stewardship. Indigenous eco-ethics, as a system of knowledge and beliefs that promote harmony between humans and nature, offer an alternative model for sustainable development in Nigeria (Akinola, 2018, p. 64).

This paper argues that indigenous eco-ethics, with its focus on respect for nature and communal living, presents a viable pathway for addressing poverty in Nigeria. By drawing on traditional practices of environmental stewardship and sustainable resource management, indigenous eco-ethics can provide sustainable, community-driven solutions to poverty. Through understanding and integrating these ethical principles, Nigeria can address both environmental and economic challenges, ensuring the well-being of current and future generations. The methodology used in this study is grounded in the philosophical analysis of indigenous African ethical principles, particularly those that govern the relationship between humans and the environment. This approach involves a comparative analysis of indigenous eco-ethical frameworks and contemporary environmental ethics to highlight the unique contributions of indigenous knowledge to sustainable development. The study adopts a normative approach, examining how traditional African moral values, such as communalism, respect for nature, and stewardship, can be applied to modern challenges of poverty and environmental degradation (Gyekye, 1997, p. 72).

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the discourse on sustainable development and poverty alleviation in Africa. While much of the development literature focuses on economic and technological solutions, this paper emphasizes the importance of ethical and

cultural frameworks in shaping sustainable practices. By foregrounding indigenous eco-ethics, this study highlights the role of cultural values in addressing pressing issues of poverty and environmental degradation, offering insights that are often overlooked in mainstream development discussions. As scholars have noted, the failure to integrate ethical and cultural dimensions into development strategies can result in unsustainable practices that exacerbate poverty (Ifeanyi, 2021, p. 45). Therefore, this study is significant not only for its philosophical contributions but also for its practical implications in the realm of policy-making and poverty reduction. The objective of this paper is to explore how Indigenous ethical principles surrounding environmental stewardship can contribute to poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarifications

Indigenous Eco-Ethics: These refer to traditional ethical principles guiding human relationships with nature, these are values rooted in environmental stewardship, sustainability, and interconnectedness of man and nature. In Nigerian indigenous practices, indigenous eco-ethics involves “communal ownership, respect for nature, and intergenerational equity,” fostering a responsibility to preserve resources for future generations (Olupona, 2011, p. 153). This approach differs completely from individualistic and profit-driven environmental practices found in Western models (Ake, 1982, p. 77).

Poverty: The word poverty is simply explained as “a state of deprivation where individuals lack basic resources for a minimum standard of living,” impacting health, education, and economic opportunities (World Bank, 2021, p. 23). In Nigeria, marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by poverty due to limited economic access and environmental factors that worsen resource scarcity (Nwoke, 2020, p. 102).

Poverty Alleviation: simply refers to strategic efforts to reduce poverty through improving access to resources, economic opportunities, and sustainable practices. As Ifeanyi (2021) notes, “poverty alleviation is not only about income but also about enhancing people’s ability to sustain themselves” in a way that fosters long-term resilience and economic stability (p. 45). Sustainable resource management is central to poverty alleviation in Nigeria’s rural communities (Okeke, 2018, p. 156).

Environmental Ethics: Environmental ethics focuses on the moral obligations humans have toward nature, emphasizing values of “stewardship, sustainability, and intergenerational justice” (Rolston, 1988, p. 45). Light and Rolston (2003) highlight that environmental ethics “urges humans to consider the broader ecological consequences of their decisions,” promoting an ethical consciousness where the well-being of the environment is integral to human welfare (p. 217).

Philosophical Foundation of Eco-Ethics

Eco-ethics is an ethical structure that examines the moral responsibilities humans have in their interactions with the environment, the idea of eco-ethics is to advocate for respect, stewardship, and sustainability in resource use. Rolston (1988) posits that eco-ethics “focuses on the value of ecosystems, the need for balance, and the obligations humans have toward maintained the health of natural systems” (p. 45). This philosophical ideology suggests that human actions should not simply aim at satisfying immediate needs but should consider the long-term impacts on the environment. By emphasizing the ethical dimensions of our relationship with nature, eco-ethics promotes values such as ecological integrity and balance, urging humans to view themselves as integral members of the ecosystem (Light & Rolston, 2003, p. 217). The main idea treated in eco-ethics is the principle of interdependence, which highlights the mutual reliance between humans and the environment. This principle, articulated by Leopold (1949) in his "land ethic," suggests that humans are "not conquerors of the land community but plain members and citizens of it" (p. 204). According to this view, our well-being is inextricably linked to the health of the environment, making it morally necessary to protect natural resources not only for current needs but also for future generations. Eco-ethics, therefore, places a strong emphasis on intergenerational equity, the idea that we must preserve ecological health for those who come after us (Murove, 2009, p. 212). In addition to interdependence, eco-ethics promotes a sense of stewardship, which calls on humans to act as caretakers of the earth rather than exploiters of its resources. The concept of stewardship is particularly relevant in the face of contemporary environmental crises such as climate change and deforestation, which are often driven by short-term economic goals. Naess (1973) argues that eco-ethics “requires individuals and communities to look beyond their immediate benefits and to consider the broader ecological impacts of their actions” (p. 96). His view discourages practices that deplete natural resources without regard for long-term sustainability, advocating instead for actions that preserve the environment’s integrity.

This approach also challenges the dominant utilitarian view, which values nature solely for its usefulness to humans. Instead, it proposes that nature has its intrinsic value and deserves respect and care regardless of its utility. For instance, Rolston (1988) states, “We must recognize the inherent worth of all living beings and ecosystems, not merely as resources to be consumed but as valuable components of a larger, interconnected world” (p. 50). This moral ethic promotes a more respectful attitude toward nature, one that views environmental preservation as an ethical obligation rather than a mere economic consideration. Eco-ethics is not only theoretical but has practical implications for how societies should structure their economies and development strategies. According to Murove (2009), eco-ethics "encourages policies and practices that prioritize sustainability, resilience, and the responsible use of resources" (p. 218). This ethical structure can inform contemporary approaches to sustainable development by providing ethical guidance for balancing human needs with environmental limits. For instance, eco-ethics suggests that industries should minimize pollution, reduce resource consumption, and consider the broader ecological impact of their operations. By integrating eco-ethical principles into policy-making, societies can work toward development models that are both economically viable and environmentally sustainable. In essence, eco-ethics presents a moral argument for environmental sustainability that is rooted in respect for all forms of life. The eco-ethical perspective encourages a shift away from anthropocentric views, which prioritize human needs, toward a more eco-centric approach that values all aspects of the natural world. This shift, according to Ogunbode (2020), “is essential for creating a world where human and ecological well-being are seen as mutually dependent rather than in conflict” (p. 45). By embracing eco-ethics, societies can foster a more unified relationship with the environment, promoting practices that benefit both human communities and the ecosystems on which they depend.

Indigenous Knowledge and Environmental Ethics

Indigenous Nigerian communities have long maintained a close and respectful relationship with the environment, as evidenced by their cultural and ethical practices that promote environmental sustainability. Indigenous knowledge, built over generations, provides practical strategies for managing resources, protecting biodiversity, and ensuring long-term ecological health. These practices are guided by a deep-rooted belief in the interconnection of all life forms, as well as a sense of communal responsibility toward nature. Mbiti (1969) highlights this perspective, noting

that in many Nigerian communities, “land and resources are not seen as commodities but as communal assets that hold spiritual and cultural significance” (p. 108). One key aspect of Indigenous Nigerian environmental ethics is communal ownership, where land and resources are shared among the community rather than held by individuals. This communal approach fosters a strong sense of responsibility, as the community collectively manages and protects resources for current and future generations. According to Gbadegesin (1991), “The collective management of land reduces the risk of over-exploitation, as community norms enforce sustainable practices” (p. 92). This is evident in practices such as the rotational farming systems of the Tiv people, which allow land to recover after cultivation, maintaining its fertility and productivity over time (Okoye, 2015, p. 190).

Indigenous Nigerian communities also emphasize sustainable farming practices that align with eco-ethical principles. For instance, the Yoruba people practice intercropping, where multiple crops are planted together to mimic natural ecosystems. This method enhances soil fertility and reduces the risk of pest infestations, providing a sustainable alternative to monoculture farming (Adewumi, 2017, p. 123). By working with the land rather than depleting it, Yoruba farmers demonstrate an environmental ethic that prioritizes ecological health over short-term gains, reinforcing the eco-ethical values of balance and sustainability. Water management is another crucial element of Indigenous environmental ethics. In northern Nigeria, Hausa-Fulani communities use the “Fadama” system, a form of irrigation that captures seasonal water from wetlands for use during dry periods (Mustapha, 2014, p. 87). This practice not only conserves water but also ensures that the community has access to this essential resource throughout the year. By managing water resources sustainably, Indigenous Nigerian communities demonstrate an ethical commitment to conservation that benefits both their survival and the environment’s health.

Biodiversity preservation is also integral to Indigenous environmental practices in Nigeria. Sacred groves, for example, are forested areas protected by cultural and religious beliefs, where human activity is limited or restricted. Iwara (2019) explains that these groves serve as “sanctuaries for biodiversity, allowing ecosystems to thrive without human interference” (p. 55). The preservation of sacred groves not only maintains ecological balance but also reflects a deep cultural respect for nature, as these areas are often considered sacred and are closely tied to the community’s identity. Indigenous Nigerian eco-ethics also emphasize a strong sense of stewardship, where humans are

seen as caretakers of the land rather than its owners. This principle is evident in the practices of the Ogoni people in the Niger Delta, who traditionally leave certain forest areas untouched as sanctuaries for wildlife and natural regeneration (Ekpo, 2016, p. 67). By protecting these areas, Indigenous communities demonstrate their commitment to sustainability, ensuring that natural resources remain available for future generations. This approach contrasts sharply with exploitative practices, such as the uncontrolled extraction of oil in the Niger Delta, which has led to environmental degradation and poverty in local communities (Okonta & Douglas, 2001, p. 72).

Indigenous environmental ethics also contributes to poverty alleviation by providing communities with sustainable resources. For example, agroforestry practices among Yoruba farmers not only improve soil health but also increase crop yields, reducing poverty by enhancing food security (Adewumi, 2017, p. 137). Similarly, communal fishing practices along Nigeria's coast help protect marine biodiversity and support local economies by ensuring a continuous supply of fish (Akande, 2020, p. 135). These practices demonstrate how Indigenous eco-ethical values contribute to both environmental sustainability and economic resilience, providing a model for sustainable development that benefits both people and nature. Indigenous Nigerian environmental ethics offers a powerful moral base for sustainability that aligns closely with eco-ethical principles. By embracing Indigenous knowledge and integrating it into modern development strategies, Nigeria can promote sustainable practices that respect traditional values, protect ecosystems, and alleviate poverty. This approach provides an all-inclusive view of development, where environmental and human well-being are seen as interconnected, reinforcing the eco-ethical principles of balance, stewardship, and responsibility.

Indigenous Eco-Ethics and Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria

Indigenous eco-ethics in Nigeria offers a sustainable and community-based approach to natural resource management, emphasizing moral responsibility, collective well-being, and intergenerational stewardship. Rooted in respect for the land and its resources, Indigenous Nigerian philosophies view nature as a shared asset that must be cared for to benefit the community as a whole. According to Murove (2009), Indigenous perspectives see resources not as commodities for individual exploitation but as “gifts from nature that carry a moral obligation to be used wisely and equitably” (p. 212). This perspective differs sharply with extractive practices,

such as oil drilling in the Niger Delta, where the unchecked pursuit of profit has led to environmental destruction and worsened poverty for local communities (Okonta & Douglas, 2001, p. 66). Indigenous eco-ethics, by prioritizing sustainability and equity, presents an alternative guideline where resource management supports both community well-being and environmental resilience. The ethical approach within Indigenous eco-ethics promotes a shared responsibility for resources, ensuring that benefits are distributed equitably and sustainably across the community. In many Indigenous Nigerian communities, land and water resources are managed collectively, with the goal of preserving them for future generations. In coastal areas, for example, traditional fishing practices reflect this commitment to sustainability. Fishermen often adhere to seasonal bans that allow fish populations to regenerate, ensuring that marine resources remain available for both current and future needs (Akande, 2020, p. 132). This practice not only supports local economies but also aligns with eco-ethical principles by balancing immediate livelihood needs with long-term environmental health.

Similarly, Indigenous eco-ethical principles are evident in the agricultural practices of Nigerian communities. Yoruba farmers, for instance, practice intercropping which simply is a technique in which diverse crops like maize, cassava, and melon are cultivated together on the same land. This approach mimics natural ecosystems, enriching the soil and reducing pest outbreaks without the need for chemical fertilizers. As Adewumi (2017) explains, “intercropping enhances soil fertility and maximizes land use,” providing a sustainable and low-cost alternative that benefits both the environment and local food security (p. 134). By protecting soil health and promoting biodiversity, Yoruba farmers can achieve higher, more stable yields, directly contributing to poverty reduction in rural areas where agriculture remains a primary livelihood. Pastoralist communities in Nigeria also illustrate the principles of Indigenous eco-ethics through rotational grazing, a practice rooted in environmental stewardship. Among the Fulani, for instance, herders move their livestock between grazing areas to allow vegetation to regenerate, preventing overgrazing and maintaining the health of the land. Blench (2001) describes this approach as “a sustainable system that balances livestock needs with the environment’s regenerative capacity” (p. 101). By ensuring the availability of pasture, rotational grazing supports not only the Fulani’s economic stability but also reduces the risk of desertification in northern Nigeria. Adamu (2015) observes that this method

allows Fulani pastoralists to sustain their livelihoods while minimizing ecological damage, reinforcing eco-ethical values that prioritize both environmental and economic health (p. 117).

Indigenous eco-ethics also emphasizes the importance of forest conservation as part of a sustainable approach to poverty alleviation. In many Yoruba and Igbo communities, forests are revered as sacred spaces, and sections are preserved as “sacred groves,” where hunting and logging are restricted. According to Iwara (2019), these groves serve as sanctuaries for biodiversity, helping maintain a balance within the ecosystem and providing the community with a continuous supply of resources such as medicinal plants and wood (p. 55). This practice reflects a deep cultural respect for nature, viewing forest conservation not merely as an economic strategy but as an ethical obligation to protect the environment for future generations. By securing natural resources, sacred groves support local needs sustainably, illustrating how Indigenous eco-ethics integrate poverty alleviation with environmental care. In other instances, we can also see Indigenous eco-ethics are evident in water management practices, particularly in arid regions where access to water is limited. The Hausa-Fulani communities in northern Nigeria have developed the “Fadama” system, a lowland irrigation practice that captures and stores water from seasonal wetlands for use during dry periods. This method conserves water efficiently, ensuring year-round availability for farming (Mustapha, 2014, p. 87). In alignment with eco-ethical values, the Fadama system is collectively managed, distributing water equitably and supporting local food production even in challenging environmental conditions. By facilitating food security, the Fadama system directly contributes to poverty alleviation while promoting the sustainable use of water resources.

The integration of these eco-ethical practices has had a significant impact on poverty reduction across Nigerian communities. For example, sustainable fishing practices in coastal areas help protect marine biodiversity and provide a steady source of food and income. Customary regulations in the Niger Delta restrict certain fishing methods to avoid overfishing, thereby maintaining fish populations and securing the livelihoods of local fishermen (Akande, 2020, p. 135). Similarly, Yoruba farmers who adopt agroforestry a method of incorporating trees into farmland benefit from improved crop resilience and additional resources like fruit and timber, enhancing food security and creating new income streams (Adewumi, 2017, p. 137). These practices, deeply rooted in Indigenous eco-ethical principles, provide a model of sustainable development that prioritizes environmental stewardship and economic resilience. This all-

encompassing view of resource management embedded in Indigenous Nigerian eco-ethics not only fosters a healthier relationship with the environment but also strengthens communities' abilities to support themselves. By incorporating these values into modern development strategies, Nigeria can promote an approach that simultaneously reduces poverty, preserves cultural values, and safeguards ecological balance. This Indigenous perspective on eco-ethics provides a powerful groundwork for a sustainable future, where human and environmental health are seen as interrelated and mutually supportive.

Challenges and Ethical Dilemmas

Indigenous eco-ethics faces significant challenges in modern Nigerian society, where tensions between traditional knowledge systems and modernization have created complex ethical and philosophical dilemmas. Modernization characterized by industrialization, urbanization, and Westernized economic models, often conflicts with Indigenous eco-ethical principles. Industrial farming methods, for example, favor high-yield mono-cropping, which can deplete soil nutrients, reduce biodiversity, and displace sustainable Indigenous practices like intercropping and agro-forestry. Onwuegbuna (2018) notes that “such methods, while efficient in short-term yield, overlook the long-term ecological health that Indigenous practices naturally promote” (p. 214). Adding to this, modern technologies and mechanized farming techniques are increasingly attractive to younger generations, leading to a decline in traditional knowledge and methods. In order to Reconcile modernization with Indigenous eco-ethics, it will require a hybrid approach that acknowledges the value of traditional knowledge while integrating sustainable technological advancements. For instance, agro-ecology an approach that combines Indigenous biodiversity and soil conservation practices with modern precision techniques has been suggested as a model for sustainable development. Altieri (2018) describes agroecology as “a bridge between traditional wisdom and scientific innovation, allowing communities to benefit from improved productivity without sacrificing ecological principles” (p. 21). This synthesis provides a pathway for balancing economic development with the eco-ethical values of environmental stewardship and community well-being.

Resource management is also another ethical dilemma to look at, particularly in areas dominated by extractive industries like oil, mining, and timber. The demand for resources on a global scale

has driven these industries to operate in ways that frequently disregard Indigenous eco-ethical standards, leading to severe environmental degradation and exacerbating poverty among local communities and marginalized groups. Okonta and Douglas (2001) highlight the Niger Delta as a prime example, where “unchecked oil extraction has caused widespread pollution, destroying farmlands, fisheries, and water sources” (p. 72). This dilemma highlights a core conflict that points out that while extractive industries may generate immediate financial gains, their operations often undermine local economies, increase poverty, and harm the environment over the long run. In contrast, Indigenous eco-ethics emphasizes resource management that is equitable, sustainable, and community-focused, raising critical questions about the ethical responsibility of both national and global industries to prioritize collective welfare over individual profit. Policy and governance further complicate efforts to maintain Indigenous eco-ethical practices. In Nigeria, many policies favor rapid industrial development and resource extraction at the expense of traditional practices and environmental conservation. For instance, land tenure laws that prioritize private ownership and large-scale agriculture frequently displace Indigenous communities, stripping them of their ability to manage land sustainably through communal ownership. As Ibrahim (2021) points out; “such policies often sideline Indigenous rights and reduce the resilience of local communities to environmental and economic challenges” (p. 60). Although the Nigerian government has taken some steps to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into environmental policy such as the ‘National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan’ (NBSAP) the implementation at the grassroots level remains limited, as many Indigenous communities lack political influence over resource management decisions (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2016, p. 12). In order to overcome these challenges, policy frameworks must protect Indigenous rights to land and resources while promoting community-led initiatives. This would require collaboration between traditional leaders, government agencies, and external organizations to align development projects with sustainability and environmental justice. Effective governance is essential to ensuring that Indigenous communities have a voice in decisions about resource use, especially in a way that safeguards traditional eco-ethical practices.

Reviving Indigenous eco-ethics in Nigeria is not only an ethical imperative but also a practical necessity for sustainable poverty alleviation. Indigenous eco-ethical principles emphasize harmony with nature, collective responsibility, stewardship, and long-term sustainability values

that are often overlooked in conventional economic development strategies. Murove (2009) argues that these Indigenous ethics inherently view humans as part of “an interconnected ecological system where the well-being of the environment directly influences human welfare” (p. 219). This well-integrated perspective encourages resource management that prioritizes ecological balance and social equity over short-term profits. Indigenous eco-ethical principles, particularly those that view land as a “sacred trust” meant to support both current and future generations, offer an alternative guide for policy-making. By embedding these values in national policies, Nigeria could promote a model of development that distributes resources equitably, protects the environment, and fosters social cohesion. As Altieri (2018) notes, “Local knowledge systems are essential for developing practices that are resilient to climate change, land degradation, and other challenges that disproportionately affect poor communities” (p. 34). Such policies could ensure that development in Nigeria respects both ecological and cultural sustainability, helping mitigate the adverse effects of modernization.

In other to cover up these lapses a promising future direction lies in synthesizing Indigenous eco-ethics with modern development strategies, creating a pluralistic approach to poverty alleviation. This integration would recognize the strengths of both traditional moral imperative and contemporary approaches. Indigenous eco-ethics provides an ethical groundwork rooted in sustainability and community well-being, while modern practices bring technological advances and economic opportunities. The challenge is to reconcile these approaches in a way that preserves cultural values and environmental integrity while addressing Nigeria’s socio-economic needs. For example, agroecology presents an innovative model that combines Indigenous farming methods such as crop rotation and biodiversity management with modern ecological science. This approach allows communities to achieve sustainable agricultural production without depleting natural resources. Altieri (2018) highlights that agroecology “not only enhances food security but also reinforces eco-ethical principles by respecting natural systems and supporting community livelihoods” (p. 38). Such a collaborative approach would enable Nigerian communities to retain control over their resources while benefiting from advancements in technology and access to global markets. Another collaborative model is community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), a strategy that has been successful in other parts of Africa. CBNRM programs are grounded in collective decision-making, sustainable resource use, and equitable benefit-sharing,

closely aligning with Indigenous eco-ethical values (Ibrahim, 2021, p. 61). By involving local communities in resource governance, these programs enhance the sustainability of poverty alleviation efforts, ensuring that development initiatives do not undermine the environmental and social foundations on which these communities depend. In Nigeria, adopting CBNRM would empower Indigenous communities to manage their resources autonomously, fostering a development model that balances economic growth with environmental stewardship.

Conclusion

To Round off this paper we see indigenous eco-ethics offers a viable and sustainable guideline for addressing poverty in Nigeria. Rooted in principles of environmental stewardship, collective responsibility, and long-term sustainability, indigenous eco-ethical practices provide valuable insights into how natural resources can be managed equitably and sustainably. By aligning with the ethical principles inherent in these traditional knowledge systems, national and local development efforts can be more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive. This paper has argued that by embracing indigenous eco-ethics, Nigeria can foster a development model that reduces poverty while preserving its environmental and cultural heritage.

Philosophically, the significance of re-centering Indigenous ethics in poverty alleviation discourse cannot be overstated. Indigenous eco-ethics challenges dominant paradigms of resource exploitation and individualism, offering a more ethical and community-centered approach to development. By emphasizing the connection and relationship of humans and nature, Indigenous ethics provides a moral foundation that respects both the environment and the social fabric of communities. These implications extend beyond Nigeria, suggesting a universal model of development where sustainability and justice are central. In the context of global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and increasing inequality, the revival and integration of indigenous eco-ethical principles provide a much-needed alternative to exploitative and unsustainable development models. These principles can guide future efforts to create a more just and equitable world, where poverty is tackled through practices that honor both the earth and the communities that depend on it.

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RHYTHMS OF UNITY: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF IZON (IJAW) DANCE AND MUSIC IN FOSTERING NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN NIGERIA'S AI-DRIVEN SOCIETY

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Abstract

Many studies have established that music and dance perform multipurpose functions in Africa. This ranges from worship to recreation, entertainment, didactic, and informative functions. However, little if any reflective perspective research has investigated the use of music and dance as a tool for national integration and development or as a part of the national strategy for solving problems relating to diplomatic issues. It is argued that the major music and dances performed represent the dominance of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria which by extension undermines the political power of the minority groups. The study therefore examines the socio-cultural relevance of music and dance as veritable tools in nation-building by exploring the role of Ijaw dance and music in promoting national integration and cultural exchange in Nigeria, especially in the context of an AI-driven society. As one of Nigeria's most significant ethnic groups, the Ijaw people have a rich cultural heritage that includes distinctive dance and music forms. This study delves into how these cultural expressions contribute to uniting Nigeria's diverse population while examining the implications of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), on preserving and transforming cultural practices. The study reveals that Izon (Ijaw) dance and music go beyond the purview of entertainment. The thematic preoccupations are part and parcel of the story as a whole as they define and redefine the existence of our nation as a united entity. We conclude that if properly employed, music and dance could be an invaluable tool for national cohesion.

Keywords: National integration, Ijaw, Izon, music, dance, AI, unity, Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria, with over 250 ethnic groups, is a country rich in cultural diversity, yet historically challenged by ethnic and regional tensions. National integration which can be defined as the process of creating a sense of unity and shared identity among a nation's diverse population, remains a significant challenge for policymakers (Osaghae, 1995). Cultural exchange, a tool for fostering understanding and harmony, has played a critical role in addressing these challenges. Among Nigeria's numerous ethnic groups, the Izon (Ijaw) people, who reside primarily in the Niger Delta, offer vibrant cultural forms that can contribute to national cohesion. This research examines the potential of Ijaw dance and music to foster national integration, particularly in Nigeria's AI-driven society. In the diverse cultural landscape of Nigeria, the Izon (Ijaw) people, one of the country's largest ethnic groups, possess a rich heritage of music and dance that reflects their deep-rooted traditions and values. Historically, Izon music and dance have served as powerful tools for storytelling, communal bonding, and the expression of social identity. As Nigeria continues to evolve into an AI-driven society, characterized by rapid technological advancements, the role of cultural practices like Izon dance and music takes on new significance.

In this context, exploring the role of Izon dance and music goes beyond mere cultural preservation. It highlights their potential as instruments for fostering national integration and promoting cultural exchange in a country with over 250 ethnic groups. Music and dance can bridge divides, creating shared experiences that transcend ethnic, religious, and geographical boundaries. The fusion of traditional practices with modern technology also presents opportunities for cross-cultural understanding and collaboration, both within Nigeria and on a global stage. This paper seeks to investigate how the cultural expressions of the Izon people in the form of music and dance can contribute to strengthening Nigeria's unity and leveraging AI-driven platforms to share these vibrant traditions with wider audiences, thereby fostering a deeper sense of national cohesion in a digitally interconnected era.

The Izon (Ijaw) People and Their Cultural Significance

The IZONS people, otherwise known as the Ijaws are an ethnic group found in the Niger Delta in Nigeria, with significant population clusters in Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers. They also

occupy Edo, Ondo, and small parts of Akwa Ibom. Many are found as migrant fishermen in camps as far west as Sierra Leone and as far east as Gabon. They account for about 1.8% of the Nigerian population according to the CIA Factbook (Appiah and Gates, Henry, 2010; John, 2011). The Ijaws are one of the most populous tribes inhabiting the Niger Delta region. They have long lived in locations near many sea trade routes, and are well connected to other areas by trade as early as the late 14th and early 15th centuries. The Ijaw ethnic group in the oil-rich Niger Delta region in Nigeria has a cultural identity that is deeply rooted in dance, music, festivals, and oral traditions. These cultural elements not only serve as forms of artistic expression but also play important roles in storytelling, rituals, and ceremonies (Ekine, 2011). Dance and music, particularly, are central to Ijaw life, providing a platform for the community to celebrate their history, communicate values, and express collective identity. The Ijaw dance, on the other hand, is characterized by rhythmic movements and vibrant costumes and is traditionally performed during festivals, ceremonies, and communal gatherings. These dances often tell stories of the people's origins, struggles, and victories, thereby keeping history alive for future generations (Oriji, 1991). Similarly, Ijaw music is renowned for its use of drums, flutes, and songs that evoke deep emotional and spiritual responses. It often accompanies dance performances and contributes to the transmission of cultural knowledge (Echeruo, 1989).

National Integration

An analysis of pertinent concepts, particularly those related to national integration, is an inevitable first step for any discourse of this sort. Drawing inspiration from the definition of "integration," which is the act of combining two different entities or phenomena into a single entity, national integration is the term used to describe any program, activity, or procedure that aims to incorporate the estimated 250 different ethnic groups (Epelle, 2015, p. 173) into a single, cohesive whole. Or, to put it another way, national integration as it is used in this study refers to the process of fusing the diverse ethnic groups that comprise the nation into a cohesive and cohesive whole.

Integration can signify different things, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. It can refer to the composition of a whole by joining or integrating different parts; it could also mean the process of bringing out or attaining equal membership in a population or social group, as well as the elimination or lack of discrimination against a group or individuals based on race or culture. The

work of Alao (1986) has cited different scholars like Odetola (1978) and Binder (1964) that have dealt with the meanings of national integration. Odetola (1978) defines national integration as meaning the establishment of a close interdependence among the various component units of a state and the creation of higher loyalties to the nation that will supersede parochial loyalties to sub-national communities, ethnic groups, or regions while Binder holds the view that national integration involves the creation of “a cultural-ideological consensus of a very high degree of comprehensiveness”. Alao also cited John Paden and Edward Soja (1971) who explain national integration as the aggregation of erstwhile autonomous, independent, and primordial groups into larger, more diffuse units whose implicit frame of reference is not the ethnic sphere, but the nation-state. Alao claims that national integration in a plural society could refer to the process of combining smaller units that already exist into a larger unit and creating shared central institutions to which the constituent units pledge allegiance. However, it should be remembered that practically speaking, maintaining a certain level of allegiance to one's ethnic group does not always conflict with national integration.

Impediments to National Integration of the Nigerian People

Pertinence calls for an examination of the challenges to national integration in Nigeria, for an understanding of how music and dance can contribute to solving the problem. One of the major factors which hinders the integration of the Nigerian people is cultural diversity. Nigeria is a heterogeneous nation with people of varied cultures. Thus, it is very difficult for people of diverse entities and cultural origins to be joined together under one national culture without rancor.

Due to their own self-serving goals, which went against the interests of the many tribes, British colonial authorities combined the northern and southern protectorates into one single governmental entity. They neglected to mention that the cultural diversity of the populace in such protectorates results in different governing practices. According to Ezeugwu in Okafor et al. (1999), most tribes would have rather had political independence than be a part of the corporate political entity known as Nigeria. Many contend that a unified Nigeria is unattainable, if this is to be taken into consideration. They support the country's partition into several ethnic groups, each of which should become an independent country.

Most individuals think that the Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo nations should be divided into three nations. This explains why there are still ongoing crises in many areas of the country, particularly in the Niger Delta. Even though their soil is the primary source of the country's riches (crude oil), Nigerians in the Niger Delta feel developmentally disadvantaged due to the absence of basic infrastructure. There are good grounds for other tribes to want to secede. As a result, there is instability and a lack of development in all of the country's socio-institutional systems. It is important to remember that religion has played a significant role in Nigeria's integration crisis

. However, to mitigate the dissension caused by cultural diversity the government promulgated programmes meant to achieve national unity they include but are not limited to the establishment of unity schools where children from different ethnic groups can mingle and learn together thereby creating room for interactivity and bonding. Others include the NYSC scheme that bundles people from different parts in one location to interact and bond. Despite these governmental efforts, national integration is still a pipe dream. It is this situation that calls for the examination of the culture of music and dance as a panacea to the impasse seeing that music and dance have a universal language that promotes joy, interactivity, and love. The bucolic beauty of most traditional dance steps and the aesthetic and philosophic appeal of most traditional music have unifying potentials as everybody enjoys and appreciates good music and dance and need not necessarily have to be from the same ethnic group as the musician or dancer. It will be pertinent to examine the concept of dance and its potential as a unifying agent.

Dance as a Unifying Agent

Dance as a term is not new to man; Bakare (1994) describes dance as “the rhythmic movement of the human body in space and time to make statements” (1). Another way to define dance is as an artistic medium through which ideas, emotions, and experiences are conveyed via the movement of people. As old as man and his need to express himself, transmit his pleasures and sorrows, celebrate and mourn with the most immediate instrument: his body, is believed to be the art of dance (Sorell, 9). It is a worldwide phenomenon that plays an essential function in human civilization in an endeavor to build social cohesiveness or togetherness, causing them to feel a strong sense of communion with one another. People are thus freed from the constraints of individuality (Lange, 92).

Humans have long used dancing as a means of self-expression and a means of sharing ideas about their surroundings and themselves. In addition to being a vehicle for the transfer of knowledge, dance fosters the development of kinesthetic skills, problem-solving strategies, communication skills, and critical thinking abilities (Minneapolis Public Schools, "The Elements of Dance"). Judith R. Mackrell in her article "Dance", characterizes dance as the movement of the body in a rhythmic way, usually to music and within a given space, to express an idea or feel, releasing energy, or simply taking delight in the movement itself. She goes on to say that while dancing is a strong impulse, the art of dance is the channeling of that impulse by talented artists into something very expressive that can enthrall even those who have no desire to dance (Academicroom.com). Dancing is used in religious, social, and cultural contexts throughout Africa and Ijaw country. It fulfills a multitude of functions and is intricately interwoven with African society. According to Mackrell, Aristotle stated in his Poetics that the fundamental function of dance as a form of expression is "to represent men's characters as well as what they do and suffer." Dance is a rhythmic movement. Hence African dances are imbued with dramatic elements that in themselves not only identify and represent the lives of the people but also play didactic roles to ensure the conformity of individuals within social groups and institutions, as well as the maintenance of social order and stability in the society.

In a paper titled "Nigeria Dances and Cultural Diplomacy," Aondo and Tsevende note that the inaugural Nigerian Festival of Arts and Culture, which took place in Lagos in 1970, was a cultural occasion intended to unite the then-12 states in a spirit of celebration following the civil war. It was planned to foster stronger bonds between Nigeria's numerous ethnic groups. Due to its popularity, it is now an annual event to serve as a forum for unity. The dance and music-focused National Festival of Arts and Culture has developed into a creative tool that brings the country together as well as a legitimate platform for marketing and cross-cultural interaction. Among the goals of NAFEST are to provide a platform for talent search, creative expression, idea exchange, skill and technique development, celebration of the best aspects of our shared history, and promotion of our cultural values of love, peace, understanding, and unity as a nation. The 36 states that make up the Federation as well as the Federal Capital Territory participate, all to uphold the primary goal of fostering national unity. According to Aondo and Tsevende, dance and music dominated the first four NAFEST editions.

Dance functions as an expression of social organization, it safeguards the traditionally established social and political hierarchy and equally emphasizes the standard of behavior, and it instructs on morals within the society. In Nigeria, there exists a lot of dances and the Ijaw dance plays the role of promoting peaceful co-existence and social integration

Music as a Unifying Agent.

Music plays a crucial role in fostering social cohesion and economic advancement. Few cultural elements allow for the expression of emotions or provide entertainment. Like music, convey information and educate. One potential prophetic and instructional tool for pointing people toward the way of Truth and Light is music. Additionally, music has the potential to be a medium of expression for the country because it not only promotes freedom and the necessity of a democratic society, but it also teaches, entertains, and informs. In today's world, music advocates for equality and justice. Music promotes national unity and the necessity of being resilient and self-sufficient as a whole. Stress can be relieved by listening to music, which supports people's emotional and mental well-being.

From the aforementioned considerations, it is possible to conclude that music plays a crucial role in the development of the individual as well as the growth of society. Above all, though, music serves to unite various societal strata, which is especially important for Nigeria. Due to its expressive qualities, music plays a vital role in social integration. It has several diplomatic roles, chief among them being the promotion of improved relations and understanding within and among ethnic groups as well as the country at large.

In a way, music is a summary of values-expressing activities, a way to disclose the core of cultural psychology without exposing it to as many of the defenses that envelop other cultural pursuits. It serves a similar purpose to other facets of the arts in this regard. Additionally, it maintains the stability of culture by serving as a vehicle for history, myth, and legend. It also highlights the "continuity" of culture through the dissemination of knowledge, the management of misbehaving members of society, and the emphasis on right and wrong.

Its existence provides a normal and solid activity that assures the members of the society that the world continues on its proper path (Merriam, 1964, p. 2550) Obviously, it would be

extremely difficult for the government and the population to appreciate the true value of the music if we are unable to indicate its contribution to national integration.

Izon Dance and Music as Tools for National Integration

A Study of Ijaw dance and music shows that it accompanies practical activities and religious rituals. However, it continues to be an important means of social cohesion and a means of displaying political/social strength and identity. Like several countries in the world that have revived their national dances, the Ijaw dance and music is a way of promoting a strong sense of national identity (Mackrell, "Dance"). Because Ijaw dance and music can cross ethnic boundaries, they have the potential to promote national integration. through theatrical productions that emphasize common human situations like getting married, having children, and dying. Expressions of Ijaw culture can foster understanding and empathy among Nigeria's various ethnic groupings. In a multiethnic community, dance and music offer a nonverbal means of communicating common values, beliefs, and feelings. Nigerians from different ethnic groups can interact with Ijaw culture at venues provided by cultural festivals such as the Amaseikumor (Ijaw Festival of Arts) (Ndiokwere, 1994). These gatherings promote cross-cultural understanding by giving other ethnic groups the chance to observe, enjoy, and even take part in Ijaw music and dancing.

Through these interactions, cultural boundaries are softened, promoting mutual respect and reducing ethnocentric attitudes that often fuel divisions (Osaghae, 1995).

The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Preserving and Promoting Ijaw Culture

With the advent of AI, the preservation and promotion of cultural practices, including Ijaw dance and music, have taken on new dimensions. AI has the potential to document, archive, and analyze cultural artifacts, ensuring that future generations have access to the rich heritage of ethnic groups like the Ijaws. AI-driven platforms can digitize performances, creating virtual archives accessible to both Nigerians and international audiences, thus fostering cultural exchange on a global scale (Tijjani & Aliyu, 2020). Additionally, AI technologies, such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), offer innovative ways to engage with traditional Ijaw dance and music. These tools can simulate cultural festivals or dance performances, providing immersive experiences for those

who cannot physically attend. This technological mediation not only broadens access but also enhances cultural appreciation by offering detailed, interactive encounters with Ijaw cultural forms (Jung et al., 2020). Moreover, AI tools can be employed to analyze and interpret the patterns of Ijaw dance and music, providing insights into their structure and meaning. These analyses can then be used to teach or replicate performances, preserving the integrity of cultural expressions. Furthermore, AI-driven platforms, such as social media algorithms, can facilitate cultural exchange by promoting Ijaw music and dance content to diverse audiences, both within and outside Nigeria (Zahra, 2021). It is noteworthy that with AI-driven platforms the meaning, significance, and universality of several themes in Ijaw music can be made accessible to a national and global audience making for deep comprehension, appreciation, and identification with the culture and people of Ijaw extraction.

Challenges and Considerations in Promoting Ijaw Music and Dance in an AI-Driven Society

Although artificial intelligence (AI) offers chances for cultural interchange and preservation, it also brings up serious issues with the legitimacy and commercialization of cultural traditions. The commercialization of Ijaw music and dance in ways that undermine its inherent cultural meanings is a problem posed by AI's capacity to repeat performances (Ezenagu, 2021). Furthermore, when AI-mediated cultural output is exploited without giving due credit or acknowledgment to its original producers, cultural appropriation issues may surface. The establishment of ethical frameworks that direct the application of AI in the cultural sphere is essential to addressing these issues. The integrity of traditional traditions should be protected, equal participation should be guaranteed, and community ownership of cultural content should be given top priority in these frameworks. Only through such measures can AI-driven platforms serve as tools for authentic cultural exchange rather than instruments of exploitation (Tijjani & Aliyu, 2020).

Conclusion

Izon (Ijaw) dance and music hold significant potential for fostering national integration and cultural exchange in Nigeria. By providing platforms for cross-cultural interaction, these art forms can help bridge ethnic divides and promote unity in a diverse society. The integration of AI technologies offers exciting possibilities for preserving and promoting Ijaw cultural practices,

making them more accessible to both local and global audiences. However, as AI reshapes the cultural landscape, it is important to remain vigilant against the risks of commercialization and appropriation. In doing so, Nigeria can leverage both its rich cultural heritage and emerging technologies to promote national cohesion and cultural dialogue. Generally, society and young men in particular look up to music and dance as an avenue for creative expression, an escape from potential self-destruction, a way of caring a living, and a vehicle for achieving a feeling of some sense of self-worth. It contributes to the perception of the country in the tourism sector and also serves the tourism sector. In support of the above, the chairman of the Local Organizing Committee (LOG) of the World Music and Dance has as objectives; to entertain, inform, and educate Nigerians. It also aimed at uniting the Nigerian family, and fostering cultural re-development in Nigeria by bringing about a re-birth and repositioning of the moral and spiritual essence of our rich cultural heritage (The Guardian, June 2nd, 2003: 63).

Recommendations

It is recommended that the government of the day should put in place machinery for the preservation and propagation of Ijaw dance and music as a strategy for achieving national cohesion. Concerted efforts should be made in the direction of applying AI to music as it has the potential for enabling its preservation and promotion in unique ways that suppose the efforts hitherto expended in preserving and propagating it. There is a need to maximize the potential for Ijaw music and dance as it could be a veritable product for cultural exchange and a unifying agent.

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