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DIRECTING ECO-THEATRICALITY ON THE NIGERIAN STAGE: LESSONS FROM AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY STUDIO THEATRE

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Abstract

The intersection between theatre and environmental concerns dates back to the origins of theatre itself. Years of continuous intersection and interaction between the two have given rise to a dynamic field known as ecological theatre or what may be referred to as eco-theatricality. Extant episteme in the area recognizes the potential of theatre to contribute to environmental consciousness to harnessing the transformative power of the stage to engage audiences, evoke emotional responses, and promote environmental awareness. In the continent for example, place, space, things, objects and people are named and known according to the nature of relationship between them and the environment. Within this context, the environment is reified and apprehended as a concrete material rather than a mere object. It is nurtured and, in many cases, worshipped in ways that result in diverse mimetic arts, poetics and aesthetics. In this paper, I draw from select stage productions from the Ahmadu Bello University Studio Theatre and seek to inspire theatre practitioners, educators, and policymakers to consider alternative ways of making theatre that puts the environment at the forefront of production. The researcher considered two eco-friendly play productions; the production of Ahmed Yerima's *Mojagbe* and Don Pedro Obaseki's *Azagidi: When gods Die*. The choice of these two productions lies in the deliberate attempts of the directors to use reusable materials to create a green theatre *mis en scene*. The researcher also wants to emphasize that eco-directing is possible even when working with canonical play-texts that do not directly address issues of the environment. The theory of Eco-Theatricality is used as a conceptual bastion to understand the rupture that has taken place in man's exploitation of the environment and the dramatist's conscious efforts at providing solutions to the problems posed by climate change.

Keywords: African drama, Drama village, Eco-theatricality, Environment.

Introduction

Theatre has long been regarded as a medium for reflecting and critiquing society, addressing social issues, and provoking thoughts. In recent years, the environmental crisis has emerged as one of the most pressing global concerns, necessitating urgent action and awareness. One of the ways within which the narrative of environmental crisis has been developed and disseminated is through the conventional media of television, radio, and the internet as well as other digital-inspired productions. A close reading of the messaging of the SDGs on environmental sustainability and climate justice, for example, suggests that its curators mostly depend on uniform communication channels to sensitize people. Alternative communication conduits at the micro level such as theatrical performances expressed through festivals, carnivals,

music, dance, drama, traditional games, and other forms of performances have neither been relegated nor have gained little traction where they have been used.

In one of the conferences I attended outside the continent, an attendee posed a thought-provoking question; “what does live theatre in ‘Black Africa’ secure in terms of climate change and justice? Another was quick to ride on the probing of the previous questioner to submit that live theatrical productions in Black Africa thrive on the depletion of the environment through its choice of materials for set design. She went further to ask ‘How can you reconcile Nigeria’s *irreverence* to the environment vis-à-vis Nigeria’s growing theatre scene’. As perplexing, maybe ‘racist’, as the question and assertive statement may read, it called for introspection in the ways we make theatre in Nigeria. More, it follows my experience between 2017 through to 2022, a period within which I have had the opportunity to see over a dozen theatre productions, costume design and performances. One thread that tied these productions together is the emphatic use of wood, rubber, trees/plants and other forms of materials which run down the environment. Could this be the reason Nigerian theatre is fingered as one of the drivers of environmental degradation?

With the growing recognition of the urgent environmental challenges facing our planet, artists and cultural practitioners are increasingly exploring ways to incorporate sustainability and environmental consciousness into their creative processes. The theatre artist is not left out. The intersection between theatre and environmental concerns is in itself not new. It dates back to the origins of theatre itself. Years of continuous intersection and interaction between the two have given rise to a dynamic field known as ecological theatre or what may be referred to as eco-theatricality. Extant episteme in the area recognizes the potential of theatre to contribute to environmental consciousness to harnessing the transformative power of the stage to engage audiences, evoke emotional responses, and promote environmental awareness. To fully harness the constructive power of the stage, the place of the director cannot be overlooked.

In the context of directing on the Nigerian theatre stage, eco-theatrical expression poses both exciting opportunities and specific challenges. Directors play a central role in shaping the artistic vision and overall experience of a theatrical production. They have the power to incorporate eco-friendly production practices, such as sustainable set designs, responsible use of materials, and energy-efficient technologies. It is also within the context of the director to collaborate with other artists to develop narratives that address environmental issues, provoke thought, and inspire audiences to reevaluate their relationship with the environment. As a budding playwright and auteur theatre director, I see the compositeness in theatre-making and the environment expressed in the meta-dialogical relationships between the stage actors, environmental actors, and more-than-human actors. I hear the voice of the environment when stage actors speak; I see men and women embodiments of plant-life and I think of the audience as forest. The environmental conditioning and space of our theatre at Drama Village in Ahmadu Bello University Zaria offers me the opportunity to live close to the earth and every other thing that is nature; that gives me a sense of being and being part of a community; that reminds me of the quintessence

of the non-infringement of the more-than-human space (environment) and the attending existential catastrophic outcome that may grip humanity if or when the environment is not given due consideration.



Plate 1: The ecological intersection and aerial view of Drama Village, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

At the Drama Village, birds chirp with the orchestra of crickets providing backups for the swooshing trees. The surrounding trees offer enough solace when the harsh weather of seasons bites and the earthy huts remind me of my roots. The life force of the environment instructs me and propels my auteur theatre. For me, Drama Village offers itself as a text to every creative mind. I align my thought with the position of Adeoye’s model of eco-theatricalism anchored on a quadrupedal aesthetics of “mythopoetic culture, textual imagination, dramaturgy of total theatre ecological idiom and the performativity of adaptation” (89). Of these four models, I am particularly interested in two; that is, the content of textual imagination and the dramaturgy of total theatre ecological idiom.

For Adeoye, the content of textual imagination is anchored on the belief that every “text is expected to lead to theatricality” (89). What this means is that the idea of text transcends the words we speak or read in books. Text in this sense could be behavioural, contextual and environmental. The environment is reified here as text; a more-than-human text capable of rupturing human existence. Adeoye contends that

even though textual imagination is very important in the creative process, “the total theatre ecological idiom, which includes dance, music, drama, pantomimic dramatization, magical display, invocation, evocation, chanting, puppetry, masquerading and many more, is a motivator for the artistic director to give vitality to play-textual conditions. He states that:

It is the duty of the artistic director to either use the workshop theatre (if he intends to celebrate the ‘limit of textuality’) or create total theatre aesthetics from a published play of the ecological school he intends to direct. If he intends to adopt the workshop style, everybody in his theatre is a creator. He will only serve as the coordinator of the series of theatrical activities created towards the whole. (Adeoye 94).

The above statement speaks of the centrality of the artistic director in ascribing relatable meanings to the more-than-human texts in performance. In this paper, I draw from select stage productions from the Ahmadu Bello University Studio Theatre and seek to inspire theatre practitioners, educators, and policymakers to consider alternative ways of making theatre that puts the environment at the forefront of production. I will consider two of the many eco-friendly play productions produced in our theatre, that is, the production of Ahmed Yerima’s *Mojagbe* and Don Pedro Obaseki’s *Azagidi: When gods Die*. My choice of these two productions is conditioned by three factors. One is the deliberate use of reusable materials to create a green theatre *mis en scene*. The second is the meta-dialogical relationship between directing the actors’ movements and the more-than-human environment and the third factor is that eco-directing is possible when working with canonical play-texts that do not directly address issues of the environment.

Conceptual Clarifications: Ecology and Eco-dramaturgy

‘Ecology’ is a word used to describe “the interconnected relationships of the living world, that is, the study of animals and plants, our habitat and environment, as well as the analysis of the interrelationships between us all’ (Giannachi and Stewart 20). It may also be used to refer to how human beings relate to each other vis-à-vis our environment, and the more-than-human world. Thinking of ecology as home unbundles the term from the stronghold of biological science and opens it up, creating different modes of engagement, which in turn could give rise to new ways of thinking and making performance ecologically. This accounts for Morton’s submission that ecological thought is not just about the sciences of ecology, but the scientific thinking of arts, philosophy, literature, music, and culture especially as they strive to imagine how we live together within an environment.

For Morton, ecology is profoundly about coexistence (4). Art, philosophy and performance can reveal, question and imagine ‘how we live together’ in differentiated and unequal ways (Morton 4). Although all art can be considered ecological in its material form, Morton contends that “ecological art, and the ecologicalness of all art, is not just *about* something (trees, mountains, animals, pollution, and so forth) but it *is* something, or maybe *does* something’ (Morton, 11). The theatre and performance practices ‘do something’: they reveal, critique, problematise and extend the thinking

of ecological relationships in one way or another. It follows that human beings and the environment are involved in a process of co-creating or de/constructing society, knowledge, stories, text and eco-performances. From this perspective, dramaturgy can be seen as a holistic approach to the way theatre and performance make meaning, which can be through analysis of play texts, but also through other elements of performance such as the ‘use of space, visual elements, sound, audience proxemics and other aspects that might be less directly addressed by play texts’ (Turner 3).

Early thinking in drama and ecology scholarship developed from ecocriticism in literature has people like Cheryll Glotfelty describe ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xviii). Lisa Woynarski further adds that ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies” (120). For Woynarski, performance and ecology could be thought of as taking an earth-centred approach to theatre and performance, viewing performance as part of the larger world which “does not float above the material world in some aesthetic ether, but, rather, plays a part in an immensely complex global system, in which energy, matter, *and ideas* interact” (xix). According to her: this thinking is useful in relation to performance and ecology, and in perhaps reconfiguring the binary that relegates theatre and performance to ‘culture’ (as opposed to nature). Theatre and performance do not exist in a vacuum; they impact and are impacted by the world of social-ecological systems and relationships. Eco-dramaturgy speaks to this relationship by asking how theatre interacts with the world (Woynarski 120).

The contention from the above is that theatre or performance may not necessarily be tied to traditional culture in ways that exclude interactivity with issues of political economy at the global scale. Adeoye conceives eco-theatre as a theatre whose motif and aesthetics are dedicated to the exposure of environmental problems and the dramatist’s conscious efforts at providing solutions to the problems posed by climate change (86). Theresa May sees it as theatre and performance-making that considers environmental reciprocity and community at the centre of its theatrical and thematic intent’ (4). May’s foundational work applies the term predominantly to play texts and intent, attending to the injustices of ecological crisis (Woynarski 124). Eckersall, Monaghan and Beddie conceive it as the connectivity of relationships between people, objects, natural forces and their interaction in the human/natural environment’ (20).

For Victor Ihidero, it is a way of apprehending how rituals or theatrical practices make ecological meaning and interact with the material more-than-human world which attends to our different experiences, complexities and injustices (83). Ihidero’s position largely follows Lisa Woynarski’s idea of eco-dramaturgy which requires a shift in perspective to de-centre the human, question neoliberal environmental logic and re-imagine the nature/culture binary. Like Woynarski, Ihidero probes the relationship between Egbesu ritual performance and the environment by considering the dramaturgical strategies that offer new ways of thinking about material encounters with the world, and critiquing the anthropocentric binaries of ecological knowledge and worldviews. The question for Woynarski is: how can theatre and performance reveal the way different bodies (human and non-human) are exposed to

through environmental injustice and unequal climate change effects? How can theatre and performance, potentially through erasure or omission of places or people, throw into relief the multiple and intersecting forms of oppression and marginalization connected to ecology? How can an intersectional analysis open up new ways of thinking about ecological performance? (Woynarski 121).

The aforementioned questions intend to bring about rupture in the ways we relate to the ecological or environmental text. To this end, one can argue that an eco-dramatical analysis considers modes of viewing and making theatre, the modes of narrativity, values, politics, ethics, production and reception of the arts. In the Nigerian playwriting scene for example, we have seen works that convey eco-dramatic currents. Some of them are Wole Soyinka's *The Swamp Dwellers*, Ameh Elaigwu's *The Climate of Change*, Greg Mbajiorgu's *Wake Up Everyone*, Ben Binebai's *My Life in the Burning Creeks*, Barclays Ayakoroma's *A Chance to Survive*, among others. While there is a motif of eco-dramaturgy in these works, there are also other plays rooted in mytho-poetry that portray more-than-human themes. The works of J.P Clark, Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, and Wale Ogunyemi are also rich in this regard. Deep-seated in the works of these playwrights is the leitmotif of environmentalism. To produce their plays on stage as well as the plays of some contemporary eco-playwrights may pose a challenge for the director. In other words, how would the theatre director, direct movements or create a *mis en scene* in a play such as Wale Ogunyemi's *Langbodo* without committing ecocide? What options are available to the director in directing Ben Binebai's *Drums of the Delta* while also safeguarding the environment?

For me as a director, I am interested in the intersection between humans and nature, and nature and culture. I perceive the environment as text and a site, as a form of representation and spect-acting, as performance and as rupture. I align with Una Chaudhuri's claim that the first step towards an ecological theatre is to acknowledge the rupture between humans and nature that theatre participates in (28). My idea of directing ecology falls within the third wave of intellection on eco-drama. As a way of explication, it is imperative to consider the waves of eco-drama. The first wave of scholars-practitioners (Cless 1992; Munk 1994; Marranca 1996, etc) of ecology performance drew from political theatre strategies such as reframing sites, resistance, audience participation and community engagement to enact ecological thinking. The second wave was marked by detachment of critical thought and reading of performance and ecology. The detachment was, and hitherto in Nigeria is, anchored on the lack of critical engagements on what performance is and does to the environment. For example, Wole Soyinka and J.P Clark like to open or plot their plays within the parenthesis of ritual sacrifices to appease the more-than-human world. While their works have received more reading from the perspective of nature-culture criticism, aspects of the human-nature interaction have not been fully explored. Only a fringe conversation or criticism exists on the theorization of Wole Soyinka and J.P Clark as eco-dramaturgs.

The third wave of performance and ecology is characterized by contestations of binaries such as centre/margin or black/white view of reality maintained by colonial discourse. For the third-wave eco-dramaturg, the focus shifts to *alterity*, that is, a

distinction among ideas rather than a black-or-white way of viewing the world. The dramas of Greg Mbajiorgu, Ameh Elaigwu, and Ben Binebai, among others, fall within this wave. While these contemporary playwrights have immensely contributed to perpetuating the visibility of ecological thought in Nigerian drama, focus should be paid to how their works may be directed on stage given the challenges that come with staging ecology. For the most part, the staging of climate change plays has been accused of poor dramatization which fails to engage the audience members in environmental thinking. Heddon and Mackey claim that:

Where the balance is tilted towards the emotional narratives of human relationships, those who seek sophisticated theatre addressing climate change are disappointed'... Many of these plays... are aligned to Hulme's 'deficit model' of communicating climate change, in which the assumption is that scientists have 'the truth', which they only need to impart to the public for them to understand climate change. (175)

As insular as the above assertion by Heddon and Mackey appears, many eco-drama playwrights as well as experimentalists have not also, in their part, written a well-made or three-dimensional eco-play that challenge the claims of ecologists, or environmental scientists who conceive eco-dramaturgy as lacking in criticality. As Woynarski rightly notes, "Instead of a deficit model, ideas of diversity, variety, circularity and multivocality are more effective in engaging the public on climate change" (127). There is even the possibility of extending Woynarski's submission to the frontiers of critiquing or directing ecology through eco-theatre or what Abdulrasheed Adeoye refers to as 'eco-theatricalism'.

Theoretical Explications

Eco-theatricality forms the theoretical ground upon which this paper makes certain claims. It is a concept that evolved from eco-theatre. Eco-theatre is a word used to describe the type of theatre whose motif and aesthetics are dedicated to the exposure of environmental problems and the dramatist's conscious efforts at providing solutions to the problems posed by climate change (Adeoye 86). *Leader's Theatre* defines it as "performances that tackle the crucial environmental issues of our day with humour, song, and heart." (n.p.) It is a holistic approach to theatre-making that centres around climate and environmental justice in content, process, and production.

The frame of analysis of eco-theatricality is anchored on five components such as environmental content and themes, sustainable practices; performance space and ecological sensibilities; audience engagement and empowerment; collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches; and evaluation and advocacy. Without the director, all of these cannot find expression in theatre production. Through the creativity of the director, eco-theatricality can incorporate environmental content and themes within theatrical narratives, performances, and productions. This involves exploring ecological challenges, human-nature relationships, climate change, biodiversity, environmental justice, and sustainable futures. By weaving these themes into the fabric of theatrical storytelling, the theatre director can provoke thoughts, inspire empathy, and foster a deeper understanding of environmental issues among the audience.

Eco-theatricality promotes the integration of sustainable production practices within theatre operations. This includes considerations such as utilizing environmentally friendly materials, implementing waste reduction and recycling initiatives, and adopting eco-conscious set and costume design. Tanja Beer's work with eco-scenography is one of the leading initiatives in this regard. Her works reverberate the third aspect of eco-theatricality, that is, performance space and ecological sensibilities. Within the framework of performance space and ecological sensibilities, the theatre director considers the ecological impact of set constructions and embraces environmentally friendly design principles, and explores opportunities for sustainable energy sources. Here, natural elements such as water, plants and earth within the performance space are integrated within the world of the production to create a sensory and immersive experience that connects the audience with the natural world. Our open-air theatre at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria fits well into this frame. It creates an immersive experience that connects the audience to the natural world. It encourages the audience to reflect on their relationship with the environment and take action towards sustainability.

The Ahmadu Bello University School of Drama thrives on collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches to staging theatre. Our theatre is a sort of artists' salon bringing together artists, scientists, environmentalists, and community members to contribute during our theatre workshops. This interdisciplinary collaboration encourages the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and perspectives, leading to innovative and impactful theatrical experiences. We believe that by integrating scientific research, environmental data, and community narratives, our theatre enriches the people and increases in relevance. For many world theatres as well as theatre departments in Nigeria, performances have always taken the form of 'text to stage'. For us, it is not completely so given our relativity to our environment. Our focus is on 'stage to text'. Here, we co-create our text collaboratively. Facilitated by the director, we cut, nail, move, replace, rewrite, transpose and adapt scenes and dialogue to fit our society. In some cases, as in the production of "Queen Amina" in 2021, we have had to use only one scene from Wale Ogunyemi's version and another from Ahmed Yerima's. Others were sourced from Turunku, Queen Amina's birthplace; key informants from the Emir of Zaria's palace as well as other Hausa ethnographers. While this may pose a further challenge regarding authorship for the external world, we thrive on dramaturgical productions. To proceed, it is imperative to examine how all of these items work out in two of our theatre workshop productions.

Eco-Directing in Ahmadu Bello University Studio Theatre

Eco-theatricality and eco-dramaturgy form the analytical tools used in arriving at conclusions in this paper. Pardon me for digressing from the banal approach of considering directing from the lens of actor's movement, speech, dialogue, character delineation and psychology etc to the process involved in co-creating, designing and construction, and thematic explorations of human-nature and nature-culture exegesis of ecology. I anchor my discussion on the recent theatre workshop productions of Ahmed Yerima's *Mojagbe* and Don Pedro Agbonifo-Obaseki's *Azagidi: When Gods*

Die as well as draw from past productions within the last five years. A better way to preface this discussion is to introduce the legend of Queen Amina. Mostly reported as the only female Emir to have ruled in the Zazzau Emirate, her story, for the most part, has remained vague and hotly contested both by the curators of Zazzau Emirate, historians as well as playwrights. While Wale Ogunyemi's and Ahmed Yerima's versions of her legend have focused on her might as a ruler, leadership skills and conquests, her predatory femininity and viciousness, other indigenous playwrights and historians have totally displaced her in Zazzau history.

Performing her legend within the framework of primordial Hausa society poses an ecological challenge to a director. Firstly, in set construction and the *mis en scene* of the production. The production workshop was facilitated by Steve Daniel and Victor Ihidero in 2021. The architecture of the A.B.U Studio provided a suitable environmental background to use sustainable production materials in the design of the theatre. The story was largely sourced from within the Zaria Emirate and Turunku, Amina's birthplace rather than from play texts. The performance opens with a recreation of a museum that houses the statues of Margaret Ekpo, Hajiya Gambo Sawaba, Queen Idia, Sarauniyya Daurama, Princess Inikpi and other historical heroines. The earthiness of Drama Village helps us to recreate the time within which these women lived. The peri-actors were made from *Barakanci*, a fallen dry product of a tree that populates the university community and dry coconut peel obtained from the market. The materials were flattened and compacted into plain planks and were used to construct the sets and all other materials that require the use of wood such as wooden cutlasses and spears. Rather than run down the environment by falling trees or cutting plants, the production team opted for reusable materials to construct the sets in ways that safeguard the ecological environment.



Plate 2: Scenic Outcome of the use of *Barakanci* materials used in the production of Queen Amina. Source: A.B.U Studio Theatre

Apart from Queen Amina and other chiefs the in council, sack cloths made from either cotton or bags were used. For me as a director, the purpose was to first and foremost facilitate the actors on the possibility of theatre without committing ecocide. During the workshop, questions of sustainability of the production materials were of course

asked and the response was for the students to consider the materials as transitory to a better developed and compact material. This experiment was however introductory even though it was deemed successful by those (Anna Oluyori 2022, Ihidero 2022, and Zaire 2023) who have either presented a seminar paper or have published academic papers from the experiment.

The experiment heightened in the production of Ahmed Yerima’s *Mojagbe* and Don Pedro Obaseki’s *Azagidi* as the entire production depended on reusable materials sourced from either waste products such as dry grasses, mats, coconut peel, fallen dry stems or branches within the university, dyed shredded old cloths pieced together, amongst others.



Plate 3: Scenes from the production of *Mojagbe*.
Source: A.B.U Studio Theatre

The plots of the respective plays were directed in such a way that the story formed some kind of meta-narratives with actions on stage to complement the catastrophic end of the two main characters, Mojagbe in *Mojagbe* and Azagidi in *Azagidi*. The performance of *Azagidi* tells the story of the passion of Azagidi and Igbaghon. Azagidi the invincible great warrior embarked on a journey to the more-than-human world in search of new challenges. In so doing, he destroys men, women, the ecology and everything that stands in his way until he gets to the depth of underwater where he

meets and eventually falls in love with the river goddess, Igbaghon. Igbaghon forfeits her position, her rights and privileges in the spirit world against the advice of Olokun, god of the oceans and Orhue her sister. She takes human form and follows Azagidi to the human world. Azagidi's quest to become King makes him abandon Igbaghon, whom he married and who bore him two sons, to marry Uvbi, the princess of Udo with the ambition of becoming king after Ogie, Uvbi's father. To gain the king's trust, Azagidi orders the banishment of Igbaghon from the land and deprives her of her two sons. Mocked and with nowhere to turn, Igbaghon kills Princess Uvbi and King Ogie and the two sons of Azagidi – an act of vengeance that serves as eternal torture for Azagidi's betrayal.



**Plate 4: Scenes from the Performance of Azagidi:
When gods Die: Source: A.B.U Studio Theatre**

While some of the audience members read the performance from the lens of greed and ambition of one man, others caught the metatextual ecological motif of the play. Azagidi's infringement into the ecology destroys him, his family and his community. Within the directorial vision, Igbaghon's lamentation is the lamentation of the forest and water-world which Azagidi has destroyed. As she cries in her woes,

it is hoped that Azagidi, and by extension, the human world, hearkens to the pain of her slow torment. The failure to hearken to Igbaghon is the *raison d'être* for the catastrophic end of Azigidi and the Udo community. Here, the characterization of Azagidi and Igbaghon is representational of the relationships between human beings and plant or water life. While the bionetwork of the environment made Azagidi, Ogie and the community to thrive, they failed to acknowledge their source and instead ran it down until it came back to bite them. Igbaghon's third lamentation and invocation for death foretells doom.

Great gods! Olokun, father-god of justice and the lord of the deep sea. Ogun, god of war and patron of male children. Ohunmila, god of wise counsel and divination. Isango, the angry god of the lightning skies. Eziza, lord of the trading winds. Esu, trickster, afflicter, and god of vengeance. I kneel before you, a broken forsaken deity. I swear to you this day. I pay for my foolishness. I ask for nothing. I ask to die. Death to the five of us. One must live to bury the dead. Death to Ogie, a living symbol of tyranny. Death to Uvbi, the shameless. Death to my twin sons; sad reminders of the calumny and pain of betrayal. Both are products of a monstrous blissful passion. Death to them, and I will gladly take my life. But he must live. Azagidi must live to bury father-in-law, concubine, sons and wife. And he shall forever roam, a destitute. With none to care for him, and none to pity him. He must live forever! (*Her speech reaches a crashing crescendo. Thunders clap lighting flashes, and the earth rumbles. All is calm*). (Agbonifo-Obaseki 38)

The logic that presents itself here for analysis is that Igbaghon is a water goddess who has been betrayed and such infidelity for her is an invitation for death. Her characterization is similar to that of the characterization of the Yeye in *Mojagbe*. Here, they set the machinery that leads to the death of the character, Mojagbe. Like Igbaghon, they cursed and called for the death of Mojagbe, one who has destroyed everything, both human and the more-than-human world. Yerima's Mojagbe is an eponymous play that centres on the dictatorial rule of Oba Aderemi Mojagbe who unleashes terror on those who made him. He is divinely blessed with virtually everything. However, he is blindfolded by his egomania to the extent that he kicks against God. Mojagbe employs the instrumentality of death to suppress all his supposed enemies, including higher authority whom that he is not supposed to treat contemptuously. Meanwhile, the king who kills humans as though they are chickens is reduced to a weakling when confronted by Iku (Death). In the play, Yerima employs death as a check on the excesses of the authoritarian ruling class that often tries to play God.



**Plate 5: Scenic picture of the Yeye in the production of Mojagbe:
Source: A.B.U Studio Theatre**

In the above scene, one can see the interaction between humans and plant life. In the scene, just like Igbaghon's lamentation, the Yeye invokes Layewu, the masquerade of death to dance with Mojagbe. Such dance means death within the cosmic world of the play. As a king, Mojagbe believes so much in the title 'ka bi o si' which means "no one can challenge your authority." In other words, Mojagbe does not want to be questioned or advised. Thus, he often threatens his people with death and punishment. According to Yeye "The air here has gone suddenly foul and a mad king sits on his stench. Away! We must prepare the land for a new one. (Yerima 38). "Air" here symbolizes the environment. Human actions make the ambience foul. The decision of the women to prepare for the coronation of another king symbolizes the outright denunciation of bad leadership that destroys both man and the environment. The inability to steward the environment by Mojagbe and Azagidi breed death. Hence, Igbaghon and the Yeye call for the destruction of the human world which has no regard for more-than-human embodiment. These two female characters must be perceived from the binoculars of more-than-human life as well as their attending forces.

Conclusion

Having argued that there is an intersection between theatre and the environment, this paper explored the concept of environmental theatre and its implications on directing on the Nigerian theatre stage. Nigerian theatre directors are incorporating principles of ecology into their work to promote ecological awareness and advocate for positive change. Using the theory of eco-theatricality, I contend that the theatre is an influential platform for disseminating environmental messages and fostering eco-consciousness among audiences. The director is a central figure in shaping the environmental

aesthetics and messages within a theatrical production given his/her role in working collaboratively with actors, designers, and other theatre practitioners to develop narratives that address environmental concerns and promote sustainable production practices, such as sustainable set designs, responsible material usage, and energy-efficient technologies. This paper concludes that by leveraging the power of theatre as a transformative medium, Nigerian directors can inspire audiences to reevaluate their relationship with the environment and foster a collective sense of responsibility towards sustainable practice.

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DESIGN PROPERTIES AND COSTUMES AS IDENTIFIERS OF CULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION AMONG THE BURA AND TIV PEOPLE IN CLIMATE CHANGE

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Abstract

Climate change in Nigeria has created a substantial human population movement and expanding design concepts due to ecological effects. It has necessitated constant research on ways of solving human needs in order to survive. One of those needs is a cultural practice that has been diversified by industrial production, occasioning loss of some natural materials, to build properties and costumes that can meet a large population demand. Using the direct observation, interview, historical-analytic and investigative approaches, this article posits that given the circumstances of climate change, there are elements of cultural diversification between the Bura and Tiv people that can be identified using performance properties and costumes. The conclusion is that climate change has increased creativity, accessibility, saved time, energy, and cost of consumption as well as increased durability of stage design materials among the studied ethnicities.

Keywords: Climate change, Design properties and costumes, Cultural diversification.

Introduction

The study examines the correlation between design properties and the use of costumes among the Bura and Tiv people. This is informed from the background that life is theatre. The idea that life is theatre has been projected by many scholars such as Kenneth Burke from his work on *Dramatism* (Burke 20), Victor Turner's *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (Turner 6), Gowon Ama Doki's *Everyday Life is Theatre: Appropriations and Canonization* (Doki 1-2), Joel Avaungwa Fanyam's "Contested Space and Culture Conflict: Issues in the Performances of Live in Nigeria" (Fanyam "Mask Design" 207) and "Mask Design with and without Content: The Social Implications of Pandemic Policy in Nigeria" (Fanyam "Contested Space" 1-2). These scholars have observed human activities from a sociological perspective as a way of acting. Under this ideation, design properties and use of costume among the mentioned ethnic groups are significant in performing domestic, religious, agricultural, and social activities. It is in the context placed on the use of these properties and costumes that enhance their relevance.

Design properties and costumes have been described by Parker, Wolf and Block in five categories as: (1) all objects carried or handled by the actors; (2) separate portions of the set on which the actors may stand or sit, such as rocks, stumps, or logs; (3) decorative features such as pictures and draperies; (4) the ground cloth and rugs;

and (5) all sound and visual effects that are not electrically powered, such as gunshot or snow (264-265). In other words, there are hand properties, set properties and dress properties. They emphasized that there are no hard and fast rules on the matter. For example, if the property (prop) is integral to the design of the clothing or is designed by the costume designer, it is usually considered a costume prop (Parker, Wolf and Block 264-265). It has been observed that a performance put on stage assumes its setting with the suitable properties and costumes put to use in characterization. What this means is that design properties and costumes that are peculiar to a given ethnicity or people could enhance a performer's action by defining their origin or locality. Consequently, this could apply to the same character applying the same properties and costumes outside the world of a human architectural stage. As a fact, familiarity with a cultural identity has an enormous role to play in creating a character's setting on stage. However, there are traditional variations and similarities in the use of design properties and costumes in contemporary times, due to climate change.

Climate change has necessitated human migration from one location to another with increased cultural changes and adoptions in search of survival without any negative effects. Scholars have described climate change as change in weather, vegetation, crops and animal production as well as human activities. According to Austin, Chinemeran, and Opara, "It is a known fact that climate change will have strong and significant negative impacts on development efforts and national plans in Nigeria as will be in most sub-Saharan African and developing countries" (40). One of the troubles of climate change has been the problem of population clusters and identity that is caused by migration and conflicts in human locations. Similarly, increased technological advancement has eased many challenges of the climate but it has also caused many problems. For instance, there are scientific discoveries about the depletion of the ozone layer that has caused intense heat and change in weather conditions and calendars. Jibrin, Adamu, and Abdulkadir claim that "the weight of scientific evidence indicates that climate change is occurring and is having biophysical, social and economic impacts at local, national, regional and global scales" (12), but the level of these impacts is determined by the adverse climatic condition of a peoples' location.

The foregoing has necessitated constant research on ways of solving human needs in order to survive. One of those needs is a cultural practice that has been diversified by industrial production, and the loss of some natural materials, to build properties and costumes that can meet a large population demand. In the process of human migration in search of better climatic zones, trade activities, and inter-ethnic relations, a lot of cultural mutations have taken place, leading to diversification and adoption. Even the act of changing location is a process of diversification. However, diversification is more manifest through cultural identifiers such as design properties, costumes, and language practices of a given people. The recent practices of the Bura and Tiv people are good examples of this development. These ethnicities are not only far apart from each other (Bura are in the north eastern axis of Nigeria while Tiv are around the north central part of Nigeria), the distance between them makes it interesting for one to consider the diversification in similarity of their design properties

and use of costumes. This article adopts direct observation, interview, historical-analytic and investigative approaches in correlating the facts between these areas. It considers climate change from the dimension of change in cultural appearance, specifically from the use of properties and costumes in environments occupied by the Bura and Tiv people. Moreover, it is important to look at their brief history, for there are important facts in the historical existence of these peoples, about their design properties and use of costumes.

Historical and Cultural Correlations between Bura and Tiv People in Nigeria

The origin of the Bura people is very interesting with some form of controversy as it is common with other indigenous groups in Nigeria. One of the controversies is whether the ethnic group belongs to or is associated with the Bantu division of the Niger-Congo. At least this view is asserted by Meek cited in Mshelia's *The Story of the Origins of the Bura/Pabir People of Northeast Nigeria* and Davies's *The Biu Book A Collection and Reference Book on Biu Division (Northern Nigeria)*. Davies observed that "they roamed from the Owenat Oasis as far as Fezzan and the Congo, and a group of them known as the Zaghawa, whose language and general affinities were the same as the Beli, inhabited Kordofan, Dafur and Borku (Wadai)" (22). This group of people, Davies referred to them simply as the Kushites.

Mshelia argues that "there's a consensus that the Afro-Asiatic Urheimat (homeland) originated somewhere in or near the region stretching from the levant/ near east to the area between the eastern Sahara and the horn of Africa, including Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan" (64). He further states that "it has already been claimed that the dispersion of the Proto-Chadic languages from their Urheimat created a variety of distinct and separate language groups, amongst which are the Bura" (64). There is a significant correlation between the account given by Davies and Mshelia, both of them agree that the people were pushed from somewhere to the Lake Chad area. They were also affected by the Arabs and the Sudanese, long enough, to have changed their linguistic considerations and classification. Samaila, Saidu, and Shehu also contend that "they never suffered defeat at the warfront by the marauding Fulani people. They belong to the Chadic language group found in the local government of Biu, Hawul Kwaya, Kusar, and Shani. But it has also been stated that all these ethnicities came from Cameroon hills to the east of their present location" (210).

There is a similarity in the history of Bura and the Tiv people. Not only are there many versions about the origin and migration of the Tiv into the Benue valley; many of which also conflict with each other. There is a particular account that traces the origin and migration of the ethnic group from Congo and another from Cameroon hills much like the story of the Bura people. The information provided by Tesemci Makar in "History of Political Change Among the Tiv in the 19th and 20th Centuries," and Iyorwuese Hagher on *The Tiv Kwagh-Hir* give this inference. Others have also suggested that Tiv people migrated from East Africa. The latter idea is broader and may not necessarily exclude Congo, in so far as it is part of East Africa. However, Dzurgba alleges that "there had not been a written history at that time. Thus, the narrations or narratives lack factual, testable, and verifiable contents" (12). This view

agrees with that of Davies on the oral history of African indigenous peoples based on the Bui records that a vast number of statements conflict with each other and many of which are inaccurate and vague but contain a germ of truth (30).

It is the position of this article that African historical and cultural records are largely presumptuous, but a particular investigation of the common design properties and costumes of these two populations (Tiv and Bura), expresses a shared characteristic that may stem from the same origin. This will be treated in this text later. Be that as it may, oral tradition in African history has created a wide gap of facts that has continued to stir arguments. For instance, it is difficult to authenticate categorically who originated a particular art within the African culture. Only a few artworks in contemporary African society have this credibility, old traditional artworks lack these facts and have often been described based on identity. Coincidentally, cultural identity influences the use of design properties and costumes. Meanwhile, the signifiers of cultural identity have to do with climate, economy, religion, and social organizations/practices. The specific concern now is the climate of the area occupied by these two ethnic groups.

Climate Issues around Bura and Tiv People

Climate issues around the Bura and Tiv areas are responsible for their design properties. According to Samaila, Saidu, and Shehu, "Even when it is hot in Maiduguri, it is usually cold in the area and there is always a breeze which makes the weather bearable" (209). The fertility of the areas has helped the people to produce large crops and has constantly exposed them to conflicts and attacks from enemies. This can be explained as the area is analysed further. The Bura people are settlers within the southern area of Borno State, Nigeria. It is a Guinea savannah area that has coarse grasses and trees. Even in the absence of rainfall, this type of area can be remarkable when fired; the grasses quickly get green shoots again and grow without waiting for rain. The area is also occupied by some rocks. Davies observed that "these rocks are the oldest in Nigeria having been formed probably over 600 million years ago, and they form the foundation of, and cover about half of, Nigeria" (6). This climatic situation implies that the soil in this area is rich and heavily farmed. The soil is capable of storing large amounts of groundwater and the water table is high with streams and rivers around the area. The plateau nature of the area also retains rainfall faster than the northern part of Borno State.

However, much of this climatic record has to do with the past. In recent years, climate change and weather conditions have increased the population density of human beings and animals to clusters due to banditry activities; a large amount of water in the area has been reduced because of deforestation, production of charcoal, increased temperatures, and competition/demand for water. An interview held with Ntakwo revealed that there is a growing concern for farmland. Climate change has pushed people to this area in search of farmlands since most of the farm lands in other parts of the state have become depleted. For instance, there are people who have migrated from Zamfara and are now settlers within Buraland. Notwithstanding, industrialization has

introduced new techniques for water supply such as dam construction and motorized boreholes which have added to natural sources of water supply in the area.

According to information obtained from Davies and Dzurgba, some of what exists in the Bura area is similar to that of the Tiv people, but with significant differences in terms of vegetation and religion. The Tiv people are fondly called "the food basket of the nation" because of the large amount and variety of food produced within the area. They are also predominantly Christians. Apart from the land being surrounded by rocks, the soil is also very fertile for cereals, tuber crops, fruit trees, and vegetables. Scholars have often described the Tiv people as large farmers. This love for farming has in recent years pitched them at loggerheads with herders; as a result of climatic changes affecting vegetation from other areas, in Northern Nigeria. The loss of water and difficult climatic conditions affecting vegetation make things difficult for some human beings and animals to survive in other parts of Nigeria and the neighbouring countries. Therefore, they pushed to the Benue valley to forcefully occupy some farmlands which triggers violence, destruction, and displacement of communities. In defence of lives, some properties were designed for hunting of wide animals that are now used for war to combat territorial enemies. These weapons used for violence and attack against external aggression include daggi (javelin), avaan (arrows), sanker (sword), and shom (matchet) in Tiv society. However, both Bura and Tiv people have these common design properties similar within their areas of existence with linguistic differences.

Design Properties and Costumes between Bura and Tiv People

There are traditional design properties used by the Bura and Tiv people for agricultural activities, domestic activities, war, and social activities. These kinds of items such as axe (khama) in Bura are referred to as 'native industries' (Mshelia 99). There are many properties made of brass in Bura culture. Again, due to the linguistic mix between the Bura, Kanuri, and Hausa in the area, some of the property names are the same. Most brass articles in Bura and Tiv are for domestic properties like cooking pots. Apart from brass works, there are also carved wooden properties like membrane drums, pestles, and mortars. Other design properties include metal works crafted by blacksmith who create two bellows made of hide with a pump. Usually, a man pumps air using the hide to light the charcoal into burning coals of fire while the blacksmith uses a very hard stone for an anvil and a wedge-shaped piece of iron for a hammer. Once a piece of iron is placed on the burning coals and it becomes reddish, soft, and hot, the blacksmith removes it using iron tongs and cleverly hits it into the desired shape or form. There are also leather-designed properties such as bags, and drum-heads. Properties made from pottery design include cooking pots, water pots and earthen wares beautifully decorated in different styles.



Images showing domestic properties and a hunter holding a pump action gun and a bow and arrow representing Bura people during a cultural exhibition held on 23 October, 2021 at University of Maiduguri, organized by the Centre for the Study of Cultural Sustainability. These same properties are also used by the Tiv people for domestic activities. (Plate 1)

The costume process is, however, made through the spinning of cotton, weaving, and dyeing of textile materials. In the past, cotton was picked and dried, seeded by hand, and then spun by whirling it between the thumb and the fingers. This way, the thread was developed and drawn in lengths of different yards. Mshelia observe that the thread was then drawn in lengths of about fifty yards until there were precisely thirty-two of them. These were then threaded into a loom and women, making strips of cloth (kuntu) in Bura (106) and (agbar a ikyondu) in Tiv. This was about two to three inches wide, which were then sewn together to make a wide piece. The strips of the finer thread were used for gowns (bul) danchiki (a small sleeveless shirt), loincloths, and female wrap-around. The term danchiki has also been adopted for use in Tiv culture, and its meaning remains the same as used by the Bura people. However, those strips made of coarse threads were fashioned into blankets. In describing this scenario, Mshelia put his words in present terms with a specific focus on the Bura and Pabir people, but this is more reflective of the past situation because the practice at the moment has greatly changed with a lot more reliance on the foreign thread. Most of the dye wells have been abandoned in the bush and some areas taken up by farming activities. There are very few spots where the costume production still exists in Bura environment, this may have affected its large production but within the Tiv environment, there are many spots where the practice still takes place (e.g., Tse-Zurgba, Ushongo, and other spots). Tse-Zurgba is robust in this art, but in contemporary times, the use of foreign thread has infiltrated the practice on a large scale.

Most locally produced cotton in indigenous communities has either ceased, abandoned or cannot meet up with the demand and supply for traditional fabrics. There has been a lot of dependence on foreign/industrial thread which comes already in prepared colours. The practice of dyeing weaved cloths in different patterns as it was in the past is now patterned with modern colour threads, obtained from the market shops. More developments in costume design have also shown that because of the resemblance of the Bura traditional cloth and the Tiv 'anger', the cloth has been adopted

for use by most Bura people in their traditional circles instead of navy blue (dark blue or indigo) and white stripes. Ntakwo explained this in an interview that the Bura men used plain knitted white material, for their traditional dress, while the women used the knitted textile with stripes of indigo and white colours for their traditional dress but these days, there is a mix-up by many people who are, not just unaware of the original tradition but also wrongly apply it. Men today use the costume with coloured strips, and even make shirts with it as traditional dress, and some tie a piece of it across the neck as representing the Bura culture, while the women use the black and white coloured stripes textile in place of indigo and white.

One other reason could be the time that was involved in making the old traditional costume. Compared to the moment, the old Bura cloth took longer and more tedious effort in making. It also involved some traditional rituals which modern religious practice like Christianity has prohibited, while adopting the Tiv ‘anger’ costume is faster, similar in traditional relevance and less tedious to use. As earlier noted, the local thread was weaved and used to sew blankets, wrappers, shirts (danchiki), and caps. Given the temperate weather of the Bura and Tiv areas, the thick nature of the cloth provided an enabling cover from cold during rainy and harmattan seasons.



Images showing Bura costumes during s cultural exhibition organized by centre for the study of Cultural Sustainability at University of Maduguri in October, 2021. (Plate 2)



Image showing the display of Bura costumes during Cultural Day Performance by Ruby Springfield College held on 14th June, 2021 in Maduguri. The costume with bolder stripes is the old costume design by Bura people, it has dark blue and white values. However, the Tiv “anger” is also designed with similar bolder stripes like that of the Bura people but in black and white tones.

Photo: Mrs Karimatu Gauda. (Plate 3)

The bright colours designed on the costumes, the pattern of lines, texture, repetition, and variation of the elements of design helped by projecting its dexterity, and rich and elegant value. Like the Bura costume design, the Tiv 'anger' costume is the most notable of these attributes and is widely produced. As noted elsewhere, ‘anger’ is weaved in black and white shades. The blackish and whitish saturated tones may vary per material depending on the creative formations of the thread adopted by the weaver. The repetition of the blackish and whitish lines on the material creates an aesthetic pattern that appeals to the eye. It expresses unity in the art form. The composition of the colour pattern creates a unity of design peculiar to itself and the culture of the people. It gives elegance to a personality who is dressed in it (Fanyam “Design Technologies” 28). This reason could have necessitated it to be adopted by the Bura ethnicity in contemporary times because of their close appearance in making and form, between the Bura and Tiv people.

More so, there is an aggressive market production of ‘anger’ currently in Tiv society, which could make any indigenous group seeking to use it, to adopt it easily. The aggressive market production may not be unconnected with the increase in demand by other ethnic groups. The attempt to share/adopt the Tiv costume as a cultural identity may also be interpreted as an attempt to re-unite origination ties that have been traced historically from the same location (Congo and Cameroon hills). This statement can stand, so long as there are historical traces of migration of Tiv and Bura people from Congo or/and Cameroon hill areas. It is important to emphasize that increase in technological materials is a catalyst to climate change. Industrialization has increased

new costume and property designs within Nigerian cultures. There are notable fabrics bearing traditional motifs that have been produced from China and imported into the Nigerian space for sale. Most domestic properties used by the Tiv and Bura people today are a shift from the traditional materials, formerly identified with the people to industrial technology like gas cylinders, electric yam pounding machines, grinding machines and the likes even in villages.

Conclusion

The article has demonstrated that climate change in Nigeria has effectively created a substantial and expanding human population movement, causing an expansion in design concepts due to ecological effects. What this means is that design properties and costumes that are peculiar to a given ethnicity could enhance an actor's action by defining their origin or locality. However, there are traditional variations and similarities in the use of design properties and costumes in contemporary times, due to climate change among the Tiv and Bura people arguably have common locational climatic conditions and design properties in their cultural diversity. In recent times, more developments in costume design have also shown that because of the resemblance of the Bura traditional cloth and the Tiv 'anger', the cloth has been adopted for use by most Bura people in their traditional circles instead of navy blue (dark blue or indigo) and white stripes. This correlation of design properties and costume between Bura and Tiv people makes only language and distance, a diversifying factor. Otherwise, their shared characteristics bonded by climate changes, have made both cultures united visually in the performance of life. In creating a performance setting for a Bura and Tiv people, the distinguishing lines in contemporary times will not be based on costumes and properties but linguistic language structures and names. By the commonality of shared design concepts, climate change has increased creativity, accessibility, saved time, energy, and cost of consumption as well as increased durability of stage design materials.

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**DRAMATIC LITERATURE AS INSTRUMENT FOR PEACEBUILDING: AN
ULTRA READING OF AHMED YERIMA'S *PARI* AND FEMI OSOFISAN'S
WOMEN OF *OWU***

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Abstract

Nigeria's social environment is crime-infested as crime is elevated above virtue with criminals having a field day. Violent crimes such as kidnapping, assassination, armed violence and other acts of terrorism are committed with impunity. The nation's instability nurture high growth of insurgency terror groups in the society and other conflict related issues. Thus, this lack of socio-political, religious and ethnic harmony in the society has put a lot of communities into conflict and war situations. This generally can be linked to ignorance, negligence and lack of awareness. This study points at the impacts of dramatic literature in creating effective awareness on the need for environmental stability and peace, as drama affects individuals, physically and psychologically in all ramifications. Hinging on Pierre Duhem's Instrumentalism Theory (IT), this article X-rays the potency of dramatic works in creating awareness and making adequate corrections that could bring unity, peace and stability in society, using Yerima's *Pari* and Osofisan's *Women of Own* as textual referents of analysis and discussion. The paper adopts the historicocritical and content analysis methods of research to engage the selected texts. The conclusion reached is that peacebuilding is the responsibility of every member of society that demands eschewing insincerity, lawlessness, social insecurity/inequalities and religious extremism.

Keywords: Dramatic literature, Conflict, IT, Peacebuilding, Stability

Introduction

The existence of drama depends on its ability to reflect the transitions that characterize human society and also educate the people. Looking at the relevance of drama in human society, it's quite enormous. Drama has been a means of creating awareness, pushing propaganda, debating controversial issues, remembering important events and people. Eneke claims that, "drama has been an 'instrument of socialization and cultural validation, drama is used to address issues that touch the whole community

and to ensure that the messages are understood and internalized by the members of the community” (7). In dramatic literature, the depiction of character, feeling, action, thought and setting must be established through language. The voice of dramatists is deciphered in choices of words that serve as agency for the characters; they create characters that talk to the reader and make great impact in him through the play.

Through dramatic literature, the dramatist reflects on conflict issues, oppression, anger and disillusionment of their present environment and seek to find solutions to various issues and other experiences through dramatic creativity. Hence, it is time for new generation dramatists to tackle unnecessary ethnic, religious and socio-politically inspired violence and conflict situations through awareness and information that can foster positive attitudes and tolerance. It is therefore, on this premise that the objective of this study is mainly pointed towards laying bare the efforts of two Nigerian dramatists – Ahmed Yari and Femi Osofisan in this regard, with the intent of propelling other existing and upcoming dramatists to key into the noble act of creating works that can engender national-environmental stability, peace and security. It is only when the environment is stable and peaceful that artists including dramatists, can effectively and functionally practice their art cum trade. Beyond the dramatists, other disciplines/fields of endeavour would find it comfortable to operate optimally without obstructions in a peace environment. Hence, the need for scholars to engage works of this nature with the intention of fostering a peaceful environment.

The study adopts an eclectic approach of Historical and Dialectical research. Historical study entails the examination of historical events. During the process of determining the extent of historical events, historians may uncover multiple interrelated aspects that led to the occurrence of a certain event in a particular context of time and space. In order to comprehend social phenomena in the past as well as the present, historical studies uncover background information and emphasize some causal linkages of past occurrences. It suggests that by comprehending our past, we might improve our ability to see the dynamics of the present (National Open University of Nigeria [NOUN] 92). The study of communicative language in all its forms, including books, essays, newspaper stories and headlines, historical documents, speeches, advertisements, dramatic texts, and more, is possible through content analysis (NOUN 74). By reading and analysing texts, a researcher may quickly identify the key elements of social contact, relativity, and textual intervention—each of which is crucial to this study (NOUN 77).

On the other hand, by examining concepts and viewpoints, dialectical inquiry will help the study uncover realities contained within the texts under consideration. As it concentrates on the creation of new or innovative understanding, including the further dissemination of existing ones which are less understood or known, this technique of inquiry excludes all forms of hypothesis testing. It is completely the opposite of empirical research in this respect. Dialectical research is concerned with arguments and concepts created through adequate logic, whereas empirical research is primarily concerned with the analysis and interpretation of evidence. It can be used to solve various types of problems in a number of academic areas, including the arts and liberal studies, despite the fact that it is not a widespread technique of study (NOUN

81). Hence, its choice in combination with the former in arriving at plausible conclusions and suppositions from the study.

The Nigerian socio-political temperature has over the years continued to rise to an unbearable peak due to increase in terrorism and unprovoked violence on innocent people. The fight against terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and sectional insurgencies have not yielded any significant result as reports of killings of members of armed forces and innocent people are on news on daily basis. This has left many Nigerians devastated, hopeless, and disinterested even more in the oneness of the nation. Some Nigerians seem to have resigned themselves to fate, believing there is no option to hold on to, to keep afloat. Thus, the need to leverage on dramatic literature for creation of proper awareness and ethical re-orientation geared towards the sustenance of peace, tolerance and oneness which culminates in national security. In doing so, they will aid in building the sense of integrity and selflessness in individuals and society in general.

It is clear that dramatic works have been used to creatively point at facts, document issues and push towards lasting peace and stability. It also provides a framework of right and wrong perceptions and attitude expectations. Dramatic works are inevitable to human existence as they reflect almost every aspect of life, and point at the dangers and negative implications of such disorganizing situations like terrorism, war and any violent conflict situation. Otite asserts that the Nigerian society is a social system compounded by contested demands on access to scarce resources especially in the political and economic fields. It is a society defined by natural cleavages and man-made conflicts. The natural membership of ethnic groups or occupational specialization threatened by expanding interest of other multiple users, provide grounds for the emergence of conflicts. The scale and dimension of conflicts vary according to the issues involved in relation to the culture concerned (138). Furthermore, accusations of victimization, neglect, oppression, dominance, exploitation, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism, and bigotry are a significant factor in the current ethno-religious disputes in Nigeria.

Over time, there is never a total agreement on how income, power, and status should be distributed among individuals and groups in any country. Additionally, there is no consensus on how to implement the required reforms and modifications. This is so that certain organizations' goals can be achieved while others are not, as different groups and people have different interests. This indicates that conflicts typically arise when underprivileged groups and individuals try to get a larger share of income and power or alter the prevalent values, norms, beliefs, or ideologies. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of ethno-religious confrontations that are currently being seen all throughout the nation in an effort to combat any perceived oppression, dominance, or marginalization. Important to notice is that Nigerian authorities have failed to create effective institutions, foster national unity, and advance what may be described as real economic progress, which has resulted in widespread poverty and unemployment. Conflicts of a communal, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic nature have now come to characterize Nigeria as a nation.

Given that Nigeria currently has a stock of poor individuals who warmonger as mercenary soldiers, poverty and unemployment have thus served as a nursery bed for various ethno-religious conflicts in the nation (Salawu 348). Therefore, a reconsideration of issues of security instability, violence and conflict resolutions while using dramatic works in creating a panacea can go a long way in this regard. This viewpoint is motivated by the debilitating impact of these aforementioned monsters on the psyche of the society. There is need to further the course of such works that redirect the attention of society on extreme need to foster ethnic, religious and tribal oneness, harmony and acceptance. This is what Yerima's *Pari* and Osofisan's *Women of Owu* stand for as these works depict recreation of life's experience in order to aid the society reflect on it positively and emulate ways of peace and social stability in our environment. These dramatic texts also argue for positive human attitudes and morals that can avert reoccurrences of such socio-political, economic and religious issues.

Theoretical Mooring

Pierre Duhem's Instrumentalism Theory is the thrust of this work. The theory has been relevant in a number of fields. In the field of arts, instrumentalism is basically concerned with the context of an art work rather than the structure and composition. Through the lens of instrumentalism, the best art works are those that convey a message or shape how we see the world. Instrumentalism posits that art is good when it functions as a tool to influence or change society (Ruiz and Woollard 322). Hence, the relevance of this theory to the paper can never be emphasized. As a result of instability and conflict situations, the Nigerian nation has been faced with increased rate of insecurities, agitations, riots, terrorism and high rate of poverty. Therefore, this paper points at how well creative dramatic works can be used as a communicative force and instrument to re-shape and re-direct the society towards national integration, stability and peace.

Dramatic Literature as Instrument for National Peace and Stability

Nigeria, in this contemporary period has been bedevilled with a number of challenges. It has faced with burning social issues such as corruption, tribalism, terrorism, kidnapping and other insecurity related activities. There has been increase of conflict situations and young groups that resort to the use of unconventional tactics of traditional warfare. This situation most times caused worrisome destruction of lives and properties in various parts of the nation. The psychological impact of terrorism is even stronger than the physical damage. In Nigeria, issues cum problems of unprovoked violence and terrorism have come from activities of different militant groups. Most of these organizations in different parts of the nation carryout series of kidnapping, murders, assassinations, jail break and coordinated bombings. Thus, it is necessary for the society to be enlightened or re-directed through drama. Such process enables the people to pay more attention to similar issues/situations, rethink, observe and emulate positive attitude. This can be possible through the impacts and effective motivations from the exposures, revelations and awareness nature of dramatic literature. The playwright through his dramatic expressions and creativity is not only

the eye of the society but also the trumpeter and indeed the heartbeat of the society. Corroborating this, Austin Anigala states that, Playwrights use drama as a medium of re-enacting prevailing issues in the society in a bid to instigate public debates and aimed at creating the foray for mind-rubbing awareness amongst the populace in order to trigger a positive communal quest for solution to varied societal maladies (285).

Dramatic literature has always been at the forefront as a vehicle of orientation and information to a given society. It requires an experience that is passed from the playwright to the reader. This goes with the feeling of mental and physical action. This is vital and impactful especially in this contemporary period where conflict, agitations and insecurity are on the increase within the society at large. The true impactful nature of dramatic literature consists in its exposure of contradictions viewed as such, in the reconciliation of the force of human action. This alternately strives to negate one another in their environmental issues and socio-political conflicts.

Furthermore, Nigerian playwrights like Wole Soyinka, Zulu Sofola, Ola Rotimi, Femi Osofisan, Esiaba Irobi, Emeka Nwabueze, Alex Asigbo, Uche Nwaozuzu among others, have over the years used an avalanche of socio-political, socio-economic, cultural events and situations to create plays that address the issues of nation's problems for better integration and national peace. Lucky Ukperi, argues that Nigerian dramatic literature stands at the forefront of literatures that highlight the nexus that exists between art and society. This interconnection continues to emerge through various styles and modes adapted by playwrights as they address socio-political and socio-economic neo realities in their environment (458).

Indeed, dramatic literature can make a vital difference in the context of the society in which they operate. It is a tool with the capacity to compel the resolution of situations, in such issues as sensitive as violent conflict situations. Dramatic dictions and plots should be constructed to feature prominently the need to promote unity, oneness, tolerance in ethnic, religion, and political relations. Thus, plays must be created to project themes that preach national integration, respect for other people's contrary views, opinion and religious beliefs. This in line with Anigala's thought that the dramatist should make sure that themes must be made to appreciate the beauty of the unity in diversity; projecting the multi-cultural, multilingual, and multi-ethnic nature of society that must be cherished as a unifying factor. Dramatic themes must be made to reform the police, other military and paramilitary work force to redeem public love and confidence in them (287).

This is very vital as at present, aggressive behaviours seem to be on the rise without adequate control. When the youths get deviated from the acceptable norms and values, various forms of social challenges arise. Without proper awareness such issues manifest into extremism, religious fanaticism, and other issues which develop to massive destruction of life and property. Hence, there should be more effort at making the people to appreciate the literary art which could effectively lead to positive re-direction and conscientization of the society. This clearly shows that dramatic works and theatre in general are powerful and effective means of solving issues and sustaining peace/stability, through the impactful nature, educational and informative functions of arts.

Pari

The play explores the form and pattern of agitation, terrorism and military that engulfs the Northern region. *Yerima* depicts the level of heart break and suffering faced by *Pari's* parents. The play *Pari* opens while *Pari's* mother emotionally laments the loss of her only daughter to kidnappers in her school. She prays and vows to do anything, including abandoning the Christian faith of which she had been a strong adherent, to have her only daughter restored back to her alive. In her hopelessness, she tried to switch to Islamic faith believing that the god of the religion would be more sympathetic to her worries and sufferings and answer her prayers. The play *Pari* revolves around the escape of one of the kidnapped Chibok School girls called *Hyelapari*, (*Pari* for short) through the assistance of her forced husband while in the detention camp of the Boko Haram insurgents. The adopted husband *Ibrahim*, for the safety of his own life escaped with *Pari*.

The plot takes an anti-climax dimension when suddenly *Hyelapari* shows up in her parent's home. *Pari* was returned home wrecked, physically and psychologically, and also a mother of one at early age. The long-term dream and aspirations of her parents shattered. Things got worse when suddenly the adopted husband *Ibrahim* shows up at *Pari's* parent's home. In the wreck that *Pari* has become, the only reality and hope she now knows is that emotional attachment to her child and husband (*Ibrahim*). All efforts by parents and relations of *Pari*, to stop her from leaving with *Ibrahim* again failed, she insists that they are both inseparable and can move on together in peace. *Pari* and the husband finally leave with their child, leaving her parents and other family relations in shock, hopeless and confused.

Pari, clearly is an emotional and heart touching dramatic work literally representing the common day to day life of people. The play shows the suffering, pains and untold trauma of violence, terrorism and conflict related situations for us to reflect on. It points to the level of dehumanization, rape, degradation and violent experiences to which the kidnapped school girls were subjected to. They can never be same having been disoriented by their horrible experiences and act of wickedness associated with instability and conflict situations. The play is a creative contribution towards bringing to fore the negative issues related to instability, war and terrorism, for a rethink and social adjustment that can foster more unity, stability and peace in society.

Women of Owu

The play established the combined forces of the armies of *Ijebu* and *Ife*. Two Yoruba kingdoms in the South-West of Nigeria, along with mercenaries recruited from *Oyo* refugees fleeing down from the Nigerian Savannah land, sacked the city-state, one of the most propitious and best organized of those times. The allied forces had attacked it with the pretext of liberating the flourishing market by *Apomu* from *Owu's* control. *Owu* in defence closed the gates of its formidable city walls, but it soon had to face the problem of drought when the rains stopped in the third year of siege. The allied forces in the seventh year finally entered the city of *Owu*, and it was all over. These allied forces, determined that the city must never rise again, reduced the place to complete

rubble and set fire to it. They killed all the male, adults and children and carried the females away into slavery, Owu was never rebuilt.

This notwithstanding, the victorious army eventually ran into trouble with the gods and goddesses. In their effort and determination to wipe off Owu people completely from the face of the earth, they incited the anger of the deities whose shrines had been violated. The deities inflicted on the returning allied armies' terrible pains and sufferings. For many years, they wander in the bush, pounded by lightning, thunder bolts, and self-inflicted wars. They were confused and ending up miserably in the stomach of wild animals. The goddess Lawumi, whose shrine was burnt, says that all hope is not lost for Owu, it will surely rise again but not as a single city but little community, that now constitute the Egbas, a Yoruba tribe in present day Ogun State.

Peacebuilding Lessons from the *Pari* and *Women of Owu*

In line with the objective of the paper which is essentially to draw lessons from the creative narratives of Osofisan and Yerima in view of fostering peace within the Nigerian society and peradventure any other clime threatened with loss of peaceful co-existence. Analysis of the two text whose synopsis are provided in the preceding section would be unavoidably imperious in this segment. *Pari* is an example of contemporary dramatic works trying to bring to notice the dangers, dehumanization and negative effects of religious, ethnic or politically inspired conflicts on the nation. The issues of terrorism, kidnapping and corruption have been the cog in the wheel of the Nation's stability, growth and development for years. Yerima's *Pari*, tries to reflect on the nation's terrorism history wherein more than 250 innocent school girls of the Girls Secondary School, Chibok, a village in Borno state, were violently kidnapped by Boko Haram insurgents to an unknown location inside the vast Sambisa Forest. Sanni Oluyemisi, states that "In northern Nigeria, Boko Haram terrorist actions and activities have resulted in the deaths of numerous individuals, the destruction of communities and displacement of families, closure of schools and abduction of teenage girls as part of their fight against western education" (51). Therefore, it would not be improper to enunciate that lack of peace is man-made. These terror activities are perpetuated by human beings as reflected in the submission of the Chorus Leader's in *Women of Owu*.

Chorus Leader: No, stop wailing and brace yourselves my dear women. The lesson clear. It's us, not the gods, who create wars. It's us, we human beings, who can kill it.
(15)

This same view is reiterated in *Pari* as Ama says,

Ama: ...when they broke into the Chibok school, dragged those poor girls out, loaded them into trucks and drove them out like prized princes .(15)

Hence it becomes imperative to ensure that ways be devised to reorient and the minds of the actors whose actions are blameworthy in the loss of peace in the society. Though, efforts are being made by various individuals, government and non-governmental agencies, the results are reflective of the need to diversify approaches to attain sustainable peace. In addition, lawlessness breeds insecurity that results in absence of peace and order. Affirming this point while reacting to Anlugba's inquest

into the state of Owu, Lawuni states that, ...it was a law, wasn't it? Laid down by your royal uncle and my son Sango. That no Yoruba should ever sell other Yoruba into slavery! But the Owus would not listen! Flagrantly at Apomu, they broke the law, and they only way to stop them was by force (19).

In this case, there is no vacuum of law, but a wrong self-seeking choice that disregards social cohesion leads to a reaction that leaves others with no option but to resist any form of subjugation and defiance by the others involved. This results into what an avoidable conflict. Laws cum regulations are meant to keep the society and individuals in check, which contributes to rein in several extremities and when enforced, help to promote peaceful co-existence. Strikingly, Yeri's effort does not neglect this observation when Luke laments that, "the dreaded boys attacked, burnt and killed thousands of our church members in Mubi and Uba. The burnt down churches... killed even the pastors" (19). The boys here are symbols of the absence of rule of law and order. Where individuals dish out despicable treatments to the extent of flagrantly committing arson and murder without restraint and fear of being caught up by the law. Thus, creating a picture of larger-than-life individuals who are above the law. Regrettably, whenever and wherever this is prevalent, there must be obvious absence of peace. In this regard, Anushiem opines that there is no question that peaceful existence, security and the rule of law are inextricably linked. The goals of security and the rule of law are maintaining peace and public order.

Here, public order refers to a prerequisite, here there is equitable enforcement of the law, protection of people's rights, liberties, and property, a decrease in violence, and the pursuit of criminal activity through a system of due process (18). This leaves a big question for those entrusted with the tasks of maintaining and enforcing law and order in the Nigerian state as incidents of this nature have continued without abating. In addition, the texts depict that peace building advocacy would end up a mirage when parties involved are unable to learn from the mistake of the past and thereafter seek means to correct those errors that breed and culminate in societal breakdown. Besides, these texts provide that as a result of the breakdown, the victims are left with traits of negative psychological impact which is a very important experience that must not be neglected. This is palpable in the Chorus' description of the Erelu's state of mind after the invasion of Owu. They say, "She's out of her senses. Insanity is the during of misery" (28). Even Erelu notes same in the case of her daughter and this is manifest as she says, "Ah poor you! So, you can be so easily frightened by a little fire! What you think is a human body set ablaze is just my daughter Orisaye, running around with a torch. The war has affected her badly and she's... well, no longer in control of her senses" (26). Same is reflected in Yerima's *Pari* as Ama says,

I feel all alone and afraid tonight. Where is my God? Where is your face, God? ... I don't believe God exists anymore. He must be really angry with us. See how he allows evil to triumph. Even on the day we chose to honour and remiond him of our plight, he allowed them to kill Sister Vero's young husband. Get up, my dear husband, don't waste your supplications. God has since walked away from here, and our madness manifests. All hope is lost on Him now (22)

The absence of peace is most times manifest in violent conflicts with wanton destruction of lives and properties which leaves a bitter taste in the mouth of victims with examples herein Ama, Orisaye and Erelu. It does not end there, as some may not be able to recover from the trauma which leaves them in a state of psychological hiccup. As seen with these individuals, there's loss of mental coordination with one questioning her Christian faith and both becoming shadows of themselves. One tactful but roughly the most socially neglect lesson from the creative submission of Yeriam and Osofisan is that the need to soothe wounded inflicted on the victims of insecurity. Where lip service is paid to creating and implementing measures to thorough mollify these victims, deadly revenge becomes inevitable. The ensuing conversion from the news of the burning and killing of churches and members in Mubi and Uba reflects this.

Hannah: Those who killed him said that he was slaughtered after he was asked to recite Faiha, and instead, he recited the Lord's prayer.

Tada: Jesus!

Luke: Right there, he was killed.

Ama: I swear, the whole world has gone mad.

Tada: When will Christians fight back? (19)

Tada's opinion mirrors the state of mind of many who have suffered losses in the absences of peace especially the lives of loved ones. This idea is not lost in Osofisan's writing as Orisaye says,

Orisaye: ... To his household, to his city and his people that the wreck the have caused here will seem in the end like a joyous feast. I will destroy them totally, totally, without remorse! They will rue the day they set out to conquer the city of Owu! All our dead will be avenged! (29).

Erelu's effort at dissuading him is met with a pill of stiff resistance coated with anger and vengeance as he further says, Orisaye: And I'll watch his blood flow, gurgling like fresh wine from the palm tree! I will be singing, mother! Then of course they will seize me, and hack me to death! Ah what happiness is waiting for me! (29). They see them as victims of a failed system where justice may never be served if left to the hands of social systems in-charge of doing so. Hence the resort to self-help becomes imminent which is driven by a strong desire to obtain recompence by taking laws into their own hands at whatever cost.

The propensity of the belief that the family is the nucleus of the society in Africa is not in doubt even with the current wave of post-normal tendencies, hence the need to ensure that it is preserved through peace building and sustainability. Unfortunately, when peace is forced to take a time off from the society, families and social organizations are left unrecognizable as an aftermath of such experience. Thus, leading to complete absence of propriety. This is what Cheche sees as he describes the state of Tada's family saying, "I heard it all. How you left the Church and became a Muslim. How Tada, your poor husband turned to drinking again. The fights... the quarrels..." (23). Therefore, one sure way for any society to be free of breeding disillusioned people in the state of Tada and Ama is to engage in all practices that

engender peace. Reasons for this all not far-fetched. From this above scenario, disillusioned persons are not in control of their minds which is the generation point of inactions, actions and reactions.

They are unpredictable and could resort to any ploy that tends to agree with their state of mind at any given moment without recourse to what may be the consequence. When families that make-up the society are forced to this state via the absence of peace, no force may be able to manage the chaos that could ensue from it. One other lesson that could be derived from the artistic master pieces under study is that lack of sincere and equitable social security programmes that are designed to cater for the needs of the average citizen is tantamount to anarchy and social cohesion

Ibrahim while narrating the reasons for his foray into terrorism points to this as he says, It started the night my mother was buried. I regretted her death more. I balmed myself for her death because it wasn't that I was away when she died. I was there...useless... but I was just a dead person there. She needed food and medicine... and none was within my reach... so I watched her... with tear-filled eyes. I watched life ebb out of her veins... then her eyes closed... her heart stopped beating... and she was gone. After her burial, I tried to find a taste to my mouth. I did not cry; I could not cry and I did not even try. Even if I had, there would be no tears. My friends, Zaki and Yakubu, had begged me to join them (46).

This brings to mind the current state of living of most Nigerians who are reported to be living under a dollar per day and wallowing in extreme poverty. Ucha contends that severe poverty is a common occurrence in Nigeria. A lack of clothing, food, education, and other necessities is depicted as a reality. Extremely impoverished individuals are so devoid of the bare needs in life that one may wonder how they manage to survive. Poverty in Nigeria is linked to several consequences and inadequacies. Nigeria's high infant mortality and short life expectancy are indicators that one of the main repercussions of poverty is poor health. Because they lack access to quality healthcare and basic facilities, Nigerians living in poverty encounter a number of health problems (47), and oftentimes, they are made to pay the ultimate price of death. Ibrahim's scenario depicts that when people are hungry, peace cannot be guaranteed. In the case that their state of hunger is met with lack of health care that leaves them with death staring to their faces, a response usually not far from being elicited. Responses in this situation are usually not palatable for the government and governed especially when there seems to be way out of their plight.

Okwuwada submits that, neglect and economic isolation lead to dissatisfaction, which will lead to anarchy and mayhem if policy and the legal system are not used to manage it. Nigeria is a prime example of a nation divided along so many lines. Certain unscrupulous mentalities have exploited this separation to commit atrocities, using this as a front for their heinous deeds. Nationwide hostility and violence have increased as a result of this (27). Ibrahim may not have fallen to whims and caprices of Zaki and Yakubu if his mother had not been lost to death as a result of lack of medical care. The state of anarchy being the opposite of unattained or un-sustained peace, it becomes imperative to consider another valued inclination of Yerima that insincerity of political actors, security agents and government in general fuels disharmony and conflict in the

society. This the playwright imbeds into Tada's conversation with Ibrahim thus: "and the government? They deny knowing about you..." (48). The following response reveals the underlaying fact that must not be de-emphasized.

Ibrahim: (*Gives a wild laugh*) ...The irony is that they created us, nurtured us for their own good at first... and after, they dumped us. Where did we get the arms? Where? From them, the military and black. Where did we get the money, we spend? Who fueled our anger? Who? ... See how well they lie now that they do not know how to quench the fire, they selfishly lit. Pit (48)

Although Ibrahim mentions the illegal proliferation of arms as a source of weapons for terrorists and criminals, however he does not leave out the complicity of government, security agents and political actors in the breakdown of peace in the society. Closely related to this is unchecked religious extremism which permeates every facet of the society like Nigeria. It is impossible to separate the nation's socioeconomic and ethno-religious unrest between the North and the South from the threat of violent crime that faces it today (Okwuwada 27). In this regard while expressing remorse reveals how many taken on regrettable actions that lead to breakdown of law and order as a result of religious fanaticism. He says, "pity. I am sorry. A thread of sacred faith lies which I believed would save me on judgement day derailed my sense and unwittingly, I became a harbinger of death... But with each passing day, it slowly dawned on me that I was the fool. A wild murderous joker... stupid fool" (51). The moment different ethnic groups with diversified interests in Nigeria begin to appreciate their various interests, religion, and cultural values to such an extent that such various interests receive peaceful acceptance and understanding. This process will be vital and easy, for the nation to develop, adapt or evolve a national unity/integration that will foster stability in the society. It is this peaceful co-existence, tolerance and understanding of one another, that the two plays *Pari* and *Women of Owu* want the society to embrace.

Conclusion

The key outcome of the ultra-reading of these dramatic texts is that lack of peace is the creation of constituents of every given society. Conversely, for peace to be built and sustained in the society values such as tolerance, trust, oneness and many other right values as imbibed in the plays under review if sustained over time, its impact on the audience will positively change the situation in the society. Leaders of religious, political and ethnic groups should stress on the importance of peace, unity and integration in their deliberations, teachings, preaching and advocacy as collective commitment to the need of one another and social stability. Within the education sector, plays that navigate the mind toward national unity and peaceful co-existence should top the list of selections for academic productions. Dramatic works should be used to incorporate and inculcate the necessity of tolerance, unity and peace in other to reduce the barest minimum vices that robs society of peaceful co-existence.

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PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY/AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: KULGUL COMMUNITY TFD EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Community/agricultural development has remained a key agenda in the development plans for both state and national governments. Beyond the national landscape, the United Nations (UN) through the sustainable development goals (SDGs) gives as its first three goals: the eradication of poverty; zero hunger; as well as good health and well-being. These goals justify the priority attention that must be given to community and agricultural development. While these goals are key in the actualization of agricultural development, what becomes an issue is to what extent practical steps that ensure sustainable agricultural development is achieved are taken, especially among rural communities that are most affected. This paper, therefore, examines the role of theatre for development (TfD) as a community-based practice for enhancing rural participation in sustainable agricultural development. It specifically uses the account of the TfD experience in Kulgul community of Billiri Local Government Area (LGA), Gombe State, as a point of departure for analysis and discussion. The study recommends greater commitment in local community empowerment through TfD to drive community action plans (CAPs) for sustainable agricultural development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Agriculture, CAPs, Kulgul community, Sustainable Development, TfD.

Introduction

Based on the vital need to provide food and related commodities, agricultural development remains at the centre of developmental agenda for local communities in Nigeria (Ufiobor 7; Nwajuba 45; Oluwaseyi 2). Even beyond the national landscape, same can be said of continental and global agendas for development. This all-important need for agricultural development means that efforts must continuously be made to see to the growth and development of the agricultural sector. Unlike the momentous gains experienced in the developed countries of the world, Nigeria has been struggling to advance in the agricultural sector, especially in local communities. Several challenges have led to the unstable growth experienced in developing the agricultural sector in Nigeria, particularly in the local communities. The problem can be categorised into direct and indirect challenges. The direct challenges include those that directly affects farming activities such as: lack of modern technologies, lack of fertilizers, unserviceable machineries, food processing issues, education, dormant research institutes, technical and financial support issues, among others. The indirect or remote

challenges that are non-agricultural in nature but which hamper agricultural development include: poor infrastructures, lack of social amenities, insecurity, community conflicts, among others.

Amidst these challenges, agriculture remains the preoccupation of local and rural dwellers in Nigeria and thus the issue is on how to ensure that rural communities are able to surmount these challenges (Omoera “Community Radio” 256). It suffices to say that the gains of agricultural development should include visible rural community development. This is quite justifiable in the sense that the sites for agricultural production in Nigeria are mostly rural communities. However, the rural communities where we depend on providing agricultural produce have continued to grapple with challenges and setbacks such as insecurity, illiteracy, lack of social amenities like good healthcare system, quality basic education, water and good roads, etc. (Ighodalo, Jacob and Justine 650). There have been efforts made to establish different agricultural policies and programmes that to help drive rural community and agricultural development in Nigeria through various government programmes like the National Accelerated Food Programme (NAFPP), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution (GR), National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), River Basin Development Authority (RBDA), Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) and The Growth Enhancement Support (GES) Scheme.

These programmes which successive governments have established since independence are yet to achieve sustainable agricultural development. In other words, a form of development that ensures that the community for which the development is meant are able to own it, give their active participation and expect a future from it. Gumh further reveals that sustainable agricultural development ensures that community members “...remain consistent in their drive towards ensuring food production, without compromising the chances of the future generations to provide for themselves” (211). While pointing to a very key issue affecting sustainable agricultural and community development in Nigeria, Daneji claims that:

In many of the programmes, development planners assumed both the problem and solutions and forced them on the target beneficiaries whose programmes are often times at variance with the needs of the people. This often results in conflicts, wasting of scarce resources, time and energy and sad enough the affected people at the end of it all are worse off. (105-106)

The need to engender active community participation for sustainable agricultural development in communities will thus require communication approaches that propel community actions for sustainable change. Theatre for development (TfD) examined in this study, is aimed at analysing how the processes in TfD as a method of participatory development can engender active community participation for sustainable agricultural and community development. TfD in its conception and practice is intended for community development (Omoera “Theatre for Development” 45). Issues as affecting local community form the thrust of this form of theatre practice (Idebe 207). “TfD is a non-formal designed approach involving the arts/elements of theatre, with emphasis on active participation, critical consciousness and dialogue for addressing development issues” (Idebe and Alheri 83).

More than exhibiting the aesthetical value of theatre arts and forms, it employs performance that provokes collective community discussion for development. Asante and Yirenkyi remark that "...it is an approach of using theatre to enhance development in the real world" (595). Boh claims further that the distinguishing feature of theatre for development and other genres is the active participation of people in creating their own culture rather than depending on outsiders. It creates messages that reflect the reality of the people as viewed by them. This involves analysis of issues that lead to change of attitudes through self-examination, situation analysis by the people themselves and not persuasion or order from above or outsiders. Through theatre for development, people are enabled to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions and then plan, act and evaluate issues affecting them (22). The intention here is to get rural dwellers to operate within a communication pattern and frame that assures active involvement. It is expected that rural dwellers exploring the Tfd communication approach will be able to become more stimulated and motivated to dialogue the issues that has been brought forward through drama/theatre processes for deliberation and resolution.

As a community focused process, Tfd projects manifest in different forms but ensure that a clearly worked-out process is taken to engage the community. Ayegba states that in many ways and at several sites the practice manifests basic attributes. These include but not exclusive of research and data collection, data analysis and prioritization, story creation and improvisation, rehearsals, community performance, evaluation-post performance discussions sometimes leading to community action plans (CAP) and follow-ups (294). These stages mentioned above may vary from one Tfd project to the other depending on the peculiarity of the project, howbeit, the basic principles in terms of the process still remains similar for all Tfd experiences. Mohammed and Ihidero remark further that:

As a tool that can easily be adaptable to facilitate diverse community-based issues and needs Tfd lends itself as a 'thermostat' of change. As a thermostat, it is capable of initiating sustainable change while its methods can be changed themselves in the process of initiating development...the potentialities of Tfd have been tested in theatre-in-education, drama-in-education, voters' education and electioneering, reproductive health, communication agriculture and extension services, among other safe spaces. Diverse mixed methods have been used to facilitate the development of theatre. (98)

The ultimate goal is to see that springing from the Tfd experiences are community actions which have been democratically arrived at by community members and for which they will be determined to collectively address (Omoera "Theatre for Development" 48; Idebe and Boyi 378; Ikyagh 366; Asante 28). It is in this sense that Tfd become a veritable tool for advancing sustainable agricultural development. This study uses an account of the Tfd experience done in Kulgul community of Billiri Local Government Area, Gombe State to exemplify the role of Tfd in facilitating sustainable agricultural and community development. The project was facilitated by the 400 level students of English Department, Gombe State University, Gombe, and coordinated by

the course lecturer, Dr. Abel Idebe and his team. It was carried out from November 2021 to February 2022.

Entering Kulgul Community

To begin, selected students visited the community leaders with a letter of introduction on what their aim was. The community fully welcomed the idea and were ready to receive the students. Afterwards a follow-up visit was done together with the lead lecturer Dr. Abel Idebe where different logistics and preparations were discussed.



Departmental Students and Community Leaders in Kulgul

The students and coordinating lecturers arrived the community on the 29th of November, 2021. They were ushered to the Dakachi's (head) of the community palace by Ahmadu Matata who is the town crier. He was blowing a flute named 'Lanse' also known as 'Busa' in Hausa language announcing our arrival to the community. The community head in the person of Mr. Danladi Magaji Musa said the community members are very excited to have us around and that they are very ready to work with us. After the courtesy call, the students did a transect walk around the community to familiarize themselves with members and places around it. They were guided by Miss Hassana Nakuru, one of the women organisation leaders.

A Brief History of Kulgul Community

Based on our findings, the Kulgul community was founded in 19th century in the year 1881 by a warrior called Orin (Lau Tando), a Tangale by ethnicity. He descended from Kumana, Tanglan (Kufai) of Kulkulun Kilang. After he had settled there, he went back to Kumana and invited his friend (Fotena), the friend came along with his wife and settled in Kulgul. Orin and Fotena were all farmers and at the same time hunters. The major ethnicity in the community is Tangale of Tanglan, there are also other minor ethnic groups like Fulani and Wurkun. The major religion practiced there is Christianity but there are few Muslims and Traditionalists. The community is known for its farming occupation. By their claim, they can feed the whole Tangale land but lack the necessary support.

In terms of community development, the community built a dispensary in 1993, this dispensary was later taken over by the government and made a Primary Health Care Centre (PHCC). However, they lack the required facilities and manpower which is seriously affecting them as a community. Western education was brought through the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) to the community. This body built two classrooms and an office; the school was commissioned in 1948 which was then referred to as Kulgul Transfer School. Another classroom was built by the missionary in 1951. The government later took over the school after the Nigerian Civil War. In 2007 the community got a junior secondary school. Apart from the petty trades and small-scale businesses around, the community is mainly agrarian.

Community Findings

The students were divided into different groups, with each group assigned to visit different areas. The areas visited include: Tulwampe, Fabaure, Pobariki, Lakul-kal, Bare and Bassa. The students were assisted by some youth members of the community to carry out the research. The following are the main findings from the community: *Lack of water*: There was mass complain about insufficient and bad water supply. Despite the community members efforts to salvage the situation, they were discouraged by the incompetence of their political leaders. The lack of water as complained by a number of them is seriously affecting their community life as a whole. *Lack of Fertilizers*: The farmers complained about the high cost of fertilizers which restricts what they plant. They said that they are able to produce bumper harvest but they lack the necessary support. *Road accidents*: Another general complain was the frequent occurrence of accident due to reckless driving on the main road. Jauro John of Tulawampe commented on this situation, he said ‘the road is as sharp as knife’. This was further proven by the testimonies of other community members who said gravels are sometimes removed from the casualties of the accidents.

Poor healthcare facilities: The community members also complained of poor and inadequate healthcare facilities such as insufficient beds, medication and most importantly the absence of health personnel. One of the respondents said there was one time that in a particular hospital, patients were attended by a cleaner who receives instructions on how to administer medication through phone call. The community members complained about how they are always referred to Kashere or Billiri for further medical attention over minor cases. Although, one of the hospitals was the efforts of the community members formerly known as a dispensary, it was not even made any better even after the government took over the welfare of the hospital. The community leader Mr. Danladi Magaji noted that the consistent issues emanating from healthy living has severely affected their productivity especially in their farming. *Lack of educational facilities and resource persons*: They complained about inadequate school teachers and instructional materials. One of the groups reported that a whole school had only three teachers while in another school, a single text book is used for three different classes, primary three, four and five.

Other issues that were reported include: negligence of the community members towards entrepreneurship, this was traced to lack of adequate awareness. Cases of

abuse of drug and local beer among farmers and some youth, were reported. Open defecation was also reported and this could be traced to the negligence towards building toilets. All of these issues formed for the community a comprehensive detailing of the issues that affect them and their productivity, especially in the area of their main preoccupation which is farming.

Community Rehearsals and Story Creation

Having gathered data on the issues affecting the community, the students alongside members of the community who assisted them decide to create a drama that will touch on the key issues that the community have identified. Secondary school students and those who came around (mainly youths) during rehearsals also picked interest in playing roles and giving their suggestions. The drama after different suggestions came up with the following scenes: The first scene presents a pregnant woman whose husband is a farmer and was arriving from his farmland looking frustrated and drunk at the same time. He was so drunk to the extent that he could not help her even when she was passing through labour, she was rather helped by her neighbours and other women who heard her wailing for help while. The second scene presents a hospital with inadequate facilities and a nurse who finds it difficult to take care of many patients at the same time; this is because she is the only one in the hospital. As she was trying to attend to the pregnant woman, some men brought in some accident victims who on their way from their farm had road accident and were seriously bleeding. The nurse was very confused and with no doctor around she quickly told them to go to the local government headquarters in Billiri or Kashere in Akko LGA.

The third scene presents some community members at the local beer parlour discussing how best they can supplement and better their farming activities. They were talking to themselves about the high cost of fertilizer, lack of buyers of their produce and the need to be security conscious. The fourth scene presents a mother and children, she wakes them up from sleep to go to school, and others go to fetch water while others go to farm. The children complained of how dirty the water is while those going to farm complained of how their planting is not so productive due to lack of fertilizer, those going to school complained of inadequate teaching facilities and other challenges they face at school. The fifth scene which is the last, presents a teacher teaching primary five, four, and three students at the same time, due to lack of enough teachers and inadequate teaching materials. In the course of the scenario building/rehearsals, the excitement of community members to play roles showed that the issues been talked about were those they relate with and that truly capture the issues as they affect them.

Community Performance and Post-Performance Discussions

Before the commencement of the performance which was titled ‘Yadkiwa Tam Kong’ meaning desire for change in Tangale language, some group of community dancers with some students in participation gave some cultural display. The masters of ceremonies (MC) in the person of Abiuda handled the microphone to make sure the programme is well organised. The performance took place in the open field within the primary school playground. It was well attended to by members and leaders of the

community, despite the fact that there was a sad incident of a teacher who died the previous day out of illness. Outside the traditional dance performance, the primary school pupils presented a song and some recitations. The next was the main performance which the participating community members and student facilitators have prepared.



Cultural Display during Community Performance

The audience watched with rapt attention and were quite responsive and reactive while the drama played out. At the end of the play, one of the community members who featured in the play asked the audience what could be the solutions to their problems in the community and different persons responded suggesting different ways to address the challenges of the community. The first person advised the community on how they can avoid drinking dirty water by boiling it and allowing it to get cold before drinking. The second person advised the community to engage in entrepreneurship in order to reduce the rate of idleness among the community members especially the youth. The third person advised the community people most especially the youths who are on social media platforms to take pictures of the challenges they have such as lack of drinkable water, lack of fertilizer, bad road condition, and so on, it might reach someone or bodies who can render help. He also noted that they can help the community employ the use of social media to sell their farm products.

One of the women leaders, Ms Hassana Nakuru, stood up to express her profound gratitude to the lecturer and students for the impactful visit to the community. She stated that ‘of course these are all our challenges but with your coming i believe that we are ready for change’. Mr. Allan who is the headmaster of the primary school also said ‘indeed there is need for better and improved school instructional materials, our children are not finding easy at all even though we are all managing to get the best’. He also talked about the community needing support in terms of selling their agricultural goods as well as the frequent accident that occurred due to rough driving on the road which needs to be worked on.

The lead lecturer, Dr. Abel Idebe stood up and addressed the community; he made known his gratitude to the Dakachi (head) of the community and his leadership for accepting the students' request to carry out their field work in the community. The lecturer commended all participants particularly those who have been making efforts towards community development. The lecturer equally expressed his profound gratitude to all those who worked with the students and contributed to the success of the performances. The Dakachi of Kulgul was the last speaker at the event. He expressed his joy towards the coming of students to their community and said this is something that has never happened before in the community and that it has seriously motivated them. Flowing from the community research and performance/post-performance discussions, the community members drew up a community action plans (CAPs).

Community Action Plans

The community action plans were as follows: the community should find ways to contribute to buy fertilizers in bulk and sell for subsidised rates for community farmers. Community members should venture into small/medium scale entrepreneurship that can complement their farming occupation. The community should form the habit of boiling the water or use safeguards to purify their drinkable water. The community should mobilise to get boreholes in the community. Community youths should place bumps and stones on the roads in order to reduce over speeding. Parents should not be discouraged by the negligence of the government towards their educational development. They should tirelessly sponsor the education of their children no matter the cost. The youths of the community should utilise the social media platform to promote the agricultural produce of their local community as well as amplify their challenges, as it may attract the attention of relevant bodies or agencies willing to render help.

Follow-Up

After about three months, the lecturer and some students revisited the community to appraise how far they are able to address some of the issues raised from the initial programme done in the community. Although this time around, the head of the community was not on seat, we met with some of the community elders and youth who were very pleased to welcome us. They once again expressed how very pleased they were to see how committed we are to the course of advancing their community. They showed us some development which they have been able to achieve within two months. The first was the creating of speed breaks along the main road. They also said after the visit, the community has decided to pull resources monthly to target the needs of agriculture especially in the area of purchasing fertilizers, as well as addressing issues on health, water and education. They told us that they have started regular provision of water purifier for the water which the children are drinking in the school.

They also mentioned that through the awareness created by social media they are currently working with one of the undergraduate students who participated in the project to get help from a non-governmental organisation who are into agricultural

empowerment for youth and women living in rural communities. There were also plans from the community to have a borehole each in two different locations of the community. From the above recounting of Kulgul TfD experience one will expressly note the conjugality that theatre possesses with community development. Abah rightly states that: there is a mutual connection of benefits between theatre and development. Theatre tells development stories. Beyond telling stories, theatre interrogates development. In its agenda of changing perspectives, it also sets agenda for development. And it is a vehicle through which communities perform their own issues and experiences, which are developmental in nature (25). More than exploring drama and theatre to tell and perform the stories, TfD leaves the community with an experience. One that ignites and pushes their resolve to toe paths of social transformation and development that fundamentally springs from within.

Conclusion

The study examined the deployment of TfD in agricultural development/community development, using Kulgul in Billiri LGA of Gombe State, as a reference point. It uses the case study to give an understanding on the vital role of TfD in propelling and advancing comprehensive approach to empowering local communities to secure their occupational futures and means of livelihood. More than examining the issues from just the narrow view of targeting how their agricultural needs can be met alone, it broadly looks at other socio-economic and cultural factors which equally have consequences on their agricultural productivity. This holistic method of addressing the issues of rural community agricultural development provides some fresh perspectives which TfD as a tool for researching communities offers. The Kulgul community having had the opportunity to address other related key social issues such as health, water, entrepreneurship, youth, transport, security, education and leadership that directly or indirectly affect their agrarian culture/development, have enabled them actualise pathways to sustainable community social change. It has also triggered collaborations and interventions, all of which are very critical for sustainable agricultural/community development.

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YOUTHS AND SOCIAL VICES: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF DRUG ADDICTION IN *SWEET-SWEET CODEINE*

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Abstract

The campaign against drug addiction has taken different dimensions in various countries of the world. Nigeria seems to be battling with different shades of social vices that are ravaging its most promising talents, the youths. This study looks at the relationship and ripple effects of social vices and thus, evaluates BBC documentary film, *Sweet-Sweet Codeine* (2018). Moored in Social Responsibility Media Theory (SRMT), the study uses descriptive and content analysis modalities of qualitative research to evaluate drug addiction among the youths in Nigeria. The article examines how the ‘Say No to Illicit Drug’ campaign can best be supported and the need for activists, campaigners and government to take responsibility and create robust documentary films, jingles and messages that are geared towards educating the populace about the devastating activities that could lead to drug abuse, trafficking and addiction, so that children and young adults can internalise and grow with the message. The study suggests that the youths’ attention could be diverted from drug abuse and addiction by interrogating the dangers of the social vice in more documentary films that would discourage their involvement in such unacceptable act. The energy of the young people could be channelled positively to champion this drive, advocating against drug addiction, drug abuse and, drug trafficking that affect not only their health, productive energy but the environment generally. The researcher, therefore, recommends that the government should utilise the opportunity offered by documentary films to push the campaign against social vices, including drug addiction.

Keywords: Documentary films, Drug addiction, Social vices, *Sweet-Sweet Codeine*, Youths.

Introduction

Social vices such as drug abuse, robbery, ‘419’ or ‘Yahoo-Yahoo,’ get-it-at-all-cost syndrome, money ritual, etc., are ravaging the sanctity of the Nigerian ecosystem when it comes to upholding high moral standards among the youths. Aniukwu and Onwumelu posit that: ...the composition of this social ideology of ritual killings for quick-money enterprise, as constantly projected to the Nigerian film audiences which could be argued are encouraging maladjusted behaviours among the youthful populations. Some of the films have shown how one can quickly become a billionaire through ritual and other dubious means without having to follow the right path, or engage in hard work, perseverance, integrity, competence, and credible endeavours (157-158).

Is there any effect that the mentioned vices may have on the progress of the country? To curtail the devastating effects of drug addiction orchestrated by the activities of some members of society, a new breed of individuals needs adequate

training, campaign and advocacy and commitment to see to its logical conclusion. The new breed is the Nigerian youth. The future belongs to the youths as such, it is imperative for the youths to be actively involved in campaigns fashioned towards addressing drug addiction. In the Nigerian ecosystem, where are the youths? Are the youths gainfully employed or engaged by the government or the drug addiction campaigners? We will be looking for the answers in the documentary film that formed the basis of discussion and analysis in this study: *Sweet-Sweet Codeine*.

Social vices are "deviant behavioural acts such as illicit sex, drug addiction, evil or immoral behaviour such as murder, examination malpractice, thuggery and such other criminal tendencies" (Apase and Yawe 3). This basically translates to acts that could be toxic to the society or the individual carrying them out. These acts are not peculiar to any particular race or geographical region. There are social menaces worldwide. Gangs in the United Kingdom are notorious for knife crimes as gun laws in the United Kingdom are stricter compared to their American counterparts. The House of Commons Library reports on the 30 September 2021 that:

The main offences involving a knife or sharp instrument recorded in the year ending March 2021 were assault with injury and intent to cause serious harm (49.4%) and robbery (36%). Chart 2.1 shows that there were more offences committed in all categories except for robbery in 2020/21 compared to 2010/11. This data excludes Greater Manchester Police Force (GMP). Since 2010/11, the total number of selected offences involving a knife or sharp instrument has increased by 27% and the number of threats to kill using knives or sharp objects has tripled (increasing by 252%). (8)

In Nigeria, which is the focus of this study, similar situations are seen as crimes such as internet fraud, thuggery, drug abuse and armed robbery are the order of the day. Cultism and cult wars take the place of gang conflicts and they are more prevalent in student populated vicinities. Films such as *Far from Home* (2022), *A Tribe Called Judah* (2024), *Nimbe* (2019), among others, demonstrate how drug abuse and addiction can frustrate the ambition and aspiration of youths and aid them in engaging in different shades of social vices. A clog in the wheel of progress against drug abuse and addictions seems to be a synergy between drug traffickers and some highly placed public servants in the Nigerian society. Through this system, illegal drugs are sold to addicts, particularly the youths.

Ekpenyong divulges that: ... drugs traffickers have hijacked the entire policy and political processes of governments and states in West Africa including Nigeria, and also institutionalised criminality in the conduct of public affairs which plays itself out in terms of the way in which the cartels, as a powerful, well-financed and highly organized special interest group, takeover policy-making through their proxies, and sponsor political advocates and protectors whose day-to-day dealings effectively put criminal interests ahead and above all other interests (6). One could argue that one of the factors that allows social vices such as armed robbery, drug trafficking and cyber fraud to flourish in Nigeria is the value system of the Nigerian society. The Nigerian society has built a value system where an individual is valued by the wealth and influence, they can command. So much value is placed on wealth regardless of its source(s) and such attributes are re-echoed in most Nollywood films. This appears to

have made many young Nigerians put morality and integrity aside to become wealthy notwithstanding its means.

As Adejoh puts it: cyber-crime, particularly among young people in Lagos, has continued to gain popularity as many young people are becoming attracted to the act. In fact, many youths in Lagos have embraced cyber-crime as a way of life and a means of improving their economic condition, especially as unemployment rate continues to soar (10). Some drug users are oblivious of the risk they put their health in as they consume these toxic pills, syrups and grass with little or no reservations. In most cases, it seems as if they are unaware of how mentally or physically unstable, they might become as they take these drugs so they go ahead and consume them. This is why documentary films that interrogate and mirror these social vices, especially drug abuse, are relevant to society. Thus, this study evaluates BBC's documentary film, *Sweet-Sweet Codeine*, that highlights the menace of social vices like drug abuse and addiction.

Theoretical Fortification

The Social Responsibility Media Theory (SRMT) is the framework for this study because it is an ethical theory that encourages the need for individuals and organisations in the media world to fulfil their civic duties to benefit the entire society. The SRMT allows free press without any censorship but at the same time the content of the press should be in the interest of the people. This media theory was collaboratively propounded by Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm in their book *Four Theories of the Press* published in 1956. It stands on the notion that media organisations have a moral obligation to act in the best interests of society. And this is based on the idea that media organisations have a significant impact on the public's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, and, therefore, have a responsibility to use their power and influence in a responsible and ethical way. The theory also discusses the controlled freedom of the press and the necessity for this freedom to be checkmated lest journalists relegate the obligation bestowed them to be watchdogs of society.

This is against the ideologies of two other normative theories of the media; the Authoritarian Theory which proposes for the media to be under the control and censorship of the government and the Libertarian Theory that proposes for the total freedom of the media regardless of whatever they report, true or false. The Social Responsibility Media Theory (SRMT) serves as a middle ground for both theories. Uzuegbunam claims that: this theory, regarded as a western theory incorporates part of the libertarian principle and introduces some new elements as well. The underlying principle of the social responsibility theory of the press is that the press should be free to perform the functions which the libertarian theory granted it freedom to perform, but that this freedom should be exercised with responsibility. If the media fail to meet their responsibilities to society, the social responsibility theory holds that the government should encourage the media to comply by way of controlling them (3).

SRMT is necessary for the study because it gives stakeholders in the media industry and filmmakers, campaigners against drug addiction, the responsibility of being watchdogs of the environment to help the Nigerian society understand the

behaviours, attitudes and acceptable practices that could help stop social vices and propagate the message of avoiding drug abuse and drug addiction. The theory stresses that it is the responsibility of the media to investigate and report issues with accuracy which is the foundation of making documentary films. Also, the theory charges the media to provide information that enhances the welfare of society like documentary films that discusses social vices among the youths and also drug addiction that is prevalent in virtually all parts of the world today.

Role of Documentary Films in Society

Documentary film could be seen as one of the most undervalued forms of films as it does not project the same entertaining intrigues as fictional-reality and fantasy films. Documentary films are majorly made to educate and inform unlike the other forms of films whose major inclination is to entertain. Documentary films are sometimes called 'actuality films' because they report with facts and images of actual events. Pictures from documentary films cover people and events that belong to the real world rather than present characters and actions conceived to tell a story that refers back to the imaginary world implicitly and symbolically. "Documentary films speak about actual situations or events and honour known facts; they do not introduce new, unverifiable ones. They speak directly about the real world rather than allegorically" (Nichols 7). Most documentary films are about real people who do not play or perform roles like actors playing characters, but rather present themselves or their ideas before the camera as the case may be (Omoera 147-148). They draw on previous experience and habits to be themselves in the face of a camera. Nichols further states that the presentation of self in everyday life involves how a person goes about expressing his or her personality, character, and individual trait rather than suppressing them to adopt a role. It is how people undergo change as people, rather than how they represent change in fictional characters. There is no specific training for self-presentation other than the experience of becoming a member of society (9).

In Nigeria, documentary film of the Nigerian Civil War is used to dissuade agitators who fan the embers of war to drop their agenda. On the internet today, there are some documentary films that show the suffering and predicament of the Jews imprisoned in Auschwitz, Poland during the World War II (WWII) and Kwashiorkor ridden children of the 1967-1970 Nigerian Civil War. For Karlin and Johnson: documentary film has been used as a tool for promoting social change throughout its history. John Grierson, who coined the term "documentary" in 1926, believed it could be used to influence the ideas and actions of people in ways once reserved for church and school (2). Documentary film has undergone many significant changes since its inception, from the heavily staged romanticism movement of the 1920s to the propagandist tradition of governments using film to persuade individuals to support national agendas to the introduction of *cinéma vérité* in the 1960s and historical documentary in the 1980s. However, the recent upsurge in popularity of documentary media, combined with technological advancement of the internet or computer age have opened up a whole new set of opportunities for film to serve as both art and agent for social change.

Film in Nigeria one could argue started with some documentary films, as the British colonial government during the WWII imported films that promoted the ongoing war into the country. Documentary films were used to educate the Nigerian populace about the war and also used as a propaganda tool to coerce the people into fighting for the British government. Such documentary films projected the British successes and achievements of the war, an action that does not represent the whole picture of the war. "The government was interested in producing and using documentary films to brainwash the colonised people and to propagate British ideals while at the same time enlightening the public on health, education and other matters" (Oladipo 2). One could argue that apart from the earlier documentary films produced in Nigeria, the genre seems to be losing its relevance gradually, as fictional reality and fantasy films have taken precedents before the majority of the Nigerian film audience. This also brings to mind the knowledge that the importance of documentary films, a significant tool in combating social vices and enhancing positive attitudes towards the environment in Nigeria, appear to have derailed recently.

The Nigerian Youth, Prospects and Challenges

National Youth Development Policy defines the youths as comprising all young persons of ages 18 to 35 years. As at 2011, the federal government of Nigeria estimated that the youths' population constituted about 40 per cent of the more than 140 million people of Nigeria. Nigeria is known to have some of the brightest young people in the world. They are also known to be among the toughest as they tend to survive in whatever situation they find themselves. Nigeria has through documentary and Nollywood film productions, has made efforts to surmount the challenges facing its youths. Emelike claims that:

It is good to show all the glitz and glamour but if the essence of your story is lost, then you have not done a job. We need to find that untold story that reflects our history and the magic of African culture more, not cloning stories informed only by pecuniary gains. Our stories should not only entertain but also inform and inspire. Filmmaking is a powerful tool, which most of us are yet to fully grasp. Nollywood can and should be the most powerful voice of the black race. Multi-Choice Talent Factory Academy, a digital hub conceived as the premier destination for connecting Africa's creative industries, is already latching onto the portal to discover, groom and connect creative minds across Africa for more productive engagement and business. (qtd. in Femi Odugbemi par.1)

Many productive industries in Nigeria are controlled by youths. For example, the Nigerian music industry which is considered to be one of the greatest exports of the country's culture is being 'pushed' and run by young Nigerians. Same could be fairly said about the movie industry. The tech sector is another fast-growing industry in Nigeria and it is chaperoned by the young people as most successful Nigerian start-ups in technology such as Fintech, Agro-Tech, among others, were set up youths. Examples are *Flutterwave*, whose chief executive officer (CEO founded at the age of 25 and *Patricia* whose CEO and founder, Hanu Fejiro Agbojide, started the company at the age of 22. Another export by the country involving mainly the youths is sports.

In 2022, a Nigerian athlete aged 25, Tobi Amusan, became a world record holder and multiple gold medallist in both the World Athletic Championships and Commonwealth Games. Another Nigerian who put the country on the world map in her youth is Chimamanda Adichie who published her world-renowned novel, *Purple Hibiscus* at the young age of 26. Though some of these individuals may be privileged, a lot of them got to where they are or achieved great feats against all odds. Uzoma posits that:

Many undergraduates cannot find ‘appropriate’ outfits to intern/for industrial attachments and graduates are either underemployed or unemployed leading them to crime, prostitution, hooliganism, susceptibility to being used as terror agents. However, underlying is the problem of ill preparedness for the labour market occasioned by faulty curriculum that does not teach entrepreneurship development and the general system which appreciates university graduates more than technical and vocational institution’s graduates. (6)

But then, not every Nigerian youth is privileged or have been lucky to ‘swim’ against the tides successfully. Some of them are unlucky and lack the skill or facility to do that, so, they turn to whatever that is available which in most cases may involve armed robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, internet fraud, thuggery, money ritual and those who might not get involved in the aforementioned depravities turn to coping mechanism which could involve abuse of hard drugs like crystal methamphetamine, cocaine, tramadol, codeine and others.

Synopsis of the BBC Documentary Film, *Sweet-Sweet Codeine*

Sweet-Sweet Codeine opens with the reporter, Ruona Meyer giving an insight into the problem of codeine addiction. She joins the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) to go after codeine dealers in northern Nigeria. The raid is carried out in a hotel where the officers pull down doors looking for dealers and users of codeine. Later on, Ruona is in the streets making enquiries of how codeine could be got easily. She gets answers to her questions. Adejuwon Soyinka is introduced as Ruona's co-reporter and he sets up a meeting with some codeine dealers in Lagos. He attends the meeting as an undercover agent with the name Mr Johnson, a businessman who wants to buy codeine and resell. He is able to strike a deal with a worker of one of the leading pharmaceutical companies in Nigeria who agrees to supply codeine to him. He gets the supplies he ordered for days while secretly filming the culprits but poured them all into a toilet sink. Ruona, still in Kano, is taken on a tour through the store rooms of the NDLEA in the city where seized drugs are kept. The duo arranges and attend a meeting with a top employee of the Peace Standard Pharmaceutical Company who teaches them how to subvert the system as codeine dealers. Ruona visits a rehabilitation centre in Kano where patients of drug abuse and addiction are being rehabilitated. She sees some of the patients experiencing withdrawal syndrome while being chained to the floor.

An Analysis of Drug Addiction among Nigerian Youths in *Sweet-Sweet Codeine*

Sweet-Sweet Codeine delves into the widespread use of codeine and other opioid-based drugs in Nigeria. Codeine, which is the main focus of the documentary film, is a medication that belongs to a class of drugs known as opioids. It is commonly used for

pain relief and as a cough suppressant. Codeine works by binding to certain receptors in the brain and spinal cord, which reduces the transmission of pain signals and can also cause feelings of relaxation and euphoria. The film portrays a grim picture of how the drug has become a part of the everyday life of some Nigerians, particularly young people. The film is an eye-opener to the devastating consequences of addiction and the social vices associated with it. This evaluation examines some of the social vices highlighted in the film and their impact on individuals and society.



Plate 1: (Drug Addiction: A group of young men and women taking drugs. 06:03 - 06:14 minutes of the film)

One of the most apparent social vices depicted in *Sweet-Sweet Codeine* is drug addiction. It presents visual images of some Nigerian youths taking drugs. They sip codeine from bottles and compliment it with smoking as could be seen in Plate 1. This is a major social vice as it is dangerous to both the health of the individual taking the drugs and the people around him or her. Ruona Meyer sharing the story behind her investigation. 20:57 - 21:53 minutes of the film) narrates thus:

Ruona: My brother, who is called C, has struggled with addiction. He didn't want to appear in this film, but has taught me what addiction can do. His struggle began years ago after our father, Godwin Agbroko, an investigative journalist like me was assassinated. My father was killed for fighting injustice and it tore our family apart. I went the way of work and my brother went the way of drug addiction. Grief pushed him into a bad crowd as it does with many addicts I have met. Once he fell into addiction, he quit school, disappearing for months. I found out he was using Codeine syrups through messages on his Facebook page. Some journalists pursue stories for fun, or for money, I'm pursuing cough syrup in anger, in rage and in love. I do it in memory of my father, I do it for the love of my brother.

Through this narrative, the viewer understands that grief, frustration and depression could lead to drug addiction and might watch out for loved ones who are in similar situations so that they could be guided against falling into it.



Plate 2: (Drug Addiction: A patient of codeine addiction experiencing withdrawal syndrome, while chained to a tree in a rehabilitation centre in Kano. 38:20 - 39:33 minutes of the film)

Ruona: This cough syrup addict was found out of control in the city, arrested and brought into the centre a few days before.

In this scene, the patient is screaming and jumping up and down. The officer in charge, Sani Usmani attributes his actions to him experiencing withdrawal syndrome. The patient is unable to leave the spot as he usually would because he is chained to a tree. The officer explains to Ruona that there were many like him on the streets of Kano that are still yet to receive medical care and are being a problem for the people around them - their friends, family and community. The officer in charge explains that it is alarming. “Before we could get two or three within a week, but now we receive seven, eight in a week (04:13 - 04:29 minutes of the film)” That explains that the number of addicts keeps increasing by the day.



Plate 3: (Ruona talking to one of the patients at the rehabilitation centre, 40:41 - 49:56 minutes of the film)

Ruona is taken on a tour around the rehabilitation centre in Kano where she meets different patients with most chained to the floor so they can stay put when their withdrawal syndrome starts. From her tour around the rehabilitation centre, the audience could understand the severe consequences of drug addiction. She meets with a 16-year-old boy who has spent two months at the rehab centre, chained to the floor. The teenager advises those who are yet to get involved with codeine to never attempt it and then also for the drug addicts to find a way to stop. Powerful images are obtained from the rehabilitation centre as the audience also see the patients battling with insects coming at them because of the stench of their present environment. Also, there was the use of audio accompanied with the images like the screams of the patients and the buzz of flies.



**Plate 4: (A patient brought into the rehabilitation centre.
41:59 - 42:37 minutes of the film)**

Ruona: Just before I left the rehab centre, a boy was brought in having been found on the street. He was delirious and soon became unconscious. Doctors struggled to find a vein to revive him with a drip. Three days later, this boy was dead. And Sani couldn't rule out cough syrup abuse, although we will never know for sure. What is sure, Sani told us, is that this is what cough syrup can do.

Still in the rehab centre, the audience experiences the most fatal effect of codeine in the system which is death. The patient who was brought was a little boy who had been exposed to codeine by adults in the streets of Kano which has led to this as could be seen in Plate 4.



**Plate 5: (A young man mixing codeine in a bottle
14:33 - 14:59 minutes of the film)**

Dr Mairo Mandara: Codeine addiction could lead to a lot of things. It could lead to almost every organ failure. People can have inflammation of the pancreas, pancreatitis, people could have liver damage. They could have all kinds of damages. That is even in the long run. In the short run, people could literally run mad

Those were the words of the Public Health Office featured in the document to discuss the medical effects of codeine addiction. Another social vice highlighted in the film is drug trafficking. The documentary reveals the alarming rate of drug trafficking and the criminal networks that operate within the industry. It blames the abuse of drugs on how it is easily accessible to the addicts.



**Plate 6: (Drug Trafficking: Ruona making enquiries in the streets.
06:15 - 06:28 minutes of the film)**

Ruona: If person wan get am how I go take get am? How easy to get am? (Loose translation: if someone wants to get it, how easy could it be?)

Addict: It's very easy. The more you like it, the more you get it. Even now if you like, it's easy for me to get it for you.

This buttresses the point that the easiness in which codeine is gotten is one of the major factors the addiction is spreading. From interactions with addicts on the streets, the filmmakers reveal to the audience how simple it is to get codeine and this is because most pharmaceutical companies supply it illegally and some pharmacies sell it over the counter to addicts. On this premise, the reporters went undercover in search of the suppliers.



**Plate 7: (Adejuwon showing a pharmacy where codeine is sold.
11:05 - 11:17 minutes of the film)**

Pharmacist: I do distribution for Emzor. These products, if I want to get them, it'll be easy for me. I'll establish the relationship between you and the rep. I'll call them, they'll come.

The reporters establish the chain from the Pharmacist who is a /wholesale/retailer to the manufacturers who distribute to him. He helped set up a meeting with the sales rep of Emzor Pharmaceuticals. One of the supply chains is already established in the above documentary. As codeine ravages some parts of northern Nigeria, methamphetamine (*Mpuru Mmiri*) takes its toll on south-eastern Nigeria. Most of the abusers or addicts are youths as could be inferred from the case study. Social vices are significant problems for most Nigerian youths, who are often affected by poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to education and resources. Examples of social vices among Nigerian youths are not restricted to drug abuse, cultism, cybercrime, and violence. These vices can have a negative impact on the development and progress of Nigerian society. Addressing these issues and drug addiction requires a holistic approach that includes orientation, re-orientation and enlightenment programmes which could be seen as the fundamentals of documentary films. Perhaps, this explains why Ewwierhoma, Oklobia and Thomas assert that the onus lies on the producer of the

documentary film to keep an open but receptive mind undertaking in-depth research on the topic to lead the general populace right and not astray. A documentary film is meant to educate and inform; and if at the end of the day, the vast majority of people who are the target audience cannot relate with and benefit from the information given, then the producers and crew must have succeeded in faltering the thoughts of people and feeding them the wrong details which can be very incurable (22-23).

Conclusion

In this article, we have demonstrated that documentary film could be used to depict some disturbing issues in society. *Sweet-Sweet Codeine* is a good commentary on the prevailing problem of drug abuse and trafficking among Nigerian youths. The case study properly examined above is in line with the Social Responsibility Media Theory (SRMT) that charges media organisations, filmmakers, even the government to work in the interest of the people. The producer of *Sweet-Sweet Codeine* prioritised the interest of the youths in Nigeria and the demerits of the highlighted social vices with the intent that the youths having seen such film will eschew such vices. The study concludes that the youths' attention could be diverted from social vices to become strong crusaders against the use of illicit drugs, drug abuse and addiction through effective platforms of sensitization such as documentary films. The government's fight against the challenges of climate change in Nigeria could also be further enhanced through documentary films which would outline the details of curtailing deforestations, and anthropogenic processes that affect the environment negatively.

The government and relevant nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) can utilise the opportunity offered by documentary filmmakers to further the campaign against drug addiction and climate pollution in Nigeria. Drawing on the SRMT, the private and government media houses, can create robust jingles and messages that are geared towards enlightening the Nigerian populace about the devastating processes and events that culminate in drug addiction and climate crisis. The energy of the young people can be channelled positively to carry out this campaign, advocating against drug addiction, drug trafficking, deforestation, gas emission, and anthropogenic processes that affect the environment negatively. 'The future belongs to the youths' should cease to be mere aphorism but treated as a serious issue that affects all and sundry. As such, the youths should be at the forefront of the campaign against drug addiction or abuse by shifting attention from social vices to positive engagements that would secure their future and protect the environment.

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TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING CLIMATE CHANGE: THE RIJIYAR ZAKI SOCIO-DRAMATIC DIALOGUE

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Abstract

The existence, survival, and sustenance of human beings depend on a healthy environment. The actions of humans in their quest for survival sometimes affect the environment negatively, which leads to climate change. The effects of this change sometimes hit hard on the livelihoods of arable crop farmers, which in turn, impacts food production and availability. This could result in food insecurity. Therefore, limited awareness on the impact of humanity's actions on the environment has led to the misunderstanding of problems that emanates from its actions and impact on climate change. This ignorance gives birth to views such as the popularly held claim events in society are orchestrated divinely, and not by the activities of human beings. This, perhaps, proves that awareness on issues of climate change is very low, especially among people in the grassroots, rural dwellers, and vulnerable groups like women, and children who are yet to fully understand the impact of their actions on climate change. This instigates the need for crucial interventions. Through socio-drama, this article X-rays how the actions and inactions of the populace can deepen health issues and food shortages in Rijiyar Zaki, a small settlement located in Ungogo Local Government Area of Kano State, Nigeria. The study employed key person interview (KPI), direct observation and action-research instrumentations. It was fortified by Icek Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB).

Keywords: Awareness, Climate change, Environment, Rijiyar Zaki, Socio-drama, TPB.

Introduction

There are numerous benefits that the environment provides. Human beings rely on these benefits for existence and sustenance. Recently, climate change has spawned one of the most devastating environmental crises faced by humanity. In some parts of the world, the rural and natural resource-dependent communities and the poor are the most vulnerable. Perhaps, this stems from their lack of awareness about climate change. Several people still have very little knowledge despite the efforts made by the government in incorporating some initiatives to educate people. Thus, it can be claimed that in places like Nigeria, regardless of awareness about climate change, the impact is not strong despite initiatives like tree planting, cleaning up the environment (sanitation), and providing a good means of disposing waste like recycling plastics, among others.

In Kano State, Aliyu writes that "climate change has had a significant effect on all aspects of society" (10). Part of the activities which instigates this is that they usually set their piece of land on fire to clear bushes coupled with the fact that a

majority use a slash to burn and clear large areas of land, forgetting extreme heat waves, fires in the arctic and so on. This act, aside from the fact that it is a climate hazard is also a medical hazard. Yet the present level of research and knowledge on climate change in the area has hardly advanced. This instigated the need to close the knowledge gap on climate change through an action research method. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to create targeted awareness on the dangers of climate change and possible measures that can be adopted to mitigate its continuity and spread. It based on a field work, using socio-drama in Rijiyar Zaki of Ungogo Local Government Area of Kano State, Nigeria with 200 level students under the supervision of the lead facilitator, Ihuoma Okorie. The intervention took place from 28 February 2023 to 2 March 2023. The total number of students that took part in the dialogue was twenty-one.

Climate Change in Nigeria

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines climate change as a change that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity which alters the composition of the world. Climate change poses one of the greatest existential threats to the planet and its people, especially in Africa. Tallas states that "climate change is having a growing impact on the African continent, hitting the most vulnerable, and contributing to food insecurity, population displacement and stress on water resources" (3). Nigeria has a tropical climate with two distinct seasons: wet and dry seasons. Huma claims that:

Nigeria's climate has been changing, evident in temperature increases, variable rainfall, rise in sea level and flooding, drought and desertification, and land degradation. More frequent extreme weather events affect freshwater resources, and loss of biodiversity. The durations and intensities of rainfall have increased, producing large runoffs and flooding in many places in Nigeria. (3).

From the above, it is clear that Nigeria has witnessed noticeable effects of climate change which have affected the country's agricultural ecosystems, including freshwater, coastal resources, and weather-related disasters, which have become more frequent (Omoera and Guanah 1-2). Reid and Simms aver that "the negative effects of climate change on developing countries have a direct bearing on freshwater, farming, and healthcare among others" (12). Furthermore, Musa and Godpower claim that the direct effects of climate change on health emanates from extreme weather events such as heat waves, floods, droughts, windstorms, and wildfires, while the major indirect effect is malnutrition. Reduced food production leads to ill-health and the spread of waterborne illnesses like typhoid fever and cholera. Increased air pollution and high temperatures equally results in increased cases of meningitis (23).

Sustainable development goal 13 (SDG 13) implores stakeholders to take critical actions that can help mitigate the effects of climate change given its impact on human health and fauna and flora in the ecosystem generally. Despite the attention on climate change in international politics and media, the political will to counter the change in Nigeria was instituted only recently, when the draft bill for the establishment of the National Climate Change Commission was considered in the Nigerian Senate.

This, perhaps, shows that climate change is one of the least addressed issues. Hence, the minimal actions targeted at tackling it. This implies that there is a lack of political will and a lack of simple solutions that provide immediate remediations in local communities. Abandoning efforts, is of course, not an option because there is far too much at stake. Therefore, considering its timeliness, there is need for a more targeted information mechanism to create awareness-raising initiatives. At any rate, an entity like Nigeria requires focussed interventions to mitigate the impact of climate change on its rapidly growing population.

Climate Change in Kano State

Kano State, with a population of over nine million, is situated in the north-west geopolitical zone and the Sahel savanna region. In more senses than one, it is an overcrowded state. In this regard, Musa and Godpower claim that the Boko Haram insurgency in north-eastern towns and villages, coupled with drought, has led to population migration to places like Kano, leading to noticeable congestion (overcrowding), increased vehicle traffic, air pollution, and poverty (28). There have been several reports of severe flooding in parts of Kano State with farms and cattle destroyed resulting from prolonged heavy rainfalls. The ripple effect is poor harvest, high cost of food items, and malnutrition. This is the point Aliyu made when he stated that “climate change and variability institute multiple threats to Kano State” (2). The key risks hover on the agricultural systems, dams and the riverine neighbouring communities. The vulnerability of Kano State spans recurrent occurrence of droughts, increased pre-rain dust bowls and poor visibility caused by harmattan, and frustrating urban microclimate. Furthermore, Aliyu argues that “the adaptation strategies currently used in the state are grossly inadequate in the rising challenges of climate change particularly in rural areas” (12).

For centuries, rural communities coped well with variations in the climate (Kent 408). However, the predicted stresses of the human-induced climate change impacts have become prevalent. This instigates the need to think out new ways of making people, adapt to the climate change realities and devise mitigation strategies to avoid the risk involved. As stated by Schemmel and Scholze “the effects of the physical damage resulting from climate change may be common in places, but inadequate knowledge remains one of the principal causes of climate change” (423). This calls for an improvement in the awareness-creation capacities and strategies in urban and rural areas. In Kano State, there is a huge impact because many of the people are farmers and herdsman who live in rural areas. However, the recurrences of droughts and floods have often left rural and urban dwellers victimized by one form of vulnerability, and suffering or the other.

As an important global issue, climate change has a close relationship with human health. A critical study which explicates this was carried out by Musa and Godpower. They examined climate change and primary healthcare in Sahelian Kano Nigeria. The study exposed the fact that climate change has potential impacts on primary healthcare and practice. The study further uncovered unswerving clinical presentations logically associated with high temperatures and excessive flooding in

certain months of the year. Consequently, effects range from skin and waterborne diseases to malnutrition and stress-related disorders (Musa and Godpower 24). Given the effects, there is a need for strategic intervention planning by stakeholders. As regards the risks associated with climate change, the damage caused, and adapting strategies in Kano State were presented by Aliyu Barau. They include “droughts, flooding, storms, poor visibility, urban microclimate, dust bowls/harmattan dust, increased temperature, and extreme cold weather while the possible damages include food insecurity, increased poverty and malnutrition, loss of farmlands, deaths, displacements, and outbreak of epidemics, destruction of private and public properties among others” (Aliyu 6).

With regard to the adaptation strategies, relief assistance from the government formed the crux, hence, the need for strategic awareness creation on how the actions of humans contribute to climate change as well as its upshots. This shows the vulnerability of Kano State in terms of adverse effects on climate change. Thus, it can be inferred that the lack of awareness of climate change has caused a lot of harm like disrupting food production and escalating health issues. This implies that environmental ignorance fuelled by misunderstanding is the bane of climate change issues in Kano State and to counter this there is the need for increased awareness.

Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was developed by Icek Ajzen as an attempt to predict human behaviour. Ajzen posits that attitude toward behaviour, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control influence behavioural intention (179). The TPB started as the Theory of Reasoned Action in 1980 to predict an individual’s intention to engage in a behaviour at a specific time and place. It was intended to explain all behaviours over which people can exert self-control. The key component of this model is behavioural intent. Behavioural intentions are influenced by the attitude and likelihood that the behaviour will have the expected outcome and the subjective evaluation of the risks and benefits of that outcome. The theory further states that behavioural achievement depends on both motivation (intention) and behavioural control.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) comprises of some constructs that collectively represent a person’s actual power over behaviour. These include: Attitudes: This refers to the degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the behaviour of interest. It entails a consideration of the outcomes of performing the behaviour. Attitudes consists of behavioural beliefs and outcome evaluations. Behavioural intention: This refers to the motivational factors that influence a given behaviour. The stronger the intention to engage in a given behaviour, the more likely it is to perform that behaviour. Thus, if there is an intention to perform the behaviour, there is a likelihood that the behaviour will be performed.

Subjective norms: This is a social pressure to perform or not to perform a given behaviour. This refers to the belief about whether most people approve or disapprove of the behaviour. It relates to a person’s personal beliefs. It further considers whether others (peers and people of importance to the person) think he or she should engage in

the behaviour. Social norms: These refer to the customary codes of behaviour in a group of people or a larger cultural context. Perceived behaviour: This refers to the perceived presence of factors that may facilitate or impede the performance of a behaviour. Perceived power contributes to a person's perceived behavioural control over each of those factors. This theory is used to explain the ways through which human behaviour and actions affect climate change in Kano State. Other perceived factors which instigate and lead to planned behaviour would also be accentuated.

Socio-Drama

The use of art is foundational in nearly every social movement. According to Scott, "drama and theatre existed with connections to community entertainment, religion, politics, education, psychotherapy, and social action" (2). This is consistent with the view of Hecht which states that "Hull House's use of theatre was based on its potential of inspiring and empowering the community with an emphasis on highlighting social and political ills" (5). This is evident in the way drama is used as a tool for social change. The term socio-drama suggests a meaning of 'social in action' or 'social action.' Socio-drama is a method of action created by J. L. Moreno in 1974. It is an active method that uses theatre as a form of activism to articulate people's way of being and thinking with their possibilities of learning and problem-solving. It dramatizes social issues within community forums for societal change. Socio-drama, a spontaneous and creative arts approach, is a fitting modality for community work related to social change. Socio-drama through the use of role-playing technique can be used to engender learning for social change. This paper conceives it as the process of using action-based methods in community settings as an experiential and communal event of social action, behavioural change, and awareness creation.

The Rijiyar Zaki Socio-Drama Dialogue

To properly educate people on the negative effects of climate change, Ngogo Local Government Area (Rijiyar Zaki) was chosen. The choice stems from the fact that a majority of the people (group) were rural dwellers with little or no formal education and whose livelihood is mainly based on agriculture. Secondly, a large number of farmers had motorbikes that emits smoke which affects the environment. Thirdly, pollution is prevalent and severe flooding is experienced whenever it rains. Hence, there exist a large amount of both air pollution and land pollution. The class engaged the group in what is referred to as a socio-dramatic dialogue in line with the constructs of the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Through this, some pieces of information were reeled out. The questions were asked in line with the constructs that collectively represent a person's actual power over behaviour. It also leveraged the environmental and economic factors which instigate people to behave the way they do.

During the warm-up process, there was a moderated discussion where the people voiced out the difficulties they face. Most of the people reported that the heat during the dry seasons has increased while rainfall decreased compared to their previous experiences. They also complained of experiencing very erratic and severe cold during the Harmattan period. This extremely cold weather has had a destructive

effect on their agricultural production. It was further reported that the frequency of water, food, and weather-related diseases had increased. A male farmer mentioned that in recent times, new and unknown diseases and outbreaks were often identified among members of the community. However, he was countered by another who noted that their experiences have been divinely orchestrated. Therefore, whatever is happening in their community has already been willed.

The group members were asked whether they are aware of what climate change is and how human activities contribute to it. They confessed that no modern techniques or technology were available to inform or educate them about how their activities affect climate change. From the findings received from the community, it was proven that their choices and lifestyle also contribute to climate change. This is evident in their habits which can later impact their future. They complained that it is harder to grow food in the face of supercharged storms, intense droughts, and rising sea levels because such environmental issues affect them in their vulnerable situations and threatens their lives. Concerning the high cost of gas, the people reported their use of burning coals and firewood. Their ways of generating power for electricity, heat, and transportation, and the ways they interact with their environment generally cause climate change.

The buildings were unsurprisingly another major cause and the amount of time spent inside them. The buildings, both residential and commercial, emit a lot of greenhouse gases because of heating, cooking, and running appliances. Deforestation is another way they unknowingly inject more greenhouse gas into the atmosphere. This is because vegetation and soil store carbon by keeping it at ground level or underground. Therefore, environmental and economic influences mixed with ignorance remain the bane of climate change among the people of Rijiyar Zaki. From the socio-dramatic dialogue, it is evident that the human impact on checking climate change is very low in the area under investigation. However, using the socio-dramatic dialogue in detailing and discussing the main causes of climate change is not about shaming people or trying to make them feel guilty about their choices. It is about defining the problem and ensuring that the people can arrive at effective solutions.

Thus, looking at the fact that the primary cause of recent global climate change is humanity, the solutions are also within the domain of human beings. Hence, the place of socio-drama. With this knowledge, climate change issues were brought to life using role-playing method as an educational tool. Afterwards, the session moved into action, enacting the described encounters. Collectively, there was a spontaneous role play. Before then, the group tried to observe, understand, measure, and analyse the positive, negative, and neutral relationships of the group which consisted mostly children, teenagers, and a few youths and old people. There were warm-ups. This was in a bid to familiarize more with the people before the enactment. This was kept short, to a minute or two. The moderator invited people who were interested in playing roles, while a few others volunteered. The enactment was done in Pidgin English and Hausa.

Act one: The drama began with the song which was conceived by the students. Both Pidgin English and Hausa were used for a better understanding:

Our climate go better
Make change be our number one plan
Take am easy o
Let us stop deforestation
Pollution no good o
E dey scatter climate
Change na the answer

The play opens with two women walking along the village path complaining bitterly about the lack of fruits and fresh vegetation due to the change in weather, particularly the low rainfall they experience; while talking, they come in contact with some women who are also lamenting and attributing their difficulties to divine will. They finally agree to see the Ruler to talk him into engaging in a religious activity to cleanse the community.

Act two: Saidu, one of the villagers is moody and worried about the change in weather and the negative effects it is having on his crops. He laments that if it continues, he will not be able to feed his family. He discusses the situation with Salim and two other farmers. They acknowledge the importance of looking for possible ways to address the issue.

Act three: Bilkisu, a student visits the community with a group of other students carrying posters that reads “Save the Environment.” She explains to the ruler (head of the community) that climate change is caused by human activities like deforestation, burning fossil fuel, and pollution. She emphasizes that everyone needs to reduce their carbon footprint and protect the environment. The villagers listen attentively and agree that everyone needs to be more responsible and take care of the planet. She explains the causes and how their activities harm the environment

Act four: Saratu, a government official, enters with her co-workers to discuss the government’s efforts to address climate change. One of the villagers expresses his scepticism about the government’s actions but Saratu assures him and the others that several initiatives have been launched to protect the environment. They share leaflets to the people containing tips on how they can contribute to the efforts made by the government. The socio-dramatic enactments successfully allowed the students, as well as some of the community members who participated to reverse roles with each other. This is in a bid to enhance the understanding of their plights. The students equally felt the plight of the communities’ members when they reversed roles.

Post-Performance Discussion

Whether grappling with droughts, natural disasters, or other adversities, there is a proclivity to attribute these occurrences to supernatural forces, yet the genuine roots of these issues often reside closer home. After the performance, participants de-rolled, returned to their seats, while the sharing phase also known as the post-socio-drama performance discussion began. Here, the facilitators were keen on discovering why they choose to attribute their misfortunes to divine will. This was imperative because

there is an intricate psychology behind the human tendency to assign responsibility to supernatural forces for omens and misfortunes, while neglecting the tangible human induced causes. This inclination to discern meaning and causation, influences the interpretation of events. For instance, in the face of the consequences arising from climate change, it was more convenient to ascribe blame to supernatural forces than to confront their actions. This discourages critical self-reflection and the imperative for engendering change and fostering a collective resignation towards their actions. In this regard, one of the participants, a community member reiterated, *Nan gun da muke, Mahallici ne ya bamu, don haka, kome yin sa ne*, which means “This place was given to us by the one who created us, therefore, whatever happens to it has been willed by him.”

The statement above reveals the people’s deliberate separation from their activities, weaving it into a broader cosmic plan. This to a large extent distances them from the responsibility of finding solutions to the problem of climate change. The response is consistent with the tenets of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which assumes that individuals act rationally according to their attitudes and subjective norms. This forms a backdrop for their decisions. Such a mindset poses an impediment to proactive measures. Therefore, there was a deliberate attempt to demystify these thoughts during the discussion. This is because while finding meaning and solace in the divine is inherent in human nature, it should not serve as a justification to evade accountability for human actions and their repercussions. Thus, the fact that persistent adherence to existing practices perpetuates some of the challenges they face was further brought to the fore. It can be averred, therefore, that subjective norms and normative beliefs were significant predictors of the people’s behaviour. Thus, the people’s attitude towards their environment influences their actual behaviour.

The people commented on and further appreciated their newfound insight. The discussion exposed the fact that the people were not aware that some of their practices affect the climate. The discussion which involved the locals exposed the fact that the people are unaware that some of the causes of climate change are oftentimes man-made. They further understood that climate has changed and that the changes result in a wide range of negative effects on health, agriculture, and livelihoods. When the discussions came to an end, they agreed that there is the need for a collective re-evaluation and proactive approach to address the climate change issues they experience. By implication, it is clear that based on the outcome of the Rijiyar Zaki experiment, climate change education is yet to penetrate many rural communities.

Another pertinent problem that was brought to the fore was the economic status of the people. Although, any population is at risk of experiencing the adverse effects of climate change, the activities of people pose a huge challenge. In this regard, another participant asked, *Idan an halasta abubuwan da ke was an kwakkwayon, me ake so mu yi tunda ba wata hanya?* That is, “If you ask us not to engage in those activities that were showcased in the drama, what exactly do you want us to do seeing that we have no other means?” The question revealed that financial challenges/ poverty has a huge impact on the activities of people towards their environment. Most of them are burdened by poverty as they struggle to earn a living, feed their families, and create

stable homes. Thus, they deploy every possible means to maximize dwindling resources. This explains why they engage in activities that place compounded stress on the environment.

They are unaware of the fact that the effects of climate change have the tendency to push them further into poverty. As explained to them in Act Three of the performance where Bilkisu explained the effect of their activities on the environment, the class went ahead to reiterate it. This was explained by one of the students, “Your activities threaten the cleanliness of the air, and limit food supply.” Almost immediately, an older man interjected, asking how that was possible. He was intimidated on the fact that some of their lands may have been weakened, putting them at risk of depleted harvests that can cause hunger, poverty, and displacement. This is because soil, which is essential for healthy crops and ecosystems is being lost. The reason for climbing temperatures and declining rainfall experienced was further revealed.

Low income stands as an enabler of the social practices they engage, which in turn, affect the climate. It can be inferred that low income holds a seemingly unbreakable grip on the people. And this influences their behaviour, and instigates them to do what they do. Thus, as contained in the TPB, low income prompts the behaviour they exhibit towards their environment; hence, a link between economic hardship and behaviour. The implication of this is that more work needs to be done in making the populace understand the correlation between the environment and climate change in their communities. The socio-dramatic dialogue revealed that the people’s attitude towards their environment, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control significantly influence their activities. However, just as human behaviour is one of the drivers of climate change, it is equally a driver for its mitigation; hence, the need for targeted interventions. Through the use of socio-drama, the students were presented as social workers. This is contained in the words of Freire the “educator” as an intervener or social worker (63).

Conclusion

This study demonstrated how socio-drama can be used as an active and experiential method for research and service to society, using Rijiyar Zaki in Kano State, Nigeria as a point of departure for discussion and analysis. It reaffirmed the idea that drama is a useful community tool that can be used to wield social change. The study concretized its argument with the Rijiyar Zaki socio-dramatic dialogue where the problem of climate change was exposed with possible mitigation strategies. The Theory of Planned Behaviour as adopted helped to explain how attitudes, behavioural intention, subjective and social norms contribute to the populace’s attitude and behaviour towards climate change. This is evident in the finding which revealed that most of the people are unaware that their attitudes affect the climate. Thus, the socio-dramatic dialogue exposed them to the negative impact of their attitudes. They consequently resolve to desist from engaging in activities that instigate climate change. The study also revealed that climate change education is yet to penetrate many communities. Therefore, winning the fight against climate change will require a great effort. The fight must go beyond sloganeering; it requires a firm commitment to collective action, fuelled by

determination because the activities of humans remain the major causes of climate change.

Recommendations

Climate information ultimately needs to be part of every decision on future infrastructure, agriculture, and societal risk management strategy. There is a need for greater awareness and implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures in local communities in Nigeria. There is a need for environmental education in schools to empower children early about the dangers of climate change and their roles in mitigating them.

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CINEMA AND THE ECOLOGICAL CHALLENGES IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: INSIGHTS FROM THE TV SERIES, *SONS OF THE CALIPHATE*

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Abstract

Three prominent individuals, namely, Khalifa Maiyaki, the offspring of the Emir of Kowa Emirate, Nuhu Bula, the offspring of a prominent business magnate, and Dikko Loko, the progeny of a highly influential political figure, are portrayed as a collective entity referred to as the "Sons of the Caliphate," symbolizing the ruling class in northern Nigeria. Their behaviour, characterized by recklessness, corruption, and the exploitation of both humans and the natural environment, serves as the focal point of this discussion. This article delves into the analysis of 'sticky portrayals of actors,' i.e., specific filmic shots that stand out as symbolic representations, visually depicting the three main characters as representatives of a particular social class. By drawing on Murray Bookchin's Eco-Socialism Theory (E-ST) and exploring the concept of power within these sensorial moments, the study examines how the film (*Sons of the Caliphate*) enables us to comprehend how the "Sons of the Caliphate" function as a corrupt agency that significantly contributes to the ongoing insecurity and humanitarian crises plaguing the northern region of Nigeria. The paper submits that there is a dearth of cinematic productions addressing the ecological challenges faced by northern Nigeria. Nonetheless, *Sons of the Caliphate* serves as a damning indictment of the political, traditional, and business elite in the region.

Keywords: Cinema, Ecology, E-ST, Northern Nigeria, *Sons of the Caliphate*.

Introduction

Cinema in northern Nigeria possesses a distinct cultural and social importance, as evidenced by the TV series *Sons of the Caliphate*, which provides valuable insights into the ecological struggles of the region. The TV series *Sons of the Caliphate* functions as a potent medium through which to explore and raise awareness about the urgent environmental dilemmas confronting northern Nigeria. The show effectively underscores the interconnectedness of human activities, natural resources, and the delicate equilibrium of ecosystems in the area. Three notable individuals, specifically Khalifa Maiyaki, the descendant of the Emir of Kowa Emirate, Nuhu Bula, the offspring of a prominent business tycoon, and Dikko Loko, the progeny of an immensely influential political figure, are depicted as a unified entity known as the "Sons of the Caliphate," which is also the title of the TV series, representing the ruling elite of the northern region of Nigeria. Their actions, characterized by recklessness, corruption, and the exploitation of both human beings and nature. The advent of TV series such as *Sons of the Caliphate* signifies a burgeoning interest in employing visual

storytelling to illuminate significant ecological and environmental matters. In this article, we will delve into the manner by which cinema in Northern Nigeria, particularly as exemplified by the *Sons of the Caliphate*, contributes to the discourse on ecological challenges and the representation of environmental issues in popular media.

Eco Challenges in Northern Nigeria: An Overview

According to Onuoha, Ngobiri, Ochekwu and Onuoha, the primary ecological obstacles encountered by northern Nigeria encompass desertification, land degradation, and biodiversity loss. Desertification, resulting from a combination of drought and land mismanagement, has engendered conflicts regarding grazing lands and farmlands, contamination of water sources and air, internal displacement of individuals, and destruction of human lives and properties (2). This has also precipitated the depletion of water resources and land carrying capacity, leading to migration and conflicts between farmers and pastoralists (Ikeke 7). Moreover, land use alteration, driven by climate change, invasive species, and poverty, has contributed to the decline of biodiversity in Nigeria (Olagunju, Adewoye, Adewoye and Opasola 23). Deforestation, overgrazing, and misuse of water resources are among the human activities exacerbating this problem. This has also been by **Obayelu** in his "Assessment of Land Use Dynamics and the Status of Biodiversity Exploitation and Preservation in Nigeria" (6). The ecological challenges exert substantial impact on food crop security, fish production, and hydroelectric power generation within the region.

Addressing these challenges necessitates collaborative endeavours, including afforestation, ethical consciousness-raising, and sustainable land use practices. The region also grapples with the repercussions of climate change, such as heightened frequency and intensity of droughts and floods, insurgency particularly in mining communities, lead poisoning in gold mining sites, and the emergence of militia groups. While it is undeniable that northern Nigeria is confronted by serious ecological challenges, it is imperative to acknowledge that the region has also achieved progress in tackling the issues. The government and local communities have made efforts to implement reforestation programmes and adopt sustainable agricultural practices. Additionally, it is crucial to recognize that the impact of climate change is not exclusively adverse. In certain instances, alterations in climate patterns have presented opportunities for crop diversification and economic activities in the region. These changes have engendered the development of novel livelihood strategies for communities, thereby contributing to endeavours to adapt to the evolving environment.

Conceptual/Discourse Exploration

The relationship between humans and the environment appears to be a narrative of devastation, as the process of urbanization and the adoption of a monetary-based economy have led detrimental consequences such as deforestation, mining, overpopulation, and pollution. Klain argues that "initial data indicates that global carbon dioxide emissions have increased by 61 per cent since 1990, which marked the commencement of significant climate treaty negotiations" (11). Regrettably, this

situation shows no signs of improvement. On the contrary, emissions continue to escalate. The United Nations, seemingly, struggles to maintain control, as no significant measures have been implemented since the highly publicized 2009 climate summit in Copenhagen. Intriguingly, discussions concerning economic and political dominance, as well as the production of weapons and atomic energy, often overshadow environmental concerns. As a result, Sakellari's analysis of three widely recognized climate change films, namely, *The Day after Tomorrow*, *An Inconvenient Truth*, and *The Age of Stupid*, posits that the intricate nature of the climate change matter impedes the comprehension and modification of public behaviour (827). It contends that popular climate change films have the capacity to influence public perception and prompt action (Sakellari 828). Nonetheless, "cultural elements, encompassing historical, religious, and social aspects, possess the potential to shape the manner in which the audience responds to initiatives aimed at communicating climate change. The responses to films may diverge from one nation to another owing to the presence of these factors" (Sakellari 829).

The World Bank's report in 2021 reveals a noticeable increase in the population of Nigeria, which stands at 213,401,322. Nigeria, being Africa's most populous black nation, holds significant relevance, particularly when considering its impact on environmental issues and climate change. This is due to the pursuit of essential necessities such as food, shelter, recreation, and infrastructural facilities by its people. Consequently, nature bears the brunt of these pursuits in various ways. A prime example is the conflict that arises between communities and oil merchants due to the activities of multinational oil companies in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. This conflict is compounded by the emergence of militia groups opposing the government, while the local community remains impoverished despite the discovery of oil. Moreover, the pollution and damage inflicted upon both humans and the water bodies in the Niger Delta continue to persist without any apparent solutions in sight. Grant asserts that Nigeria possesses one of the most elevated rates of deforestation (3.3 per cent) across the globe. Over the course of the past three decades, the country has experienced the depletion of approximately 6.1 million hectares or 35.7 per cent of its forested areas (23). Nigeria encompasses remarkable biological diversity, serving as a habitat for gorillas, chimpanzees, baboons, and elephants, while also boasting a total of 899 bird species, 274 mammal species, 154 reptile species, and 53 amphibian species (Grant 24). The repercussions of this destruction are two-fold, adversely impacting both human and animal populations, thereby projecting an ominous trajectory towards the complete extinction of various avian and animal species.

Agina's submission regarding the Niger Delta provides us with a comprehensive understanding of the historiography of exploitation in the region. Agina claims that during the mid-1950s, the Nigerian state made a significant discovery of oil in the southern areas of the nation, known as the Niger Delta region. This discovery prompted the commencement of crude oil exportation. Through a partnership between Shell Petroleum and the Nigerian government, most of the government revenue became dependent on the profits generated from the oil industry (56). Unfortunately, the exploration of oil had detrimental effects on the land and its inhabitants in the Niger

Delta. Ogoniland suffered greatly from these consequences. William Boyd, a British writer, and a close associate of Ken Saro-Wiwa, a prominent Nigerian writer and advocate for minority rights, aptly describes the situation, stating, "what was once a tranquil rural community thriving with prosperous farmers and fishermen has now transformed into an ecological wasteland emanating a sulfuric stench. The creeks and water holes have become contaminated due to uncontrolled oil spillage, while the ominous glow of gas flares illuminates the night sky with an orange hue" (Boyd 2).

The Nigerian film industry has made significant investments in exploring the themes of ecology, human exploitation, and environmental exploitation in the Niger-Delta region. Noteworthy examples of these films include *Across the Niger* (directed by Izu Ojukwu and Kingsley Ogoro, 2007), *Amazing Grace* (directed by Jeta Amata, 2005), *Anini 1 & 2* (directed by Fred Amata, 2005), *Black November* (directed by Jeta Amata, 2012), *Blood and Oil* (directed by David Attwood, 2011), *Crude War 1 & 2* (directed by Ugezu J. Ugezu, 2011), *Delta Force* (directed by Glenn Ellis, 1995), *Heat of the Moment* (directed by Glenn Ellis, 1992), *King of Crude 1 & 2* (directed by Ugezu J. Ugezu, 2007), *Militants 1 & 2* (directed by Moses Inwang, 2007), *Oil Village 1 & 2* (directed by Kalu Anya, 2001), *Stubborn Grasshopper 1 & 2* (directed by Simisola Opeoluwa, 2001), *Sweet Crude* (directed by Sandy Cioffi, 2009), *The Drilling Fields* (directed by Glenn Ellis, 1994), and *The Liquid Black Gold 1 & 2* (directed by Ikenna E. Aniekwe, 2008).

The narratives of ecology in northern Nigeria, particularly in the mainstream Nollywood or Nigeria's film industry, have received very little attention. This issue is critically examined in McCain's influential chapter titled "*Nollywood and Its Others: Questioning English Language Hegemony in Nollywood Studies.*" While the focus in this paper revolves around the cinema narratives in northern Nigeria concerning ecological issues, it is important to note that the film under scrutiny, *Sons of the Caliphate*, is primarily set in northern Nigeria and employs multiple languages, predominantly English and Hausa. As a result, it may not fit into the conventional definition of mainstream "Nollywood" films, which are typically of Yoruba/Igbo/Benin origin or produced in English or its pidgin variant. Similarly, it may not exclusively align with the category of Kannywood films, which are of Hausa origin and mainly produced in Kano State. Instead, it could be classified as part of the emerging "New Nollywood" movement, as described by scholars, or what John Illah refers to as the "Nigerian film industry" denoting an industry that transcends linguistic boundaries, as highlighted by McCain. In fact, the film's director, Kenneth Gyang, expresses a similar sentiment, stating, "I would like to view my productions as representative of Nigerian cinema," echoing Illah's perspective.

Historically, the region known as northern Nigeria has existed as a separate entity within the larger country of Nigeria. This division has been marked by distinct customs, foreign relations, and security structures. In 1962, northern Nigeria expanded its territory by incorporating the British northern Cameroons, which chose to align itself as a province within northern Nigeria. The proclamation of the protectorate of northern Nigeria took place at Ida on January 1, 1897, under the leadership of Frederick Lugard. It was on the 15th of March in 1957 that Northern Nigeria achieved self-

government, with Sir Ahmadu Bello assuming the role of its first premier. Presently, the region encompasses the states of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau States, Federal Capital Territory FCT Abuja, Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe, as well as Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara. Northern Nigeria is currently bedevilled by various militia groups, such as Boko Haram, herdsmen, bandits, and kidnappers, which have contributed to the human catastrophe and precarity in the region.

Simultaneously, there are numerous mining ponds spanning from the tin city of Jos in Plateau State to the gold mines in Zamfara. In a documentary (*Lunar Landscape*) directed by Kenneth Gyang and produced by a German organization, Heinrich Boll, Nnimmo Bassey of the Health of Mother Earth, an NGO, aptly describes the situation. Bassey highlights that in many regions around the world where there has been extensive extraction of solid minerals, significant environmental challenges have arisen. These include the contamination of water bodies with toxic chemicals and the emergence of various diseases, ultimately leading to widespread poverty in these areas (Gyang *Lunar Landscape*). Historical records indicate that in 1904, the British colonial government established a mineral survey team, which led to the discovery of a tin deposit in the Jos-Plateau area, now known as Plateau State. The trend continued until the indigenization policy replaced the involvement of foreign experts in the mining sector. As reported by the *Daily Trust*:

In 1972, the federal government of Nigeria, seeking to break the dominance that expatriates had in tin mining, designed a nationalisation policy that placed Nigerians in charge of the sector. The government's indigenisation decree achieved the compulsory acquisition of controlling shares in foreign companies. But this policy created a problem because the few foreigners still in it lost interest. The Nigerian Mining Corporation (NMC), coming with the new policy the same year, did not help the situation as the activities of the tin mining companies declined steadily until the early eighties when a merger of existing companies became inevitable. (<https://dailytrust.com/plateau-bears-scars-of-tin-mining/>)

This policy has also facilitated the opportunity for illicit mining activities to be carried out by the local population and their foreign counterparts, resulting in severe consequences characterized by heightened insecurity in the regions. Similarly, there has been a noticeable increase in acts of banditry in many areas in Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina, Kaduna, and other northern states. The phenomenon of climate change holds significant implications for the mining industry and the issue of insecurity. The mining sector's impact on water resources and its capacity to adapt to climate change can potentially influence water security within the communities that host these mining activities (Leonard 2). In general, the issue of climate change exacerbates the problem of insecurity and presents challenges across various sectors, including mining and food security. As articulated in Brzoska's article titled "Climate Change as a Driver of Security Policy," it is emphasized that "climate change has rapidly emerged as a significant concern on the security agenda of states and international organizations" (11). This article examines the crises above as a convergence of the natural and cultural

realms, and the ways in which the mediums of cinema, theatre, and drama can portray and question certain aspects of these profound existential issues.

Theoretical Framework

Eco-Socialism within the realm of film has been an area of investigation conducted through various methods. Some scholars argue that films of all genres, ranging from mainstream Hollywood blockbusters to independent art-house productions, possess the capability, whether consciously or unconsciously, to approach ecological issues and raise public consciousness. However, the 21st century has observed a significant transformation with the emergence of ‘green movies’ in India, which effectively illuminate ecological concerns such as water contamination and scarcity, with the aim of sensitizing viewers to the necessity of water conservation. While these summaries provide valuable insights into the broader paths of eco-cinema and its ability to address ecological matters, the specific notion of eco-socialism within the realm of film remains unexplored.

Eco-Socialism, also referred to as green socialism, socialist ecology, ecological materialism, or revolutionary ecology, is an ideological amalgamation that encompasses elements of socialism, green politics, ecology, and alter-globalization or anti-globalization. Within the realm of eco-socialism, it is generally posited that the expansion of the capitalist system is the root of social exclusion, poverty, warfare, and environmental deterioration through the processes of globalization and imperialism. These occurrences transpire under the watchful ‘eyes’ of repressive states and transnational structures. The originator of the Eco-Socialism Theory (E-ST) is Murray Bookchin. E-ST asserts that the capitalist economic system is fundamentally incongruous with the ecological and social prerequisites of sustainability (Magdoff and Foster 20).

Magdoff and Foster, placing economic priority on meeting human needs within the ecological boundaries, as required by sustainable development, question the inherent mechanisms of capitalism. Eco-socialists advocate for the replacement of capitalism with eco-socialism, a socio-economic and political structure that embodies equality and aims to reconcile human society with the non-human environment, ultimately addressing the current ecological crisis and paving the way for sustainability. In her book, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, Klein sheds light on the capitalist frameworks and the misconceptions that obscure the climate discourse when she submits that:

Communal forests around the world are being turned into privatized tree farms and preserve so their owners can collect something called “carbon credits” a lucrative scam...there is a booming trade in “weather as if deadly disasters were a game on a Vegas craps table (between 2005 and 2006 the weather derivatives market jumped nearly fivefold, from \$9.7 billion to \$45.2 billion). Global insurance companies are making billions in profits, in part by selling new kinds of protection schemes to developing countries that have done almost nothing to create the climate crises, but whose infrastructure is intensely vulnerable to its impact. (8-9)

Against the backdrop of capitalism, which is a system rooted in profit, there is a desire to privatize and profit even from disastrous events. Thus, eco-sociologists assume that the expansion of the capitalist system leads to social exclusion, poverty, war, and environmental degradation due to globalization and imperialism. This expansion occurs under the supervision of repressive states and transnational structures. From this theoretical perspective, we investigate the aesthetics and employ formal strategies to examine the relationship between cinema/film and the world in which it exists as both ontology and discourse.

Sons of the Caliphate: A Synopsis

Sons of the Caliphate is a television series that is situated in the northern region of Nigeria. The narrative unfolds in the fictitious Kowa State in northern Nigeria, focusing on three influential individuals. Khalifa Maiyaki, Nuhu Bula, and Dikko Loko, who cultivated a close friendship. Nuhu Bula and Dikko Loko become entangled in a romantic entanglement with the remarkably beautiful Binta Kutigi, who seeks retribution for the death of her father during her childhood. The inception of political machinations arises when Kalifah Maiyaki, who coincidentally is the prince and offspring of the Emir of Kowa, expresses his intention to vie for the position of Governor in Kowa State. Consequently, his father and the emirate council endeavour to obstruct Khalifah, the rightful heir, from entering the realm of politics. Concurrently, his stepmother intensifies her scheme to orchestrate his candidacy for the sake of her son, Hamza, who stands next in line for the throne. Alhaji Sani Bula, an affluent individual, seeks to insert his son Nuhu into the race for his personal gain, namely the misappropriation of Kowa State's ecological funds. While the interplay of love and revenge persists throughout the thirteen (13) episodes in season one, the subsequent thirteen episodes in season two revolve around the motive of the competition and the reality faced by the populace, as the violence for control of mining sites, particularly in rural areas, unfolds due to the underlying desire to profit from the sites while the people continue to suffer untold hardship.

Power and Ecological Discourse in Northern Nigeria

The Eco-Socialism Theory (E-ST) generally assumes that the expansion of the capitalist system is the cause of social exclusion, poverty, war and environmental degradation through globalization and imperialism, under the supervision of repressive states and transnational structures. In this analysis, we define power within the text and context of the film because as Agina argued on what she calls "methodological discussion and debate" in the study of Nollywood or the "Nigerian film Industry" giving credence to the submission of Jackie Stacey's term "methodological questions." She states that, "methodological questions need to be debated in film studies because without such a debate the politics of knowledge remain hidden and mystified" (2). Agina further submits that:

Among scholars, only Haynes wrote brief commentaries alluding to the films as political critiques (Haynes, 2006); and among journalists, Steve Ayorinde and Shaibu Husseini produced newspaper articles that by 2014 were irretrievably lost in the archives of The Guardian (personal communication). Absent from existing scholarship

was the reception of films made in the past. This revealed the limits of the methods of enquiry, particularly those of textual analyses which currently dominate the literature. (1)

Without undermining the existing frameworks of ideas found in scholarly journals and other written works, Agina asserts that the critical examination of research methods is crucial in the contemporary empirical scholarship of the arts and humanities. Arguably, the study of film in Nigeria is still in its developing stages, with a significant emphasis on literature and theories of theatre. This further contributes to the ongoing discussion while narrowing the knowledge gap in the pursuit of addressing the question of "why? Barnett and Duvall offer a definition of power as "the production, within social relationships, of consequences that influence the abilities of individuals to determine their circumstances and destiny" (Agina 13). This definition modifies Scott's perspective of the "functioning of power within social relationships."

Overall, their conceptual framework can be summarized by the following quotation: this concept has two dimensions at its core: 1. the kinds of social relations through which actors' capacities are affected and affected and, 2. the specificity of those social relations. Conventionally for social theorists, social relations can be viewed as being broadly of two kinds: relations of interaction among previously constituted social actors; or relations of constitution of actors as particular kinds of social beings. For the second dimension, the crucial distinction is whether the social relations of interaction or constitution through which power works are direct and specific, or indirect and socially diffuse (45). With this theory in mind, we set out to define power structures in the text and context. The actors in the film are drivers of the story and what they say about 'each other' and 'a thing' describe the meaning and function of that material or idea. Binta Kutigi the antagonist paints a good picture of the personalities of the three friends when she said bitterly.

Binta Kutigi:...Just because their fathers are rich. Just because they are sons of the caliphate.



Plate 1: Binta Kutigi is angry while telling Loti about the Sons of the Caliphate

In this scene, Binta directs our attention towards the location of power, as she delineates their social relationship as one that can be described as 'rich vs. poor' and 'offender and victim.' She herself stands as a victim, subjected to both structural and forceful circumstances, evident through her tender age and her poignant tears as she bears witness to her father's demise due to the heedless actions of the 'sons of the caliphate'. This act of reckless driving serves as a symbolic representation of a leadership that lacks compassion towards the destitute members of society. A leadership that remains indifferent to the well-being and sustenance of the impoverished, while persisting in governing the state despite the countless challenges posed by inequality and the exploitation of both human and natural resources within the environment. It is within this context that we perceive the manifestation of power, as symbolized by the enigmatic characterization of the 'sons of the caliphate.' The subsequent dialogue meticulously elaborates upon the intricate power dynamics that exist.

Sons of the Caliphate's Representation of Northern Nigeria's Environment and Power Structure

I. Traditional Institution

The Emir of Kowa holds both constitutional and structural authority in the northern region. The Nigerian constitution acknowledges the significance of the throne, and he is the temporal and spiritual leader of the people. The institution commands a great deal of respect. Thus, Khalifa Maiyaki, the son of the Emir of Kowa, embodies a form of power that aligns with Barnett and Duvall's concept of "structural power." This type of power functions as the constitutive relations of a direct and specific nature, thus mutually shaping and defining the productive power that operates through diffuse constitutive relations. These relations are responsible for generating the social capabilities of individuals in their respective contexts.



Plate 2: Kowa Emirate Palace in Council. Seating arrangement alone locates the place of power.

II. The Political Class

Dikko Loko, the offspring of Alhaji Loko, the influential figure in the realm of politics, embodies an alternative manifestation of authority. As posited by Barnett and Duvall, "compulsory ~and, (to a lesser degree, institutional) power accentuates agency to the extent that structure assumes the role of a backdrop within which As endeavours and Bs responses are situated and restricted, thus heavily relying on agency and treating structure as a constraint" (49). Within this context, Alhaji Loko personifies an establishment for the political potency he wields, dictating who attains political positions and reaping the benefits through the use of coercion or other intimidating methods. He epitomizes a political dominion that is both immediate (compulsory) and institutional (diffuse) due to the democratic principle that mandates regular elections in Nigeria every four years, thereby encompassing aspects of both direct and institutional authority. The political Godfather concurrently assumes such authority.

III. The Business Class

Nuhu Bula, the offspring of Sani Bula, is a prosperous young individual who received his upbringing in a foreign land. In this context, power manifests itself in a structural and productive manner, with its direct allies being of a political nature. The political entities establish laws and regulations that serve to benefit the business class. The key aspect lies in the desire of A to prompt B to modify its behaviour in a specific direction. Within this framework, the central focus of the film revolves around the discourse of ecology. We witness Sani Bula engaged in a conversation with Jinjiri, contemplating the potential influence on the outcome of the upcoming Kowa state general elections, specifically targeting "A" (the political class). The Bula Group of companies, an indigenous establishment, possesses a substantial stake in a multinational mining corporation that has been operating in the Kowa Local communities for approximately six decades, without considering the health of the local residents or providing compensation.

Bula: Jinjiri, I have been thinking, you see having Nuhu becomes governor is not a bad idea.

Jinjiri: it is a brilliant idea; we need to work on *Loko* (political Godfather) to lick his wounds.

Bula: trust me *Jinjire Loko* is the least of my worries right now and especially with all that is happening in the company ...having access to that eighty billion ecological trust funds ...



Sons of the Caliphate S01E02 Episode 2

Plate 3: Action of Bula and Jinjiri discussing the ecological funds and the prospects of looting by using political power

The intention of this shot was to capture the beauty of the garden and emphasize the importance of environmental appreciation. The scene was filmed outdoors in a serene location where only the trees and grass could hear the characters. This paper recognizes the significance of this setting as it serves as a metaphor for the relationship between humans and nature, particularly in the context of capitalist production, where humans often seek to exploit and destroy the natural environment. The relationship between culture and nature is complex, as cultural practices can have a significant impact on the natural environment. For instance, corruption within a culture can lead to a variety of negative environmental consequences, including poor management of natural resources, degradation of wildlife habitats, and indiscriminate tree-felling for personal gain. Additionally, cultural practices such as hunting can contribute to the depletion of wildlife populations, while a lack of proper environmental education can exacerbate these issues.

As Olorode noted while referencing Mohammed: the effect of climate change in far northern Nigeria has assumed such magnitude that the minimum vegetation cover in Katsina, Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi, Kano, Jigawa, Bauchi, Yobe, Maiduguri, Taraba, and Adamawa states respectively have already fallen below 10% as against the ideal requirement of 25% ecological cover recommended by UNEP to support Fulani man and his herds. The predominant Fulani herder of the lower Sahel and Sudan savannah and the northwest and northeast Nigeria are now migrating and gradually becoming natives in the middle-belt region to find greener pasture for their herds... the farmer has fears that the Fulani herds will destroy his farmlands. The natural result is a clash over land rights (6).

Culturally, land is synonymous with birthright. With a rising population in northern Nigeria, the crises over the environment seem to be on the threshold as the

ruling political elites as depicted in the *sons of the caliphate* continue to take environmental issues with levity by looting and mismanaging the ecological intervention funds. Here we underscore a point that a film is a cultural material and does not exist in a void. The writer and director of this film seem to stand in the gap, we see this action as a form of power call it direct structural and proactively diffuse because it reminds the viewer of how he/she has failed to replace the ruling hegemony in the state. The narrative is a graphic reminder of cases already proved beyond a reasonable doubt in the Nigerian courts to cite one, the former Governor of Plateau state According to the anti-graft agency, EFCC through its website <http://www.efccnigeria.org>:

His trial before Justice Adebukola Banjoko of a Federal Capital Territory, FCT, High Court, Gudu, Abuja had commenced on January 25, 2016, with the EFCC presenting exhibits, including the statement, as part of documents to prosecute him for allegedly diverting N1.162 billion Ecological Fund meant for the state, to private companies and individuals. In the statement, Dariye had acknowledged instructing all States Trust Bank, (now defunct), on the disbursement of the said N1.162 billion Fund, which had been released by the Office of the Ecological Fund and credited to the bank.

He was granted a presidential pardon on April 14, 2023, despite facing charges. The question remains whether justice was served in this case. In a documentary film titled "*Lunar Landscape*," Kenneth Gyang described the environment as a barren landscape with stepped-sided mounds and multi-coloured ponds or lakes. This is available for viewing at <https://ng.boell.org/en/resource-politics> .Additionally, there have been cases of lead poisoning in Zamfara State. The root cause of this crisis is unsafe mining and ore processing. It is crucial to provide those involved in mining and ore processing with access to safe facilities and programs to prevent further exposure to toxic lead. A report from MSF states that in March 2010, an estimated four hundred children died in Zamfara state due to prominent levels of lead in their blood.”

Insights from the TV Series *Sons of the Caliphate*

Insights obtained from the television series, *Sons of the Caliphate*, reveal several valuable lessons. Firstly, it highlights the conflict in the northern region of Nigeria, which can be seen as a manifestation of the struggle between mankind and the natural world. This conflict is fuelled by a pervasive culture that exploits both the environment and fellow human beings, perpetuated by capitalist tendencies within the ruling class. It is imperative to review the efficacy of the federal government's creation of ecological funds intervention. This initiative, established in 1981 based on the recommendations of the Okigbo Commission, requires careful evaluation to ensure its optimal functionality and alignment with the needs and aspirations of the people. Moreover, the Northern region of Nigeria is currently experiencing a class war. This conflict arises from the impoverishment of Northerners, orchestrated by collusion between the traditional, political, and business elite. Considering these insights, it is essential to launch a comprehensive and extensive campaign to raise awareness and knowledge among the general populace. This grassroots movement should focus on countering the detrimental effects of informal mining activities prevalent in Northern Nigeria. The

proliferation of illegal and informal mining, lacking modern equipment and techniques, must be effectively monitored, and regulated.

The wrath exhibited by the youthful Binta Kutigi in the film serves as a symbolic gesture, gradually maturing from adolescence to adulthood in pursuit of justice. However, the narrative fails to elucidate the economic transformation of the impoverished Binta. Instead, it highlights her allure and femininity to connect and socialize with the ruling elites. To attain justice, she must assimilate into the same social class as the *Sons of the Caliphate*, thus shedding light on the issue of social stratification and inequality in northern Nigeria. Despite the increasing prevalence of banditry, kidnapping, and the killing of innocent civilians, the media narrative neglects to address the underlying class conflict, opting instead for superficial coverage. Olorode argues that this is due to the fear of a potential class war, leading both the ruling class and the media to emphasize ethnicity and religion rather than class dynamics in the conflict between herdsmen and farmers.

Echoing Olorode's viewpoint, the release of corrupt politicians through presidential pardons, while accidental inmates and petty criminals languish in prisons without receiving justice or opportunities for rehabilitation, exemplifies the influence of social class. In this context, power is wielded and enforced through control and silence. Every day, informal miners lose their lives in the ponds of Jos, Plateau, yet these incidents are not reported by the media. For instance, on September 3rd, 2018, a retired army general who had been declared missing was discovered three months later in one of the mining ponds in Dura-Du, Jos South LGA of Plateau. Interestingly, the narrative surrounding this incident took on an ethnoreligious dimension, deflecting attention from the issue of mismanagement of ecological funds allocated to the state for the maintenance of such ponds, due to the collusion of the ruling class in the Northern Nigeria.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis, the continued fragmentation of the masses along ethnic and religious lines, pervasive corruption at various levels, the commercialization of elective positions, excessive costs associated with governance, and the persistent state of public insecurity are often cited as the root causes of conflict in northern Nigeria. However, the film's counter-narrative deserves commendation, as it challenges the prevailing discourse and accuses the northern ruling elites, referred to as the *Sons of the Caliphate*, of instigating the human and environmental crises faced in the region. These crises are a direct consequence of exploitative practices aimed at generating wealth and exerting dominance, deeply entrenched within the framework of capitalism.

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**BETWEEN BELIEF, SPIRITUALITY AND SUPERSTITION: AN
ECOCRITICAL CONSIDERATION OF SELECTED TRADITIONAL IGALA
TALES**

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Abstract

The traditional Igala society, akin to most African societies, is characterized by certain ethos, including beliefs, values, folklore, and taboos, propagated through traditional oral tales and avoidance rules. The evolvement of religions other than the African Traditional Religion (ATR), especially Christianity and Islam, and the wake of Western civilization witnessed the suppression of some of such tales and rules, contributing to their classification as primitive and superstitious. Hence, the efforts to replace them with new values and culture. Using Focus Group Discussions to collect and analyse data in a qualitative design, this article studies some of these traditional tales and avoidance rules from the prism of ecocriticism to show how they tacitly or implicitly encompass the world's future in their themes. Salient, in this regard, is the burning issue of environmentalism. Highlighting how the manner of their formulation and propagation might have affected acceptability, the article posits that the antiquated narratives were, on the contrary, futuristic from the onset. Therefore, further efforts at their re-presentation, especially in theatre performance, would open them to empirical and scientific approaches, thereby, positioning them as veritable cultural models for environmental conservation.

Keywords: ATR, Avoidance rules, Ecocriticism, Traditional Igala tales, Taboos.

Introduction

Pre-colonial African societies were largely guided by several belief systems, values, folklore and taboos or avoidance rules. These values were mostly propagated through oral tales laden with moral instructions, behaviour guides, and social restrictions. Adherence to these values and taboo were mostly based on cultural regulations and spiritual injunctions. Thus, flouting them could be punishable by several culturally constructed measures. The popularization of colonial religions, western civilization, and the rise of internet/Information Technology might have relegated some of the belief systems promoted in the oral tales to their description as superstition and has contributed to how adherents have jettisoned such beliefs. In the wake of the world's increasing awareness of climate change and sustainability, an ecocritical consideration

of these traditional tales could reveal a relationship between these adherences and environmental sustainability.

Traditional Igala tales in the context of this article connote ‘stories’ told among the Igala people, with a cultural relevance to the Igala people, and which were from time past, ‘shared orally’ including folktales, myths, legends, and taboos (Madej 1). While a decline in the listening and telling of these traditional tales is a subject of much research (Nkoli and Okoye 1), their implication for conversations on environmentalism and climate action could be one of many possible ways of shifting attention to their resuscitation, maybe in improved forms, for entertaining, educative, informative, and many other socially functional purposes.

Generally, traditional tales typically convey moral lessons and instructions. Those targeted at strict social control may also come forth as taboos or avoidance rules. Onebunne describes taboos as “‘avoidance rules’ that forbid members of the human community from performing certain actions, such as eating some kinds of food, walking on or visiting some sites that are regarded as sacred, cruelty to nonhuman animals, and using nature’s resources in an unsustainable manner” (182). Thus, taboos were a formidable instrument for maintaining social order among many African communities. Formine’s historical examination of food taboos in pre-colonial and contemporary Cameroon demonstrates that taboos, cutting across religious, social, and anthropomorphic classifications, have implications for health, gender relations, and classism. That is far beyond the domain of religion and culture. While this finding means that taboos might have implications for more areas including ecology, climate change, and environmentalism, their manner of propagation that has occasioned disbelief, especially on religious, class, and gender grounds militate against their efficacy for environmentally relevant courses such as ecology and climate action. In Cameroon for example, Formine concludes that:

Food taboos may fade away as women... who occupy high positions make frequent trips to the hinterlands and make radio broadcasts in towns, where they speak in support of women’s liberation and equality with men. Their speeches have prompted some women to question the viability of certain taboos that were observed in precolonial times. Furthermore, many schools have opened, which has increased the level of literacy.... Better-educated women will no longer submit to food taboos imposed by men, as they did in the past. Currently, the few people who observe food taboos in Cameroon live in rural areas. Persistent financial hardship is causing many young people to migrate from towns and cities back to rural areas, bringing with them enlightened, urban ideas. It may well be that in a hundred years, only a few food taboos will be observed in Cameroon. (50-51)

Formine’s exposition above gives insight into some of the factors contributing to a declining rate of adherence to the avoidance rules that many traditional tales propagate. The exposition might also lend credence to a later submission in this study on the need to directly emphasize the socially functional aspects of the traditional tales which may be more effective for actualizing their tacit ecological functions in express terms.

Among the Shona people of Zimbabwe, several taboos cutting across the interaction of humans with “water sources, natural vegetation, wildlife, and endangered nonhuman animal species” enforce social attitudes targeted at environmental sustainability (Chemhuru and Masaka 125 – 132). In Nigeria, Adedayo Afe specifically highlights the social functions of taboos among Yorubas of the old Ondo province (106). The Idemili (of the Igbo tribe) and many other Igbo communities hold the python as a sacred animal and enforce appeasement rituals in the event of its killing by mistake (Onebunne 188). There are further examples beyond the shores of Africa, like the Indians for example, who revere animals such as Monkeys and Elephants, the notion of ‘evil forest’ and the conservation it promotes, as well as the embargo on some woods as firewood (Onebunne 188).

Although the primary aims of taboos in African societies were spiritual observances and social or moral behaviour control, they seem to exhibit tacit implications on ecology, environmentalism, and climate change actions. In Igboland, taboos ‘unintentionally’ promoted the “preservation of lands and Wildlife” (Onebunne 187). Kanu states that “Igbo-African indigenous beliefs, taboos, sanctions, and knowledge have contributed hugely to the checking of the abuse of the environment” (1). Kanu further discusses some other animals and their kinds, which may have been protected by an Igbo belief and taboo system (5-11). The ongoing suggests that the subject of Nigerian traditional/cultural tales/beliefs and climate change have been explored in some ways. However, their peculiarities, type, manner of expression, details, or modality of adherence slightly differ across geo-locations or cultures as Nigeria, given its robust ethnic groups would be too large to explore satisfactorily in a single article of this sort.

Concerning the Igala ethnic group, few scholars including Israel Yunisa Akoh have explored the relatedness of Igala spirituality and environmental sustainability (285-300). Given the significant role of religion and spirituality in the lives of the people as well as environmentalism, Akoh submits that “Igala taboos, religious beliefs, sacred rites and totems provide frameworks for defining acceptable resource use. When these traditional practices are promoted and protected, ecological balance would be restored” (298). The question then remains; how can ‘these traditional religious practices’ be ‘promoted and protected’ in an age where stronger forces of ‘new religion’ and globalization challenge their frameworks and occasion a new attitude?

Igala traditional tales have received more scholarly attention in other regards compared to the perspective of climate, environmentalism, and eco-criticism. For instance, among others, Joseph and Emah focus on resuscitative measures for Igala folktales which in their opinion are threatened by "modern technology and games" (74). They advocate increased documentation of Igala folktales in writings as well as through digital technology to leverage the increasing interest of youths in digital technology towards propagating Igala folktales (81-82). Armstrong Aduku Idachaba considers Igala oral poetry as source materials for film and argues that the transposition of Igala oral poetry and traditional tales could enhance the relevance of the tales and bring originality to the film art (140-153). Fidelis Egbunu explores Igala proverbs and highlights their significance to the moral, social, and spiritual existence of the Igala

people (259-264). Therefore, a specific consideration of Igala traditional tales and beliefs regarding environmentalism could reveal peculiar characteristics arising from their mode of propagation, level of adherence amidst continuous globalization, the effect of 'new' religions, and the possible role of drama, theatre, and performance to chart a folklore-climate based research.

Theoretical Grounding

The discussion in this article is framed around ecocriticism. Cheryll Glotfelty's resonating definition is that "ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xviii). Although the earlier focus was more on written literature, more applications of ecocriticism have demonstrated its suitability for engaging with oral literature. For instance, Ashenafi Belay Adugna undertakes an ecocritical exploration of Oromo proverbs, an ethnic group in Ethiopia (28-34). Geremew Chala Teresa and Hunduma Dagim Raga also undertake an ecocritical examination of Oromo folk songs. Adugna posits that the proverbs "represent the quest for human/nature co-existence, through its claim of the intrinsic value vested on different life forms... which reflects the ethics of care in the culture" (34). Adugna further submits that there is a "utilitarian value attached to nature in the discourses of the proverbs", a spatial relationship between humans and animals and then, a gendered perspective of the relations between humans, animals, and the environment (34). Similarly, Khairil Anwar argues that oral traditions in the form of myths, legends, fairy tales etc possess "ecological wisdom" requisite "to form a green moral character in sustainable development" (6).

Employing the ecocritical approach, Tomi Arianto has studied the '*Mak Ungkai*' folklore among the "Malay people in Tanjung Kertang village, Batam, Indonesia" (576-589). Enongene Mirabeau Sone has explored "the relationship between nature and culture as reflected in Swazi oral literature" etc (39 – 49). The directions of these studies are that a healthy environment relies on aspects of oral tradition and the cultural practices that groups of people develop out of their traditional tales and adherence to inherent beliefs. Although there is a similar pattern in the several studies underlined by the theoretical scaffold of ecocriticism, one peculiarity of each study and indeed, any new study in the area would be an engagement with a new cultural environment or further analytical angles to an already explored cultural background. The ecocriticism theory is applied in this article to examine any possible relationship between certain Igala traditional tales and the physical environment. Given that the avoidance rules inherent in some of the tales concern the relations between humans, animals, and the natural environment, the article explores the tacit-mindedness of ecology in the traditional Igala tales and how theatre and performance arts could become a medium for highlighting veritable models of environmental conservation in the traditional tales.

Methodology

Focus Group Discussion provided data for the discussion in this study. The need to cross-examine some tales also necessitated face-to-face Oral Interviews,

electronic/digitally mediated interviews, and participatory observation. Triangulation of these methods elicited traditional Igala tales and the opinion of selected Igala natives on the meaning and essence of the tales. These methods proved more effective in an informal design of free-flowing discussion in homesteads, among purposefully selected Igala culture researchers, and sometimes, impromptu gatherings of Igalas who are knowledgeable in oral traditions. During data collection, most respondents were familiar with key terminologies they mentioned only in the Igala language. The study however relied on S.S Usman's *Olufia Ekeji (Igala Language Dictionary)* for translating the names of some trees and animals.

Discussion: An Ecocritical Consideration of Selected Igala Traditional Tales

The Igala ethnic group is one among many ethnic groups and tribes in Nigeria, dominant in Kogi State, Nigeria, but resident in good numbers across several parts of Nigeria and the world. As found in most traditional African societies, the Igala people have over the years, resorted to the use of oral tales, taboos, and avoidance rules for regulating social and moral behaviour. A popular saying used to persuade Igala children to be obedient is *anagbo akola ito awalu, itogbe, Ukola che*. This saying implies that, when an elder sends a youngling on an errand, the elder calls the attention of the youngling after giving the instructions and spits on the floor. He will tell the child, "You must return before this spittle dries up. If not, your navel will decay as the spittle dries off". With this, the child would hurry to run the errand as swiftly as possible.

The analogy above, although not directly related to the discussion on environmental conservation formed part of the introductory deliberation during one of the focus group discussions that elicited data for this study. The key question was whether there was any merit in the claim that a child's navel would 'decay' if he/she does not deliver on an errand in good time. It was agreed that fallacious as this is, it was efficacious over the years in getting younglings to do their domestic chores and run errands since they grew into faithfully believing in a 'decaying navel' as a consequence of disobedience or underperformance. This background created the atmosphere for discussing Igala tales that border on environmental conservation. Akin to the given analogy, the tales identified did not originally have their focus on environmental conservation. Leaning on ecocriticism, however, they could be interpreted in terms of interrelated themes drawn across deforestation, bush clearing, fishing, rivers/water bodies, firewood, and meat selectivity.

Trees and Water Bodies

Igala land is blessed with arable land and the Igala people have historical affiliations with farming activities. Evidence is the naming of villages and settlements after farm activities, crops, animals, rivers/streams, and activities of hunters etc (Boston 116). Because some of the farmlands are bordered by streams and rivers, it is widely believed by the Igala people that farmers who are close to any water body must be careful never to "naked the river". By this, they imply that while the felling of trees and clearing of bushes for cultivation could be a common practice, those who farm near any natural

water body must never fell trees or cut bushes to the edge of the natural water body. Hence, one characteristic of rivers in the area is an evergreen thick grass or tree walls. One of the stated consequences for people who “naked the river” is that they would have invited several spirits from the river which would spell doom for them and their farming activities. Although adherence to this practice had this mythical undertone, it was a gatekeeper checking deforestation for as long as people kept to its injunction.

Fishing

A recurrent tale was one related to fishing; the ban on fishing activities in the Inachalo River which is to some persons born out of a historical occurrence or which others describe as merely mythical. Located in Inachalo, Idah, Kogi State, the Inachalo River is held by oral tradition to be the site of the ritual sacrifice of Princess Omodoko, done to win victory for the Igala people during the Igala/Jukun War. Tom Miachi records that the Inachalo River was poisoned as a strategy to kill fighters from the Jukun side some of whom eventually drank the water from the river and died, thereby, contributing to the victory of the Igala people at that war. In Emmy Idegu’s *Omodoko*, reference is made to the Inachalo River while preparation was on for the Igala/Jukun war. Idegu notes in the play’s direction for action that while leading a group of people in prayers, ...A man dressed in a costume such that is very common in the Northern part of Nigeria... enters the river. He moves to the middle of the river and resumes some other rounds of prayers. Dancing in the river, he stands straight looking into the sky and offering some inaudible sounds. He touches the water, drinks it a little, looks up and does so for a number of repeated times... he pours some powdery substance into the river... As he does so, some fishes scramble in the water. He resumes prayers, a very long one. Holding the red ball high in the air, he throws it into the upper part of the river. It bursts, making a loud sound. Coming out of the river, he looks victoriously fulfilled. (58)

At an intense part of the war, Idegu, in the play *Omodoko*, presents that some of the Jukun warriors “die vomiting blood” (71), an indication that the poisoned river had its effects on the warriors. The popular tale talked about the river maintains that as an aftermath of the spiritual processes leading to the poisoning of the river, the poison itself, and the death of the Jukun fighters, it became an upheld injunction never to fish in the Inachalo River or eat any fish from it. It is believed that the fish in the Inachalo River can never be cooked and if one dares to try, the fish would remain raw regardless of how long it is cooked.

In today’s age of information technology as well as a flourishing use of the internet and social media, some youths of Igala origin, have raised challenging opinions regarding the prohibition of fishing in the Inachalo river. That fish from the river would not be cooked constitutes a special area of their probe. Abdullahi Haruna describes this inquisitiveness as “the new thirst for Inachalo water...” and cautions the ‘new generation’;

Do not let your curiosity make you challenge what is not after you... let not your supersonic intellect make you dare the mystery of yesterday... The Inachalo mystery isn't begging for revalidation, as such, it is needless digging up its mystery or debunking its potency. A child can fondle his mother's breast but he dares not near his

father's scrotum, it's not cowardice, it is reverence! The fishes in Inachalo aren't crying to be eaten nor are they disturbing your existence. Leave them potent just like those before you... Some mysteries are better left to be curious about, and not try to clear the curiosity because, when the repercussion births, not only those who seek to dig in will face what it takes from the mysteries but, everyone in that time. Let our thirst for the Inachalo River be that of expanded knowledge, dredging and sustenance of its historical awe and tourism potential. ([https://leadership.ng /the-new-thirst-for-inachalo-water/](https://leadership.ng/the-new-thirst-for-inachalo-water/))

Haruna's caution points out the increasing level of doubt or desire to subject some of the age-long narratives to practical tests. It is not certain that Haruna's caution would deter the imminent scientific enquiry to ascertain the claim, for instance of the Inachalo River tale. This is, of course, a subject of further research. However, the primary concern here is the implication of the narrative for the relationship between the organisms in the Inachalo River and the ecology of its immediate human society. The age-long adherence to the injunction never to plunder the Inachalo River for fishing activities may have contributed to the preservation of the species of fish present in the river, thereby securing their livelihood through the ages.

Visiting Rivers, Streams, and Farms at Noon

Oral tradition in parts of Igala land holds it that pregnant women should never visit the river at midday (*iko ihiaja/egba ihiaja*) as it is believed that at noon, the river/water spirits (including goddesses) meet. Thus, if a pregnant woman dares to visit the river at that time, she stands the risk of becoming possessed by any of the water spirits, and eventually, giving birth to a child who would be from birth, possessed by the spirit and consequently, required to worship/appease such spirit his/her lifetime or be faced with untold calamity. More discussants at the Focus Group discussion comment that this avoidance rule is not limited to pregnant women alone as in other parts of Igala land, it binds on all and sundry. Various reasons given are that water spirits or, according to others, evil spirits carry out their activities at that time. As such, people are not advised to visit the river at midday through the hot afternoon. Although the veracity of this claim is uncertain, the Igala people over time adhered to this injunction, more so that the Igala people believe in an essential proverb; *enwu ke ma li n a lie n*. That is, "whatever you do not see (find, search for) will not see (locate) you". A similar narrative holds about going to the farm at midday.

There are ecocritical concerns that could be raised from this narrative; in what way could 'giving the river a break' constitute a sort of environmental conservation, especially in a geographical location where such a river provides the major source of 'free' water for nearby dwellers? Or to what degree does an unchecked plundering of the river affect environmental conservation? While these questions might not be convincingly answered yet in the context of these narratives, one insight could be in the submission of Nilsson and Berggren that the protection of "river environments and human needs of rivers remains one of the most important questions of our time" (791).

Meat Selectivity

There are avoidance rules and taboos among Igala people that regulate the consumption of some animals as meat. Participants at the Focus Group Discussion agree that in the traditional Igala society, people generally abhor eating the meat of animals such as *Obala* (cat), *Abia* (Dog), and *Okoo* (pig). Also, most Igala pious Muslims forbid eating the *Ukabu* (Chimpanzee) and *Oge* (Monkey). Again, while these avoidances are propagated under the canopy of religious beliefs, some of which are now lost and described as superstitions, the searchlight here is on how the avoidances have been some sort of gatekeepers for the preservation of key actors of ecology, that is, the animals or objects of the avoidance rules and taboos.

Trees and Firewood

Before the advent of modern and advanced cooking utensils, most African societies relied on the use of dry wood (firewood) from several trees as kindles, fuel, or flames for cooking. This practice is extant in rural African settlements and widely observable in several villages. Among the Igala people, distinct clans have avoidance rules regarding the use of woods from specific trees as firewood which witnessed a religious adherence over time. Discussants at the Focus Group Discussion agree that generally, the traditional Igala society abhors the use of *echi*; the African Indigo (Usman 90) for firewood. Another tree described by the Igalas as *Ukp'omajuwe* (a literal English translation is 'killer of chicks') is also not permitted into homes as firewood. As the name implies, it is believed that where it is used, poultry farming would not thrive as it would lead to the death of poultry birds. There was strict adherence to this injunction as the average traditional Igala home practiced subsistent poultry farming. Some of the observance rules regarding the use of firewood are only restricted to clans. A participant at the Focus Group Discussion exemplifies that in times past, clan members of Ogbogba Oga, of the Igalamela/Odolu Local Government Area of Kogi State forbid the use of the *Agba*; the balsam tree (Usman 11) or African Balsam as firewood. Another participant mentioned that the *Enache* botanically called *Hymenocardia acidula* is forbidden as firewood among some families of the Enjema clan. One pointer to the impending dead end of these avoidances might be the declining knowledge of trees and plants that the avoidance rules included and the reasons for such avoidances.

Another tree whose wood is forbidden as firewood is the *Okopi* tree known by the botanical name, *Lophira lanceolata* Van Tiegh. Akoh mentions that one reason behind the avoidance of the *Okopi* tree as firewood especially "among descendants of Ogbajele in Ofakaga, Ajetachi, and Agala" is that the tree played a role in rescuing their ancestors "from a dreaded disease" (293). Two participants of the Focus Group Discussion however added that it is a divine injunction that ardent faithful of the *ogwu* (twin) rituals obey. The *ogwu* rituals are performed by children born as twins or their parents and since woods from the *okopi* tree form parts of the ritual items, it is thus forbidden as firewood and held sacred, especially by devotees to the *ogwu* ritual. Similarly, *ukpokpo*; the sweet sop shrub botanically known as *Annona senegalensis* Pers (Usman 327) is forbidden by sects of Igala as firewood. It is believed that when

ukpokpo is used as firewood, anyone who consumes the food prepared would develop sores in the mouth.

Besides the respective themes explored above, Traditional Igala spirituality may have tacitly strengthened forest reserves which are a source of environmental conservation. Thus, apart from the reverence accorded rivers by preserving their wall of trees, sacred shrines and consecrated places of Igala traditional religious beliefs remain natural environments with secure 'flora and fauna' (Akoh 292). Akoh names a few sites such as "Ayabi in Affa-Ibaji, *Okwula* forest in *Egume*, *Ojaina* (Royal Cemetary at Idah), and the *Agana-Obagwu* forest in Ofu (292). Similar to the few mentioned, several households, clans, and communities have their respective reserved areas such as the *Okwula*, a place reserved for ancestral worship. Another important site is the *Ereane* which is the name for reserved areas dedicated by Igala traditionalists in different communities to the veneration of the "earth divinities" (Akoh 294) or for spiritual divination, fortification, supplications, appeasements, and cleansing/purification. Given the sacred status of such a place, it is free of any form of encroachment including hunting and deforestation and invariably, contributes to environmental conservation.

Most of these tales, taboos, and avoidance rules were easy to enforce as their spiritual undertone implied that violators do not need to be caught and punished by humans but are reprimanded by the spiritual forces believed to rule over the people. They are however weakened by the same reason of spirituality as more people renounce religious faithfulness or public faithfulness to traditional belief systems, for the now more popular religions; Christianity and Islam (Mckinnon 303). Similarly, the manner of propagating the traditional tales and beliefs; enmeshed in spirituality and now, superstition, may account for why Onebunne hints at the selectivity in adherence to some taboos in recent times. Onebunne notes for instance, that food-related taboos "makes no sense at all, as what may be declared unfit for one group by custom or religion may be perfectly acceptable to another" (180). The decline in adherence to these traditional beliefs and avoidance rules which have been demonstrated to have tacitly promoted environmental conservation implies that, in addition to the many other factors challenging ecology and climate, the awakening occasioning the jettisoning of traditional beliefs with environmental implications would exacerbate global climate conditions.

The consequence is that people will cut down more trees, burn bushes recklessly, encroach water bodies, encroach forest reserves, harm more organisms, and kill more animals. As they do so with the freedom that their doubts about the spirituality of the traditional beliefs, avoidance rules, and taboos provide them, they also do so at the detriment of the global climate condition. Since traditional narratives are raw materials for theatre making, theatre and performance could bring about a reorientation, through which environmentally conservative traditional tales and beliefs could be considered in the light of their ecological advantage, thereby, stemming the impact of their relative boycotting by people on the grounds of 'new religions'. The manner of their representation in drama and performance could therefore provide data for their eco-critical interrogation, would open them to empirical and scientific

approaches, thereby, positioning them as veritable cultural models for environmental conservation.

Conclusion

Igala traditional tales and the beliefs, taboos, and avoidance rules inherent in them exhibit a tacit consciousness of environmental conservation. They were however shrouded in cultural embargo and spiritual injunctions. Since the Igala ancestors may have lacked the theoretical and empirical effrontery to justify how the necessary actions fostered by the traditional tales and beliefs could beyond their spiritual essence, fulfil some environmental conservation functions, they were easily watered down by forces of religion, urbanization, and literacy, and described as superstitions. Theatre and Performance are potent, through re-presentations to re-direct scholarly and practical attention to how some of the traditional narratives are invaluable to the future of the world's climatic condition. Apart from the focus of theatre and performance on the mythic essence of traditional narratives, therefore, a consideration of their implication for ecology, environment, and climate action in contemporary performances and theatre-making processes could be one way of opening Igala traditional tales and beliefs to environmentally functional perspectives, climate centred theorizations and experiments. Theatre and performance, therefore, is one potent means of situating these functional traditional narratives in more social and environmental contexts to occasion better sensitization on their functionality as opposed to their consideration as spiritual observances. This requires an intentional projection of the social and environmental benefits of the traditional tales, taboos, and avoidance rules.

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IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON AGRICULTURAL FESTIVALS IN IGBOLAND: THE CASE OF *IWA JI*

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Abstract

In traditional Igbo society, a bountiful harvest begets an exciting festival which is used to celebrate nature's benevolence on the people and the appeasement of the respective gods and goddesses perceived to have aided the fruitfulness of the crops. Hence, agricultural festivals are determined and celebrated based mostly on that season or time of the year when the weather is most clement and the farmers are at rest in preparation for the next planting season. This study uses historical-analytic and direct observation methods to interrogate how climate and weather conditions affect agricultural festivals. It further seeks to understand the reasons why particular festivals are celebrated at specific periods of the year using the *I wa Ji* festival of the Umudioka people as a paradigm. It finds that agricultural festivals are set and celebrated at seasons when the weather is most accommodating and perhaps productive. It further observes that climatic and weather conditions influence communal wellbeing and that the effect of a clement or adverse weather condition impacts heavily on the verve, and otherwise, of the community. This in turn, affects the nature of the festival and its attendant performances.

Keywords: Climate change, Agricultural festival, *I wa Ji*, Traditional Igbo society, Harvest.

Introduction

The Igboland was predominantly an agrarian community before the advent of the Europeans and the subsequent western civilization that came with colonization. In spite of the attendant alteration occasioned by western education and Christianity as well as industrialization; the Igbo still subsisted through agriculture. This is evidenced in the numerous festivals that are celebrated in honour of nature deities and seasons as propitiation for the sustainability of the land through bounteous harvest and abundant crop yields. Consequently, the Igbo have various festivals that take place at different seasons and periods. Most of these festivals are annual celebrations while some are occasioned by times and seasons as well as happenings within respective communities; such could be bi-annual. Hence, there are festivals like *Elim ede*, *Ilọ Mmuṅṅọ*, *I wa Ji*, *Ufe Ji Oku*, *Uzọ Iyi*, *Mkpukpa*; *Nwafọ*, *Ito Ogbọ*, *Iru Mgbede* and so on. It is worthy of mention here that although some of these festivals are celebrated among every Igbo community, like the *I wa Ji*, others like *Uzọ Iyi*, *Mkpukpa*, *Nwafọ*, *Iru Mgbede* and the

likes, are peculiar to specific communities where they obtain because of their distinctiveness and associations with some indigenous deities/gods.

The *I wa Ji* and such connatural festivals that are dependent on earth's yield and are determined by the nature of the harvest as well as the time and season of the year; are directly or indirectly affected by weather and or climatic conditions. According to Audu, Audu, Binbol and Gana, "planting is usually delayed when there is late onset of rains, while the early cessation destroys the late crops thereby causing poor yields, poor quality crops..." (5). This presupposes that a bountiful harvest, as a consequence of good climate, begets a robust festival and on the other hand, poor crop yields, occasioned by bad climate, will adversely affect the glamour of the festival. These changes in weather conditions which impact either positively or negatively on the harvest are what is generally referred to as climate change. Climate, according to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*:

Is the condition of the atmosphere at a particular location over a long period of time; it is the long-term summation of the atmospheric elements (and their variations) that, over short time periods, constitute weather. These elements are solar radiation, temperature, humidity, precipitation (type, frequency and amount), atmospheric pressure and wind (speed and direction). (1)

In other words, climate is the nature of the weather of a particular area or location within a specific period and this state of the weather is variable as it could be affected by natural forces such as temperature and humidity of the atmosphere and these reactions on the weather or climatic conditions ultimately result in climate change. Some human activities like bush burning and excavations equally contribute to climate change as the end results of such activities are changes in the natural environment. Climatic changes, most times, are seen to have occurred when there are longer periods of rainfall, as against what is usually obtainable. Equally, when there is a more prolonged season of drought, or when there happens to be a combination of both which in the long run could impact adversely on the weather and consequently affect crop yields.

Climate change, itself, is "the significant increase in the earth's temperature over a long period of time" (Nche 1). It could be taken to mean "a phenomenon whereby solar radiation that has reflected back off the surface of the earth remains trapped at atmospheric levels due to buildup of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases rather than being emitted back into space" (McLean and McMillan 29). Nche further explains that climate change is "a long-standing phenomenon as the mix-up of various gases that make up the earth's atmosphere has changed over long periods of time so, average global temperature has fluctuated" (1). It follows, therefore, that the climate changes as a result of variations in the earth's natural state whose agents are principally natural but could be man-made. Hence, "climate change can be due to natural external forcings (changes in solar emissions or changes in the earth's orbit, natural internal processes of the climate system) or it can be human induced" (Smith, Krishnamurti and Arnfield par. 3). Thus, as nature objects like crops and trees and other flora and fauna are sustained by the earth's yields, climatic changes directly or indirectly affect their productivity. This discourse focuses on *I wa Ji*, a festival

commemorating a successful planting season and a bounteous harvest and how climate change has affected the nature of the ceremony in recent times.

The *I wa Ji* festival is renowned throughout Igboland but emphasis here will be on its celebration among the Umudioka people of Dunukofia clan in the Central Senatorial District of Anambra State, Nigeria. Umudioka town is known for the art of *Igbu Ichi* (facial scarification). The community is principally agrarian and a good number of the male folks are traditional artists and medicine men who specialize in the art of *Igbu Ichi*, *Iwa Akpy*, *Nkasị Anị* and other forms of facial and bodily tattoos. The town is located along the old Onitsha-Enugu Road about fifteen kilometres from Onitsha. It is bordered on the east by Ogbunike and Oze towns, on the north by Umunya, on the west by Ifite Dunu and Umunnachi communities, and on the south by Ogidi and some parts of Umunnachi towns, respectively. The major traditional festival of the people is the *Mkpukpa* festival - an event that celebrates the goddess of the town which takes place in the month of July before the *I wa Ji*. Umudioka is administered centrally by an *Igwe* (traditional ruler) with the traditional prime minister, *Onowu*, the *Igwe-in-Council*, *Nze Oba Ojianị* and the Umudioka Improvement Union. The town is made up of ten (10) villages. The study used historical-analytic and direct observation methods to examine the object of its interest.

The *I wa Ji*

I wa Ji or *A wa m Ji*, as the name implies, simply means 'to cut the yam'. It is a simple way of saying that the yam is ready to be eaten after harvest. The *I wa Ji* ceremony is one of the highest traditional festivals of the Igbo. It usually takes place between the months of July and September depending on the season and the nature of the year's yield. On the average, the planting season, especially for yam, begins with the first rain of the year which usually occurs at mid-February. Subsequently, harvesting time begins in July. Traditionally, every town in Igboland has a priest who confers and consults with the town's deities in charge of crops. It is this priest who announces the date for the *I wa Ji* festival. It is expected that as at the time of announcing the date for the *I wa Ji* that all the yams of the preceding year would have been eaten save for the seedlings which are preserved for the next planting season. The Umudioka people celebrate the new yam festival, *I wa Ji*, in the month of September. The town celebrates it with other towns that make up Dunukofia clan: Ukpo, Ifitedunu, Umunnachi, Umudioka, Ukwulu and Nawgu. This is because the towns of Dunukofia are said to be the children of one man, *Okqfia*. So, most traditional festivals like the *I wa Ji* are commenced centrally at Ukpo by the clan head who is the *Eze Ukpo* after which each town's *Igwe* will celebrate the festival in his home/town.

It is taken that the *I wa Ji* ceremony is the formal declaration that the new yam should be eaten. In other words, it signifies that the people are free to eat the new yam. No titled man in any Igbo community is expected to eat the new yam until the *I wa Ji* ceremony has been performed. *Ji* (yam), among the Igbo is taken to be the 'king of crops' and it is believed that it is the sole prerogative of the men to plant yam such that a man who has a big barn filled with yam is regarded as a very rich man. Such a man is popularly called *Di Ji*. In traditional Igbo society, a man is valued by the size of his

yam barn (*Oba Ji*). Even in recent times, the quantity of yam at a traditional marriage ceremony (*Igba Nkwu*) determines or is taken as a measure of the groom's social status. This further authenticates the claim that yam (*Ji*) is the king of crops. Hence, the special privilege accorded it through the celebration of the *I wa Ji*. It is usually celebrated with pomp and pageantry. In Umudiọka, for example, the *I wa Ji* is usually celebrated on an *Afọ* market day. Coincidentally, the *Afọ* market is the town's major market day. The popular *Afọigwe* market is owned by the Umudiọka people. Ordinarily, no occasion is scheduled to take place on a *Afọ* market day in the town but some highly revered ceremonies like the *Mkpukpa* and *I wa Ji* are done on an *Afọ* day to emphasize their importance to the people.

On the day of the *I wa Ji* festival, the people of the town will converge on the Igwe's palace to witness the first breaking/cutting of the yam by the traditional ruler. Umudiọka is a town that has had people who have settled in other towns and climes as villages but they still bear the name Umudiọka. For instance, there are Umudiọka communities in Awka (Umudiọka Awka), Awkuzu (Umudiọka Awkuzu), Neni (Umudiọka Neni), all in Anambra State, Orlu (Umudiọka Orlu) in Imo State, among others. Tradition has it that these communities were begot by Umudiọka men who had travelled to those places as traditional medicine men with their art and local science and were offered land by the communities they visited because of their good work and they eventually settled there. These communities usually come to the palace of *Eze Diọka* to pay homage as their traditional homeland during the *I wa Ji* of the Umudiọka people. Traditionally, these communities are not expected to eat the new yam until the *I wa Ji* ceremony has been performed by *Eze Diọka*. Similarly, the ten villages that make up Umudiọka will pay homage to *Eze Diọka* at the ceremony.

At the *I wa Ji*, the *Eze Diọka* prays for longevity and give thanks to the Almighty God (*Chukwu Okike*) and the gods of the land for the year's harvest. He prays for guidance and protection and for a more bountiful harvest in the coming season. The new yam is roasted and eaten with palm oil and some local delicacies like *Ukpaka* (oil bean) and *Utazi* (*gangronema latifolium*) vegetable. Prior to the ceremony at the Igwe's palace, the chief priest (*Eze Mmuọ*) of the town would have performed some traditional rituals at the shrine as propitiation to the gods for a bountiful harvest. This is because the *I wa Ji* is a communion between the gods and the people, hence, it is celebrated before the eating of the new yam. It is believed by the people that after consultations with the gods by the *Eze Mmuọ* and no positive response is got from the gods, that the date of the *I wa Ji* would be adjusted to such a time when the gods are favourably disposed to the eating of the new yam. During the festival, there are different dance displays by various groups ranging from age grades, villages and the visiting communities, women groups. Some children and teenage groups also present their own dances. The ceremony is usually marked by fanfare. It is a form of carnival because the people appear in their best attires; entertaining masquerades and dancers line the streets of the town and social visits are exchanged between in-laws and among friends and relatives.

The Impact of Climate Change on *I wa Ji*

The *I wa Ji* (new yam) festival, as already stated, is performed as thanksgiving and gratitude to the earth goddess in appreciation for a good harvest while praying for a better and more fruitful harvest in the coming season. The event usually marks the beginning of the eating of the new yam and by implication the commencement of a new season. Some communities like Enugwu-Ukwu in Njikọka Local Government Area of Anambra State begin the *I wa Ji* with the *I gụ Aro* ceremony which literally means the beginning of a new year in the Igbo traditional calendar. However, this prestigious festival has been affected by climatic changes in recent times as is evident in the dwindling rate of the glitz and glamour that go with it. Climate change, in this context, means those significant changes in the weather conditions before, during and after the planting season which ultimately affect crop yields either positively or negatively. The changes being referred to here are not the periodic changes in the volume of rainfall or duration of harmattan or dry season. Rather they include those changes that happen and endure over a long period of time such that marked significant changes are noticeable in weather conditions. According to a United Nations report on climate change, *What is Climate Change?*

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. Such shifts can be natural, due to changes in the sun's activity or large volcanic eruptions. But since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas... The main greenhouse gases that are causing climate change include carbon dioxide and methane. These come from using gasoline for driving a car or coal for heating a building, for example. Clearing land and cutting down forests can also release carbon dioxide....
(1)

Omoera and Guanah further note that climate change refers to the process of greenhouse gases being released into the atmosphere as a result of industrialisation (54). Similarly, Audu, Audu, Binbol and Gana state that climate change: is a single problem which has given birth to numerous known issues such as sea level rise, ocean warming, increasing temperature, rainfall variability, increasing evaporation and increasing tropical storms among others. These effects have also metamorphosed into some impacts such as the decline in agricultural activities, drought, migration, health problems, crises among farmers and herds - men, flooding, erosion, hunger and poverty among others and other numerous problems yet to manifest (2). Thus, as climate changes, weather conditions are affected and consequently, everything that is dependent on weather conditions for its existence is affected. It is not surprising, therefore, that an agricultural produce like yam is affected by climate change. The Umudiọka, the community under study, is a relatively small town.

Findings reveal that the 2022's farming season did not commence on time as the rains did not come early as expected. Chikezie, Ibekwe, Ohajianya, Orebiyi, and Ibeagwa have earlier noted that "climate change leads to a distortion of seasonal patterns and consequently, changes in the pattern of rainfall and temperature" (4). The early rains that usually signal the beginning of the rainy season came and ceased almost immediately. This affected the yam seedlings that were planted at that initial stage

because with the abrupt stop of the rains, the soil dried up and scotched the planted seedlings thereby making some of the farmers who planted early to have some loses. Previous studies on the impact of climate change on agricultural products give credence to the claim as reported by Petra Döll thus, “farmers in Nigeria have reported that climate change is causing uncertainty in the length and onset of the farming season, longer and shorter periods of rainfall, and reduced harmattan (a dust-laden wind with very little humidity on the Atlantic coast of Africa)” (270). This, ultimately affected the harvest because the yams that were planted in the later months when the rains became consistent did not give as much yield as the farmers had expected.

Secondly, it was observed that due to consistent cutting down of trees as a result of urbanization and development occasioned by the fact that a majority of the youths of the town have acquired wealth and are desirous of moving into their personal houses (leaving their family compounds). Consequently, those traditional farmlands have been transformed into estates where homes are built at the expense of the farms. With the loss of the trees and natural vegetation induced by bush burning and the construction of houses, sinking of boreholes and other attendant developmental features, Umudioka town is fast losing its traditional ambience. It is yielding more towards modernity which in actual fact has drastically reduced the size of available farmlands and has adversely affected the farmers and their farming activities. Citing Ehrlich and Erlich in “How the Rich Can Save the Poor and Themselves: Lessons from Global Warming” and Adams, Brian, Stephanie and Leary in “Effects of Global Climate Change on Agriculture: An Interpretative Review, Apata argues that “humanity is now rapidly depleting fertile soil, fossil groundwater, biodiversity and numerous other resources to support the growing population” (33). This has invariably led to reduced portions of farmland and has culminated in very low crop yields not only in quality but in quantity.

Beyond the building of new houses in locations that were hitherto farmlands, there is the issue of erosion and flooding. As new houses spring up with fences and sundry developmental features like roads (which are not often well constructed), traditional water channels are blocked and runoff water from people’s homes usually flood the remaining expanse of farmlands which are not yet developed into residential areas. Even in the few places where there are tarred roads, the associated drainage is channelled into farmlands. This is a very major source of flood and erosion because the farmlands where the flood water is channelled into have become wastelands as normal farming activities could no longer be carried out there due to erosion that has occurred there. Audu, Audu, Binbol and Gana claim that “in most farmlands, rill, splash and gully erosion have devastated the lands as well as crops. Most farmlands have been turned into “badlands.” Sheet erosion in particular washes the top soil and nutrients thereby exposing the sub soil which is very poor in nutrients hence leading to drastic reduction in crop yield” (7).

Again, as the farmlands began to dwindle in size, there has begun an increase in urban migration. The youths of Umudioka have acquired western education and are more engaged in more modern jobs, businesses and vocations to the detriment of subsistence farming. This in itself has adversely affected farming activities in the town

because the few areas that are left for agricultural purposes are now being used as sites for factories and cottage industries. Thus, there is an increased pressure on the soil to produce more food with very little resources as the emergent industrialization coupled with increased population and urbanization with the consequent pollution emanating from industrial waste, emission of chemicals and bush burning have contributed to climate change. The effect of climate change on agricultural products and particularly on yam has impacted negatively on the *I wa Ji* festival within the time frame of this study. This is because the “increase in regional temperatures as a result of climate change, particularly in the tropics can lead to heat stress for all types of crops” (Gray 43), the consequence of which is very low crop yields because the “heat stress” does mitigate against proper development of seedlings in the soil. Thus, a poor harvest does not give the farmer and by extension the people enough reason to celebrate the *I wa Ji* with pomp and ceremony.

It was equally observed that a good number of farmers have lost their farmlands due to increased urbanization, flooding and erosion making the elderly and the titled men to rely on yam grown in other climes for the celebration of the *I wa Ji*. This singular fact has taken away a lot of verve from the festival because most men are now being neglected because they could neither cultivate yam nor own a yam barn. It is common knowledge that only a few farmers are operating in the town. Even the few that are left could barely grow enough yams for sustenance. So, there is little joy in inviting friends to one’s ceremony of *I wa Ji* when the yam to be celebrated was not got from one’s farm as used to be the traditional practice. Hence, the usual festivities are no longer what they used to be. The resultant effect is that the *I wa Ji* festival in Umudioka has become more of a private affair than a communal one as everyone can easily buy some tubers of yam at the *Afo Igwe* market and celebrate the festival with their nuclear family. Most men prefer to observe the *I wa Ji* in their residences rather than risking the long travels back home to Umudioka since the yam to be used is not harvested from Umudioka soil.

Conclusion

The study has shown that climate change is not clement to farmers and that this has impacted negatively on the *I wa Ji* festival in Umudioka. However, as the people are still desirous of keeping and maintaining the agricultural festival for posterity, it is advisable that the situation could be improved if and when certain measures are put in place to checkmate the adverse effect of the climate change. It is therefore, recommended that: principally, as the town is experiencing an increased population due to its proximity to some urban areas like Nkpor, Ogidi and Onitsha which has necessitated an increase in the construction of commercial houses in the community resulting in the depletion of farmlands, the community leaders could map out certain areas as farm settlements as a way of encouraging those who are still interested in farming. Equally, to checkmate flooding and erosion, the people could experiment with the erection of wind breakers and shading to forestall the devastating effects of flooding and heat waves, respectively. It is believed that when positive measures are taken to mitigate the effects of climate change that there will be renewed interest in agricultural

activities, particularly in farming and this would result in increased farm yield and in turn a revival of the vibrant and carnivalesque celebrations of the *I wa Ji* in Umudioka.

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COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION: THE AGRICOLA MULTIPURPOSE EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

The need to educate farmers through the use of development communication (DC) techniques in ensuring food security necessitated this study. Climate change affects farmers who depend on natural rain-fed farming and agriculture. During such change, crops, seedlings, stored food, farming implements as well as storage facilities/infrastructures are damaged, leading to food insecurity. The work is hinged on the Technology Determinism Theory (TDT) attributed to the American sociologist, Thorstein Veblen, which insists that technology, technological development, communications technology and media are pivotal to any social change in society. This is because, changes in society is propelled by the advent of new technology, development of innovation leading to a new order. The primary data for the study was obtained through the use of Development Communication technique of disseminating vital information to Agricola Multipurpose Farmers' Cooperative Society through the social media. Focused Group Discussion of social media messages was used for the data analysis. The study concludes that proper information dissemination to farmers will in no small measure assist in the management of climate change leading to food security. The study recommends the use of the new media for the dissemination of information to not only farmers but to the general public for the sustenance of agriculture and food security.

Keywords: Climate change, DC, Farmers, Food security, Social media

Introduction

Communication plays a very important role in development. It is a tool for the empowerment of the populace through sharing of relevant information. Odoom, "beyond its role as an empowerment tool, communication" is used to promote people's participation in development activities. Particularly, citizens rely on knowledge and information in order to successfully respond to the opportunities and challenges of social, economic, cultural, political and technological changes. Communication media are used to support development through the dissemination of messages that encourage or support development. When encoded message (information) is decoded (received and understood), communication has taken place. The implementation of the received message results in improved living as well as help to avert impending danger. Mukherjee agrees that "communication is a crucial part of development process". He further claims that "through communication, individuals can share information and thereby increase their knowledge and develop a sense of community" (116).

Development communication is "the practice of systematically applying the processes, strategies, and principles of communication to bring about positive social

change” (np www.caluniv.ac). According to Ongkiho and Alexander who copiously quoted Quebral, development communication is “the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equality and the larger fulfilment of the human potential” (130). What the above means is that development communication (DC) uses the creativity in the arts, scientific methods in the social sciences through theories and principles, interpersonal channels of communications experienced in mass media, “individual, group, organizational, international, national, provincial, sectoral, program, or at the grassroots” (131), as a catalyst for social change to eradicate poverty for the good of the people. It is “characterized by conceptual flexibility and diversity of communication techniques used to address the problem” (www.caluniv.ac). Some of these techniques used in DC include “information dissemination and education, behavior change, social marketing, social mobilization, media advocacy, communication for social change, and participatory development communication” (www.caluniv.ac.).

Mensah conceptualises DC as the “systematic and planned use of communication for social change using interpersonal channels, ICTs, audio-visuals, and mass media. Indeed, if development programmes are to be long-term, they must begin with systems that enable broad participation from everyone interested in the desired change” (25). She further claims that the organizers must take into cognizance and understand the indigenous realities and peculiarities, making adaptations to suit the people and their cultures and not imposing alien method on them. To succeed, familiarization visits is critical where some of the methods are explained to them before application. Human development cannot be possible without education as it helps in achieving sustainable human development. Without it, all other tools employed in this regard, are weak and feeble. Education enhances individual and collective capabilities, and brings the society to a higher level of awareness in respect of its opportunities as well as possibilities. The *Microsoft Encarta Dictionary* defines education as “the system of educating people in a community”. It expatiates that education is “the imparting and acquiring of knowledge through teaching and learning, especially at a school or similar institution” or the knowledge or abilities gained through education.

From the above, it is evident that education is a two-way process involving the messenger and the message. The message contains information which must be sent through a medium. That is a communication medium. Inherent in the message is the information that will change the receiver’s attitude when he acts on it. That change is education. Making him to understand, decode the information results to change of behaviour. Social media is interactive media. It belongs to the generally classified new media. One of the limitations of the old media is lack of interaction among users and the propinquity of getting feedback. However, this has been partly overcome with the new media which has made some of the old media like radio and television programmes to be interactive. Now, most programmes on radio have phone in programs, talk shows and live programmes which has integrated the new media. Radio programmes are viewed live through Facebook and listeners can contribute and interact

with programme presenters live, through WhatsApp and Instagram. Manning observes that feedback to media outlets was often indirect, delayed, and impersonal... With the rise of digital and mobile technologies, interaction on a large scale became easier for individuals than ever before; and as such, a new media age was born where interactivity was placed at the centre of new media functions. One individual could now speak to many, and instant feedback was a possibility (1158).

Farming and farmers are another important component of the society. Farmers help in providing food through their occupation which is farming. "Farming is the business of cultivating land, raising stocks" (*Oxford Advanced Dictionary*). Information needed to actualize this important objective need to be made accessible to them. This is where communication is expected to play a very crucial role. Encarta Dictionary simply describes communication as "exchange of information: the exchange of information between people, e.g. by means of speaking, writing, or using a common system of signs or behavior". Information is power. It carries messages that may make or mar a situation, particularly to the rural farmer during climate change. The ability to understand and implement the message will lead to high yield and invariably, improved economic status. On the other hand, "development is about change. It is about changing for the better. It could be about social or economic change for improvement or progress. When we refer to development communication, it is about such communication that can be used for development" (4). According to www.sathyabama.ac.in "It is about using communication to change or improve something. Here we use different types of messages to change the socio-economic condition of people. These messages are designed to transform the behaviour of people or for improving their quality of life" (4). However, factors like climate change may not only negatively affect farm yield but also impoverish the farmers if adequate information is not made available to them.

Naturally, there are always variations in climate change. Just as our day turn to night and night into morning, climatic condition varies from cold to hot, dry and wet. However, it is when this variation turns to the extreme and persists for a longer period that we get disturbed. Again, most of the causes of the extreme climatic change are caused by man's activities. Anthony J. McMichael, Diarmid Campbell-Lendrum, Sari Kovats, Sally Edwards et al agree that the global climate "is now changing as a result of human activities—most importantly, those which cause the release of greenhouse gases from fossil fuels" (1543). They copiously quoted to the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) where they asserted that there "is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is likely to be attributable to human activities" For instance, the depletion of the ozone layer has adversely affected climatic conditions. According to the Royal Society report on climate change, "human activities have significantly disturbed the natural carbon cycle by extracting long-buried fossil fuels and burning them for energy, thus releasing CO₂ to the atmosphere" (6). The above is supported by Chris Riedy who opined that "since the Industrial Revolution, human emissions of greenhouse gases from fossil fuel combustion, deforestation and agricultural practices have led to global warming and climate change" (criedy@uts.edu.au).

Theoretical Foundation

This study is hinged on Technological Determinism Theory (TDT). The emergence of this theory is usually attributed to the American sociologist Thorstein Veblen, who formulated the causal link between technology and the society. According to the supporters of technological determinism, social changes are controlled by the technology, technological development, communications technology and media. The modern information society arises as a result of the development of innovations, new technologies and their social and political implications. Since the establishment of this direction in the early 20th century, two different branches separated: radical and moderate (hard, soft) technological determinism.

According to the radical version, the technologies represent a prerequisite for changing the society, the second branch regards the technology only as a key factor that may or may not mean change. Today, we can quite confidently say that the Internet and the nature of new media is fundamentally changing the structure of the society. The expansion of computers, networks and the Internet has radically changed many aspects of not only human communication, but also the entire society's life. The rising popularity of new media has changed the nature and the way our society and the individuals act – the way we do the shopping, recruit staff, pay taxes, use the library, gain academic degrees and educate ourselves. Through a philosophical analysis, the text examines the nature of contemporary technological determinism, the features of new media and the method they use to affect the creation and distribution of information and knowledge in the education process.

Historical Overview of Development Communication

Mass media played a very pioneering role in the advancement of development communication. Mefalopulos asserts that “the initial stages of development communication were characterized by the use of mass media that considered people as audiences ready to be influenced by the mes-sages they received...If done properly, the dissemination of information was viewed as capable of achieving the intended behavior change” (xviii). Development communication started in India through “rural radio broadcasts in the 1940s in different languages”. (www.openknowledge.worldbank.org). The broadcasts were in indigenous languages such as Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati and Kannada. The experiments started with Community Development projects initiated by the government. Guided by the socialistic ideals of India's constitution, the first generation of politicians, initiated massive developmental programmes throughout the country. To succeed, they used the radio to get to local farmers in the rural areas. They also made use of person-to-person communication. This is because, at that time, literacy rate in India was very low. These efforts were later complimented by their universities and other educational institutions.

In the Philippines, the use of communication to support development emanated from Erskine Childers, the Director of the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) Support Service in Bangkok in the 1960's. He effectively adopted communication appraisal, planning, production and evaluation for selected development projects supported by the UNDP and UNICEF. This was followed in the

1970's by Nora C. Quebral, head of the Department of Agricultural Communications, University of the Philippines College of Agriculture. Nora C. Quebral, recognized as the "Mother" of Development Communication because of her pioneering and cerebral work in development communication. She first coined the word "Development Communication" in a seminal paper, "Development Communication in the Agricultural Context" was presented in the symposium titled, "In Search of Breakthroughs in Agricultural Development." University of the Philippines Los Baños' 1971 became the first to offer degree programs at the Doctorate, Masteral's and Undergraduate degree levels. The school has since diversified in other areas of communication such as Development Broadcasting and Telecommunications Development Journalism, Educational Communication, Science Communication, Strategic Communication, and Health Communication (www.caluniv.ac).

In Africa, the history of development commission in Africa started in the Anglophone countries in the 1960s and early 1970s, through the use of radio and theatre for community education, adult literacy, health and agricultural education. Communication for Development was pioneered in Southern Africa through participatory communication approaches with support from the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). In 1994 the FAO project "Communication for Development in Southern Africa" was a pioneer in supporting and enhancing development projects and programs through the use of participatory communication approaches. The FAO project, placed under SADC, developed an innovative methodology known as PRCA-Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal, which combined participatory tools and techniques with a strong communication focus needed to design strategies enhancing projects' results and sustainability. FAO and SADC published a handbook on PRCA and this methodology is still widely used today in various projects around the world (www.caluniv.ac).

Hambly Odame emphasizes the work of non-governmental organization, Farm Radio International and its members across sub-Saharan Africa for establishing linkages for the exchange knowledge between development partners such as agricultural scientists and farmers mediated through rural radio. (www.caluniv.ac). One of the first examples of DC was Farm Radio Forums in Canada. From 1941 to 1965, farmers met in groups each week to listen to special radio programs. There were also printed materials and prepared questions to encourage group discussion. At first, this was a response to the Great Depression and the need for increased food production in World War II. But the Forums also dealt with social and economic issues. This model of adult education or distance education was later adopted in India and Ghana.

History of Agricola Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society, Ifite-Ogwari

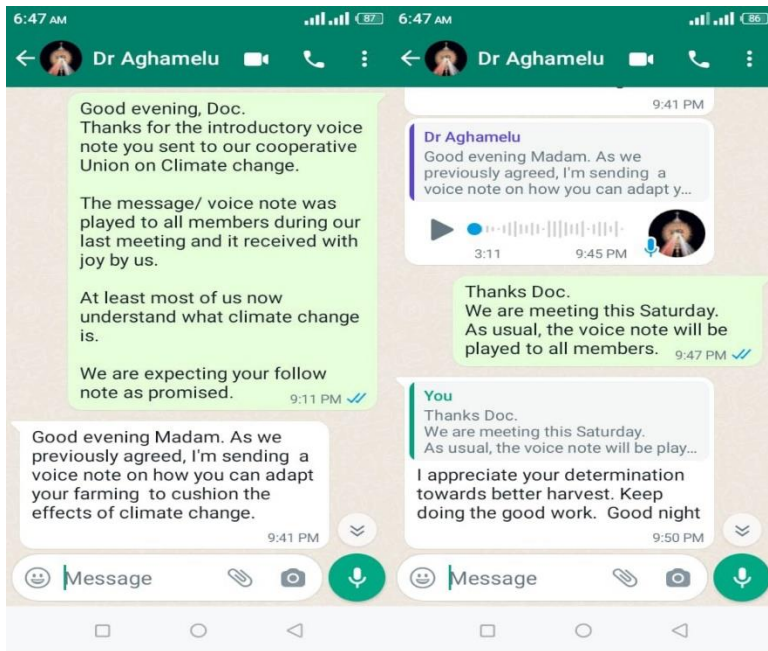
Agricola (Ifite-Ogwari) Multipurpose Co-operative Society is a registered Multipurpose Farmers' Cooperative Society domiciled in Ifite-Ogwari, Ayamelum L.G.A, Anambra State, Nigeria. The members are primarily farmers of varied agricultural products such as yam, rice, potatoes, and poultry. It was inaugurated in 2009 with a numerical strength of fifteen (15) members. Its objectives include but not limited to helping members with information for sourcing of funds, produce marketing,

better farming strategies, among others. Currently, the numerical strength of Co-operative is seventy-five members, made up thirty-two females and forty-three males within the age range of 18-66 years.

Data Collection and the Experiment

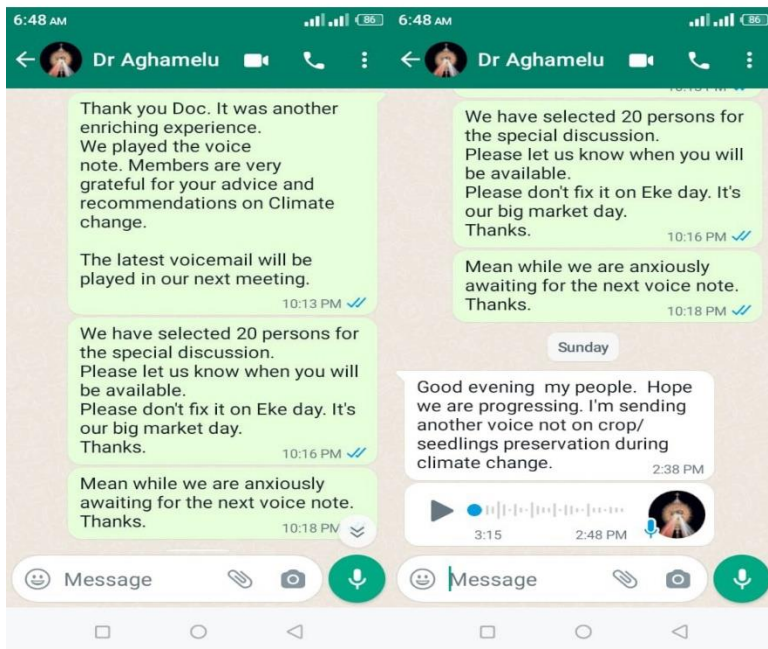
The data was collected from members of the Agricola (Ifite-Ogwari) Multipurpose Farmers' Co-operative Society in Ifite-Ogwari through purposive sampling. Focused Group Discussion of social media messages was used for the data analysis. The researchers adopted the WhatsApp medium of the social media as a means of communication to the farmer's cooperative society. This is partly based on the conviction of the researchers that WhatsApp is attractive, coupled with the advice that "People interested in development communication should understand their audience i.e., readers, listeners or viewers. They should also know the needs of their audience so that whatever medium is used, the messages are relevant. The messages then have to be passed on in the most attractive manner" (npopenknowledge.worldbank.ng). During the preliminary visit to the farmers, the researchers inquired and were assured that eighty percent of them own an android phone but the group does not have a WhatsApp group. The researchers opted to open a WhatsApp platform for the group, which they accepted and graciously permitted us to include our names in the platform. This move was to create a seamless communication channel between the researchers and the farmers in total adherence to the advice of Mefalopulos where he admonished that to succeed in development communication: it is always valuable, and often essential, to establish dialog among relevant stakeholders. Dialog is the necessary ingredient in building trust, sharing knowledge and ensuring mutual understanding. Even a project that apparently enjoys a wide consensus, such as the construction of a bridge, can have hidden obstacles and opposition that the development communication specialist can help uncover, address, and mitigate (8).

This experiment is modelled after the Canada experiment where development communication approach was first adopted from 1945-1965 through the Farm Radio Forums. During this period, farmers gathered in groups "each week to listen to special radio programs". The Agricola (Ifite-Ogwari) Multipurpose Farmers' Co-operative Society experiment lasted for four weeks. The researchers visited the group twice, during our preliminary session where we agreed on the medium for sending the messages and the last meeting where we discussed with some selected members who served as our focused group. Three messages were sent to the group, namely: a. Adaptation of farming to climate change, b. Effects of climate change on farming environment, c. Preservation of crops/seedlings during climate change. During their weekly meetings, the messages are played through a loud speaker for all to hear. After each meeting, challenges, questions raised by members from the voice notes are sent to us through the WhatsApp platform. Our inputs and clarifications are made and forwarded back to them.



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Figs 1-4 Different WhatsApp messages exchanged between the group and the researchers

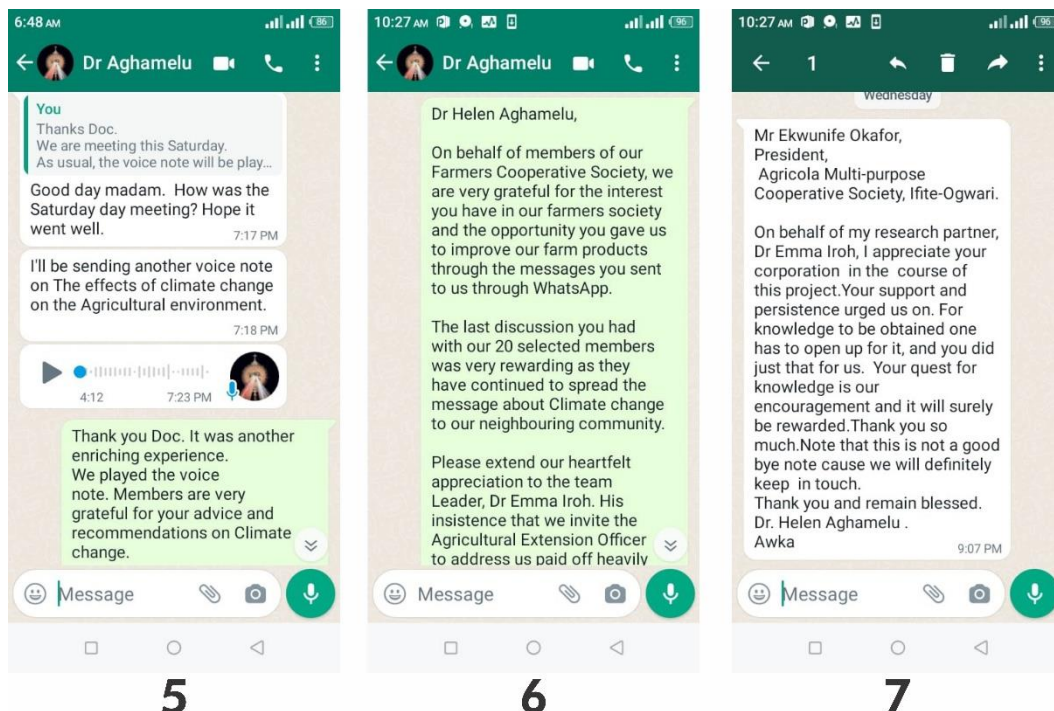
Focused Group Discussions

The discussions started with a replay of the voice notes to serve as entry behavior as well as to refresh their memories. After that, some clarifications were made based on the issues they raised. The researchers framed questions from the voice notes sent to the group through WhatsApp to guide the discussions. The questions are: a. What is climate change? b. Does Climate change affect Adaptation of farming? c. What are the effects of climate change on farming environment? d. To what extent does Development Communication enhance information on climate change? The discussions were cordial. The first two questions were combined to read: What is climate change and does Climate change affect Adaptation of farming? In answering, Amaka, a member of the cooperative and a yam farmer, explained that “climate change is a period of unpredictable weather condition characterized by excess rain, late rain or excess draught”. She regretted that over time they have lost their farm products due to not taking adequate measure to safe guard their products.

She specifically pointed that last year flood destroyed her farm products because her family did not take adequate precautionary measure and thanked the researchers for the insight. According to her: I now understand fully what climate change is. I have been hearing it in passing but has not put my mind to find the meaning. I even understand now that our activities may even help in escalating climate change. Some of the participants confessed that they did not know that the daily weather forecast has anything to do with farming and farmers as most of them never bothered to listen to it or ask questions about it. They also promised to adhere to the instructions of the agriculture extension officer. Chika, who spoke on their behalf said: we never bothered ourselves with what they say about weather condition on radio or television and we don’t bother to ask. Now that you people have emphasized their importance, we are going to set a committee for the monitoring of the daily weather report to be sent to our WhatsApp forum every day and to be working closely with the Agric Extension Officer to prevent some of the effects and losses as well as improve our production. Corroborating Mrs Anyika, another participant admitted that they never took the agriculture extension officers seriously and promised that henceforth: we should listen to information on weather report and our extension officers who are sent to guide us. The agriculture extension officers are specially trained to guide us in our farming. We must adhere to their instructions especially on modern farming methods, use of pesticides and planting of particular crop at a particular time. On the extreme effects of climate change our environment, Mama Stella; a 65-year-old farmer observed that “climate changes results to water and air pollutions which turn the farms acidic, swampy, and unproductive. She further stated that it can cause wild fires.

This is because “when the environment becomes too dry, any little fire accident can escalate to an uncontrollable rate that our crops, lives and livestock are affected”. Also, Ifeanyi Okagbue explained that climate change results to extreme temperature variations. According to him, it makes the temperature to be either too hot or too cold that it affects our crops. Crops don’t do well during extreme weather change. The livestock and crops will be exposed to a lot of danger, even us the farmers will not be left out because it will affect our health. Everything about farming has to be moderate.

Once the environment is not conducive, it affects our lives, crops and livestock. On how we preserve crop/seedlings during climate change, Edith, another participant, observed that: when there is too much rain, the entire environment is flooded; hence there is too much water in the soil. The plant will not be receiving nutrients because the soil will be too water logged for them to move down their roots to collect enough mineral. There will be less air in the soil making the root to soggy and damp that seed roots will not be able to move. So, the solution is to find areas where the soil is more porous.



Figs 5, 6 and 7. Conclusion of WhatsApp messages between the researchers and the group.

Okechi further enthused that we should not “work on clay soil or soil that retain a lot of water during flooding, rather we should look for areas where the soil is more arable. Again, when there is more heat or drought, we should work for areas that retain water”. On the usefulness of Development Communication strategy to enlighten the farmers on climate change, the discussions showed that Development Communication enhances information on the effects of climate change on farming environment. This is because Development Communication goes directly to the target audience and gives room for interactions for clarifications. One of the participants, Chief Okechukwu Omali was very thankful for the insight and knowledge gained from participating especially through the channel of information dissemination which he shared with his family. He informed us that he has introduced “meeting after meeting” in his compound where they gather to listen to the voice notes, our clarifications of the issues

they raise. Chijioke thanked the researchers for opening their eyes on the use of the social media. According to him: We have been using this phone without fully realizing the full potentials. So, from now, we can check our daily weather forecast, share and receive messages in our farmers WhatsApp group and most importantly, now that we have agreed to join the Agric extension officer to our WhatsApp group, most of challenges will easily be overcome without much difficulties.

Findings

It is evident that the Focus Group Discussants gave a clear indication that the medium of information affects farmer's adaptability to climate change especially among rural farmers. Majority of the discussant observed that because the information was directly given to them, they were able to personalize its contents and applied them accordingly. Madam Uka, a member of the cooperative stated thus "we have been hearing this from other media of information but I always see it as government propaganda. This one is more personal and direct to us and we are now more ready to preserve our products against any climate change". Again, Chief Okechukwu Omali informed us that he now shares the messages to his farmer friends who are not members of their cooperative society, educating them on how to prevent adverse climate change. According to him, "I have started sharing the messages to my farmer friends to understand the effects of climate change and how to preserve their products and they are very thankful for the information. Again, the message on the use of pesticide has been very useful to me and I have also shared it with some of my colleagues and friends".

Conclusion

The study concludes that proper information dissemination to farmers will in no small measure assist in the management of climate change leading to food security and development. This is in line with Steve Oga Abah who said that, "development must be seen as activities undertaken with acceptance as well as the participation of the communities to achieve the improved lives of the people" (30). Since the group has been exposed to the information about climate change, they will take over and control it to ensure better agricultural yield, leading to development. Furthermore, the detailed and personalized nature of development communication (DC) gives room for on-the-spot practical of preservation methods of crops and seedlings for food security. This is because one of the participants, Mr. Obiora Nwibe testified that "after the weekly discussion meetings of the cooperative, he began to fully understand the preservation methods and the best way to practice them during climate change." The choice of the theory "technological determinism", which stresses that social changes are controlled by the development of innovations, new technologies and modern information and communications technology techniques of the new media like WhatsApp in particular, greatly facilitated the efforts of the researchers to achieve the aim of the study, which is to inform farmers on the need to combat climate change to forestall loss of farm products.

Recommendations

The study recommends the use of the new media for the dissemination of information, not only to farmers but to the general public for the sustenance of agriculture and maintaining food security as well as to avert loss of farm products and implements. It will also help to avert food insecurity. Farmers should listen to weather forecast and follow the instructions. The study further recommends that government should disseminate information to rural farmers through the social media. Also, government should establish community viewing centres where information and films with agricultural practices and themes are shown to them for educative and entertainment purposes.

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PERFORMING CLIMATE CHANGE, FARMERS/HERDERS CRISIS AND FOOD INSECURITY IN AFRICA

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Abstract

The reality of climate change has become a great concern to various parts of the world, including Africa. The emission of various greenhouse gases into the atmosphere as a result of global industrialization and increasing consumption has resulted in a gradual increase in global temperatures leading to massive floods, and the destruction of human lives, animals, and farmlands. Coupled with the incessant Farmers/Herders crisis in parts of West Africa, particularly Nigeria, food insecurity has also become a worrisome issue that needs to be frontally addressed. Given the foregoing, global and local measures need to be practically taken to mitigate these threats to human life and existence. This article interrogates the dangers of climate change and farmers/herders' clashes to food insecurity and proposes how theatre and the performing arts could be utilized in sensitising the populace to achieve peaceful coexistence, food security, human survival and safety on planet earth.

Keywords: Climate change, Farmers/herders crisis, Food security, Human survival, Performing arts.

Introduction

As the demand for natural resources and energy continues to rise globally, the balance between natural and human activities continues to degenerate. A foremost consequence of this growing imbalance is the change in climate conditions. Global warming has been in existence for over a century, but only became a major world concern in the last forty (40) years. This phenomenon, experts say, is attributed to population growth, carbon dioxide emissions, indiscriminate burning of bushes, armed violence and nuclear activities, gas flaring, deforestation and so on. All of these activities contribute to the devastation of our environment and have the potential to directly or indirectly affect our standard of living and quality of life. Barrack Obama, the former President of the United States of America, once warned: climate change is no longer a problem of the future, but rather, a challenge that will define the contours of this century more dramatically than any other (*Straits Times* 7). To appreciate the gravity of the situation and implement measures to reverse the trend, Obama advised that every effort to promote climate control awareness, must be universally embraced and that all hands must be on deck by engaging not only scientific or political options but also, creative and socio-cultural products and presentations.

Climate Change – Definition and Overview

The United Nations defines climate change as “a long-term shift in weather patterns and temperatures” (1). This shift, according to Stocker et al...manifests itself in changing precipitation patterns, changing intensity, frequency and duration of extreme weather events such as drought, wildfires and extreme rainfall, increasing sea level, acidity and ocean temperatures, melting glaciers and alterations in the ecosystem (12). The problem of Climate Change is one of the fall-outs of environmental degradation. Nda et al., climate change as “a long-term change in the statistical distribution of weather patterns over periods of time that range from decades to thousands of years”. It may be a change in the average weather conditions or a change in the distribution of weather events concerning an average, for example, greater or fewer extreme weather events (13). It may be limited to a specific region or across the whole earth. Climate change according to Saidul Islam is the change in the state of the climate that can be identified, using statistical tests, by changes in the mean or variability of its properties, which persists for an extended period (18). In other words, it is the change in climate conditions over time, whether due to variability or as a result of human activity. Climate change has not only resulted an increase in global-averaged mean annual in temperatures, but also, the increased amount of atmospheric greenhouse gases (GHGs).

Causes of Climate Change

It could rightly be said that Climate change is a product of numerous acts of environmental irresponsibility by man. It is an outcome of man’s unfriendly treatment of the environment and the careless consumption and utilization of facilities of nature. According to the National Academy of Sciences, climate change can have natural drivers such as volcanic eruptions, however, human activity has been the primary cause since the 1800s (40). These human activities include transportation, agriculture, industry, land use, electricity production, space heating, and refrigeration to mention a few. The foregoing activities contribute to the generation of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, methane, F-gases, and aerosols which are in turn mostly responsible for the global warming associated with climate change. The underlying science of the cause of climate change is therefore not complex.

The accumulation of these greenhouse gases and aerosols causes a blanket effect in the earth’s atmosphere. This “blanket” keeps the heat radiated from the sun to the earth from leaving the Earth, thereby causing the temperature on the earth to increase over time (United States Congress, Committee on Science and Technology 81). Carbon dioxide is the most important greenhouse gas and the primary contributor to recent climate change. The biggest contributor to carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is the burning of fossil fuels used predominantly in transportation. On the other hand, the depletion of natural vegetation (known to consume carbon dioxide) and associated with land use, contributes significantly to increasing carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere. Oyebanjo argues that agriculture and fossil fuel use, also contribute to methane emissions which have about 25 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide, but abound in far smaller amounts in the atmosphere (1).

Impacts of Climate Change

Some of the very real impacts of these greenhouse gases can be seen in the more frequent occurrences of heat waves, droughts, worsening air and water quality, changes in rainfall patterns, floods, etc. (<https://www.epa.gov> 17). Another serious impact is that global sea levels have risen by over 10 centimetres in the past thirty (30) years (NASA 17). The rise in sea level according to Lall et al., has had devastating effects in several instances across the decades and has shaped city planning, farming practices, and settlement habits. New health and safety concerns are developing as a result of this changing terrain and its effects on critical infrastructures (42). In addition, famine and food shortage is also a direct consequence, as coastal areas that depend on aquatic life, have had to adjust, as nature reacts to the changing ecosystem. There has been some debate as to the human contribution to climate change. Some argue that the problems are entirely natural, that is, an act of God, having no human contribution, and would therefore demand no human effort in the process of controlling it. To such a school of thought, it could be God's visitation on the sins of mankind or a mere happenstance that will correct itself as God deems fit. But scientific explanations have cast aspersions on such argument, and have rightly viewed the occurrence for what it is: a result of the careless habits of man that can only be ameliorated by man through God's guidance.

Regardless of the symptoms or impact of these climate conditions, the key to halting this damage is "immediate action". Humanity must develop healthier habits in the use of nature's resources and tailor consumption around conservation and efficiency. The United Nations claims that: cutting emissions, financial adjustments, and adapting to climate impacts are the three general actions that are required to address this global threat. In practical terms, the adoption of renewable energy technologies, a conscious effort to protect infrastructure, lives, and natural ecosystems, the influx of huge financial investments and policies that streamline these actions, are the solution. Ross Garnaut puts forward five main policy themes required for the mitigation of climate change; policies must be practical, equitable, and global, they must align with economic growth, and that good governance is critical. In the end, the tools and resilience we need to mitigate and weather these climate changes are constantly being improved upon and it behoves on every field of human endeavour including the creative arts, to contribute meaningfully to this unified goal of restoring balance to our climate system (102).

Climate Change and Africa

It is erroneous to hold the view that since Africa is not as industrialized as America and Europe, it needs not to worry about the adverse effects of climate change. It is a bitter irony that Africa which contributes least of all continents to climate change, will probably suffer most from its consequences. (Earthlab 91). In many African communities today, bush burning in agricultural farmlands is still a common occurrence. Apart from bush burning, the wasteful gas flaring going on in Nigeria's Niger-Delta and some other African oil-producing locations, are major contributions to the problem of global warming. Relatively recently, on Monday 22 May 2023, the 650,000 barrels per day Dangote refinery was officially opened by former President

Muhammadu Buhari with four Presidents of other African countries including Ghana, Togo, Niger, and Senegal in attendance. Experts have been reeling out the massive business and economic benefits derivable from this huge investment, but they have also touched emphatically on the amounts and implications of the greenhouse gas emissions that the refinery will be releasing into the atmosphere daily. Dr Segun Adaju (an Energy Consultant) speaking on Global Business Report on Arise News on Tuesday 23 May 2023, averred that the Dangote refinery can be described as “a paradox of blessing and danger”, given both its economic benefits and environmental risks.

African roads are filled with vehicles that are not in compliance with the more recent on-road emissions standard targeted at tackling this climate problem and these vehicles continue to ooze greenhouse gases as well as other criteria pollutants recklessly into the atmosphere. There was a time in Nigeria when such vehicles were banned from plying the roads, but, not anymore. Also, the high population has caused a great strain on land resources making people cultivate on communal reserves or erect buildings on drainage paths, on top of canals and erosion-prone sites. This is very common in Lagos, Nigeria, and other urban cities in Africa. Population growth has been cited as one of the causes of the stress on the environment (Ekong et al. 16). Many African cities are also very poor in refuse disposal and waste management. Oftentimes, the public drains are so stuffed with refuse that rainwater finds it difficult to go through, thereby flowing unto the roads and sometimes into people’s homes. Most urban dwellers after waiting in vain for public refuse disposal compactors, resort to burning their wastes, thereby releasing carbon gases into the atmosphere which negatively impacts the environment. Rather than continue to contribute to aggravation of the situation, Africa should be at the forefront in terms of environmental advocacy, as it does not possess the technology to take care of its citizens, in case of disaster.

The Concept of Food Security

Food security as a broad concept, cuts across many dimensions. It means access to sufficient food for healthy living. United States Agency for International Development USAID Bureau for Africa, (cited in Eme, Onyishi and Uche) defines food security as a situation when all people at all times have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a healthy and productive life (14). Food security is a three-dimensional concept, namely; food availability, affordability, and accessibility. Availability means ensuring sufficient food for households through production; accessibility depends on distribution and distinct factors such as the functionality of food markets and affordability refers to the ability of families to pay the upmarket prices for food.

According to the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, (FAO, 2021:24), there are about 828 million people who are undernourished globally, with poor nutrition accounting for nearly 55% of deaths in children below the age of 5 annually. A further 20.5% of the population in developing countries is undernourished due to lack of food availability and economic access to food. These findings may further be exacerbated due to the rise in world population projected by the United Nations to

increase by 2.6 billion by 2050. The rise in population coupled with growing urbanization and increasing environmental problems such as climate change, pollution, and deforestation would have detrimental effects on food production, distribution, and consumption. In addition, the inability of food producers to meet the demands of the population would cause food prices to escalate and worsen the problem of food security faced by the already-at-risk populations of the global community, particularly in Africa.

Connection between Climate Change and Food Insecurity

Food shortage can be caused by climate change and climate-related disasters, such as: Rise in average global temperature: This leads to drying up of water bodies which affects crop production and livestock rearing. Sea level rise: This leads to increased flooding, erosion, and saltwater intrusion into the soil which results in salinization and waterlogging. The impoverished soil causes a reduction in the quality and quantity of crops, thereby lowering the availability of food for the population. Increased concentration of Greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere: This traps more heat on earth which causes drought and affects farmlands, livestock, and animal husbandry. The effects of climate change are unequal between developing African nations and the rich and developed economies of the world. Poor countries are more affected by changes in climate conditions and crop failure due to a lack of knowledge, technology, and skills to deal with such changes and also the inability to stockpile sufficient food for their people when crises strike.

Connection between Farmers/Herders Crisis and Food Insecurity

The second reason for food shortage which makes food crisis and insecurity more devastating is the dangerous but needless clashes between farmers and herders particularly in some African countries. The term farmer denotes in modern times, a person engaged in planting, grooming, and producing crops, seafoods, or livestock on land or in water. By this definition, all farming, inclusive of livestock (which has adopted ranching in advanced nations worldwide) has an identified location in which the activity takes place. On the other hand, a Herder is actually, also a farmer by the definition above. Herders engage in livestock farming, such as cattle rearing, sheep and goat herding. In this paper, the term is applied specifically to groups of livestock farmers who engage in migratory farming and have no permanent location. These herders according to Gordon (2000:19), prefer traveling around a vast geographical area with their livestock, on a largely unmapped route they refer to as “grazing route”. This primitive mode of livestock farming is mostly still found in Africa, particularly amongst the Maasai ethnic nationality of Kenya and Northern Tanzania in East Africa and the Fulani of North and West Africa, that span from Algeria, Morocco, Niger, Mali, Northern parts of Nigeria, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Chad, and more recently, Benin, Cameroon and Ghana.

It is this kind of migration, particularly by the Fulani, that in recent times has seen these herders migrating away from the southern fringes of the Sahara Desert, into areas inhabited by the buyers of their livestock in the middle belt savannah areas and even the rain forests, South-East, South-West and South-south of Nigeria. This

movement has however given rise to clashes between crop farmers resident on these lands and the livestock migrating farmers, known as herders. According to Udosen, the crisis between Farmers and Herders can be understood as the problem of access to land for economic survival (26). In his words: “The principal driver of conflicts between farmers and herders is economic in nature, with land-related issues at the centre, especially issues of accessibility and use of land and water resources”.

Since the Sahelian drought of the 1970s and 80s, increased migration of herders into the humid forest zone of West Africa has caused a massive increase in the frequency of farmer-herder conflict. Land and water resources are now under increasing stress especially due to the prevailing situation of climate change, leading to fierce competition and violent conflict over their use (Udosen 26). To better understand this phenomenon, we shall apply the resource access theory (RAT), propounded by Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald Salancik. They believe that man’s access and control over resources define man’s basis of power and success. Jeffrey and Gerald (1978:16), observe that; resource ownership and utilization have defined the dimensions of most conflicts involving man since time immemorial. Buttressing this point, Sikor and Lund assert that: “access to natural resources is often contested, and rife with conflicts at many levels”. Therefore, the need for people to legitimize their rights and access to natural resources has remained central in competition and contestation for national resources” (1).

The resource access theory helps in giving a better understanding of the prevalent farmers and herders crisis. The inability of the Fulani herdsmen to have unhindered access to grazing areas is to a significant extent responsible for the conflict between the herders and farmers. While climate change was not a precursor to the migration of herders to Southern Nigeria, it has increased their migration to the Southern Forest zone from areas with increased frequency of drought and lower availability of natural resources into areas with better resources for their livestock. The constant migration from the Sahel areas into the humid forest zones has continued to cause clashes with farmers who complain that the herders do not stick to the uncultivated areas thereby destroying their crops and livelihoods.

On the other hand, the rising population has been putting pressure on farmers to increase food production. They have thus, begun to use lands that are traditionally pasture paths for cattle ... known as the Burti System. Under this system, the Pastoralists were given a tract of land, linked together in a pattern of migratory routes, to feed their cattle in a way that eased tensions between herders and farmers. Old Nigerian maps once had these tracts delineated for cattle migrations, but as the population continued to grow, farmers began to encroach on these lands for pasture, forcing the herders to crush crops cultivated by the farmers, thereby amplifying tensions. The north central states of Benue, Plateau, and Nasarawa and other states in the south and middle belt for example, have experienced crises that have led to thousands of deaths and displacement of persons as a result of clashes between herders and local farmers in several communities.

Agbedo argues that: ...the seeming and unending crisis has led many communities to create self-defence forces and ethnic militias which have engaged in

further violence and consequently, this has greatly affected the Nation's stability and food security. Federal and state governments have made several attempts to quell this problem, but the crisis has continued to escalate. This has forced many farmers to abandon their farmlands rendering several communities deserted, while those who resist invasion have lost their lives. The unfortunate situation according to Nweze (2015), has led to a decline in the productivity of crops and herds which has become a threat to National food security. Given the above, the solution to food insecurity in Africa, particularly Nigeria, does not appear to be in sight yet, and in a press release by UNICEF (for every child) in Abuja on 16 January 2023, it was projected that more than 25 million Nigerians are at risk of facing hunger and suffering, from acute malnutrition between June and August 2023 (<https://www.unicef.org>). The Federal Government needs to exercise political will in solving this problem of food shortage, and the mindless carnage by herders to save lives, preserve our farmlands, and forestall the crisis of food availability. Without beating about the bush, cattle herding and livestock production must be treated as every other business whereby the owners establish permanent ranches on land acquired legitimately, far away from crop farming communities. Local and international investors should be sourced and encouraged to provide funding interventions to boost production in the sector. In addition, the bandits terrorising communities, burning houses, and killing innocent people must be stopped in their tracks. They must be fished out and dealt with according to the law.

It is hoped that the current administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (barely two months in the saddle), will frontally attend to this aberration not only for peace to reign but also to avert the crisis of food insecurity, hunger, and malnutrition in the country. Thankfully, during his inaugural address on May 29 2023 at the Eagle Square in Abuja, he hinted at some of the policy thrusts of his administration and declared that... Agric hubs would be created throughout the Nation to increase food production and engage in value-added processing. The Livestock Sector will be introduced to world best practices and food will become surplus and less costly. (Arise News, DSTV Channel 416). Also, concerning insecurity, he announced that "security shall be the top priority of his administration because neither prosperity nor justice can prevail amidst insecurity and violence". He assured that steps will be taken to minimise the perennial conflict over land and water resources. These are heart-warming declarations. We hope however that in terms of implementation, President Tinubu will be able to match "words" with "actions", in the coming months and years.

Performing Arts and the Quest for Solutions to Climate Change and Food Insecurity

The last part of this presentation will be used to examine the role of performing arts in creating awareness and supporting Government actions in addressing the issues of climate change and food insecurity. Imagination, not just science has seen humanity scale all the obstacles it has encountered and move civilization forward through the ages. Renata et al. argue that fusing more culturally rooted elements into the creation and demonstration of climate change would enhance processes of future thinking (27). Yousoff corroborates that: imaginative practices captured in Literary, Filmic, and

Creative arts can play a very important role in proffering strategies for improving environmental consciousness ranging from metaphorical investigations to scenario building and creating tangible representations of change (19). For example, Burke et al (2018:33), analysed how “participatory, climate change-based arts interventions could birth more engaging and effective approaches towards sustainable climate behaviour change.

Roosen et al. claim that “art can utilize vectors such as analogies, narratives, and metaphors that make climate communication more approachable. According to them: art has the power to provide visual visualization, allow a more personal experience of a seemingly impersonal, indirect threat to climate change and give people a sense of belonging and group identity as they come together to tackle this collective problem (26). All these arguments have found their voices echoed to various extents in films and documentaries like Davis Guggenheim’s award-winning documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth* (USA, 2006), David Attenborough’s *A Life on Our Planet* (USA, 2020), Bong Joon Ho’s *Snowpiercer* (TV Series, USA, 2013); and movies such as Adam McKay’s *Don’t look up* (USA, 2021), Umanu Elijah’s *A place called Forward* (Nigeria, 2022), Apolline Traore’s *Sira* (Burkina Faso, 2023), Yar’Adua Foundation’s *Swallow* (Nigeria, 2021), Angelique Kidjo’s *Mother Nature* (Benin, 2021) to mention a few. For instance, the 2021 movie *Don’t Look Up* tells the story of a science Professor and his younger student discovering a fast-approaching comet that is set to reach the Earth and will likely destroy it. Together, they need to convince the government as well as the public of the existential threat and the catastrophic consequences it may have on humanity. However, the task is more difficult than they think when no one takes them seriously. The team struggles to break through the craziness of social networks, political inactions, and the lack of media attention. Indeed, the comet approaching the planet is an ambivalent metaphor for climate change and its disastrous effects. The film also serves as a reminder that politicians are not doing enough and if they do not act quickly, it will be too late to save our planet.

Snowpiercer is a commentary on our global socioeconomic structure as well as a statement regarding our futility against the powers of nature. More than anything, however, the film has an even more radical underlying message. Not only do most of the train’s inhabitants die before the avalanche occurs, but the train itself is already on its way out. The engine is failing, the system is corrupt, and extinction is imminent. No matter how our heroes fight to get to the front, they are hopeless in fixing the train’s inherent problems. The *Snowpiercer* was never really going to last forever and neither were we. *Snowpiercer* suggests that a hard reset can solve society’s woes. Our civilization needs to be buried beneath the snow before new structures can be built. Due to attempts to segregate the elites from the poor inside the train, the journey runs into problems, leading to a bloody rebellion that ends in the destruction of the train and the death of most of the occupants. With only Yona and Timmy escaping the final explosion that triggered an avalanche, seeing a polar bear in the distance after surviving the explosion indicated that life still existed outside the train, indicating the possibilities of a new start for humanity.

David Attenborough's *A Life on Our Planet*, released in 2020 was described by the *New York Times* as a map of how steeply the planet's biodiversity has diminished. The documentary features provoking imagery from all over the world that isolates and presents the destructive effect human beings have had on nature and the ecosystem over time. The documentary, which Attenborough himself describes as a "witness statement", is an example of the performing arts serving as a memory for the world, a strong visual reminder of where we were, where we are now and where we are headed if action is not taken. In Nigeria and other African countries, the desire to join the fight against climate change using the performing arts is also catching on as filmmakers, musicians, animators, and theatre artists now play active roles in the advocacy for a better environment. In a recent attempt by Umanu Elijah in the film, *A Place Called Forward*, he treats the issue of soot that has recently become a major environmental issue in the once beautiful city of Port-Harcourt. In the Republic of Benin, the singing Diva, Angeliqe Kidjo joined forces with French Director Yann Arthus-Bertrand to make a short film titled, *Mother Nature*, a committed, transgenerational musical film centred on the protection of the planet earth. In Burkina Faso, Appoline Traore's film *Sira*, first presented at the 2022 Pan-African Film and Television Festival (FESPACO), in Ouagadougou, addresses the problem of access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene for women and girls in a context marked by climate change. Added to this are the abuses suffered by the girls, kidnapped by terrorists while fetching water.

Another Nigerian movie titled *Swallow* by Yar'Adua Foundation treats the grave challenges posed by climate change, inadequate infrastructure, and poor agricultural practices to food insecurity in Nigeria. According to a Premium Times review of the movie; ...it decries the alarming decline in the number of fish in the Niger Delta as well as underweight cattle, insufficient rice, wheat, and vegetables in the Northern part of Nigeria. In the movie, a large number of farmers and investors made vivid descriptions of how agricultural farming has moved from better to worse over the years while exposing governments' abysmal response to the challenges. As much as these films are predictive in their representations of the attitude of man to the issues of global warming and the resultant climate change that has led to major food insecurity across the world, especially in Africa, it becomes imperative for world leaders to realize that the continent of Africa does not exist in isolation from the rest of the cyclic Earth. It is predictable that if global warming remains unchecked and the climate change denials continue to gain ground, it won't be long before the gloomy predictions in some of these films begin to manifest.

In the area of Live theatre, the Climate Change Theatre Action, founded by Elaine Ávila et al, is a global series of performances and readings of short plays centred on climate change. Every two years since 2015, 50 playwrights from diverse backgrounds are commissioned to write five-minute plays on a select climate crisis facet. (<http://www.climatechangetheatreaction.com/about/>). It has since evolved into a U.S Canadian collaboration between the Arts Climate Initiative (ACI) and the Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts (CSPA). It uses storytelling and live performances to foster dialogue about the global climate crisis, create an empowering vision of the

future, and inspire people to take action. Events can be in-house readings, radio shows, podcasts, or film adaptations.

In Nigeria, not much has been done actively in the area of live theatrical interventions on climate change, although, there are some published plays that address the issues of the environment. For instance, Bode Sowande's *Mommy Water's Wedding* is an advocacy about keeping the sea pure. Sowande frowns at the illicit business of Adagunodo which uses the sea as a dump site for toxic waste. Ahmed Yerimah's *Hard Ground*, though, is about militancy and youth restiveness in the Niger Delta, the genesis of the whole crisis stems from the poverty and degradation of the environment through oil spillage which affects farming and fishing and directly impacts their livelihoods. Other plays that subtly address the unique link between maintaining nature to balance climate and our existence and survival as humans include Soyinka's *Swamp Dwellers* and Osofisan's *Another Raft* and *Twingle Twangle – A Twinning Tale*.

Also, in an article titled, "Communicating Change in Africa through the Theatre for Development Process", Nda S.U and Ekong F.U (2012:10), report a community theatre project successfully used to create awareness of the state of the environment in Ikot Ayam Itam, Itu local government area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. In addition, Greg Mbajiorgu's eco-drama, *Wake Up Everyone* was performed at the Alexandria Auditorium, University of Nigeria Nsukka as reported by Norbert Oyibo Eze in an article titled "Drama and the Politics of Climate Change in Nigeria." Also, in 2017, students of St Mary's International School, Ilorin performed, *The Last Tree* by Shahid Nadeem and an environmental poem titled *Gaia* by Hiro Kanagawa (www.climatechangeaction.com (13). Certainly, more of these need to be done across the country and in Africa, to keep the awareness of the dangers of climate change sustained.

Furthermore, in an article titled "Deepening Theatre's Role in Tackling Climate Crisis" (Pg. 4), Ben Tomolaju, author, theatre director, and critic lamented the horrific situation Nigerians are experiencing, particularly in Ondo State including Rivers, Delta, Jigawa, Cross Rivers, Anambra and Bayelsa through the ocean surge anytime the rains come – the entire beach is covered by sludge, roads are cut off by storm and buildings shattered by the bellowing storm. According to him, it was this kind of horror that J.M Synge, the Irish dramatist depicted in his classic, *Riders to the Sea*; where Maurya, an old woman lost her husband and all her six sons to virulent waves. Tomolaju retorts: I don't know how the Irish eventually overcame theirs that we no longer hear of it even in this period of climate change, but no responsible individual or leader of thought can afford to ignore the horrendous assault of nature on hapless citizens (24).

In the same article, Jerry Adesemo, Artistic Director, Arojah Theatre Abuja, believes that the theatre could be a powerful tool for raising awareness and promoting action on climate change in Nigeria. He noted that the world is investing in climate science, straightening resilience, and advancing environmental justice, however, new initiatives on the theatre stage will improve understanding of the changing climate. According to him: theatre performances can be used to educate audiences on causes

and effects of climate change in Nigeria. Theatre can also be used to highlight the impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities and how individuals can take action to reduce their carbon footprint (16). He added that: the theatre could be used to engage communities in discussions about renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and the protection of Natural resources. These performances can be followed by workshops and discussions on how communities can take action to reduce their carbon footprint and adapt to the impact of climate change, while also, promoting behavioural change among individuals, encouraging them to adopt sustainable practices such as recycling, reducing energy consumption and using public transportation (17).

He is, however, surprised that on the Nigerian stage, we are not doing much of theatrical projects, deliberately designed to address these issues. He laments that this may be because of funding fatigue because educational and advocacy theatre cost quite a lot. Concluding, he said, one or two persons may be doing something, but not giving it the right projection. Apart from the fact that our playwrights in Nigeria, and indeed the entire African continent need to write more on the subject of climate change, we also call on our theatre for development experts to consider the utilization of theatre for development methodology in communicating the perils of climate change and environmental deterioration in the African continent. The TfD methodology makes provision for communal participation in the performances, discussions on the problems put forward through the plays, and communal agreement to implement the provisions. According to Zakes quoted from Nda and Ekong, the TfD methodology is “the most democratic of the media of communication open to man” and if effectively employed and deployed, it has the potential of mobilizing for a change from the attitudes that cause climate change, environmental degradation and food insecurity in the African society (8).

Conclusion

Global warming is a severe challenge for the environment and human well-being, which has often resulted in excessive heat, crop failures, food shortage and famine, rising sea levels, severe flooding, and tropical cyclones. As a response, the world has been in search of solutions to this troubling phenomenon and some of the major recommendations are the advocacy to focus on alternative energy sources rather than fossil fuel-based energy. The Alternative energy sources include wind, solar, biomass, geothermal, and hydro. These alternative sources of energy are environmentally friendly and pose no threat to ecological balance. It has been established that food production and climate change are all interlinked and changes in one factor would have a negative or positive impact on the other. For instance, the reduction of climate change effects will help improve food security problems as it reduces the likelihood of crop failure or deaths of livestock due to natural disasters. The following are some immediate and long-term recommendations to combat the challenge and danger of changes in climate conditions. The use of cars and automobiles that can run on cleaner alternative fuels, such as Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), Hydrogen, and electricity should be encouraged globally. Reforestation schemes must be prioritized to grow a large number of trees. Forest degradation and deforestation must be seriously

discouraged. There is a need to invest in National orientation programmes to educate the citizenry about attitudes toward the environment, the essence of social interaction, and the value of life. For instance, the public must be educated on the environmental hazards caused by pollutants such as nylons and papers, plastic containers, bottles, cans, used cars, broken electronics, broken furniture, and hospital wastes. Awareness can be created through radio jingles, TV adverts, posters, flyers, and other out-of-home (OOM) and below-the-line (BTL) advertising materials.

There is a need to modernize agricultural practices through the use of technologies and promote implementation of climate-smart and conservation agriculture, such as irrigation-fed agriculture rather than rain-fed agriculture. In Nigeria, the government must exercise political will in resolving the farmers-herders crisis. For instance, the ranching method of cattle rearing should be firmly adopted across the states of the federation, while livestock farmers, including herdsmen, could be given needed training for efficient management of the ranches. As a matter of urgency, the government needs to strengthen the security apparatus of the Nation, while law enforcement agencies must rise to their responsibilities, by prohibiting, arresting, and prosecuting those in possession of illegal arms and ammunition to forestall violence, destruction of farms and killings of farmers. Climate change education should be introduced in Nigerian schools' curriculum as it is already being done in South Africa. There is a need for more research on the subject of climate change and food insecurity. And finally, there is a need to organise an all-encompassing climate summit to engage tech organisations, climate organisations, food and nutrition experts, agriculturists, the media, Artists, filmmakers, individuals, government officials, and other key influencers. The summit will bring forth an avenue for all stakeholders to collaborate and develop sustainable policies and other solutions to make climate actions more effective across the globe.

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BANE OF CRUDE OIL EXPLORATION IN THE NIGER DELTA: THE EXAMPLE OF OSSY OKEKE'S *LIQUID BLACK GOLD*

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Abstract

Crude oil is a major source of foreign exchange and revenue generation for the Nigerian economy. It is one of Nigeria's numerous natural resources found in communities in the Niger Delta region. While its exploration has yielded significant growth in the Nigerian economy, the seeming unabated grievances and recurrent outbursts of agitations and crises that translate into militancy and other forms of civil disturbances among host communities have raised serious problem in destroying mutual relationship between oil companies, host communities and government. The resultant effect is the depletion of production and its negative consequences on the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country. This study attempted to improve relationship between the concerned stakeholders by investigating causes and effects of grievances, agitations and civil disturbances in Niger Delta. It was guided by Frustration-Aggression Theory as a framework to qualitatively analyse a purposively sampled film, *Liquid Black Gold* by Ossy Okeke Junior. A critical textual autopsy of the film revealed that these unending agitations are predominantly caused by external and internal factors, vis-a-vis the neglect and irresponsibility of government on one side and the corrupt and fraudulent penchants of most Niger Delta leaders on the other side. This study recommended the legislation and implementation of policies on improved corporate social responsibility (CSR) to host communities in Niger Delta and the deterrence of corrupt practices by government agencies and leadership class in the area.

Keywords: Agitations, Crude oil, CSR, Exploration, GDP, Grievances, Niger Delta.

Introduction

Niger Delta, a geographical landscape dominantly situated in the south-south geopolitical zone of Nigeria is endowed with abundant crude oil, a natural resource that accounts for more than ninety per cent of the foreign exchange earnings for the country and eighty per cent of federal revenue in Nigeria (HRW qtd. in Dede 31). According to Lucas, Vakkai and Targema: the area which is described as the Niger Delta region of Nigeria lies between the latitudes of 40 and 60 north of the equator and 40 and 80 east of the Greenwich. It comprises nine out of the thirty-six states that make up the Federal Republic of Nigeria (4). The region that is known to have established a reputation for peace and hospitality has in recent times been bedevilled with grievances which have metamorphosed into different forms of agitations and violent activities targeted at oil installations, foreign and local expatriates and even the populace.

The devastating impact of this to the immediate environment, socio-political and economic lives of the people and the nation at large is overwhelming. The havoc-

wrecking atmospheric conditions of war, civil unrest, crossfire of explosive devices, killings, turbulence, kidnappings, maiming and insecurity of lives and properties perpetrated by the militant activities in the Niger Delta environment invoke the feeling of a people in an acute condition of warfare and a nation in a depleted state of economy. The imperatives of proffering sustainable solution to the Niger Delta problem, therefore, lead quite logically to the question of understanding the causes and effects of the problem in the area. Using a textual analysis of Ossy Okeke's *Liquid Black Gold* (2009), this study investigates critically the causes and effects of grievances and agitations in the Niger Delta region with the view to proffering an enduring solution to the menace. By so doing, the study would have raised a template for a peaceful conflict resolution between critical stakeholders in the crude oil business in the Niger Delta region and the oil-bearing communities. Recommendations made from this study could yield significant results to the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta through an improved standard of living and adequate developmental attention from the concerned authorities. The study would also address the concern of the multi-national oil companies whose activities would enjoy hitch-free operations. Furthermore, the government would enjoy the necessary civil stability and robust economy to escalate national growth and development.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this study was the Frustration-Aggression Theory (FAT). Originally proposed in 1939 by John Dollard, Neale Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer and Robert Sears as a hypothesis, FAT was later developed in 1941 by Neal Miller and revised in 1969 by Leonard Berkowitz. The theory believes that frustration often paves the way for aggression and aggression is a stimulant of frustration. Accordingly, "frustration can create aggressive inclinations even when they are not arbitrarily aimed at the subject personally (Berkowitz 59). This theory is believed to be relevant in explaining riots and revolutions usually caused by the deprived section of society that may express the accumulated frustrations and anger of individuals through violence. This theory was used to analyse the impact of frustration among the oil-bearing communities of Niger Delta in stimulating aggression and crises in the area.

Research Methodology

Methodologically, the research design adopted for this study is qualitative in which some variables were investigated to ascertain real causes and effects of agitations and aggressions among oil-bearing host communities of Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The study is limited to a population of one film: Ossy Okeke's *Liquid Black Gold* (2009). The sampling technique adopted for this study is purposive in which, the researcher purposely selected the film under review due to its relevance to the issue of discourse. This is consistent with the view of Ofo who posits that purposive sampling is a method in which the researcher simply handpicks the sample because he or she considers them typical to what he/she wants (65). Data collection for this study included the primary and secondary sources, which translates to the study of a film at the primary level and

the study of other library materials at the secondary level. For the method of data analysis, the researcher adopted a textual evaluation and close reading of Ossi Okeke's *Liquid Black Gold* (2009) to investigate its main subject of discourse.

Review of Literature

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria has become a critical subject of focus in Nigeria and beyond, unarguably, for its major stake in the Nigerian economy. HRW (qtd in Dede 31) claims that the Niger Delta contributes to more than 90 per cent foreign exchange earnings and eighty per cent of federal revenue in Nigeria. The rich natural crude oil deposits in its geographical environment are the major source of wealth that drives the economy of Nigeria. One of the major issues of concern among scholars is the ill treatment of the goose that lays the golden egg in a land where milk and honey flow. Several authors, such as: Anyanwu, Iloma, Ebekwue, Omoera, Adjeketa shed some lights.

In his article, "*Black November: Interrogating the Niger Delta Questions*," Anyanwu describes the Niger Delta region as the heart of Nigeria's oil dependent economy and argues that the wealth derived from this region had sustained the nation's economy and stabilized her political system for over fifty years now (152). He explains how the resources got from the Niger Delta region was systematically plundered by politically dominant sections of the country to build more roads, bridges, schools modern communication system, real estates, industries and generations of billionaires for themselves at the peril of the Niger Delta states. Anyanwu further laments how Niger Delta states have suffered in unquantifiable terms and measures in human, material, environmental, economic, social political, spiritual and other forms of atrocious experiences. He believes that without the faults of the Niger Delta people, their rich natural resources have attracted a lot of enemies to the region than friends. This situation, he likens to be epitomizing the quintessential example of the fate of the goose that lays the golden egg which in her case, the egg had become an albatross (153).

Citing Bazunu and Ekong, Anyanwu claims that the exploitation of crude oil in Niger Delta has come with various environmental challenges archetypal of such natural extractions. He, therefore, posits that oil exploration is the major problem that gave birth to virtually all the problems found in the region: degradation, environmental pollution, underdevelopment, neglect and abuse of human rights, therefore, become recurrent qualifiers and decimals in describing the Niger Delta. Given this situation, Anyanwu argues that the Niger Delta question revolves around the desire of the Niger Delta states to free themselves and their people from the evil and oppressive policies of the multi-national oil companies that dot the region in a bid to live better lives and get the dividends of the crude oil that nature blessed them with. Using Jeta Amata's *Black November*, which revolves around the Niger Delta people of Nigeria and the Western Oil Company, Anyanwu describes the narrative of the film as a tale of plundering and grabbing of the oppressors at various levels and the oppressed (160). He traces the problem in the region to failed corporate social responsibility (CSR) on the part of the oil company with the connivance of the inhuman and insensitive

government on one hand and then, the ignorant masses and a few corrupt elite classes on the other hand.

Omoera uses selected Nollywood films, *October 1* and *Black November* as templates to pinpoint and articulate the complex issues of human rights violation in Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta area (237). He argues that the films depict the pervasive ills and both have elements of protest aesthetics, which underscores the potential of Nollywood film narratives to help lift the Nigerian masses out of the socioeconomic and the sociopolitical torpor to which the state authorities and their colluders (both local and international) have perennially tried to reduce them (240). In another study, “Crude Oil Crises in the Niger Delta: Prospecting a Theorization of Militancy Subgenre of Action Film in a Selected Nollywood Narrative,” Iloma observes that there is a surge of a new dimension to insecurity around Niger Delta region which has caused great tension and severe unrest in the area (98). He explains how disgruntled youths of the region organized themselves into militia groups and wreck havocs, undertaking coordinated attacks on crude oil facilities, indiscriminate hostage taking of foreigners and causing other related social problems. Iloma explains how the discovery of crude oil in Oloibiri in present day Bayelsa State has been characterized with mixed feelings of happiness and sadness between stakeholders and beneficiaries of the oil and gas business against the impoverished members of the host communities. He, therefore, submits that despite the huge economic impact of the crude oil economy in Nigeria, it is generally associated with a lot of poverty, impoverishment and crises in the Niger Delta region.

Emuedo and Abam assert that the Niger Delta has been the epicentre of hydrocarbon resources exploitation from which Nigeria, has earned huge revenues since 1958. However, despite its abundant hydrocarbon resources, the Niger Delta remains bisected by pervasive poverty (18). Using Jeta Amata’s *Black November* (2012) for contextual evaluation, Iloma claims that the film is sustained on the thematic thrust of militancy and agitation against a system of exploitation, neglect and forceful degradation of the Niger Delta environment by the Nigerian government. He explains how the Niger Delta youths become restive and resort to kidnap, assassinations, bombings, violence and other forms of militant activities with the view of forcing relevant authorities to save their community from environmental degradation. This idea of youth restiveness in the Niger Delta region as further corroborated by Adjeketa and Ebekue is triggered by various factors. Using Jeta Amata’s *Black November* as a critical lens, the following factors are identified as causes of the crisis in the region: victimization arising from economic exploitation, lack of good governance, government poor attitude to the Niger Delta people, corrupt practices of government officials. (Adjeketa 115; Ebekue 164).

Udengwu believes that Niger Delta people are a marginalized group that cannot be left alone because they are naturally endowed with what the rest of the nation and in fact, the world needs, the crude oil (66). She argues that the presence of oil in the area should necessitate empowerment and total regional transformation (68). Regrettably, however, Udengwu decries how this enviable natural resource of the Niger Delta has ironically translated to developmental degradation instead of

sustainable development. She maintains that the people are not just denied access to their God-given riches, they also suffer destruction of their major source of livelihood: Poor agrarian lives of farming and fishing due to the activities of the multi-national oil companies which has caused oil spillage and environmental pollution and degradation. Even more disturbing is the gross failure of the Federal Government of Nigeria to adequately compensate them for their loss of major sources of livelihood.

Irobi Esiaba's *Hangmen Also Die* reveals another conflicting part of the Niger Delta struggles in which, corruption among the leadership class in the area leads to the diversion of the people's common wealth for self-aggrandizement. The play reveals how a group of Niger Delta youths from the Izon ethnic group who have been unemployed for several years after acquiring different levels of university degrees vent their frustrations and disillusionment on society by becoming 'outlaws'. These people who formed themselves into a criminal gang called 'suicide squad' take to crime for survival since their university degrees cannot put food on their table. They kill, maim, murder and massacre. They describe themselves as "small time thieves who have graduated into armed robbers and outlaws" (16). Tamara tells members of the suicide squad to channel their grievances to the real enemies of progress instead of the general masses who are also victims of similar circumstances. This prompts the suicide squad to attempt to end the history of squandering by storming into the palace of Chief Isokipiri Erokosima, a top government functionary who has stolen community funds meant for compensation from government. After torturing him to confess how the fund is selfishly stolen and squandered, they decide to hang him by the neck until death.

Daniel Kpodo's *The Struggles* (a play performed at University of Port Harcourt Theatre in July 2022) focuses on the mishaps that occur in Opoluama, a Niger Delta community, considered to be extremely poor and deteriorated on all fronts. Like other Niger Delta communities, Opoluama is endowed with rich mineral resources that can produce stable income for the people, the greed of King Ikiriko and his cabinet who continue to divert the people's commonwealth for self-aggrandizement would leave the people with crumps. The youth consider the people at the helm of community affairs as being responsible for their retrogression, thereby prompting them to venture into innumerable criminal activities. The demand for a better living condition from state and the multi-national oil companies operating in Niger Delta area has, therefore, remained a recurrent issue among the indigenous peoples of the Niger Delta. Over the years, several groups such as the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta Volunteer Force, among others, have been organized to pressure relevant authorities to the plights of the people. Udengwu reiterates how Ken Saro-Wiwa, a renowned Niger Delta environmental activist championed MOSOP in the 1990s to demand that oil money should be used to improve the deplorable condition of the Ogoni people (72), Inarguably, Ogoni is one of the most vocal ethnic nationalities in Niger Delta as regards the demands for improved living conditions.

Comparatively, the activities of crude oil exploration by the multi-national oil companies in Niger Delta, its consequential effects and reactions by the host communities constitute a major crux in Ayakoroma's *Trends in Nollywood X-rays* this

idea taking the paradigm of some Niger Delta communities (185). Ayakoroma describes the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) as an organization which represents the Ogoni people of Rivers State in the struggle for ethnic and environmental rights. He explains that the federal government of Nigeria and Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) are the primary antagonists of MOSOP. He believes that the former are flagrantly ignoring the developmental needs of the people despite the abundant crude oil and gas wealth obtained from the area (138). The Ogoni struggles were emboldened by a declaration of the Ogoni Bill of Rights which was addressed to the federal government of Nigeria in 1990. Ayakoroma explains that this bill enumerated some of the problems of the Ogoni as including; Oil related suffering of the people, neglect by the government, lack of social amenities and political marginalization. Ayakoroma further clarifies that the above concerns were placed on the basis of self-definition of the Ogoni as a separate and distinct ethnic nationality, hence, the seeking of autonomy, environmental protection and control of a fair share of the revenues derived from the crude oil extracted from their land and cultural rights among others by MOSOP.

A Critical Analysis of Grievances and Agitations among Niger Delta Citizens in Ossy Okeke's *Liquid Black Gold*

Ossy Okeke's *Liquid Black Gold* (2009) tells the story of resistance of some aggrieved youths of Zeide, community of Niger Delta against the environmental pollution, degradation, neglect and poverty in the land. The GMP Oil Company, a global oil company which is engaged in serious crude oil exploration in Zeide has enjoyed uninterrupted exploration activities for years. Some youths led by Ebimpade (Sam Dede) feel aggrieved and cheated over the suffering which the presence of the oil company in their land has translated to: No potable water, no employment, no compensation for damage caused, sexual abuse of their sisters, wives and mothers, no alternative sources of livelihood after their only source have been destroyed by the oil exploration activities. The dialogue below, in which the protesting youths outline their grievances to their King sheds light on this notion:

Laifa: Our people are suffering. Look at us, with our kegs but no clean water to drink because of oil pollution. Here are our youths with their nets but no fish to catch. All the creeks have been poisoned by oil pollution. Our old ones are dying of dehydration and our younger ones, dying of different forms of malnutrition and disease. Even the youths can no longer cope in their schools. We are asking that what have we done to the oil companies and our representatives before them to deserve this kind of neglect?

In the above dialogue, some of the fundamental causes of the problems enumerated border on the immense impact of oil pollution and spillage on their environment which has negative effect on their major source of drinking water, aquatic and agrarian lives. The youth leader laments the absence of drinking water in the land and absence of fishes in their waters due to crude oil spillage. It suffices that these are basic essentials of life in Zeide which have now been lost to the activities of crude oil exploration. The people are now subjected to different health issues and sudden deaths owing to the environmental pollution. Hence, the aggrieved youths, represent a

frustrated and disillusioned set of indigenes whose basic means of living have been destroyed without provision for an alternative source.

Another perspective to the problem of the Zeide people as revealed by Ebimpade, another youth leader is what can be described in this study as *self-exploitation*, an exploitative method where indigenes of the same community exploit fellow indigenes. Ebimpade decries the role of those who represent them to the relevant authorities as contact persons to the white men who sexually exploit their sisters, wives and even mothers in exchange for bright opportunities. These indigent representatives are those who one must pass through to get enrolled in the company's scholarship scheme, training opportunities and the likes. Instead of showing patriotism to communal development in their little corners, they use the little portion of authority at their disposal to exploit fellow community people. This is what Ebimpade complains about in the statement below:

Ebimpade: Our sisters and mothers have become objects of sexual abuse in the hands of those who represent us before the white man simply because, they determine who gets enrolled in the white man's trainings and jobs. What about our lands, our farmlands that have been put to use by the white man and his oil company, are we not going to be compensated for that? We want answers your majesty, we want answers.

Beyond the wanton sexual gratification indulged in by the community's representatives as established above, other corrupt practices abound. While the generality of the people lurches in abject poverty, the chiefs selected to represent them live visible life of wealth and affluence after diverting communal compensation money to personal use. After all efforts of the aggrieved youths to dialogue directly with the oil company had been frustrated by the greedy chiefs in connivance with the military, the youths decide to take their destiny in their hands as they resolve to fight to be emancipated from the looming reality of extinction.

The film explores the issue of agitations and terrorism. The aggrieved youths of Zeide take to assassination, kidnapping, intimidation, radicalism and bombing, amid other forms of militant activities, to force the authorities concerned with the crude oil exploration in their land to rescue their community from extinction. A community that had once thrived on its rich agricultural resources in which plenty of food and fishes were the mainstay of their economy, the advent of the oil exploration activities has devastated the only source of livelihood without any form of relief material or alternative means of livelihood provided. The people have suffered to an unbearable point. The leader of the aggrieved youths, Ebimpade speaks further:

Ebimpade: My people have suffered and are still suffering. We've tasted anguish; we've seen despair, hopelessness, intimidation, humiliation. My people have cried for solace, but it never comes. A one-time happy, happy and peaceful people, the lifestyle of every Zeide man was free of violence, free of stress. You know, we never depended on anybody or any people for our daily lives. We were great farmers, great fishermen. Great masters of the hoes and cutlasses, and then the white man came with his oil companies. But for the oil companies and their greed for the treasures that God gave us in our land, we still would have been living in peace till now.

Wife: Ebimpade, if only you can get rid of this life consuming (pointing at his gun).

The terrorist activities represented in this film are instigated by remote and immediate causes. While the deplorable conditions of the community and its lack of social amenities are objectionable, they only constitute the remote causes of the 'violence' in the film. The people, understanding the usefulness of non-violent means to conflict resolution had resorted to peaceful measures where their grievances would be tabled and dialogued upon, but the greedy activities of the chiefs who had formed and initiated a parallel youth group against the agitating youths would not allow their voices to be heard. Even more provoking is the connivance of this set of greedy chiefs with the military administrator of the state to randomly shoot, arrest, and unilaterally execute law-abiding members of the community. This incident, however, triggers the immediate cause of the war:

Ebimpade: We cannot take this anymore; they attack and arrest us for no crime. How much more of this can we take? They brought lies, we took it, they brought betrayal, we took it, deprivation, we took it. All this madness we have taken from the white man. How much more of this can we take? No, we would not take it. We would fight; we would fight to stay alive. Imagine this! Humiliation, incarceration and finally, death. We would not take this anymore. We would fight to stay alive.

Others: Yes

Biokpo: Yes! We must fight to stay alive. We have sought for negotiation; we did not get it. We sought for dialogue; we did not get it. Brothers, this is violence and it must be taken by force. We will fight.

The war which puts Ebimpade, his second in command, Biokpo (Gentle Jack), and other militants in a life-threatening condition is fought multidimensionally. While the aggrieved militants are fighting to defend themselves against a factional group created and sponsored by the greedy chiefs against them, they are also fighting against the military, the federal government, the oil company and the greedy chiefs. The major weapons of warfare used are sophisticated Ak 47 assault rifles and other explosive devices. The methods of warfare typically involve exchange of fire arms and guerrilla fighting in which such activities as surprised attack, kidnapping and killing dominantly play out. Another benchmark used for the investigation of grievances and agitations in the *Liquid Black Gold* is found through character analysis. *Liquid Black Gold* represents a binary interaction between good and the bad characters. The film reveals different categories of characters pursuing two distinct motifs that border on what is morally good and bad. Ebimpade identifies their enemies in this dialogue with his wife:

Let me tell you something, my dear wife, our real enemies are the government and those that we have sent to represent us before the oil company. Our perceived enemies are the oil companies who out of naivety or ignorance or maybe sheer greed have connived with these two enemies to rip us off.

One of the most significant character categorizations in the film is the Ebimpade led youths of Zeide who engage relevant authorities on the need to improve the living conditions of the people. The community has suffered all forms of neglect and deplorable conditions, including lack of drinkable water and scarcity of food, among others, due to environmental pollution occasioned by the activities of the oil company operating in the community. As previously noted, the people have become

frustrated over failure of relevant authorities to respond to their needs. They have also been subjected to a series of offensive attitudes by the authorities, hence, they resort to violence as a last option to stay alive.

Ebimpade: (Talking to his wife). What do you take us for? You think we are cannibals and scavengers. You think we kill just for the sake of it? No, listen, we fight just to stay alive. We fight to defend ourselves, so if anyone dies in the process, it merely completes that definition of history, because, a few must die for many others to live.

The need to ensure a better living condition for the Zeide is the major reason why the aggrieved youths have taken to violent agitations and as a result, put their lives on the line. They choose to fight with the last drop of their blood not for self but for the sake of the community. Ebipade restates this position as he declares: "Beware, my life is in the struggle and the struggle is in the emancipation of my people." The management of the GMP Oil Company represents a category of greedy and selfish characters in the film. This group of characters are predominantly driven by the need to explore and exploit the rich crude oil resources available in Zeide community. Even though the company makes so much money from the multi-billion-dollar natural resources deposited in the land, they cannot boast of any genuine effort at improving the living condition of the host community, both in the areas of infrastructural development and human capital development. Instead of developing the community, the company engages in sponsoring crises with the aim of amassing wealth out of it. As one of the company's executives tells Mr Sunny:

Because when they are fighting, we are making a lot of money. Look at it this way, the government will concentrate in dousing the crisis and they pay less attention to our bunkering business. Put it this way, they're killing each other, we make the big Naira, you know what am saying.

The chiefs representing Zeide in the company and the agents of the federal military government represent another category of characters. Their high level of greed in siphoning the proceeds of the crude, especially the diversion of community benefits to personal coffers, plays significantly to the problem of Zeide. Ebimpade has claims that: there are just a lucky few that the community vested with the power to represent us before the oil company, and to bring before the oil company, the several hardships that oil exploration has brought on our people. Chief Ebi, Chief Zeite and Paul, the retired school teacher. These are people that are so rich, they are even richer than the king, and they saw this assignment as an opportunity to enrich themselves while shutting their ears to the plight of our people.

The chiefs are very influential in the film. In the scene where some community youths are to be employed into the company, the chiefs decide to discriminate against deserving youths that pass the company's test for selfish reasons. "You see, we have to be very careful the way we recruit these people. You see, some of them that are too big, if we take them, they will confront us, they will conspire against us. We need boys that are loyal that we can control," says Chief Ebi. For this reason, duly qualified youths who by the company's standard had passed the test for the job are flagrantly dropped while the perceived loyalists are employed, even though they do not pass the test. The

draining off of the relief materials due the community and presenting only a piecemeal by these same chiefs, the illicit deductions and diversions of the employees' monthly wages for self-enrichment, the siphoning of ecological funds due the community, among others, as contained in various scenes of the film validate their greedy and selfish dispositions. On the part of the military government, their primary concern was how to amass wealth and increase their personal gains as could be justified in various scenes of the film. In a meeting between Mr. Philip of the GMP Oil, representatives of Zeide community and the Ministry of Youth Development, the greedy disposition of the government's representatives is brought to the fore.

Ogbeifi: Thank you Mr, Philips, Hon. Chiefs. You've just heard what Mr Philip said. We represent powerful interest from above, I think it has become imperative that we take over the settlement of our youths and all the necessary funds that are due to it and in doing that, we will be entitled to fifty percent of the total fund.

Alhaji: Chiefs, you know we are the agents of the ruling military government as such, we have been mandated to supervise the final settlement of the youths along the oil producing areas in order to curb restiveness.

It should be emphasized that 'the powerful interest' highlighted above represents the selfish interests of some top government functionaries who use their high-ranking positions to divert legitimate benefits of the oil producing communities for personal aggrandisements. As can be recalled from the film, the provision of arms for the militants by the same government functionaries whose duty it is to secure the land is not genuinely targeted at the good of the militants but to create an atmosphere of civil unrest in order to attract greater financial deal as security operatives.

The setting of the film at Zeide community epitomizes the level of gross underdevelopment suffered by the average oil producing communities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Plate one below reveals how impoverished Zeide Community is irrespective of the abundant natural crude extracted from its land on a daily basis: Dilapidated mud houses suggestive of leaking thatched roofs. The community which plays host to a multi-billion-dollar multinational oil company ironically has nothing to show for the huge sum of money milked from it. No good road, no infrastructural development and no bridges. The community is revealed as still being in its primitive state of development. All the frames in the film as contained in the photos below reveal different aspects of the communities' setting. In all of them, the issue of underdevelopment is underscored throughout.

Another aspect of setting prominently used in the film is the aquatics. Creeks are intrinsic to the geographical topology of the Niger Delta region. In the film under study, the creek is used as the major source of transportation for the people. The conveyance of people and commodities from one point to another predominantly depends on water transportation. The creek as used in this film also facilitate the movements and combatant activities for the aggrieved militants



Plate 1. Shot revealing the level of Zeide's underdevelopment.



Plate 2. Aggrieved Niger Delta militants from Zeide at the shore of a crude oil polluted river.



Plate 3. Sporadic shooting by a militant in Zeide



Plate 4. Kidnap scene of an expatriate working in GMP Oil Company in Zeide

Conclusion

This article examined grievances and agitations among crude oil-bearing communities in Niger Delta with the view to identifying the causes while also attempting to proffer solutions. From the available evidence in the film examined, the study discovered the problem to be emanating from external and internal forces viz-a-viz the negligible attitude of government and multinational oil companies to improve quality of life in the affected communities and the congenial corrupt practices of Niger Delta leaders who take advantage of their positions as representatives of the communities to exploit the people. This study further established that all attempts by the concerned citizens of the host communities to have the problems peacefully resolved proved abortive. Whereas, the problems were biting hard on a people whose source of livelihood was seriously threatened, failure of concerned authorities to mitigate these effects brought frustration to the people who consequently got aggrieved and became agitated.

The study, therefore, concludes that the grievances and agitations in the Niger Delta region can be resolved through genuine developmental commitment on the host communities by relevant authorities and a patriotic disposition on the side of community leaders in Niger Delta. From the foregoing, the following recommendations are proffered for the resolution of the crude oil related crises in the Niger Delta region. A legislation and implementation of improved policies on corporate social

responsibility of government and oil companies on the oil-bearing communities in the area. A policy of inclusion of host communities in the scheme of affairs. Provision of alternative means of livelihood for the host communities is also strongly advocated since environmental pollution and its sweeping effects on climate has negatively affected the people. Strict punitive measures to discourage corrupt practices of diversion of community fund for personal use should be put in place by critical stakeholders.

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INDIGENOUS DANCE AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The question of environmental health has been placed on the front burner of discourses in several academic fields as a measure to provoke conversations to rethink and atone for age-long humanistic and anthropogenic activities. Over the years, humans have continually plundered the earth and other non-human ecosystems in the guise of development, industrialization, modernity, and civilization. Today, we are hit by several negative feedbacks, ranging from high sea levels, global warming, environmental-based diseases, and devastated seas and landscapes. Based on the present accelerated changes evident in society, studies about the future predict the end of humanity or the apocalypse; a report that have received universal attention as reflected in the United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDGs) 13, 14, and 15. Governments and policymakers have continued in their efforts to ensure environmental protection to rebuild the earth's resilience for the present and future generations. Given these indices, environmental discourse has received multidisciplinary attention and the arts have tried to be part of the panoply of strategies. Although there have been considerable responses from drama and music, indigenous dance seems not to have done much in scholarship and practice of this new reality. The researchers, relying on the Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST) and using the content analysis and participant observation tools of qualitative research method, submit that indigenous dances in Nigeria have the potency to become dominant tools in advocacy about the environment despite conceptual and physical limitations.

Keywords: Advocacy, Environment, Indigenous dance, IST, Posthumanism, SDGs.

Introduction

The idea of a depleting earth (Anthropocene) has assumed several discourses on causes, nature, and impacts. Several nomenclatures have been put forward by scholars and world bodies in an attempt to comprehend and navigate the subject. According to authors like Kidner, it is 'Industrocentrism' (9), which uses the power structure of colonizing both people and nature while subjecting them to the capitalist economic

system, rather than ‘anthropocentrism.’ Others such as Haraway and Routley and Routley, use the terms ‘human chauvinism’ and ‘speciesism’ to describe the long-held preference for the human species above non-human aspects of the ecosystem (Haraway 56; Routley and Routley 36). Some like Baird Callicott refer to it as homocentrism or human supremacism which is the essentialisation of the human factor at the expense of other non-human civilizations and agencies (111). In Haraway’s thoughts, no amount of evidence that other beings also possess these traits would persuade the human chauvinists that they should be given the same moral concern as humans despite the fact that they formally assert that these traits – such as language, rationality, sociality, etc. – provide reasons for privileging humans (56-57). The truth remains that human activity is identified as the primary cause of what studies about the future envision as a coming apocalypse regardless of the course that concern for a weakening ecosystem takes.

Humanist principles essentialize man to the exclusion of his non-human partners, whether under the garb of speciesism, homocentrism, ‘capitalocene’ (Moore 1); Chthulucene (Haraway 57); Wasteocene or ‘technocene’ (Lopez-Corona et al. 6). Non-human elements of the environment are viewed as simply objects or ‘means to human ends’ (Callicott 119), a view supported by radical relativists like Protagoras who maintains that man is the measure of all things. To say that the world is in the throes of a depleting earth’s resilience and biodiversity is to say the obvious. In the Nigerian case, there has been persistent toxification and wasting of the human, land, air, and water bodies. Beginning from colonial contacts and their mantra of modernization, civilization, and the current sustainable development fad, humans and their environmental counterparts have been plundered beyond measure. The increasing human population and the consequent demand for food production, capitalism, oil politics, and carbon democracy which are colonial installations, have further plunged several areas in the country into an ecological wasteland. The Niger Delta region has been known to be an example of toxicity and wasting, ‘eco-alientated’ (Abba and Onyemaechi 54) and “a tale of plunder and waste” (Ajumeze 22).

Other parts of Nigeria such as Lagos, the economic hub of the country, have not been spared the ecological devastation consequent upon industrialization and urbanization. Lagos is an area made up of several water bodies in the form of lagoons and creeks as well as land and air spaces. It has been heavily polluted (Omoyajowo, Raimi, and Waleola 37; Salami, Akinbomi and Patinvoh 53). While the water bodies have been heavily polluted by microplastics, heavy metals have polluted the land bodies according to the latter. Due to the prevalence of plastic wastes, a lack of knowledge about their ecological impact, and a lack of commitment to sustainable waste management methods, microplastic pollution is now widely acknowledged as a serious danger to livelihoods, biodiversity, and public health (Omoyajowo 35).

Since it provides us with food, fibre, oxygen, and regulates weather patterns and crop pollination, nature is vital to human lives. However, the strain on it is escalating. Humans have altered about seventy-five per cent of the earth’s surface, nature and animals are now restricted to ever-tinier regions of the globe. The cumulative anthropogenic activities of human beings on the planet have become the

basis for the United Nation's concern for planetary restoration, especially seeing the recent negative feedbacks such as rising sea levels, climate change, and the rise of zoonotic diseases which Billy McGuire sees as the earth fighting back. Deforestation and desertification are among these anthropocentric activities of humans, especially in tropical landscapes like Nigeria. According to the United Nations, around one million animal and plant species are threatened with extinction, hence, the institution of sustainable development goals (SDGs). The SDGs are a call to action for all countries, rich and poor, to promote prosperity while protecting the environment. It is recognized that addressing poverty necessitates strategies that encourage economic growth while also meeting a variety of social needs such as education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, in addition to addressing climate change and environmental protection (United Nations par.1).

This call to restore and rebuild the earth's biodiversity has taken the front burner of several disciplines including the humanities and the researchers seek to engage the indigenous Nigerian dances in the advancements of conversations for planetary restoration. The research is prompted by the seeming lack of indigenous dance presence in the current matrix of environmental action among other arts such as music and drama. The researchers argue in this article that while indigenous dances before colonial contact have contributed to land and seascapes; acknowledging their agencies and impact on collective survival and existence of the period, the salient features seem to have been distorted and watered down by colonial ideologies.

This paper, therefore, seeks to achieve three goals: firstly, to explore the nature, impact, and trajectories of environmental discourses. Secondly, contribute to the rapidly increasing studies of decolonization through an advocacy of indigenous standpoint theory. Here, the researchers seek to debunk certain misconstrued colonial ideologies and foreground the need to utilize indigenous knowledge resources in conversations and interactions with the peculiarities of indigenous environmental realities. Thirdly, situate indigenous dance as one potent communal knowledge resource with the capacity to further discourses about rethinking human anthropogenic activities for sustainable development.

Indigenous Standpoint Theory and the Environmental Question in Nigeria

The Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST) is an offshoot of the Standpoint Theory (ST) that speaks to a researcher's biography. In ST, the researcher according to Denzen and Lincoln, speaks from a particular class, gendered, racial, cultural, and ethnic perspective" (11). ST according to Harding and Moreton-Robinson can serve as a perspective, an explanatory standpoint as well and a methodology (Harding 24; Moreton-Robinson 334. However, it also acknowledges the researcher's subjectivity in a location and the manner in which the research is done. Coates, Trudgett, and Page claim that it could serve as both theory and methodology, which give a voice to minority groups, allowing them to challenge social norms as the outside within (907). The theory has been challenged by Western methodologies due to its decolonial nature and insistence on indigenous ways of thinking and knowing.

The Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST) provides what Coates, Trudgett, and Page see as the opportunity to reveal the way in which indigenous knowledge is constructed, and unravels Western knowledge paradigms from indigenous ways of knowing (907). It produces more in-depth and culturally inclusive knowledge (Nakata 214). IST affords indigenous scholars a tool to interrogate the ways in which indigenous people are recognized and entangled with Western conceptualization and methodologies. This explains why Nakata contends that IST is a significant advancement in theoretical inquiry (214). Although it has been widely implemented in the educational sciences, the idea itself appears broad and stands alone. That is, it is not specific to one field or environment. This is by no means a limitation, but rather an advantage. The theory's breadth allows it to be utilized in a variety of contexts and combined with other methodological techniques.

The theory helps this study in rethinking the hitherto modalities adopted in engaging the environmental situation for sustainability in Nigeria. It helps to identify, interrogate, and resolve disparities between indigenous and Western knowledge systems (Ardill's 315). It aids the researcher in dismantling negative colonial consciousness on the outlay of Nigeria's understanding of the concepts of sustainability, development, and other variables that have besieged the journey to nationhood. Focusing on the environmental chaos in contemporary Nigeria, the researchers use the theory in their assessment of environmental issues and the peculiar impact on the future of the country. Accordingly, IST helps to interrogate the nature and impact of various approaches and methodologies that have been adopted in environmental issues and foregrounds the need to achieve what Omoera has conceptualised in a slightly different context of film as "painstaking aesthetic inward-looking attitude" to advance indigenous knowledge systems to facilitate awareness and change in theorizations and approaches to research in Africa (119).

The case of rebuilding earth's resilience in the guise of posthumanist consciousness has also been a lopsided one. Having been the agents of earth's pollution due to industrialization, missiles and nuclear weapons building and launching, crude oil politics, and unhealthy exploitation, dumping, and toxification of crude in the global South, the West has turned to these despoiled sites to take responsibility for rebuilding their land, human and seascapes. They treat the issue in ways that seem like all regions are responsible for their own pollution without attributing any blame to themselves. More so, they have, as they have often done, moved further to impose their methodologies on us to utilize in the campaign for environmental issues without considering the unique lifestyles and knowledge systems of others.

Perhaps, due to futures' studies' prediction of an impending apocalypse, the colonial masters have become genuinely concerned but as usual, blame the generality of humanity in all regions and locations of the world for their environmental transgressions. Africans for instance, had their unique ways of relating with and protecting their environment. If the goal of environmental protection is to "support the health of humankind and the rest of nature in their respective habitation" (Mwambazanbi 26), then Africa had a perfect structure going for them before the "clearing and cutting" (Ysabel Martinez 174) systems of colonial masters. The

methods adopted in Africa are cognitive of the agency and essence of environmental collaborators up to their spiritual agencies. The trees were not just felled for fun and leisure and the lands were not 'abused' during food production. In many African communities, the fallowing of land was a system that enabled the land to regain its lost nutrients.

Environmental issues in the global south have been closely linked to colonialism. There is no doubt that several years of Western conquest in these countries were characterized by the plundering of human, animal, plant, and environmental bodies. The slave trade, exportation, pesticides, crude oil discovery and exploitations, and building of railways and motorways were very instrumental to the exiling and pollution of several animal, human, seas, and land and air bodies from their natural environment. This thought aligns with that of Martinez who maintains that "the culprits of pollution are colonial mechanisms enforced by militarism and imperialism and that the right to pollute becomes the ultimate form of colonialism" (171). The post-colonial movement which the researchers read as merely a handover of oppressive regimes from foreigners to the landowners maintained the same status quo in managing resources and development outside the collective well-being of all occupants of the environment and their distinct roles. The mechanisms of the colonial masters were retained in politics and economics which increased capitalism and the wasting of environmental bodies. Scholars like Martinez observed the hierarchical structure of the world in the nomenclature of the global north and global south dichotomy, that the planet is increasingly and unequally polluted.

In addition, there is the idea that global south territories are more like what Bruce calls an "ecological wasteland" (par.1) following the toxification engendered by colonial conquest and sustained by postcolonial ideologies. Indeed, the 'clearing and cutting' of colonial masters have deprived nature of its rhythms and balance. The case of sustainable development regarding the environment as a postcolonial ideology does not suit the peculiarities of certain scenes in the theatre of environmental wasting and toxification in Nigeria. Just like all regions of the world are increasingly and unequally polluted, so it is with Nigeria; it is increasingly and unequally polluted. The oil-producing Niger Delta region, for instance, is environmentally devastated in ways that development seems like a curse to inhabitants of that area in the same way that sustainability for them is nothing short of 'hate speech.' Sustainability for them entails the maintenance of the systems and structures of polluted flora and fauna of the region in the same way that industries have defaced the creeks and waterways in Lagos, Onitsha, Aba, and several other cities in the name of industrialisation and modernisation.

Nigeria has pursued development, industrialization and world recognition in ways that are non-indigenous and the result is the recognition of the Niger Delta as "one of the most polluted places on earth. Life expectancy is just 41 years" (Mbachu par.4). Other parts of the country have also been impacted by severe environmental issues such as flooding, polluted water, high rising sea levels, and zoonotic diseases. Given the nature of the times we have entered, which Ziauddin Sardar calls "the postnormal times (435)," environmentally, we seem to have become more ignorant of

ourselves and our place in the world or perhaps, humanity is been overrun by an army of environmental forces, fighting several years of degradation and oppression. In line with the Indigenous Standpoint Theory, which the researchers also read as a decolonial tool the onus is on regions to look inward to evolve strategies for tackling their issues in their unique ways. As much as the researchers acknowledge that several governments have attempted to rewrite the ecological tragedy, it is also a thing to note that there have been loopholes in their approaches. Firstly, environmental issues are approached from a hierarchical standpoint emasculating the indigenes. The structures adopted deprive indigenes of their input and participation. Secondly, these approaches seem to play around colonialist ideologies that have not helped so far, such as amnesty, developmental projects, contracts, and aid. This approach seeks to offer ‘development projects’ in exchange for quality living in these regions either as a way for governments to mask their ignorance of the issue or their gullibility to critically process the impacts of long-term effects of the situation. This approach creates unwanted and complex dependencies on Eurocentric models to tackle national issues, which have continued to fail in Nigeria and other postcolonial states.

Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST) teaches that “any appeal for self-sufficiency grounded solely on economics and good sense is doomed to fail” (Glissant 149) and research according to Choy and Woodlock should have cultural meaning and perspectives for the indigenous people and their communities (41). Against this background, therefore, there is a need to look inward and devise unique means to break all encrustation of colonial constructs about ourselves and our world. Such device(s) will dismantle the normalisation of wasting practices through continuous demands and reckonings; and provoke new consciousness about our activities on the planet. This article proposes the need to fall back on indigenous knowledge resources to rebuild our failing plant in Nigeria due to their inherent appeal and potential for pushing the environmental question from the domain of knowledge to the domain of feeling.” (Tolstoy 196). Indigenous knowledge resources such as dance and folktales can be used in confronting contemporary anthropocentric ideologies and cultivating stewardship in the human relationship to their environment. They could also be deployed in touching the attitudes of Nigerian (African) leaders whose gullibility has mortgaged the well-being of their communities and has (people, land, and sea) more vulnerable to complex and unwanted dependencies on colonial ideologies.

Environmental Concerns in Some Nigerian Indigenous Dances

Dance is a medium of communication that entails the translation of the human body into codes that project intent and recognisable messages from dancers to their audiences. It is a “language which expresses the geographical locations, biological temperaments, religious beliefs, political and historical experiences of the people that own it” (Arinze 23). This conceptualisation makes indigenous dance in Nigeria, like other African countries, a “total performance” (Akas 69), such that incorporates key elements of traditional African theatre like masquerade, mime, painting, costumes, folktales, and dance. Dance, like any other African art form, commits individuals to being tools for projecting the norms and values of their society. In line with the

foregoing thought, we can apprehend indigenous Nigerian dances as indigenous knowledge and a projection of same to the members of the community.

Indigenous knowledge speaks to the accumulated knowledge and wisdom as well as the pedagogic modes of transference of traditions to communities based on socio-religious, political, and economic views of life. Hardly is there any aspect of African life that lacks expression in dance including the environment. Dance is interwoven in the fabric of African life: work, play, social, vocation, and religion. Human relationships with the environmental 'others' are also indexed in dances. Indigenous dance emerged as a result of man's attempt at establishing a relationship with the forces of nature. Therefore, "man interacts with the world through his body, which also acts as a sensory organ for him to pick up on and understand the rhythms and tensions of the world around him" (Hawkins 3). The environment is at the centre of all traditional norms and values in Africa. The various festivals are prayers of human elements to forces unseen for better living conditions in the environment. In the same vein, the various traditional norms and values are intended to guide and safeguard man's interactions with the human and environmental bodies. The cosmic and environmental foci of dance arguably gave rise to different forms of dance that abound in in Nigeria and indeed the African continent. Akpan and Ekong assert that the environment greatly affects the movement, musical instruments, songs, costumes, and cosmetics in a creative endeavour like dance (11). Hence, all dances have their environmental roots or implications for indigenous communities. Even in the case of marriage and childbirth dances, the environmental implication is the continuity of race and balance of life on earth; maintaining the ecological order of existence.

Furthermore, the Egbenu-Oba, a traditional dance of the Ora-Eri people in Anambra State, Nigeria is a dance that reproduces and celebrates the experiences and exploits of hunters in their hunting expeditions. Hunting is an age-long indigenous vocation not just for the Igbo ethnic group but all indigenous peoples across Africa. It was a steady income stream that one could work at full-time. Hunting was used to gather meat from bush animals such as deer, antelopes, and grasscutters. They were also employed to get rid of dangerous wild animals, including wild bulls, warthogs, and leopards. Usually, Egbenu-Oba depicts hunters hunting with locally made rifles and cutlasses. The Egbenu-Oba is a manly dance with precise dancing moves that are akin to a real hunting experience. The issue for the researchers here is this; placing the scope of this dance and the current and future realities of the Anambra ecosystem (one of the fastest developing states in southeast Nigeria), what becomes of the fortunes of this dance amidst the burgeoning concerns of urbanism, infrastructure and development?



Plate 1: Performance shots of the Egbenu-Oba Dance of Ora-Eri in Anambra State, Nigeria

The dance is dependent on the existence of bushes and the availability of non-human communities that the colonially-hoisted ideology of development is fast taking away. This means that possibly in the next fifty years, given the current indexes of population increase and the implication on housing and infrastructure, Egbenu-Oba may soon suffer what the Ohafia War Dance suffered in contemporary times when there are no more wars to fight. In any case, the content and context of the dance is anthropogenic because it is a celebration of the exiling of non-human communities that constitute stakeholders in the ecosystem. Another case is the Ukwata dance of the Abbi people of Delta State Nigeria. This dance is central to the Ukwata festival which marks the transition in age groups and serves as a time to honour the land's ancestors. The festival also signifies the end of the Abbi people's yearly agricultural efforts and the start of a new growing season. Ukwata dance honours the benefits of water and all of its beauties. The dancers usually wear stunning blue and green costumes, and they imitate a variety of aquatic animals, including crocodiles, iguanas, fish and alligators. They create dance steps that allude to aquatic existence as well as the ancestry of these aquatic animals. The dance has an effect on the environment and spirituality of the community during the Ukwata festival.

The researchers' argument here is that: what is the 'future' of the Ukwata dance when the water bodies have been charred by oil spills and gas flares in that part of Delta State, Nigeria. What amount of life will the Abbi people still find in the water bodies in the next fifty years given the persistent environmental devastation in the area? The sordid environmental realities put these indigenous dances and cultural practices at the brink of unimportance because human life cannot be devoid of the environment. The quality of human life is a product of the quality of the environment; the level of ecosystem interaction tells on the life expectancy. In other words, our cultural practices including dances will make more sense when there are human beings to perform them and when the impetus for their performance is largely sustained particularly from the environmental standpoint.

Indigenous Dance and the Setbacks of Environmental Sustainability

The salient environmental features and implications of indigenous dance were arguably truncated during colonialism. The alien intrusions into traditional knowledge systems in the fashion of religion, media, technologies, and formal education saw the crumbling

of indigenous structures from which the indigenous dances derived their bearing and impact. Religiously, the drifts from the shrines to the churches/mosques heavily impacted the perspectives of indigenes on their cosmic structures just as the formal education and technologies made the indigenes question long-held belief systems and practices as well as turn their backs on them. The researchers here do not imply that these intrusions are totally negative to the Nigerian society. Rather, they are of the view that their adoption was without critical interrogation on the overall impact on indigenous communities and the environment. Secondly, they are of the view that the new realities that were forced on us by colonialists were totally anti-tradition and by extension, anti-environment.

The core of indigenous life has been greatly punctured in ways that indigenous dance performances and other indigenous practices are seen as evil and paganistic since they do not meet up with the realities of contemporary aesthetics and functionality. Aesthetically in the sense that the various design patterns in their pure forms seem backward for today's audience especially Generation Z (those born between 1995 and 2012) and Generation Alpha (those born between 2013 and 2025). These generations of people have been enmeshed in a highly technological and chaotic world punctuated by cyber and environmental exposures and crises. The postnormal happenings in the world such as flooding, lead dumping, crude oil spills, gas flaring, microplastic toxicity and climate change have become daunting and persistent realities. The subject has attracted the attention of world governments and has also assumed a multidisciplinary stature wherein all disciplines have engaged with it in ways to provoke conversations around it. Given the imperilled nature of the government, climate change and other environmental issues appear 'too big' to be left in the hands of the Nigerian government alone.

Other arts like drama and music have to some extent contributed to the environmental discourse in Nigeria but the indigenous dance seems to be unconcerned perhaps as a result of ignorance or inability to navigate the art form into credible contributions to environmental conversations. Collard-Stokes aptly sums up this dilemma when she says that in discussions about the preservation and improvement of human ties with nature, the field of dance has largely gone unmentioned (par. 3). For her, this can be a result of a general lack of awareness or a failure on the part of dance(rs) to convey the breadth of their expertise in this area. Amidst the potential of indigenous dances to contribute to the ongoing conversations about rebuilding the earth's resilience, there are certain glitches. The human body is implicated in conversations about the environment. Anthropocentric ideologies figure humans as responsible for the depletion of the earth and the same body is the sole instrument for dance. In the ways that painting, drama, and music can be interrogated independently from their creators, the dance art is not so. The dancer is his/her dance and dance also, speaks about body essentialism. Therefore, in line with posthumanist tenets, the art of dance seems unfit to interrogate environmental issues.

Secondly, there is an issue with indigenous dance scholarship. Reactions in dance research in Nigeria began as responses to validate African dance forms as theatrical arts for early critics who never found anything of theatrical value in Africa

dance. Since then, much of the scholarly writings have focused on the semiotic or iconic qualities of dance and the functions of certain indigenous dance forms in society. These again, the writers of this article perceive, as colonial constructs to derail dance scholars into the constellation of all forms of dance into the umbrella of ‘African dance’ for the ease of identification and assessment while there is no concept up-to-date about ‘Western dance.’ This is partly the reason why indigenous dances have not developed in their various forms beyond validations as theatre in their own right. Hence, the seeming inability to address contemporary issues as observed by Collard-Stokes above. Certain scholars have attempted to focus more on the generalisations of African dance in their works to the peril of its various forms that abound in the various communities. This makes the expansion of the forms seem difficult as they lack a scholarly bases upon which to ‘plant’ the needed development. The seeming gap in the scholarship of African dance has further impaired the communicative and developmental potential of indigenous dance. On one hand, some scholars still feel that the indigenous dance forms must remain in their purest forms, devoid of Western encrustations. On the other hand, there is the opinion, according to Arnold Udoka that:

The purpose of dance in the society is to define an ideological focus and aid the citizenry in understanding, internalizing and relating with their environment. By so doing, participants in a culture are then predisposed to appreciate their bearing in relation to society. This understanding and internalizing processes assist the participants in the efforts to reconcile with the accepted pattern of behaviour and social interaction... the popular local performers in this regard are not responsive to the social needs of the society. Maybe because of ignorance ... culture by colonialism and subsequent social changes which demand more of repositioning rather than opposition. (286)

Udoka’s position aligns with the thrust of this study in the sense that it creates room conceptually for indigenous dances to be flexible and attuned to emerging and prevailing realities in society. It is in this consciousness that the researchers criticise indigenous dance practitioners and scholars for the seeming relegation of the art form in the present scheme of things, including environmental discourse. Thus, dance is yet an untapped potential in environmental conversation on remediation/awareness of degraded sites and endangered fauna and flora ecosystems.

Adapting Indigenous Dances for Environmental Stewardship Advocacy

Just like in times past, indigenous dance still has the potency to speak to current environmental realities. Its nature and appeal to emotional and psychological sensibilities can push environmental conversations from the domain of knowledge to the domain of feeling. Environmentally plundered landscapes such as the Caribbean and Philippines have begun evoking indigenous knowledge resources in remediating devastated landscapes. Nigeria needs to follow through with indigenous knowledge resources to first debunk colonial consciousness about the issues, critically analyse the nature and degree of polluted land and seascapes as well and make us take responsibility to ensure better living conditions for everyone. Indigenous dances, therefore, can aid this process when the issues around the engagement are scholarly

and practically tackled. Hence, the need to rethink the place of the body. As much as the human body is a metaphor for human chauvinism, it is the wrong way to conceive the human body. The human body itself is an ecosystem that consists of a large number of microbiomes. What this means is that a large portion of what makes up the human body is made up of non-human species. These microbiomes constitute the oldest forms of life on earth and their existence goes back more than 3.5 billion years. They have evolved with humans for the last six million years and have developed intricate interactions over time (“Human Microbiome” cited in Folke, Polasky, Rockstrom, and Galaz 834).

These microbiomes are necessary for human health and in turn, need the environment of the human body to survive. Therefore, dance forms could be created to project the relevance of environmental collaborators and the need to preserve them. In this regard, the several hunting dances that abound in Africa, for instance, could be retouched to rather than kill animals without considering their ecological agency, to protect and enforce animal rights so as to enable replenishment and contribute meaningfully to existence. This position highlights the importance of the non-human communities and foregrounds the need to “collaborate with the planet that is our home, and collaborate in a socially just and sustainable manner” (Folke, Polasky, Rockstrom, and Galaz 835).

Dance emerged out of prevailing environmental situations of society and must get its bearing by keeping in touch with emerging realities. Practitioners and scholars of indigenous dances should begin to manipulate dance materials or create new indigenous dance materials to address this great threat to humanity: the environmental issue. Adjusting existing forms may be seen, therefore, as puncturing the essence and identity of existing indigenous dance forms but in a critical sense. The researchers see this issue as yet a self-imposed colonization of ourselves and our future in the world. It is glaring that indigenous dances are fading as a result of the punctured essence of their existence due to colonial contact and the need to revive them through a kind of repositioning to address current realities to restore patronage and appeal of the indigenous dance forms.

In sticking to the ‘pureness’ of the indigenous dance forms, African dance practice and scholarship alienate themselves from the fleetingness of life or society. The reality of our times is in no way in concordance with the precolonial and early colonial societies. Advancement has occurred in several fronts. Geographical borders have been obliterated by technological advancement and there is a heavy traffic of cultures in and out of the Nigerian space. The case speaks to changing aesthetics between the precolonial society and now. Against this backdrop, insisting on pureness is another way to relegate the indigenous dance art form. What is needed is a critical repositioning of the art to be attuned to prevailing realities and the apocalypse is an apt subject to trigger this transposition. The various boat regatta performances and the Ukwata dance in the riverine areas of Nigeria can be retouched to speak to the detoxification and protection of sea bodies as well as the agency of the non-human lives that inhabit them. As a highly emotional art, dance can connect with the emotions of inhabitants, oil companies and governments towards a changed environmental

attitude from toxicity to remediation for sustainable development in the case of the Niger Delta region.

Social dances like the *Abigbo*, *Bongo* and *Odinala* dances and music in Imo State, Nigeria can be used in environmental awareness creation and consequent policy formation and reformation for environmental stewardship in Imo State and beyond. Issues about effective waste management, dumping and pollution of water bodies can become the thematic thrust of the *Abigbo* dance and music which will help interpret the impact of the environmental oppressive actions on the generality of life in the now and in the future. We can have dances that speak to the uncritical and unrelenting pursuit of ‘WIERDing’ against the concerns of their environmental impact and implications for the future in Nigeria. WEIRD which Siliezar, interprets as a ‘Wealthy, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Developed’ society (par. 6), is a colonial machination that was not critically analysed by countries like Nigeria. The aftermath of WEIRD pursuit is the colossal waste of human, air, land and water bodies evidenced in the growing hunger rate, industrial pollution of urban cities, the spread of zoonotic diseases, and a threatening biodiversity loss in virtually all regions of Nigeria. Indigenous dances have the efficacy for environmental positive impact when consciously utilised as decolonial tools.

Conclusion

Indigenous dance practitioners and scholars must understand that in line with Adeoti “when dance travels across space and time as it often does, the aesthetics transform in response to the realities of the new destination while still bearing the marks of the old environment” (6). Adopting this consciousness in its entirety will not only aid in debunking rigid conceptualisations in the field of dance but will inform all aspects of indigenous knowledge in contemporary society. Today’s realities, its contradictory, complex and chaotic nature exposes the folly of individualist approaches to existence and environment in Nigeria. Upon making some millions of naira in Nigeria, the next line of action is the ‘clearing and tearing down’ of nature in the name of building houses. Governments in the name of development care less about the environmental impacts of the projects. Corruption on the other hand has flawed the policies of government and industries to their environmental roles. These foreground the need for inward solutions to collective environmental issues and indigenous dance can aid in the campaign towards fostering the needed actions of stewardship to the environment in various communities. Its nature as a collective identity of a particular people gives it an edge over alien Western structures that have been hitherto explored and aimed at turning the country to a dump site for the West. Its ability to appeal to the emotional and aesthetic sensibilities of its hosts also impacts its communicative influence to drive and provoke environmental conversations in Nigeria and beyond.

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NOLLYWOOD FILMS AND THE NIGER DELTA CRISIS OF ECOLOGY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The discovery of oil in the Niger Delta region of southern Nigeria in 1956 at Oloibiri, has brought myriads of problems to the region. For decades, there have been agitations and attendant crises resulting in repeated loss of lives and properties and monumental destruction of the ecosystem. Several interventions, including from Nollywood, and countless efforts at finding a solution to the conflicts have been deployed. This paper undertakes an assessment of the progress of actionable measures taken, primarily by the government and oil companies, in curbing environmental degradation and injustices, thereby bringing the citizens' agitations to rest. It uses Nollywood films, *Blood and Oil* (2010), *Black November* (2012), *Oloibiri* (2015) as points of departure for analysis and discussion. This paper interrogates the level of changes attained, if at all, with the production of the aforementioned films. It deployed a qualitative research method, exploring document observation, media analysis and focused group discussion (FGD) instruments. The study is theoretically undergirded by the Marxist Film Theory (MFT). Findings showed that, though there have been significant changes since Nollywood's films in the crises, there is still much that needs to be done, to lay to rest the issues of agitations and climate change in Nigeria's Niger Delta. The paper submits that new interventions from Nollywood are required as events have assumed new dimensions and new dynamics have arisen.

Keywords: Agitations, Art, Film interventions, Niger Delta, Nollywood, MFT.

Introduction

Art, undoubtedly, could be said to be one of the most dynamic phenomena of society. Scholars has attempted to define art, however, the more it is defined; the more it has to be defined. Geertz opines fact that "art is notoriously hard to talk about" (94). Nascimento adds that, when made of "pigment, sound, stone," or without any clear

reference to the “figurative world,” what we named ‘art’ seems “to exist in a world of its own, beyond the reach of discourse” (19). It is not difficult to talk about art, but in everyone's eyes, “it seems unnecessary to do so” (Geertz 94). For many, according to Geertz, art “speaks, as we say, by itself: a poem must not mean but be; if you have to ask what jazz is, you will never get to know” (94). Consequently, in the words of Nascimento, “we often learn to 'feel' rather than 'think' about those thought-provoking songs, or those impressive paintings, or those films that thrill us whenever we remember them” (19).

One can afford to discuss extensively and satisfactorily the effects of art generally and film in particular, and how it affects society. In this sense, it is not out of place to register that, art influences society by changing opinions, instilling values and translating experiences across space and time. Research has shown that art affects the fundamental sense of self. Painting, sculpture, music, literature and other arts are often considered to be the repository of a society's collective memory. Art preserves what fact-based historical records cannot: how it felt to exist in a particular place at a particular time. Art in this sense is communication; it allows people from different cultures and different times to communicate with each other via images, sounds and stories. Art is often a vehicle for social change. It can give voice to the politically or socially disenfranchised. A song, film or novel can rouse emotions in those who encounter it, inspiring them to rally for change (“How Does Art Affect Culture and Society?” par.1).

Art is also communicative – it helps people from various cultures understand and communicate with each other through songs, pictures and stories. People often relate to other societies and cultures through their artistic representations (Omoera and Chukwuma 83-84). As a vehicle for social change, governments use art forms such as murals, paintings, sculptures, drama, movies and songs as propaganda material to change public opinion and launch public informational campaigns. Art is all around us. You experience art while walking through the city, listening to the radio, or driving your car. Every tangible man-made object you see or touch results from an artist's vision. Artists provide creative, intellectual and emotional insights into society at large, impacting the masses and challenging the status quo. Art helps cultures unite and boosts economic growth—helping the world become a prettier, better and happier place to live in. This is why art is known as the highlighter on the text of life (“How Does Art Affect Culture and Society?” par.3).

Films are nothing but the amalgamation of art, literature and science. While art and literature reflect the moments of life brilliantly, science studies man and his world. And since cinema is the combination of the three, it undoubtedly portrays man and his life in society (Yadav 144). Cinema, since its very beginning, has been a great medium of reflection on the socioeconomic and political changes in society. Films have an immense potential to project the images of a society in a way that conventional mediums never could. The Indian film industry is one of the largest film industries in the world exploring the images of Indian society through cinema (Yadav 141). Films have always been a mirror reflecting the actual image of our society. Cinema too is a

form of mass media that is inspired and influenced by society and quite beautifully and effectively portrays the moments of life.

Nollywood and the Struggle in the Niger Delta

Research unveils the existence of an avalanche of other critical studies that have been conducted on the Niger Delta. This is particularly true as it regards the role of film in fostering socio-political changes in society. Hence, it is necessary to review studies that have formed the fulcrum of relevant literature for the study. Fyनेface's "The Emergence of Niger Delta Agitation Films in Nollywood: A Critical Analysis of Selected Works" traces the emergence and development of the Niger Delta sub-genre films to the viewers' desire to discontinue the viewing of the usual ritual films that have become boring. Defining the concept of Niger Delta sub-genre films, Fyनेface claims that:

As a sub-genre, the Niger Delta agitation films lucidly paint a gory scenario of the lifestyle and the ecological inconveniences and devastation meted to the rich oil-rich areas of the region by the government that is backed by some elite and community heads representing the people. The films vividly portray the root causes of youth restiveness in the region. Again, the Niger Delta agitation films as a sub-genre bring to its audience the various difficulties encountered by indigenes of the Niger Delta states. (428-429)

Fyनेface proceeds to highlight several other characteristics of the identified sub-genre of Nollywood films. The study reveals that oil politics, which found its tributaries into the soil of the region in the late 1950s, was initially alien in the course of the then kings and leaders' interest in palm kernel and oil. It was after the discovery of crude in 1956 that the Niger Delta began to suffer untold hardship, first from the colonial masters and thereafter from the rulers in Nigeria. The study identifies the generic development of Nollywood, starting from the ritual genre to the emergence of new sub-genres, among other areas of interest.

Adjeketa's "The Niger Delta Crisis: Portrayal of Causes of Restiveness in Nigerian Home Video Films", undertakes a critical analysis of home videos that have been produced by filmmakers "to highlight the plight of the people of the Niger Delta as a result of oil spill, leading to militant response by the youth, having achieved little peacefully" (159) of which she states, "*Black November* is one of such films" (159). Adjeketa thus establishes the role that the film medium plays in society. He argues that like every other art form, it functions as a mirror of the society, exposing the good, bad, and ugly happenings in different strata and regions of a given country (159). Adjeketa asserts that "the failure on the part of the government to implement policies that will better the lots of youths of the region" (159) is chiefly responsible for the situation. In this connection, he acknowledges the role of home videos like *Black November* and posits that "careful analysis of the film reveals that the Niger Delta youth are agitating for freedom, from bad governance, diseases and death caused by pollution from oil spills and neglect by successive governments both at the centre and region" (Adjeketa 159). Therefore, there is a need to adopt the approach of Ebiere, which Adjeketa

describes as, “a constructed approach of dialogue and good conscience to express and communicate their grievances to the government” (159).

Anyanwu’s “*Black November: Interrogating the Niger Delta Question*” interrogates Jeta Amata’s *Black November* on the vexed issues of the Niger Delta in Nigeria. The issues border on the quest for emancipation from injustice, environmental degradation, deprivation, inhuman treatment, negligence, are at the nexus of the agitations and militancy in the region (151). But the article draws “inferences from what the movie overlooked and what it portrayed such as the failure of dialogue births violence” (151). He highlights the problems in the Niger Delta and give credence to the thematic concerns raised by the director and draws on the ethos of the Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT), which sees violence as a product of frustration borne out of depriving people of their rights, denial of justice; a sense of oppression sets in that then leads to reactions that may be violent (158). Anyanwu submits that “the Niger Delta region is much misunderstood, abused and betrayed by its own people, the media, Nigerian government, oil multinationals and the world at large” (151). The misunderstanding is largely a product of media misinformation and ignorance on the part of stakeholders and that the filmmaker succeeded in getting his message across (Anyanwu 168).

Ebekue and Nwoye in “Nollywood Interventions in Niger Delta Oil Conflicts: A Study of Jeta Amata’s *Black November*” critically X-ray Nollywood’s contribution to the peace effort in the Niger Delta with special attention to Jeta Amata’s *Black November*. The paper establishes the background upon which the research is undertaken, and the writers refer to the discovery of oil in Oloibiri in 1956, which they categorically state has brought myriads of problems to the region (Ebekue and Nwoye 104). It is a fact that there has been a lingering crisis in the region which has led to loss of lives and properties. There have been countless efforts to find a permanent solution to the conflict. However, there seems to be a renewed agitation and restiveness resulting from the stoppage of the amnesty program that was instituted by the late President Yar Adua’s federal government (Ebekue and Nwoye 104). They discuss film as an artistic intervention in the context of conflict management stating that:

Film as an artistic intervention especially in the context of conflict management has its effectiveness hinged on its communication potential. Film is a medium of communication and as well an art. Nigerian film industry therefore can through the use of film contribute to the development of African culture. (Ebekue and Nwoye 110)

According to their analysis, Jeta Amata, through *Black November*, “contributes to the numerous attempts at restoring peace in the area and bringing to fore the evolution of the crisis from a popular perspective” (Ebekue and Nwoye 113). The point is that the government’s handling of the Niger Delta oil crisis has been poor and appears to lack sincerity. Added to this, are the nefarious roles played by the international oil firms that play dubious politics in their corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities in oil producing communities. This, perhaps, underscores Omoera’s argument when he posited that Kunle Afolayan, and Jeta Amata, through *October 1* and *Black November* respectively unfurl different layers of human rights issues, including child abuse, women abuse, environmental pollution and degradation, widespread poverty,

community abuse, political thievery and corruption, etc., which have negatively impacted on Nigeria's struggle for development (Omoera 237).

Ayakoroma in "Contextualising Change in Nigeria's Leadership Question through the Film Medium: A Critical Reading of Jeta Amata's *Black November*" examines a volatile community in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria ravaged by crude oil exploration and exploitation activities of a multi-national oil company. The people fight against the evil machinations of corrupt government and oil company officials that collude to impoverish them (Ayakoroma 1). Ayakoroma's submission is that "only transparency in the policy actions of leaders, at federal, state, local government and community levels of governance, will mitigate incessant youth restiveness in oil-producing communities" (Ayakoroma 15). He argues that "the film medium remains a viable option in managing change in Nigeria's search for credible political leadership" (15).

The Marxist Film Theory and its Application

This study is undergirded by the ethos of Marxist Film Theory (MFT). MFT is a film theorization that uses the philosophy of Karl Marx to analyse film. It looks at the role of film in the context of the larger socio-economic structure and examines how films can reflect and influence social change. Marxist film theorists focus on the power dynamics between the dominant classes and the subordinate classes, as well as the ideological messages that films may contain. Marxist film theorists use Marxist ideas to analyse films in terms of their class-based content, their representation of social and economic power, and their potential to influence social and political change (Carter par.1). In other words, Marxist Film Theory (MFT) is a theoretical approach that emphasizes the ways in which films reflect and perpetuate class inequalities. It suggests that films are produced within a capitalist system that values profit over artistic expression and that the content of films is often shaped by the interests of the ruling class. It also stresses the ways in which films can be used to promote social change and challenge dominant power structures. Examples of Marxist filmmakers include Ken Loach, Michael Moore, and Oliver Stone (*Studocu* par.5).

MFT is one of the oldest forms of film theory. Sergei Eisenstein and many other Soviet filmmakers in the 1920s expressed ideas of Marxism through film. While this approach to Marxism and filmmaking was used, the loud complaint that the Russian filmmakers had was with the narrative structure of Hollywood filmmaking, which reflected an individualistic and capitalist perspective where a single individual had every other thing centred on him/her. Eisenstein's solution was to shun narrative structure by eliminating the individual protagonist and tell stories where the action is moved by the group and the story is told through a clash of one image against the next (whether in composition, motion, or idea) so that the audience is never lulled into believing that they are watching something that has not been worked over. This could be considered a socialist manner of film narration (Edwards 9).

The researchers find the MFT very suitable for this study. The films under review all seem to deploy the philosophy of Karl Marx in dealing with their situation—the proletariat of the Niger Delta fighting the bourgeoisie for justice and fair play. The

films are purposely produced to serve the role of film in the context of the larger socioeconomic structure of the Niger Delta and they are deployed to reflect and influence social change in the region. In the films under investigation, we can relate to the power dynamics between the dominant classes of the Niger Delta and the subordinate classes, as well as the diverging ideological positioning of the two classes that constitute the matrixes for continuous agitations. Consequently, this study recognizes in the films the representation of social and economic power, and their potential to influence social and political change.

Impact Assessment of Nollywood's Film Interventions in the Niger Delta

For decades, there have been lingering agitations with attendant crises resulting in loss of lives and properties and monumental destruction of the ecosystem in the Niger Delta region. Put in another way, the subject of the Niger Delta, which comprises the quagmire of the discovery of oil in the region, the attendant consequence of environmental degradation, the political drama surrounding it, the outcries of foul play and social injustices and the resultant agitations from the people and the lingering crises in the region; is one of the most long-time national issues in Nigeria. There have been several interventions, including from Nollywood, and countless efforts at finding a permanent solution to the conflict. Well-meaning Nollywood filmmakers, some from the region, have churned out films telling the story of the people for the most part. Notably among Nollywood's film interventions in the Niger Delta are films such as David Attwood's *Blood and Oil* (2010), Jeta Amata's *Black November* (2012), Curtis Graham's *Oloibiri* (2015). Others include Ikenna Aniekwe's *Liquid Black Gold I & II* (2008) and *Amnesty I & II* (2009), Charles Inojie's *Genesis I & II* (2010), Ugezu J. Ugezu's *King of Crude I & II* (2011).

This paper, therefore, undertakes an assessment of the progress and development in actionable measures taken, primarily by both the government and oil companies, in curbing environmental degradation and injustices, thereby bringing the citizens' agitations to rest; if at all, with the film interventions of Nollywood through the aforementioned film works. To gather data to that effect, the researchers employed document observation, media analysis and focused group discussion (FGD) instruments. The use of documents and visual tools in research entails the use of documents and other visual media to extract relevant data that is suitable for a particular research endeavour. Mason affirms that the analysis of documentary sources is a major method of social research and one which many qualitative researchers see as meaningful and appropriate in the context of their research strategy (Mason 103). She claims that there are many different ways of generating data through documents, including using the Internet, even as there are many different types of documents (Mason 103). These include books and other publications, newspapers and magazines, lecture notes, seminar papers, and websites, among others. Documents particularly analysed in this paper were newspapers and magazines both online and offline.

A focus group discussion (FGD) on the other hand, is a qualitative research method and data collection technique in which a selected group of people discusses a given topic or issue in-depth, facilitated by a professional, external moderator. This

method serves to solicit participants' attitudes and perceptions, knowledge and experiences, and practices, shared in the course of interaction with different people (Eeuwijk and Angehrn 1). Eeuwijk and Angehrn add that, "the technique is based upon the assumption that the group processes activated during an FGD help to identify and clarify shared knowledge among groups and communities, which would otherwise be difficult to obtain with a series of individual interviews" (1). For the sake of the challenge of rallying people with the knowledge of Niger Delta affairs physically, a WhatsApp group was created to drive the FGD; links were shared on relevant groups and communities from where participants were enlisted in the group. The group entitled "Focused Group Discussion on our Study" comprised a total of 24 members. However, only three (3) members responded to the discussion questions that were posed. The researchers conducted the discussion on the responses of the three (3) group members. The three members that responded were Hameed Olutoba Lawal of the Department of Dramatic Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife; Dr. Henry Obi Ajumeze, Lecturer, Theatre Studies at University of Manchester/United Kingdom; and Timchang Miri, a University of Jos/National Film Institute Jos' Film Culture and Archival Studies Master's student. The questions posed to guide the discussion include the following:

- i. In your opinion, how have the Nollywood films on the Niger Delta depicted and reflected the issue of environmental degradation, injustice and abuse of human rights, and the attendant agitations?
- ii. Since Nollywood's interventions in the Niger Delta with films such as *Blood and Oil* (2010), *Black November* (2012) and *Oloibiri* (2015), etc.; what is your assessment of the progress and development in actionable measures taken, primarily by both the government and oil companies, in curbing environmental degradation and injustices in the region, thereby bringing the citizens' agitations to rest, which you would admit the Nollywood films on the Niger Delta inspired or contributed to?
- iii. What, in your opinion, is the level of changes attained, if at all, obviously inspired by the interventions of Nollywood with films on the Niger Delta? Is there still much more that needs to be done, to lay to rest the issues of climate change and agitations in Nigeria's Niger Delta that Nollywood can still contribute to making it happen through carefully crafted stories? If yes, what more do you suggest should be done?

In responding to discussion question one, Lawal acknowledged that "the films in focus vividly captured the environmental degradation and agitations in Niger Delta region of Nigeria to sensitize national and international communities." Timchang corroborated Lawal's position stating that the films on the Niger Delta are "very emotive films with high concentrations of screen and psychoanalytic theories used to drive the true stories of the Niger Delta people and the neglect of their fundamental rights to live." Henry, on the other hand, during the discussion had major observations to make, which are equally captured in the study. However, his contribution is suggestive of the fact that he alludes to the claims of Lawal and Timchang. It is thus

clear that, the films on the Niger Delta to a large extent have significantly captured the realities of the region.

Making their contributions to the second question, Lawal answered in the affirmative that “there have been rehabilitative and palliative measures by the oil companies and the federal government for the degraded environment and the pauperized peasants. But these efforts are being sabotaged by the political elites, community leaders and youth.” Timchang answered in the same light as Lawal and stated that there have been interventions, making reference to statements made by the federal government, particularly the announcement of the award of contract for the cleaning of Ogoniland by the President Muhammadu Buhari administration. Another government programme Timchang referenced is the Amnesty programme and the creation of the Niger Delta Commission. Moreover, the establishment of a university/polytechnic to focus on oil, refining, petroleum engineering, etc., are all developments Timchang spotlighted. By the same token, Timchang confessed “but all of these have not reflected in significant progress and development of the people and the environment. This may be due to corruption and other factors.” The researchers agree with Timchang totally. He confirmed Lawal’s submission. He cited an example of the impact of Nollywood’s film interventions in the Niger Delta affairs with Jeta Amata’s *Black November*. The film premiered in the United States of America with the then president Barack Obama physically seated with oil multi-nationals. This Timchang stated is a direct achievement in creating awareness to the world and the headquarters of the oil companies operating in the Niger Delta region.

Admittedly, Timchang stated the screening of these films (films on the Niger Delta) created more awareness to people who are not from the area or who may have never lived there. The question would be, how does that impact the region? We believe even communicating the plight of the people, for global awareness, is an effort; for it is awareness that generates pressure from different groups that spur parties responsible to reasonable and definite measures to address issues. For instance, in the reference Timchang made to *Black November*, there is more than he stated. It is reported that *Black November* has had significant impact—Amata and associate producer Lorenzo Omo-Aligbe were invited to the White House regarding the film; Congressman Bobby Rush and his Republican colleague Jeff Fortenberry were so affected by the film that they sponsored a joint resolution aimed at pressurizing the Nigerian government and Western oil companies to clean up spills in the Niger Delta (Kogbara and Otas par.1; Sesay par.1). Ajumeze on the other hand, contended that:

The framing of the discussion questions, especially questions two and three appear to suggest that changes in the region are traceable to the filmic interventions only. In other words, these questions ignore the other variables in the politics of the region, and draws an insular conclusion to the perceived transformations that have occurred in the Niger delta. Without undermining the impact of literature and arts in human politics, this assumption may require some further unpacking and problematising. How do you measure the effect—even affect—of art in politics, is the question here.

For Ajumeze, there was a significant shift in disciplinary focus from discussion question one – which is cultural and artistic – to questions two and three – that he

considered outside the frame of the film/art. To this contention from Ajumeze, the researchers explained the crux of their study “we are actually looking at the effect of art on what happens around us and the intervention of artists. Remember, every society gives birth to its own art. The Artist is a product of the society in which s/he lives....” At any rate, Ajumeze appeared not to have fully comprehend the discussion questions though his contention was valid. The questions the researchers posed did not suggest that changes in the region are traceable to the film interventions only. We acknowledge that there are other variables in the politics of the region, and the perceived transformations that have occurred in the Niger Delta are not solely a result of Nollywood film interventions. Nevertheless, with Ajumeze’s suggestion, the FGD questions were improved upon, as they appeared above, to communicate effectively the problem and objectives of the study. Thus, the researchers affirm the impact of literature and the arts in human politics. Against the backdrop of Ajumeze’s question of “how do you measure the effect – even affect – of art in politics, is the question here” that we wish to state that there are ways to measure using different parameters.

In response to the third question, Lawal stated that the film interventions from Nollywood have stimulated and led to the empowerment of restless youth and the provision of infrastructural facilities that include roads, hospitals and schools. Lawal admitted, “however, much still needs to be done in orientation on climate change and proactive measures to checkmate its menace on land and water resources.” Perhaps, what Lawal failed to state is the definite measures that should be taken by Nollywood filmmakers to achieve what he suggested. Timchang, on the other hand, submitted he didn’t have any evidence to show the level of changes that may have taken place in the Niger Delta with film interventions from Nollywood. Nevertheless, Timchang suggested what more should be done by filmmakers is “to make investigative films on the government’s handling of the problems – corruption, bureaucracy, sabotage, etc. The researchers unravelled that filmmakers are coming to terms with the reality that more is required over the matters of the Niger Delta. It is worthy to note that while this study was going on, a new film on Niger Delta environmental degradation was released in May 2023 in Abuja. The film, *Akpama*. *Akpama*, is produced by Shan George. It is a feisty docudrama that projects the environmental degradation of the Niger Delta. The film is an adaptation of the novel, *Presumed Guilty*, by Anegebe Anthony Asemokhai. It tells the story of a young man, Akpama who takes laws into his own hands in an effort to protect his people from certain spearheads and their activities in the society. The film is an exposure of the crisis and the health hazards that the Niger Delta people are passing through (Oshoko par.2).

The release of *Akpama* attests to this study’s earlier presumption of the necessity for Nollywood to churn out more films on the Niger Delta affairs as events must have assumed new dimensions and new dynamics have arisen in the course of time. This is necessary because, if filmmakers fail to persist with their interventions in speaking up on the issues through rationally crafted stories with powerful and dynamic characters, the issues would not be properly addressed and laid to rest. Thus, the Niger Delta ecosystem will continue to be degraded. This ultimately will affect the inhabitants and likely result in recurrent agitations. The researchers also realised that

in as much as the review of documents and discussions undertaken have pointed to the state of the Niger Delta ecosystem after Nollywood's film interventions; observation, even participant observation and personal interview instruments will be more effective in gathering and generating more accurate data on the subject. The researchers, in this case would have to travel to the Niger Delta and visit the respective areas that have been environmentally degraded by oil exploration. The researchers would have to interact with different authorities, ranging from the government to the oil companies to the host communities and even the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the region. This way, a more robust, all-inclusive, and realistic data would be gathered regarding this subject. This constitutes the limitation of this study.

Conclusion

This paper has undertaken an assessment of the progress and development in actionable measures taken, primarily by both the government and oil companies, in curbing environmental degradation and injustices in the Niger Delta, thereby bringing the citizens' agitations to rest; since Nollywood's film interventions with great films like *Blood and Oil* (2010), *Black November* (2012), *Oloibiri* (2015), among others. It interrogated the level of changes attained, with the interventions from Nigeria's film industry with particular reference to the known films on the Niger Delta. The paper adopted the qualitative research approach and explored the use of document observation, media analysis and focused group discussion instruments anchored in the Marxist Film Theory. Although there have been significant changes that can be attributed to the interventions of Nollywood films, more needs to be done by filmmakers, to lay to rest the issues of climate change and agitations in Nigeria's Niger Delta.

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**TEACHING CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH CREATIVE DRAMA: THE
LADY VICTORIA ACADEMY SECONDARY SCHOOL, MAKURDI
EXPERIENCE**

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Abstract

This paper advocates for the adoption of creative drama in teaching climate change in post-primary schools in Nigeria. This is predicated on the fact that beyond natural climate change, human activities have adversely affected the earth, thereby causing anthropogenic climate change. It is imperative to bequeath the knowledge of climate change to students of post-primary school level of education in a graphic manner that is capable of propelling them to lead the campaign against anthropogenic climate change and take steps that will halt it. The article is anchored in Cognitivism Theory (CT). Using the qualitative method of research, the researchers identified the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas) to make electricity and power vehicles, clearing forests for farms and cities, and cultivating of livestock, among others, as some of the human activities that release “greenhouse gases” such as carbon dioxide, methane, halocarbons, and nitrous oxide into the atmosphere; which, depending on the intensity, cause climate change. Through a creative drama titled, “Earth to Someone,” the researchers engaged and taught students of Lady Victoria Academy Secondary School, Makurdi (LVASSM), on the subject of climate change, especially as it concerns the role of humanity in causing or averting climate change issues. From the creative drama experience with students of LVASSM, the paper submits that students’ understanding of climate change and its impact on the earth is better enhanced if they participate in the learning process. The students affirmed that they understand the subject better with creative drama than when they were taught theoretically in class. The conclusion reached is that the adoption of creative drama in teaching climate change is very suitable because of its participatory approach which enhances a natural and graphic approach to learning. It is recommended, therefore, that teachers of geography, basic and agricultural sciences, among others, should synergize with theatre

artists to practicalize the teaching of climate change for effective teaching and learning and attitudinal change of students towards the environment.

Keywords: Climate change, Creative drama, CT, LVASSM, Teaching and learning.

Introduction

Climate change has increasingly become prominent in international public debates and political agendas of many countries in the last few decades. This is due to the threat it poses to human existence on earth arising from the depletion of the ozone layer which has occasioned global warming. No one can shy away from discussing it. Riedy asserts that “climate is the average of the weather conditions at a particular point on the earth. Typically, the climate is expressed in terms of expected temperature, rainfall, and wind conditions based on historical observations. Climate change is a change in either the average climate or climate variability that persists over an extended period” (1). This means that the climate will incessantly change either positively or negatively due to the activities that go on in the earth such as changes in the earth’s orbit, the energy output of the sun, volcanic activity, the geographic distribution of the earth’s land masses and other internal or external processes that influence climate. As a result, natural climate change occurs which is why we have cold and hot periods/temperatures globally.

This alone would not have attracted too much attention. However, scientific experiments and observations indicate that the earth’s climate is now changing due to human activities. Riedy contends that it is termed “anthropogenic climate change.” The processes involved are complex but can be summarised as follows: human activities, such as burning fossil fuels (coal, oil and natural gas) to make electricity and power vehicles, clearing forests for farms and cities, and cultivating livestock, release “greenhouse gases” into the atmosphere. The main greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide, methane, halocarbons, and nitrous oxide. These gases accumulate in the atmosphere and allow radiation from the sun to pass through but trap some of the heat radiating back from the Earth. This is called the “greenhouse effect” because the principle is similar to a greenhouse, where the glass roof allows sunlight (1-2).

The greenhouse effect over time results in ‘global warming’ – an increase in the earth’s average temperature. It must be noted that global warming is one type of climate change but it drives other changes in the climate, such as changes in rainfall patterns and the frequency and distribution of weather events such as droughts, storms, floods, and heat waves as experienced by many parts of the world today including Nigeria. This is why the discourse on climate change has taken centre stage globally since no country is left out (Omoera and Guanah 1). Considering that most of the activities responsible for climate change today are carried out by human beings either deliberately or ignorantly, it has become pertinent to engage and teach students on this subject more seriously to develop a generation of people who would be more conscious of the environment and do everything humanly possible to protect and preserve it rather than cause damage to it. It is because of this that this article considers creative drama as a suitable tool for teaching climate change among post-primary school students. Undoubtedly, students at this middle level of education are capable of taking actions

that are harmful to the environment thereby causing climate change. Besides, it is imperative for them to understand the natural changes that take place on the earth to function better as individuals. As such, this engagement will create the desired knowledge and consciousness needed for a safer climate.

Creative drama is a classroom teaching technique used to assist the learner in learning through play. This is predicated on the conviction that for children and youths, learning takes place more easily and has a lasting effect if it is informalized which is what creative drama does. The American Association of Theatre for Youth defines creative drama as “an improvisational, non-exhibitional, process-centred form of drama in which a leader guides participants to imagine, enact and reflect upon human experience” (Davis and Behm 10-11) It is improvisational because scripts are not involved but a product of imagination and creativity. It is non-exhibitional because it is not meant for public show or a paid audience as such but for classroom purposes and it is process-centred because there are procedures that are followed to achieve its aim generating active participation from the learners. This explains why McCaslin, in her book, *Creative Drama in the Classroom and Beyond*, acknowledges that:

The activities involved in creative drama are always improvised, the players create the dialogue, and what is created is not intended for an audience. Participants are guided by a skilled leader rather than by a theatre director. Conversely, the term Children’s Theatre is used to describe formal productions where the entertainment of an audience is the focus. There is usually memorized dialogue and a stage director directs the production. The production can be acted and produced by adults or children, or by amateurs or professional actors. (8-9)

This technique unquestionably creates a more favourable environment and apparatus for learning since every learner is allowed to imagine and explore with a view to contributing to the process of education and knowledge acquisition. The learner is not just a passive recipient of knowledge as provided by the traditional model of teaching and learning. Furthermore, the approach to learning makes an indelible mark on learners as they hardly forget what they were part of evolving. And, considering the sensitive nature of the topic of climate change, it is imperative to adopt a technique such as this to make the desired mark on students for a better result in the future.

Conceptual Clarification

Climate Change

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines climate change as a change that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods (1). This means that climate change is a shift in average weather conditions, including measures such as temperature, humidity, rainfall, cloudiness, and wind patterns – and changes in the frequency or severity of these conditions. The earth’s climate has recurrently changed throughout its history, in cycles that occur over very long periods. This is a natural process.

However, today we tend to use the phrase ‘climate change’ to refer to the very rapid changes in the climate that we have seen over the past 50 years or so.

The scientific evidence is clear that these changes are not being driven by long-term natural climate cycles. Instead, their main causes are global warming and human activities. This is evident in the increased emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases which trap the energy in the atmosphere, causing a ‘greenhouse effect.’ This greenhouse effect warms the earth triggering extreme weather patterns, compromised food security, and increased vector-related and climate-related diseases and deaths. Hughes, Kerry and Shaun claim that:

The atmosphere is a layer of gases around the earth. It protects the earth’s surface from the sun’s harmful rays and contains the oxygen we breathe. It is mostly nitrogen and oxygen, but it also contains smaller amounts of other gases, including those commonly referred to as ‘greenhouse gasses. Greenhouse gases include carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane, nitrous oxide, and also water vapour. (373)

Fischer and Knutti agree that a “majority of these gases come from burning fossil fuels for the production of energy, with deforestation, industrial processes, and agricultural processes as significant contributors” (12). According to the World Health Organization, the effects of climate change have made a significant impact on health. It is predicted that climate change will cause an additional 250,000 deaths annually between 2030 and 2050; “38,000 will be due to heat exposure in the elderly, 48,000 due to diarrhoea, 60,000 due to malaria, 95,000 due to childhood malnutrition and 9,000 due to others” (par.1). With the prediction of the World Health Organisation (WHO), one may ask what impacts of climate change are we already seeing and are pointing in that direction? Undoubtedly, climate change has profound implications for people and the ecosystem generally. Some of the impacts of climate change that are already prevalent as noted by Climate Assembly UK include:

Changes in extreme heat

Higher average temperatures mean heatwaves are now more frequent – and tend to be hotter when they occur. Some of the extreme heatwaves that we are now seeing would have been highly unlikely without the recent warming of the planet. The increased temperatures also make events such as the forest fires that have been happening recently in Australia more likely and more intense. Parts of the world, such as in the Mediterranean and Central and West Africa, are seeing more frequent and more extreme droughts due to climate change.

Increased rainfall

Warmer air holds more water, making heavier downpours more likely as temperatures have increased. This increased heavy rainfall can lead to increased flooding, damaging property and threatening lives. In the UK, there is evidence that some specific weather events, such as the heavy rainfall in the winter of 2014/15, have been made more likely by climate change (Climate Assembly UK 627-634). Similar impacts are occurring elsewhere in the world. The record amount of rain that fell on Houston during Hurricane Harvey in 2017 made it the second most costly hurricane to hit the USA

since 1900. Climate change has made a damaging downpour like that around three times more likely.

Changes in the availability of food and freshwater

Changing weather patterns have affected crop yields – the number of crops like wheat and maize that can be produced from an area of land. In some areas of the world climate change has helped yields go up, but overall yields have not risen as fast as they would without the effects of climate change. The availability of freshwater for drinking and agriculture in some places has also been affected, particularly downstream from melting glaciers, in areas like the European alps. Glaciers are an important source of drinking water for almost one-third of the global population.

Rising sea levels

Higher air temperatures are causing the increased melting of huge ‘ice sheets’ on land in Antarctica and Greenland, which run off into the oceans. The warming planet is also causing an expansion of seawater, increasing its volume - similar to how the liquid inside a thermometer expands when it is heated. Both of these factors are driving an increase in global sea levels. The global sea level has risen by around 20 cm since the start of the 20th century. This has caused storm surges – the rise in sea level that occurs during intense storms – more likely to exceed existing sea defences and cause flooding. As many densely-packed cities are in low-lying coastal regions around the world, this hazard can affect large numbers of people. This is particularly true in developing countries such as Bangladesh, but cities like Venice and Miami are also low-lying and will be affected too. In the UK, rising sea levels have contributed to recent decisions to abandon areas of coastline, such as the village of Fairbourne on the Wales coast.

Loss of biodiversity and nature

In the ocean, the increase in water temperature is putting pressure on ocean life. The Great Barrier Reef, where the coral population is in shallow water, has recently declined by up to 50%.¹ The ocean heat that caused large damage to the Great Barrier Reef in 2016 would have been highly unlikely before the time of the industrial revolution around 200 years ago but is now likely to happen around 1 in every 3 years on average in today’s climate. Current ocean conditions haven’t existed in at least the last 65 million years. There is also evidence of climate change affecting nature on land, with many species of plants and animals shifting to new areas due to warming (Climate Assembly UK 1-2). This is why all hands must be on deck in contributing to a safer environment to avert further destruction of the earth by activities of human beings and the secondary school is a sure place to begin the campaign and sensitisation of climate change.

Creative Drama

Any discourse on creative drama must necessarily make us turn to Winifred Ward (29th October 1884 –16th August 1975), the American Professor of Drama at North-Western University who founded the creative drama (what she called creative dramatics). She

is referred to as the mother of creative drama having provided a systematic approach to learning through drama. Winifred Ward's work in the 1920s as supervisor of the creative drama curricula of Evanston public schools enabled her to use creative drama as a teaching method in elementary schools. She established the important relationship between story and creative drama. She believed that telling stories would inspire children to participate in classroom drama and assist them in comprehending the content. Her stimulation for creative drama was often the purpose of storytelling-sharing a story without a book (Ward 1952).

McCaslin avers that “at the foundation of drama is dramatic play. Dramatic play can be described as the “free play of very young children, in which they explore their universe, imitating the actions and character traits of those around them” (7). Creative drama is a classroom teaching technique employed by a teacher to assist the learner in imagining, enacting, and reflecting on human experiences with a learning view. It is an informal drama with no scripts and it is not created for an audience but for the learning experience of students in the classroom. It is an immediate experience for the child who supplies the thoughts, words, and actions. Ehrlich corroborates that when creative drama is used as a teaching tool:

It is both a cognitive and affective technique. It provides opportunities for auditory, visual motor and verbal activities. Problem-solving (inductive and deductive thinking) is encouraged. Stress is put on classifying, fact sorting, sequential conceptualization, spatial concepts and most important decision-making (problem-solving). Creative dramatics techniques reinforce teaching and learning in language arts, social studies, science and math. (75)

The core idea behind the utilization of creative drama in the classroom is the desire to continue to foster the development of creativity and the imaginative potential of students to make them active participants in the educational process. No doubt, in contemporary times, creativity and imagination are essential skills, not only for the artist but for people in all walks of life. Though the educational system often recognizes the value and importance of these skills, their development does not often translate into classroom practice, especially when elementary teachers are overburdened with work and under pressure to meet state and federal mandates in other curricular areas. In addition to the development of creativity and imagination, the art form of creative drama creates a mirror with which to critically examine society and the human experience and provides an opportunity for students to deepen their understanding of humanity and cultures, both past and present.

Teaching and Learning

Teaching is a conscious and deliberate activity that takes place between a teacher and a learner. According to *Christensen*, “it can be defined as engagement with learners to enable their understanding and application of knowledge, concepts and processes. It includes design, content selection, delivery, assessment and reflection” (2). To teach is to engage students in learning; Thus, teaching consists of getting students involved in the active construction of knowledge. A teacher requires not only knowledge of subject matter, but knowledge of how students learn and how to transform them into active

learners. Good teaching, then, requires a commitment to a systematic understanding of learning. The aim of teaching is not only to transmit information but also to transform students from passive recipients of other people's knowledge into active constructors of their own and others' knowledge. The teacher cannot transform without the student's active participation. Teaching is fundamentally about creating the pedagogical, social, and ethical conditions under which students agree to take charge of their own learning, individually and collectively.

On the other hand, learning is an activity or process of gaining knowledge or skill by studying, practising, being taught, or experiencing something. It is the art of acquiring and retaining knowledge, skills, values and norms of a society for the purpose of reproducing same for human and societal development. Basically, learning is about what students do, not about what teachers do. *What societies envisage as important teaching and learning constitutes the 'intended' curriculum. Since it is usually presented in official documents, it may be also called the 'written' and/or 'official' curriculum. However, at the classroom level this intended curriculum may be altered through a range of complex classroom interactions, and what is actually delivered can be considered the 'implemented' curriculum.*

What learners really learn (i.e., what can be assessed and can be demonstrated as learning outcomes/learner competencies) constitutes the 'achieved' or 'learned' curriculum. In addition, curriculum theory points to a 'hidden' curriculum (i.e., the unintended development of personal values and beliefs of learners, teachers and communities; the unexpected impact of a curriculum; unforeseen aspects of a learning process). Those who develop the intended curriculum should have all these different dimensions of the curriculum in view. While the 'written' curriculum does not exhaust the meaning of curriculum, it is important because it represents the vision of society. The 'written' curriculum should therefore be expressed in comprehensive and user-friendly documents, such as curriculum frameworks; subject curricula/syllabuses, and in relevant and helpful learning materials, such as textbooks; teacher guides; assessment guides. In some cases, people see the curriculum entirely in terms of the subjects that are taught, and as set out within the set of textbooks, and forget the wider goals of competencies and personal development. This is why a curriculum framework is important. It sets the subjects within this wider context and shows how learning experiences within the subjects need to contribute to the attainment of the wider goals. Teaching and learning, therefore, are inevitable in the educational sector.

Theoretical Infrastructure

This article is anchored in the Cognitivism Theory (CT). Firstly, cognition refers to the human processes of understanding. It is grounded in the work of Jean Piaget, who developed a theory of cognitive development throughout the lifespan of an individual. According to Huitt and Hummel: this theory involves four stages of cognitive development including sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, formal operations. The sensorimotor stage lasts from birth to two years of age. Infants and toddlers acquire knowledge through motor skills and the five senses. The preoperational stage lasts from two to seven years. Children learn to make connections

based on symbols by playing pretend, connecting letters to sounds and eventually to words. The concrete operational stage lasts from seven to eleven years. This is when children and preadolescents develop logic. The formal operational stage begins around age twelve and lasts through adulthood. This involves the ability to understand and talk about abstract ideas, and students develop critical thinking skills. The role of teachers is to tailor the curriculum to students' stages and spot and address cognitive deficiencies (Huitt and Hummel 17). In cognitivism theory, learning occurs when the student reorganizes information, either by finding new explanations or adapting old ones. This is viewed as a change in knowledge and is stored in the memory rather than just being viewed as a change in behaviour. This research finds this theory suitable because it promotes learning by participation which is what the creative drama approach emphasizes. As such, it is capable of positively driving the research.

The Storyline of 'Earth to Someone': An Improvised Drama at LVASSM

Lady Victoria Academy Secondary School, Makurdi (LVASSM) is a private co-educational post-primary school located opposite the College of Health Sciences, Benue State University, Logo II, Akpehe, Makurdi, Benue State. In an interview with the principal, Mr. Emmanuel Amashegh, "the school has a huge population of over a thousand students and a staff strength of sixty-eight teachers." The environment is serene and conducive for learning. It has been in existence for over fifteen years and it is affordable, hence, the high population. The choice of this school for this research is predicated on the long-time relationship between the school and the Department of Theatre Arts at Benue State University where the researchers have been involved with theatre-in-education practical with students of the school. The cooperation of the school in this regard has been outstandingly exceptional, hence, the decision of the researchers to carry out this research in the school.

'Earth to Someone' is a short-improvised drama staged at LVASSM before the students and staff on the effects of climate change. The play revolves around the family of Mr. and Mrs. John Tuta who have three children – Terfa, Terdoo and Msendoo. The entire family is living in one room since Mr. John is an artisan and on a low income. Terfa and Terdoo are in secondary school and Msendoo is in primary school. The entire family complains of the heat which makes sleeping difficult. Mr. Tuta complains emphatically that the kind of heat being experienced this time is different as it leaves one with no option but to look for a way to fan one's self. Unfortunately, due to the heavy rainfalls which have equally become consistent, electricity has been equally stalled. As such, Mr. Tuta gets a generator to provide electricity to power his fan and at least produce air for them to overcome the heat. Due to the nature of the house and for security reasons, the generator is not placed far from the room and the smoke produced by it finds its way into the room, choking the entire family to go unconscious in sleep; but for a neighbour who comes knocking to remove the handset he had plugged in for charging, the entire family would have perished. On noticing that there was no response from anybody and that there was smoke everywhere around the compound, forced the door open only they find the entire family unconscious. The drama ends with a facilitator who plays the role of a teacher and teaches about the

danger such smoke from generators causes to the atmosphere which eventually results in climate change where there is excess heat and torrential rainfalls causing floods and many other negative effects. By and large, what we give to the earth, goes to someone as the name of the drama portends. Below are excerpts of the drama in pictures.



Plate 1. Opening of Drama skit titled “Earth to Someone”
Source: Lady Victoria Academy Secondary School, Makurdi. SS I Class.
Date: 06-10-2023



Plate 2. A drama skit titled “Earth to Someone” shows the family of John Tuta
Source: Lady Victoria Academy Secondary School, Makurdi. SS I Class.
Date: 06-10-2023



**Plate 3. “Earth to Someone” shows the family of John Tuta and a neighbour viewing their new generator to power their fan and save them from heat.
Source: Lady Victoria Academy Secondary School, Makurdi. SS I Class.
Date: 06-10-2023**



**Plate 4. A drama skit titled “Earth to Someone” shows the family of John Tuta in an unconscious state due to a generator emission and their neighbour who came in at the time and raised the alarm for their rescue.
Source: Lady Victoria Academy Secondary School, Makurdi. SS I Class.
Date: 06-10-2023**

Thematic Preoccupation of the Play

The thematic preoccupation of the drama is the causes of climate change. In the drama, it is established that the climate has changed, hence, the excessive heat being experienced which has made it difficult for people to sleep, and the torrential rainfall which has caused floods and damage to electricity facilities thereby causing power outages. These are clear signs of climate change. However, what is unknown to the people is the fact that some of their activities are responsible for climate change. As presented in the drama, the use of generators and other locomotive automobiles release a lot of gases into the atmosphere that trap the energy in the atmosphere causing ‘greenhouse effects.’ The greenhouse effect warms the earth causing extreme weather patterns, thereby making climate change adversely. These activities of human beings against the earth have a regression effect on humanity as it suffers the consequences in the long run as seen in the drama – the heat, power outage, and the unconsciousness caused by the smoke produced by the generator.

The drama preoccupies itself with teaching students why the climate is experiencing change and the human activities responsible for the change using the scenario of the smoke released by the generator into the atmosphere and what it does to the earth and humanity. The drama concluded by reiterating that bush burning and burning fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas) to make electricity and power vehicles, clearing forests for farms and cities, and rearing livestock, among others, are some of the human activities that release ‘greenhouse gases’ such as carbon dioxide, methane, halocarbons, and nitrous oxide into the atmosphere and depending on the intensity of these gases on the earth to cause climate change. With this practical knowledge, it is expected that the students will be more informed and conscious of their activities which can make or mar the earth. Below are excerpts of the thematic discourse and analysis in pictures.



Plate 5. The researcher analysing the thematic thrust of the drama “Earth to Someone” with the students. Source: Lady Victoria Academy Secondary School, Makurdi. SS I Class. Date: 06-10-2023



Plate 6. The researcher and one of the dramatists analysing the thematic thrust of the drama “Earth to Someone” with the students. Source: Lady Victoria Academy Secondary School, Makurdi. SS I Class. Date: 06-10-2023



Plate 7. One of the dramatists contributing to the thematic analysis of the drama “Earth to Someone” Source: Lady Victoria Academy Secondary School, Makurdi. SS I Class. Date: 06-10-2023



Plate 8. The Principal of Lady Victoria Academy Secondary School, Makurdi and his staff during the drama presentation. Source: Lady Victoria Academy Secondary School Makurdi. SS I Class. Date: 06-10-2023

Creative Drama as a Panacea for Effective Teaching and Learning of Climate Change

Generally, the theatre as a didactic resource in the educational field has great pedagogical value. Relatively recently in Nigeria, various experiences have taken place in educational classrooms where the theatre is used as a teaching and learning tool, highlighting its usefulness in promoting the teaching-learning processes (Omoera 206). Based on the experiences of this research and several other theatre-in-education (T-I-E) programmes in the Makurdi metropolis and elsewhere, we can affirm that the benefits of the drama and theatre resources at the educational level have positive implications for the development of competencies and skills, as well as for the teaching-learning processes.

Creative drama as a teaching resource is not limited to teaching only drama and theatre classes to students, but goes beyond. It tries to involve students to build a play from the detection of socio-environmental problems and propose solutions, thereby creating an interrelationship between theatre and education. Boer and Bittencourt affirm that an interrelation that occurs through play, improvisation, and scenic language, as natural forms of expression, favouring attitudes towards the problems of our world. Since ‘thinking about environmental education, linked to the theatre, is to emphasize the role of students in the perspective of understanding, apprehending and interacting with the environment in the most healthy and fraternal way possible (3162). Consequently, Moreno-Fernández posits that:

...To work on socio-environmental issues in the classroom it is necessary to use an appropriate methodology that incorporates active learning methods that promote the development of social skills. Strategies must be put in place that favour communicative competence, the development of critical thinking, and responsibility in decision-making. All this is from an interdisciplinary and action-oriented approach. Because without a doubt environmental education has as one of its fundamental aims to train critical, committed and action-oriented citizens. Theatre for environmental education consists of dramatization as a means of learning knowledge, procedures, attitudes and values related to the environment. A type of theatre with great potential at an educational level. Because theatre is a key element in raising environmental awareness. A theatre that is very focused on working so that the target audience knows about our world and the problems that affect it. (80)

It is on the strength of the above that this article posits that creative drama is a panacea for effective teaching and learning of climate change. More so, that it is related to basic issues closely linked to everyday life with a focus on raising awareness of the environment. From the creative drama, SS 3 students of Lady Victoria Academy Secondary School, Makurdi (LVASSM) chorused in the affirmative their understanding of the discourse on climate change better than when they were taught in class as a topic in Geography. When probed further, they asserted that the practical demonstration of the topic made it more memorable as they now understood what is causing climate change and in fact what climate itself entails. This approach is largely successful because of the dynamization of the classes, the imagination, the interaction between the students, the socialization brought about by the teaching approach, and the promotion of teamwork.

Also, it shows that working on socio-environmental problems requires bringing emotional education/intelligence to the fore. This is, perhaps, why Mayer posits that “behaviour is guided much more by our emotions and values than by knowledge and, therefore, it is necessary not only to offer information but also to propose experiences that reconstruct the connection between man and the environment that we are trying to preserve” ((219). This kind of experience can effectively be provided through theatre and drama. In creative drama, we can explore the key issues around climate change using stimuli, stories, content, and form. It, therefore, has the power to engage students’ affective and cognitive domains in learning. No doubt, the creative drama applied here could be used to provide effective teaching and learning on environmental issues to create the desired consciousness for positive change.

Conclusion

The paper submits that it has never been so compelling for humanity to develop lifestyles and behaviours that are sustainable for the future of planet earth, and develop students’ thinking concerning ‘human’ sustainability – peace and human security – to develop environmental sustainability such as now considering the gravity of climate change. Sustainability through creative drama emphasizes ways to directly involve students in understanding their connections with their environment and their interconnectedness in the world. Engaging students and educators with contemporary thought and practice is important to develop an understanding and awareness of the

environment and its sustainability. Creative drama allows participants to be imaginative and creative through the exploration of issues. It therefore demonstrates how to maintain an optimistic view that adopting sustainable practices in the environment is possible and students can be agents of changing the narrative.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made. School managers should ensure that teachers train and retrain in drama and practical approaches to teaching. This is a sure way through which they can break new grounds on topics such as climate change. Theatre-in-education practitioners should rethink the Coventry Belgrade theatre experience and initiate collaboration with schools to assist teachers on how they can teach their subjects through creative pedagogies. The management of schools should devise an independent way of assessing the effectiveness of teaching and learning in their schools to fill in gaps that are standing in the way of the creative process.

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THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT, INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT AND FOOD CRISIS IN BENUE STATE: THE UKPIAM IDP CAMP EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

In recent years, population displacement has been topical in discourses across disciplines. This worrisome trend that has affected livelihoods and peaceful co-existence in the country is caused mainly by armed farmers/herders' conflicts and banditry, among other factors. In Benue State, the farmers/herders' crisis has been the major cause of displacement which has sacked farmers from their sources of livelihood. Consequently, food shortage prevails in the state and the nation at large, given the fact that Benue State whose massive population is displaced, is considered the food basket of the nation. Through a qualitative research approach, this paper investigates other issues that are associated with this displacement. The paper found out that if nothing sustainable is done to checkmate this ugly trend, the entire country might be plunged into food crisis in the long run. It, therefore, recommends the theatre for development (TfD) approach as an enduring strategy towards resolving this hydra-headed problem. As evidenced in the Ukpiam TfD workshop under study, this people-centred form of theatre has been proven over the years in various experiments to trigger actionable solutions to community problems and jolt relevant government agencies and other policymakers to enact policies that offer lasting solutions to issues identified.

Keywords: Food crisis, Population displacement, TfD, Ukpiam IDP camp.

Introduction

Nigeria has continued to grapple with myriads of challenges that hamper its sustainable development pursuit. The issues range from social and political unrest to insurgency, ethnic and religious crises, which have had innumerable negative effects on the citizenry, leading to massive displacement, wanton destruction of lives and properties and food shortage. This ugly trend has become dominant, especially in the northern states of the country, which are known to be the major suppliers of food. The United Nations report of January 2023 sheds light on this, stating that:

Continued conflict, climate change, inflation and rising food prices are key drivers to this alarming trend. Food access has been affected by persistent violence... armed banditry [not excluding farmers- herders' crises] and kidnapping in states such as Katsina, Sokoto, Kaduna, Benue, and Niger. [*Addition ours*] (2)

This trend as cited above is not limited to the aforementioned states and its effects which include, but are not limited to displacement, have become graver and more inimical to Nigeria's development than one can imagine. Broadly speaking, the International Medical Corps (IMC) claims that internal displacement is caused by various incidences such as religious persecution, armed communal conflicts, natural disasters such as earthquakes and eruptions. However, the focus of this paper is displacement in Benue State that is caused by the farmers-herders' conflict.

Benue is one of the states in the north central region of Nigeria. It has twenty-three (23) local government areas. It lies within the lower River Benue trough in the middle belt region of the country. According to the 2006 Population Census, Benue has a population of 4,253,641 and occupies a landmass of 32,518 square kilometres. The Tiv are the dominant ethnic group, occupying fourteen (14) local government areas, while the Idoma and Igede occupy the remaining nine local government areas.

In Benue State particularly, indigenes who are predominantly farmers have witnessed climatic and weather shifts which are known to affect farm yield over the years and thus is also a point of concern. However, the horrendous insurgence of armed herdsmen in the state has sacked these farmers from their original homes. While their farms have become permanent grazing reserves for cows, internally displaced persons (IDP) camps scattered across the state have become permanent abodes for farmers. This is a bone of contention and needs urgent attention since the acclaimed food basket of the nation has been thrown into starvation itself and can no longer boast of catering for the nation's nutrition needs. This study, therefore, serves as a key contributor to salvage this worrisome drift as it espouses on the prospects of the theatre to substantiate previous efforts in this regard.

Internal Displacement in Benue State

The twenty-first century has been tough and challenging for Nigeria, especially the north central and Benue State to be precise. This is because the security of lives and properties has become a topical problem as the greater part of stories of people in these areas has in recent years been woven around violent conflicts orchestrated by conflicting interests of cultural, social and political groups. Heassly aptly captures this when he says that: "one of the most significant challenges facing the citizens of the world in the 21st century is how to live and work peacefully with others in all spheres of personal and public life" (83). Perhaps, this observation explains the plight of the Benue people who have been victims of armed attacks by herdsmen for over a decade and counting. The problem stems from the continuous clamour for arable land for farming and grazing.

Over the years, the depletion of arable land for subsistence farming largely as a result of increasing urbanization and the adverse effects of climate change, especially along the Lake Chad basin have caused increased struggle between farmers and herdsmen. While farmers clamour for land to cultivate crops, herdsmen seek pastures for grazing purposes. These clashes of interests, therefore, build up to confrontations that have become unhealthy to the peaceful coexistence of both groups. It is these confrontations, attacks and counterattacks that have been the causes of continued

unrests in states such as Benue, Nasarawa, and Plateau, among others. Since 2010, Benue State has become a war zone because of the activities of herders which usually result to violent clashes with farmers. The height of these violent conflicts was the attack on residents of Guma Local Government Area on New Year's Day in 2018 where over 70 farmers were murdered and tons of valuable properties destroyed. Since then, these attacks have continued unabated across the 23 local government areas in the state.

The attacks on Benue farmers oftentimes appear to be largely coordinated and spontaneous, mostly leaving immeasurable marks, particularly in local government areas such as Guma, Logo, Katsina-Ala, Makurdi, Agatu, Gwer West and Kwande. Ikpanor and Sambe observe that the attacks are: characterised by large-scale destruction of lives, farmlands, and properties, rape, abduction, and displacement of farmers, an operation clearly suggests a clearly orchestrated plan to evict the farmers from their ancestral homeland (48). One could not agree less with the fact that the incessant attacks on Benue farmers are consciously planned and sponsored. Victims of such coordinated attacks often are sacked from their original homes and forced to seek refuge in IDP camps that are scattered across the state. These camps continually increase as long as the Benue people continue being displaced by the activities of the herders.

Sadly, farmlands have been deserted for years since they have become danger zones and the expected results of this massive displacement of farmers is hunger and increased food crisis that have engulfed Benue State and Nigeria generally. The Benue population that was one time acclaimed as 'feeders of the nation' have been reduced depending on government, donor agencies and individuals for feeding and other basic necessities such as shelter at IDP camps. This, therefore, calls for urgent steps to augment the existing efforts of individuals and groups to tackle the causes of displacement and alleviate the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs) resident at the temporary camps across the state. The researchers see the need to explore a new dimension, using theatre for development (TfD) as a means of addressing the towering menace of displacement and food crisis in Benue State.

Theatre for Development

In Africa, the performative culture of the people is known to manifest through various art forms such as music, dance, storytelling and other folklorist traditions which abound in the numerous festivals and ritual activities that uniquely characterise communities and ethnicities across the continent. Tracing the roots of theatre practices in Africa, Adeseke claims that theatre in Africa was started by the people to appease the gods for survival and success in their occupations such as farming, hunting, wine tapping and the rest. Theatre in Africa later metamorphosed into ceremonies and festivals used to commemorate occasions like childbirth, housewarming, marriage and other festivities (192).

These performative art forms later progressed and transcended mere entertainment to play crucial roles of information, cultural propagation, and socio-political transformation. One key function of African theatre is its potency in

preserving the authentic culture of the African people as it forms a totality of the lifestyles and encompasses both material and non-material culture of the people. However, several factors such as colonisation and western education have redefined the practice of theatre in Africa. To a large extent, theatre in the past decades, has experienced a shift from cultural preservation and promotion to include a participatory art form that seeks for actionable solutions to the problems of communities. This form of theatre is recorded to have emanated from the inspirations and experiments of Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educationist and theatre practitioner. According to Boh:

Freire assumed that the people (especially those who were oppressed and marginalized) obtain knowledge through their own life experience, but are persuaded by the oppressor to believe that knowledge is relevant and they themselves are ignorant. (45-46)

The above assertion was a response of Freire to an educational system which he termed as the 'banking system' where teachers and theatre practitioners were seen as the custodians of knowledge in a setting where community members were meant to accept views and whatever solutions offered for their own problems hook, line and sinker as their opinions would not count (Boh 46). Consequently, Freire's approach of participatory drama that puts first the opinions and suggestions of community members did not end with his experimental activities in South America, but has gradually culminated into what is known world over today as theatre for development (TfD). In Africa, this theatre form has progressed and evolved through the years with nomenclatures such as popular theatre, community theatre, and theatre for rural development, among others (Omoera 45).

Theatre for development as it is today, transcends the ideology of having theatre practitioners serving as researchers in communities and members of host communities serving as providers of information in the research process. Rather, it bridges the gap between the practitioners and community members and places both parties in an avenue of dialogue where issues are raised, debated upon and actionable solutions are advanced with community members serving as the frontliners because they are the custodians of such issues and have the best solutions to them. It is, therefore, not out of place to state that this form of theatre offers members of rural communities the opportunity to participate actively in development of their community and by extension, their country.

It is important to observe at this point that, while TfD practice creates avenues for interaction between theatre practitioners and members of host communities in a participatory dialogue, it also attracts the attention of third parties in the long run such as government, non-government organizations and other donor agencies. This is possible when suggestions advanced in the process of TfD are put into practice. It proves to the world the level of commitment of the people towards self-dependence in seeking solutions to prevailing issues. Thus, one could be right to state that the success of any TfD workshop can only be established when the suggestions advanced during the post-performance discussions are put into practice by those who pledge responsibility in the community.

TfD, Internal Displacement and Food Crises in Benue State

Theatre for development (TfD) as a practice has been widely embraced and utilised as a catalyst to providing lasting solutions, especially in rural communities where populations are unaware of their problem-solving potential. Its potency has remained unwavering even in the era of digitization in which electronic media enjoy prominence. In fact, because the new media is still far-fetched to rural dwellers in Africa, TfD remains useful in providing entertainment, participatory education and empowerment. In Benue State, this form of theatre practice has been variously utilised by academic theatres of tertiary institutions to serve the dual purposes of training would-be practitioners and to engender rural development. It is, therefore, pertinent to employ the services of this theatre practice which has been proven over the years to trigger answers to difficult problems, to mitigate the prevailing challenges of internal displacement and food crisis in Benue State.

The Ukpia IDP Camp Experience

This experiment was carried out in October 2022 with the aim of utilising TfD as a tool for solution-finding to the challenge of internal displacement and food crisis in Benue State. *Brief Profile of Ukpia IDP Camp*. Ukpia camp is situated along Daudu-Gbajimba road and is about 10 kilometres away from Daudu town in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State. According to the chairman of the camp, the camp which has an estimated number of about 2,722 internally displaced persons (IDPs) was established by the Benue State government on the 29 November 2020. It houses IDPs who have been displaced from various communities including Tse Unande, Asange Abaa, Angur and Amua, all in Guma Local Government.

Methodology

Data was collected using the theatre for development methodology. The researchers used instruments such as focus group discussions (FGDs), oral interviews and direct observation methods. For the FGDs, members of the camp were segmented into younger men, older men, younger women and older women. The oral interview instrument was majorly adopted to gather data from the camp officials and management which included the camp chairman and his executive members, and block leaders. The researchers also keenly observed respondents and participants in the research process. After a thorough data collection exercise using the aforementioned instruments, the following constituted the issues surrounding internal displacement in the state:

Cause of Displacement: The major cause of displacement was identified to be the incessant farmers-herders' crisis that has overwhelmed Benue communities in the past decade.

Effects of Displacement: Members identified effects of displacement to include diseases, hunger and poverty, lack of shelter, and ultimately, death of displaced persons. In his explanation, Mr Terwase Kwaghtser, in the focus group discussion with older men, lamented that no one wishes to leave the comfort of their homes to settle in strange homes such as IDP camps and when this becomes the case, such persons tend

to get disillusioned about life. In a separate comment, another youth also lamented on how energetic youths are rendered helpless and idle in IDP camps, thereby being at the mercy of government, non-governmental organisations and well-meaning individuals for survival.

Drama Scenario

The issues relating to displacement as raised by the participants in the data collection phase, were collated and formulated into drama episodes after a prioritisation was done by community members with the researchers serving as guides. The following drama scenarios were formulated as the intervention drama:

Episode One: The scene opens at a farm where two Tiv women are weeding. Shortly, some Fulani men lead their cows as they trespass and enter the farm, eating and destroying crops. This displeases the Tiv women who complain but in response, the Fulani men threaten them with cutlasses and they run for their lives while the cows continue to feed on the crops. Moments later, the Tiv women return with their husbands who are seriously angered at the sight of the destruction caused by the Fulani men and their cows. This leads to an intense disagreement that results in fierce crisis where the Fulani overpower the Tiv people, killing some while others flee with injuries.

Episode Two: The now displaced persons are seen helpless at the IDP camp. They lament bitterly about the lack of amenities at the camp such as shelter, food and health facilities. One of the IDPs out of desperation decides that he would go out to his farm to get food but is reminded and discouraged by the others that the place he intends to go out to is a death zone, having been overtaken by the herdsmen.

Episode Three: Some members of the camp are seen expressing hunger while others are sick including children. IDPs lament that for months, they have not received support from anyone including NGOs that used to support them with food in the past years. They reveal that even when a few persons bring support to them, it is largely insufficient due to how it is shared and given the large population in the camp. Out of desperation, some of the IDPs decide to go out in search of food from their farms where the herdsmen have taken over. They express awareness of the dangers involved but also conclude that it is better to take such chances than remain in the camp where hunger can also lead to death. Despite concerns, and fear of death, some of them decide to go out to source for food.

Episode Four: At the camp the next day, while IDPs are seated discussing, a young man enters amidst tears to break the news of massacre of those who went out earlier to search for food by the armed herdsmen. There is mixed reaction as most people blame the sad event on hunger and desperation.

Drama Performance, Discussion and Analysis

After the aforementioned activities, the researchers liaised with camp members, intimated them on the next step and some members volunteered to take up acting roles in the drama. During the rehearsals, members were allowed to make reasonable input in the drama, to enhance better comprehension of the issues and scenarios. On Saturday 29th October, 2022, the drama was staged to an audience of over 100 persons,

comprising camp members and members of the host community. After the performance, the audience was engaged in a post-performance discussion anchored by the facilitators who used Tiv language as the communication medium since all members of the camp could comprehend and communicate more effectively in Tiv than with any other language. The facilitators of the intervention drama, prompted discussions from community members. Through questions, the facilitators were able to uncover what the audience deduced from the drama. Firstly, members chorused that issues portrayed in the drama were prevailing issues among camp dwellers. They, therefore, identified the following issues in the drama: displacement as a result of armed herders-farmers crisis; vulnerability and hunger among IDPs; and desperation among displaced persons which leads them to danger zones in search for food.

The facilitator also sought to know what camp members were willing to do or suggest as actionable solutions to the issues identified. In response, the leader of Block A in the camp, called on the government to find lasting solutions to displacement, which is to resettle IDPs back to their original homes. This view received several affirmative choruses as Mrs. Mimidoo Awuna added that IDPs lack the capacity to end the crisis and guarantee lasting security and resettlement of IDPs. Therefore, the onus lies on the government and other relevant bodies. Also, the representative of the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) to the camp, enjoined members of the host community at the event to consider IDPs by offering them pieces of land where they (IDPs) can farm and produce food for sustenance. He also advised IDPs not to make themselves more vulnerable by being idle but to go out and do menial labour at nearby farms, construction sites and even markets to enhance their livelihood. The camp chairman also advised IDPs to embrace unity and see themselves as one family at the camp. That way, the feeling of vulnerability will be reduced.

Key Findings

Consequent upon analysis of data collected from the research site, the following findings were made: Finding solutions to displacement in Benue communities is a task that is beyond the capacity of IDPs. Therefore, the government and other agencies with the capacity to quell the incessant crises and ensure lasting security of life and property are heavily relied upon in this regard. Most IDPs in these camps specialised in various handiwork prior to their displacement. However, they fail to harness these unique skills for the personal and general advantage of their camps, probably due to the regular assistance they receive from external bodies such as NGOs and well-meaning individuals. Instead of finding lasting solutions to displacement occasioned by the farmers-herders' crisis, the government and other donor agencies are more focused on offering assistance to displaced persons in IDP camps. This makes such interventions appear as though they are efforts in futility due to the increasing number of displaced persons on a frequent basis.

Importantly, we must reiterate that internal displacement in Benue State occasioned by the massive attacks of armed herdsman has rendered farmers homeless and farmlands deserted. Because the crisis continued unabated, one may rightly observe that sustainable development goal 2 (SDG 2) in Nigeria, which aims at ending

hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture by 2030 is on the brink of total defeat (Uza, Alamveabee, Onah-Ugbem and Nwafor 51). Internal displacement as a formidable threat to peaceful coexistence and economic development, greatly affects sustainable livelihood of agrarian communities such as those in Benue State. Not only has this displacement of rural farmers limited food production and increased food losses, it has also denied the Benue and Nigerian populace access to food and availability of food supply in the right proportion as it ought to be. Owing to this fact, prices of food items soar higher by the day across the country and are expected to continue as long as the root cause lasts, especially in line with the current inflation and recession in the country. This is, therefore, an identified need for organisations as well as well-meaning individuals to focus attention on the causes of displacement rather than expending energies on alleviating the plight of displaced persons who seek refuge in IDP camps.

In the area of theatre, it can be observed that the practice over the years has been preoccupied with other socio-cultural, political and economic issues such as nutrition, environmental sanitation, among other issues. However, the issue of food crisis and internal displacement which is a national issue, still calls for attention from theatre practitioners, especially with its potential of engendering sustainable solutions. This paper, therefore, is a call for the attention of theatre practitioners to utilise the necessary paraphernalia of theatre in engendering peace and finding lasting solutions to displacement in Benue State and Nigeria at large for enhanced food security and peaceful relations among both indigenes and settlers.

Conclusion

The paper concludes with optimism that if the theatre practice discussed above has been effective in engendering positive dialogues and finding solutions towards challenging issues beginning from Freire's experiments, the improved practice as it is in contemporary society will suffice as a catalyst towards peaceful relations among Nigerians and most of all, finding lasting solutions to internal displacement in Benue State and Nigeria at large. Therefore, the paper suggests increased subscription of theatre practitioners in this process which includes research into community issues using the theatre for development methodology; analysis and synthesis of issues identified, drama formation, performance and post-performance discussion forum where parties involved interface and dialogue to device better ways of finding solutions to identified problems. It is, therefore, our suggestion that the post-performance discussions should feature not just community members and catalyst teams, but also organisations both government and non-government bodies capable of enacting policies that will checkmate the root causes of displacement. The validity of this suggestion lies in the fact that since the major cause of displacement in Benue State is armed herdsmen attacks on farmers, community members are to a large extent, limited in their capacity to curb the current security situation in their communities.

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NEW MEDIA AS THEATRE STAGE FOR POLITICAL EDUCATION: A STUDY OF SELECTED NEW MEDIA SKITS ON THE 2023 NIGERIAN GENERAL ELECTIONS

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Abstract

Many factors, primary among which are leadership failures, led to some level of apathy among the electorate in past elections in Nigeria. A report claims that only 35.66% of the Nigerian electorate participated in the 2019 general elections. The situation was envisaged to get worse in the 2023 elections owing to obvious socio-political realities in the country. Various media were, therefore, employed to salvage the situation through conscious and unconscious political agitations. Hence, during the 2023 Nigerian general elections campaigns, the services of the theatre in political conscientization through the dissemination of video skits and short films through the new media especially, YouTube and WhatsApp were sought. The attention of the public was drawn to an avalanche of citizenship rights and political education as well as relevant information aimed at guiding the citizenry in taking the right actions for the betterment of the country. This article interrogates the role of the theatre in creating citizenship rights' education via the new media during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. Adopting the Technological Determinism Theory (TDT), the study uses content analysis and direct observation methods to examine selected recorded performances disseminated via the new media during the buildup for the 2023 general elections. A total of five video skits shared via the new media were analysed. Based on the analysis of the selected video skits, the study surmised that the Nigerian populace may have garnered some wealth of knowledge bordering on electoral consciousness, candidate's leadership qualities and general voters' education. The paper concludes that theatre as a vehicle of instruction engaged in creating social awareness that enhance citizenship responsiveness sought to facilitate the democratic process for good leadership in the 2023 Nigerian general elections.

Keywords: Drama skits, New media, Political agitation, Short films, TDT, Theatre.

Introduction

Indisputably, the theatre is a valuable weapon in the 'fort' of change. The theatre is used as a metaphor for change as well as to challenge, provoke and engage the audience to take certain positive actions. Quoting the Theatre Union Manifesto, Thornton claims that "theatre must face up to the problems of its time; it cannot ignore the poverty and suffering which increases every day. It cannot with sincerity, close its eyes to the disasters of its time" (1). Theatre employs such tools as visceral images, metaphors, real human environments and actions, larger-than-life props and costumes, cultural

elements that the audience can identify with, as well as the opportunity for empathy and/or distancing to communicate messages to people.

One aspect of human life that the theatre has continually touched is the area of governance. In its long history, the theatre has been involved in the workings of governance by offering safe ways of ‘talking back to power’ and providing spaces to challenge received wisdom. This is applied to democratic governance to serve the purpose of this paper. The theatre has also told stories that represent the depth and breadth of communities and their leadership. This it has successfully done by adopting and adapting to various forms which it has continued to morph with emerging technologies that create platforms for its sustainability. In recent times, the social media theatre stage has emerged. It is powered by the new media. To some extent, the social media theatre stage is devoid of the spatial limitations of the physical theatre. According to Akoh and Ugwu, “the emergence of the social media has indubitably altered the Nigerian theatre space. The social media stage has created a niche for individuals to somewhat independently practice theatre” (14). This, arguably, makes the theatre available to service virtually all aspects of the polity via the new media.

The digital technology has birthed the new online theatre platforms with their attendant gains and losses to theatre practice. Through the new media, the Nigerian populace, for instance, became more aware of the happenings in their sociopolitical and sociocultural ecosystems. Consequently, the Nigerian masses have become conscious of their environment, and as such, have developed tough skin and survival gimmicks to either ignore the political leaders when they are failing while struggling for daily bread or engage the government in one form of agitation or another. The latter option has become more prominent and was made manifest in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. Hence, one of the most active tools of engagement during the 2023 general election was the social media theatre that artists engaged for the purposes of conscientization and civic rights awareness creation.

Theoretical Scaffolding

This study adopts the Technological Determinism Theory (TDT) to underscore its argument that the new media is an emergent theatre stage for political education. Hauer asserts that technological determinism is the belief that technology is the principal initiator of the society’s transformation. The emergence of this theory is usually attributed to the American sociologist Thorstein Veblen, who formulated the causal link between the technology and the society. According to the supporters of technological determinism, any social changes are controlled by the technology, technological development, communications technology and media. The modern information society arises as a result of the development of innovations, new technologies and their social and political implications(1).

The proponents of the Technological Determinism Theory (TDT) are of the view that the society is usually influenced and shaped by technological developments. Society hardly has any choice but to adjust and adapt to new technologies and innovations and their usage. Technology is here could be seen as a determinant of changes that have meaningful impact on all aspects of human life and living. TDT

denotes an approach that promote the thesis that educational technology is influenced both by the users and their surroundings, and above all, by the technology itself. Technologies are said not to be neutral to the learning process. Rather, it structures information in a manner typical of them. Yet, the negative consequences of technological development are seen as the result of poor use by the people, and not necessarily a result of the very nature of technology.

Small Media, Social Media and New Media in the Nigerian Election Space

It should be pointed out *ab initio* that “variations exist in the use of terms, describing the new technologies that revolutionized the processes of information gathering and dissemination” (Auwal 29). Such terms as social network, internet community, social website, social platform, forum and chatroom have been used by different scholars at different times. The concept of social media in Nigeria is linked to mediums of social interactions that allow people to have personal interactions with others using their phones or laptops (Omoera and Guanah 8-9). With over thirty million social media users in Nigeria, and the rising profile of social media influencers, one can argue that social media has made a positive impact by way of changing the ‘face’ and concept of politics in Nigeria. Actors/influencers and users access the social media more freely than is the case with the physical theatre or orthodox media. The speed of communication and exchange, the cyber community it can create, the interactive nature and options for exchange of various forms of communication as well as its believability cannot but be applauded.

According to the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), as of "December 2022, the number of active mobile subscribers in the country reached 222.57 million, while internet subscribers exceeded 154.8 million" (*Africanews* par.1). While we note that social media users are part of the electorate, data from the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) "shows that the number of active social media users in Nigeria has risen from 27 million in 2019, to 36 million" (CDD par.2). Owing to this, one may be right to attribute the new dimension in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria to social media influence. It is pertinent to note, however, that: "...these networks for the flow of information can also promote democracy. Civic awareness of the continuous voters' registration process and the importance of participating has largely been driven by a sustained online campaign in the run-up to 2023" (CDD par.1). Again, the social media platforms served as a medium to fact-check political leaders and those aspiring to official positions in the struggle for deepening democracy; to ensure good governance and peaceful co-existence.

‘New media’ is used to refer to “a 21st century catchall term used to define all that is related to the internet and the interplay between technology, images and sound” (Bailey Socha and Barbara Eber-Schmid cited in Ebekue 96). This definition of the new media is not all encompassing. To Agboola, new media is essentially a cyber-culture with modern computer technology, digital data controlled by software and the latest fast developing communication technology. Most technologies described as “*new media*” are digital, and often have characteristics of being networkable, dense, compressible, interactive and impartial (105). Agboola’s view here throws more light

on some of the characteristics of the new media. Auwal adds that: “new media can be described as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of the World Wide Web (WWW) and that allows the creation and exchange of user generated contents” (29). Auwal’s submission speaks to the possibility of the creation and exchange of digitally generated content (texts, pictures, audios and videos), which is an exciting component of the new media. Furthermore, Asemah describes the new media as a broad term that recently emerged “to encompass the amalgamation of traditional media such as film, images, music, spoken and written words, with the interactive power of computer and communications technology, computer-enabled consumer devices and most importantly, the Internet” (30).

Owing to the exciting characteristics of the new media, the youths have become its biggest fans. Of course, “the Nigerian National Youth Policy of 2009 defined a youth as a person between the ages of 15-35” (Abraham 275). To the youths, the new media provides easy means of getting information from their internet-based terminals or handheld devices that provide them their choice information at anytime and anywhere as long as there is internet connection. The media under the new media adopt the small media techniques in their operations bringing in elements of guerrilla theatre and poor theatre, usually impromptu, and make use of minimum actors, props, scenery, costume and makeup. The term small media is used to refer to the alternative, experimental media that have their production, marketing and/or distribution patterns usually not in line with or affiliated to the orthodox major media outfits that are majorly under government control (Serberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1-2). To Brian Larkin, the small media refers to “technologies such as video and audio cassettes, photocopiers, faxes and computers, which differ from the older big mass media of cinema and television and radio stations” (110). He further explains that other non-electronic forms of media production such as stickers, slogans and arts that decorate taxis, buses and motorbikes are part of the small media concept (124). In this regard, Ihenhenge asserts that:

The orthodox media, are seen as elitist and belonging to a certain class in the society—the bourgeoisie. Their ownership, affordability, accessibility, language use and participation as well as their location in time and space, at least in their earliest stages, was far from the masses. But the small media facilitates the rise of new, radical, cheap and accessible communicative spaces. It creates possibilities for local media production and consumption. Small media are more decentralized in ownership structure. (149)

The accessibility of the small media provides an alternative media for those eager to express themselves “This makes them more like unofficial forms of popular culture, from rumours to jokes and mimicry, in that they create cultural and political spaces of communication that are outside of the control of the State and corporations” (Larkin 111). Discussing further on the ability of the masses to access the mainstream media in Nigeria, Isekhure affirms that “access for Nigerians to the electronic media is limited, especially in the rural areas, as the country suffers from a severe shortage of electricity with frequent power failure” (226). At any rate, Agboola points out that

in the recent years, fast developing technology has been fuelling an information revolution. The new media, digital broadcasting and the internet are sweeping away the limitations of the analogue world and weakening the grip of government-owned platforms. The nature of the relationship between the broadcaster and its audience is changing. New media in this information age provides an immediate, informative, intelligent, interactive platform for discussion and debate (105). The new media theatre usually adopts a combination of the guerilla and poor theatre approaches characteristic of the small media. These views affirm the use of the new media, especially the social media, as newly found theatre stage.

Analysis of Selected New Media Skits on the 2023 Nigeria General Elections

Asemah asserts that information and communication technology, exemplified by the new media, has brought about “a fundamental shift on human society and created profound change in the way we live, work or play” (271). Nigeria is one of the countries where Asemah’s assertion holds water. It has been said that Nigeria as a country has about 32.9 active social media users, a greater per cent of which are youths. The implication is that many Nigerians have tapped into the various social media platforms. During the build-up for the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, the electoral body in Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), consistently assured Nigerians and the international community of free, fair and credible elections in the 2023 national elections. The electoral body assured Nigerians that their votes will count as the sole determinant of the outcome of the elections as technology will be deployed to ensure proper result management. This gladdened the hearts of the people and many set to work. Film was then put to the services of the electoral process mainly by independent creative artists and theatre practitioners. This was seen more in the area of voter education. There is an avalanche of video skits produced, disseminated and consumed during the 2023 general election in Nigeria via the social media. But a few will suffice here for analysis.

Election Campaign in Nigeria

The video skit titled *Election Campaign in Nigeria* was produced by Real House of Comedy. It was shared mainly on YouTube and WhatsApp. This skit presents two scenes. In the first scene tagged as “happening elsewhere”, a political candidate is seen with a group of youths as he sells his candidature to them. He is able to discuss issues that he will tackle if elected and policies he will bring to improve the conditions of the populace. The youths he addressed were able to buy his ideas and hail him as the one whose candidature they will endorse. In the second scene, a situation is presented and tagged as “happening in Nigerian politics.” In it, a political godfather presents his ‘anointed’ candidate to be to the people. Rather than try to convince the people to accept him based on his proposed action plans, he starts running down the personality of the opponent calling him all manners of names. At the end, he distributes an item that looks like a roll of toilet paper to the people telling them how the item was bought from the United States of America (USA) and taken to Dubai and Italy before bringing

it back to Nigeria. The people are made to snap photograph with the godfather and his anointed candidate- displaying the gift item.

This skit attempts an exposé of the issue of what the electorate should look out for in the campaigns of the political candidates. It admonishes the candidates to go for issue-based campaigns which should be driven by well packaged action plans. This, of course, should be devoid of the irresponsible, reckless and inflammatory rhetoric of the past elections. It may be right to assert that finding solutions to state problems start with sound political campaigns. At campaigns, candidates come to seek the voices, the votes and the mandates of the electorate and should, thus, not be a time for some mean fight with opponents or disrespect to the viewpoints of others. This informs the idea of political debates by candidates. Unfortunately, many political candidates in Nigeria blatantly shy away from political debates.

Nigerian Politicians during Election Campaigns

Another skit titled *Nigerian Politicians during Election Campaigns* is also produced by Real House Comedy and shared majorly on YouTube and WhatsApp. In the drama skit, a character labelled ‘President’ goes round the community falsely helping people do their work telling them “There is no need labouring yourself. Just vote for me and I will help you.” The skit shows him as he collects the cutlass from a labourer cutting grasses to help him cut the grasses. He is also seen helping someone carrying a generating set to carry the set as well as help a sachet water hawker to hawk his ware. With these, the people hail him as the Godsent messiah and assure him of their votes. Soon, he is shown as winning the election and things change for the worse. As he is shown alighting from a vehicle, the young man he helped cut grasses comes to hail him as president only to receive a thunderous slap from him. At this point, other characters tagged ‘Poverty’, ‘Garri and Groundnut’, ‘Unemployment’, ‘Insecurity’ and ‘Debt’ come to embrace the young man as one of their own. This skit shares similarity with the one below. Hence, the two will be discussed together.

Nigerian Old Politicians Election Strategy

This skit has similar story line with the one above – *Nigerian Politicians during Election Campaigns*. *Nigerian Old Politicians Election Strategy* is produced by Thespian Nozy Production and distributed on WhatsApp and YouTube. In it, the character tagged Nigerian Politician helps another character sweep, feed, and even ‘take care of a girlfriend’ before election only to change after election slapping anyone who attempts to come close to him. The storylines in the two skits above (*Nigerian Politicians during Election Campaigns* and *Nigerian Old Politicians Election Strategy*) are what one witnesses in Nigeria during elections when hitherto unapproachable politicians suddenly descend from their high horses to the level of the common man on the streets. As elections approach in Nigeria, politicians boarding motorcycles or buying local foods like roasted corn, yam, and plantain by the roadside becomes common sight. For instance, a report written by Tola Owoyele and published on 14 February 2022 with the title ‘Politicians are Back with Gimmicks Ahead of 2023: Here are the Top 5 Yet’ reads thus in part:

Nigerians have seen Orji Uzor Kalu and Adams Oshiomhole, former governors of Abia and Edo States respectively, buying and eating corn by the roadside... Rochas Okorocha, former governor of Imo State, once helped a woman roast corn with one hand while carrying her child with the other, his entourage taking pictures of every moment. Also, Dino Melaye, a former Senator, posed for the camera with a tray of boiled groundnuts on his head.

The report went on to name many other Nigerian politicians with this gimmick in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria including, Governor Abdullahi Ganduje of Kano State, Dele Momodu, Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State, and Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo. In another report, the Governor of Lagos State is captured as behaving like the politicians in the above skits immediately after the presidential elections. Note that the candidate of the opposition party won in Lagos State. This accounts for why the governorship candidate of the ruling party started behaving like the politicians in the skits. A story on JKYNO BLOG is captioned “Sanwo-Olu turns Phone Repairer, Evangelist, Usher, all in One Week.” Part of the story reads thus: unny enough, Sanwo-Olu has gone back to archaic politics and campaign strategy which... has completely demystified and abolished... Sanwo-Olu has been going round Lagos licking Ice Cream in a public mall, going to churches to dance, standing at entrance to work as ushers (sic) and most recently, in a phone repairer’s shop.

The video skits *Nigerian Politicians during Election Campaigns* and *Nigerian Old Politicians Election Strategy* above succinctly capture the political scenarios above and warn the electorate to beware of the political stratagems. There is also the video skit (a solo performance) of one character named Young Elder GCFR produced by Elderly Nation Production. It was released shortly before the presidential elections initially scheduled for Saturday 18 March 2023. Even though the skit did a direct campaign for a candidate, it was a dramatized general advice to the Nigerian electorate to disregard ethnicity, religion, zone, and political party and vote the individual based on proven records of integrity and competence. It also gave general voter education based on the dates for the elections and a few other things the electorate need to know ahead of the election.

Tinubu and Peter Obi

Another video skit titled *Tinubu and Peter Obi*, produced by Spartacuz Comedy, is a cautionary note to the supporters of the political parties and their candidates. The skit is structured in form of a political debate between presidential candidates of two political parties. The debate witnessed the use of the known mannerisms of the said candidates. During the debate, the two supporters are seen interfering and creating antagonistic atmosphere. At the end, the candidates leave only for the supporters to stay back attempting to have a physical combat. This is the type of situation that is usually witnessed in Nigeria where party supporters usually clash resulting in fatalities. For instance, on Thursday February 23 2023, supporters of two political parties clashed in Kano leading to the death of some persons and leaving many others injured (*The Cable* par.1). However, reports about the clash carry conflicting information about the actual number of casualties. Similar clashes are recorded to have occurred in Lagos in

January 2023, in Port Harcourt in April 2023, in Ibadan in March 2023, and in Bauchi in March 2023 to mention but a few. All these clashes led to the death of persons and injury of many others. Yet, the candidates are usually seen after the elections winning and dining together to the disappointment of the said supporters. The video skit *Tinubu and Peter Obi* cautions Nigerians to steer clear of such ugly occurrences of the past in the 2023 elections.

The Election

One of the most important messages from the video skits for the 2023 general elections in Nigeria can be said to be contained in the skit titled *The Election* produced by Brain Jotter Comedy. Here, a popular politician simply called Chief comes to an uncompleted building to meet some guys who live there. The guys call him praise names as he details them to, as usual, go and obstruct voting in a polling unit presumably the stronghold of his opponent. The boys agree to the job saying it is a small task for them. Having agreed to do the job, Chief goes to his car to signal his son sitting inside the car to give him some money to pay for the job. At that instance, the boys notice his son and inform Chief that the job will be easier as his son will join them in executing it. Of course, Chief objects to this, telling them that his son is busy with studies and is also not a local street boy like them. This angers them making them hit the son. As Chief tries to protect his son, the leader of the gang hits him making him jump into his car and run away.

The message of the above skit is that the youths should shun election violence. Hitherto, the practice had been that the politicians keep their families in the background with tight security arrangements and then foreground the youths and arm them with weapons and some money to execute election malpractice and bring winning for them at all costs. Once the said elections are won, the youths used to execute the election are taken to the background while the families of the politicians are brought to the foreground for inaugurations and swearing-in ceremonies. It can be argued that the message was well received by Nigerian youths. A report of 5 April 2023 by the *Premium Times* states that the 2023 polls in Nigeria recorded the least violence in the history of the country with a fatality rate put at between 13 and 28. The report went ahead to state that the 1964/1965 elections recorded 200 deaths; 1993 elections 100 deaths; 1999 elections 80 deaths; 2003 elections 100 death; 2007 elections 300 deaths; 2011 elections 800 deaths; and the 2015 elections 150 deaths. This is an improvement on the past experiences, probably because of the kind of voters' education that the social media theatre provided.

Conclusion

Although the social media theatre is still developing, it is found to be a viable platform for theatre and theatrical performances for quick influence. The 2023 Nigerian general elections witnessed a new dimension that is different from what it used to be. The social media could be said to be a factor that changed the narrative in Nigerian politics in 2023 by bringing participants together to freely share opinions. Put differently, the social media was able to create virtual town halls. Subsequently, theatre as a

propagandist tool as well as a weapon of mass instruction created an unprecedented awareness for the youths and the-less-politically-conscious in Nigeria. The analysis of a few of the video skits for the election in this research reveals that the masses may have harvested some wealth of knowledge bordering on electoral consciousness, candidate's leadership qualities and general voters' education. The conclusion reached is that theatre as a vehicle of instruction engaged in creating social awareness that enhance citizenship responsiveness sought to facilitate the democratic process for good leadership in the 2023 Nigerian general elections. There have been many more of such new media video skits produced after the elections to pass critical comments on the eventual outcomes of the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, especially on perceived shortcomings and their resultant effects.

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**TRADITIONAL AFRICAN FESTIVAL THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S
AGITATION: OGENE NKIRIKA FESTIVAL OF NKWESSI IN OGUTA
LGA, IMO STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

It could be right to assert that some African festival theatres have not recognised the significance and strategic roles of children. The adult participants dominate the whole processes, giving children less prominent roles, which relegate them to mere passive audience. This has led to agitations, loss of interest and discontinuity in many cultures in Africa. Cultural festivals embody the belief system and general philosophy of a people, which could be handed over from generation to generation through inclusive practice. Suffice it to say that, it is in the middle childhood and early adulthood that the search for identity and respect for traditional values are inculcated. Using the observational, historical and analytical methods, this paper focuses on the place of children in Ogene Nkirika festival of Nkwessi community in Oguta Local Government Area (LGA) of Imo State, Nigeria. Ogene Nkirika (mock new yam festival) marks the commencement of the new yam cultural activities. It is the children's version of the Omere Ife (New Yam festival). Hence, children in the community are clamouring for inclusion into the main festival. Findings have shown that many children have drifted from the core values of African cultures for lack of inclusion. The paper views that this lack of inclusion of children will continually dampen the sustenance of African cultures and values. It concludes and recommends that children should rather be integral part of the main festival, and not restricted to a fragment of it, as is the case of Ogene Nkirika.

Keywords: African culture, Festival theatre, Nigeria, Ogene Nkirika, Values.

Introduction

Nkwessi community could be said to be one of the smallest towns in Oguta Local Government Area (LGA) of Imo State, Nigeria. It is comprised of five villages namely; Umudei, Umukeni, Umudike, Umuabodi and Umuaro. The people of Nkwessi are mostly farmers, fishermen and traders. Among these three occupations, Nkwessi people are predominantly farmers as a result of the large acres of land and natural fertility of the soil within the environment. In the business of farming which ranges from yam, cocoyam, cassava, local beans, maize, melon and other farm and cash crops, yam is the most identifiable crop. This is presumably because; it is loved and consumed by almost every human and members of the community.

It has been observed that the economy of the people of Nkwessi depends largely on farming and fishing from the beautiful blue lake and numerous creeks surrounding it. In effect, the religious life of the people reflects a pronounced riverine setting. There is no gainsaying the fact that Oguta local government area is well known

for the famous Oguta lake resort; which is one of Nigeria's top tourist attractions. (<http://www.nairaland.com/ogene-nkirika-festival.parade-beautiful>). This has helped to boost numerous rich cultural heritages within the local government areas, including the new yam festival. Although Christianity has taken over some belief systems, yet, there are strong religious influences from traditional angles as well. This can be seen in some people who still worship the water spirit and refer to certain parts of the land as sacred points and shrines. Therefore, all activities such as farming, fishing, child bearing, marriage and even death are believed to be guided by the gods of the land and the water spirit. One can dare say that traditional societies are characterized by festivals of various kinds and dimensions. Okam posits that:

Some festival theatres distinctly manifest aspects of the community rituals or worship, some celebratory; yet others function towards social change. Irrespective of their types, underlying the different forms of community performance is likely to be found the central element of ritual associated with one aspect of community belief or another.

(1)

One can unequivocally state that Nkwessi community is one of the communities in Igboland that has so much respect for yam. This can be illustrated in some indigenous titles such as Ezeji (king of yam), Oshiji (one who cooks yam) Obaji (ban of yam) and other titles that dignify the cultivation of yam. These titles have helped in no small measures to ensure food security; as many abled men have gone into competitive farming spree just to be identified with any of the decorous titles. It is wise to note that one of the criteria that earn one the title is the man with the highest number of yams in his barn upon harvest. Therefore, the title projects the energy and strength of the man of the season, who will be celebrated and decorated with the enviable title.

In fact, it has been exaggerated that an average Nkwessi man must have something to do with yam; if you don't enjoy boiled yam with palm oil, stew or any local sauce, you will surely enjoy the porridge with fresh vegetables, fried or pounding it to be swallowed with any good soup, preferably the nsala soup. Hence, Nkwessi people believe that yam harvest helps to extricate hunger and ensure food security. It is based on this fact that the new yam must be celebrated in Nkwessi community annually; specifically on the months of September, while the actual date may vary according to the appearance of the moon.

The people of Nkwessi equally have extraordinary regards for children. This can be established in the names of the five villages where there is reoccurrence of *Umu*. *Umu* in Igbo dialect means children. The children of Nkwessi community through the process of socialisation learn mores and values which are composed of social, cultural and religious obligations. The purpose is to help them decode the social system of the community, so as to enhance their understanding of their appropriate places. These are manifested through the social systems of some festival theatres. One has observed that during these festivals, there is a collective paroxysm as the custodians of culture and elderly people invites the gods through incantations and ritual dances. These actions are taken by older adults while children are mere audience; with little or no knowledge

of what the ceremony postulates. It is in this context that this paper addresses the issues of the place of children in traditional African festival theatres.



Fig. I Children as observers (online source)



Fig. II. Children as observers (online source)

An Overview of Traditional African Festivals

Traditional African Festival Theatres have evolved over the years as tools that ensure continuity and sustenance of the socio-cultural lives of a people in various communities. The essence of the continuation of festivals could be derived from the fact that African communities have ethical systems that are functional and organised in nature to coordinate human behaviours and activities within the communities. These ethical principles and practices have immensely helped in regulating the social life of a people, through cultural norms and traditions that are highly revered. The effectiveness of these cultural ideologies and lay down rules are prominent in some festivals that periodically connect the people to their gods. This constant affiliation with the gods through festivals affirms the essentials of African belief system; which holds that Africans are metaphysically governed and controlled by the gods. Hence, the proceedings of cultures and festivals in African context are built on the cosmic cycle of myth. Therefore, festivals in African traditional society are not just for fun and entertainment, but are forms of spiritual reunion and communion with the gods.

The traditional African society believes that their existence in the world has spiritual under tone. In essence, the supernatural influences and interventions by the gods can neither be extricated nor ignored. As such, the medium of various festivals in Africa has logically been used to acknowledge and propitiate these supreme beings for various reasons of successful and continuous existences. In effect, the observations and celebrations of African traditional festival theatres have different connotations to different communities. While some communities believe that festival is a medium of entertainment and relaxation, ushering and celebration of bountiful harvests, others see it as ways of identification with times and seasons, religious and rituals ceremonies, among other motifs. In either ways, the life experiences of Africans are undoubtedly multidimensional; with each revealing and manifesting the nature of reality in their peculiar ways. Little wonder some traditional African cultures are marked with many festivities and ceremonies that help to promote social cohesion among members of the society within the ambience of ecstasy and jollity. Therefore, traditional cultures remain the aspect of human that cannot be avoided by any member of a society. This

is because culture provides the fundamentals of human existence; as every living being has a form of identification in language, norms, dressing, cuisines and many more. Spencer observes that:

Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the meaning of other people's behaviour (258)

More so, the culture of a people holds the most vital aspect of such people; as its practices turn out to be the very first set of laws of indoctrination and orientation for children. In effect, they overtly or covertly form the basis of human orientations. According to Gordon: every society known to man has evolved a rich cultural symbol system, whereby at first glance, strange objects and odd types of behaviour appear to the outside as unwarranted cognitions and emotions. Upon examination however, each symbol system reflects a specific cultural logic and every symbolism functions to communicate between members of the culture in much the same way, but in a much more subtle manner, than conventional language (4).

The fundamental reasons for festivities in Africa as established in this paper explain that man's existence cannot be fruitful and meaningful without the mediations of the gods. In other words, the life of a traditional African is ordered around the cyclical view of the world. As such, there are seasons for clearing the ground, for planting, for harvesting, for eating, for merry-making and the whole cycle begins again. However, the cyclical conception of life and the need for man to participate in the mythical acts of creation are symbolized by agricultural or seasonal cycle. In commemorating traditional African festivals, the theatrical mediums of dance, music and performances are adopted to spice up the ceremonies. These festivals may not have reached their optimal levels of acceptance and continuous practices without the use of these mediums. Ihentuge believes that "there is a wealth of cultural heritage manifested in ceremonies connected with marriages, births, farming and myriads of other social institutions. These cultural activities contain the germs of rich poetry, excellent music and lively drama"... (462).

Festival dances could be ceremonial or vocational; but ritual dances are the most prominently performed in traditional African festivals. This is because; they are used to appease the gods of the land for either a bountiful harvest or protections of life and properties. **Music** in traditional African theatre manifests through songs and instrumentations. The traditional songs are basically used to embellish the ceremonies for better entertainment values. This could be seen from the fact that; Africans as under developed nation engage themselves in vigorous and rigorous occupational activities. Therefore, the festival period is a period of relaxation with valuable entertainment tactics. In essence, the use of traditional songs acts as soothing balms that relieves tensions, stress and anxiety. Ogbalu believes that "Igbo folktales as a medium of entertainment is fictitious and mythical" (68). Therefore, the aspect of music embodies the mythological background and the general philosophies of a people in folk manner. According to Sreekumar:

Story tellers, singers, minstrels and other kinds of folk entertainers have acted for centuries as sources for the transmission and dissemination of news and information through face-to-face life communication... The value, attitudes, beliefs, and customs of the people are propagated, reinforced and perpetuated through these folk forms. The issues in a society are depicted in form of a satire by the folk artists for entertainment and curing societal evils. (59)

The overall essence of music and dance find their expressions in performances in consonance with the lyrics and rhythm of the songs. These dramatic performances are spurred by well-articulated songs, which the performers respond to with corresponding steps dramatically. Dramatic performances give the highest level of fun to festival theatres; as both performers and audience find common grounds in the euphoria of the display. While different performers are exhibiting energetic impetuses, the audience are cheering and applauding their creative ingenuities. According to, Nzewi as cited in Agu: folk music in all its element and application has latent psychological, psychical and spiritualizing essence; it is an ethnic community that portrays group spirit, thought, myths and aspirations. At the same time, it is a bond, the umbilical cord that links the group with the ultra-terrestrial forces whose potencies are made manifest in various awe-inspiring phenomenal and unpredictable ways in their lives (67).

Traditional African theatres act as social identifiers and unifiers as their themes are derived from the arrays of events that happened in the community. Suffice it to state that every human society has peculiar norms which not only characterize it; but also determine the life of its members. Akpodiete opines that: members consciously and intuitively obeyed and adhered to these mostly unwritten codes of the society. These regulate the physical and psychological behaviours that were openly applauded and commended within the society. Thus, it governs the psychodynamics processes of early childhood behavioural development abilities. Hence it breeds the essence of mutual respect, create collective coherence, and encouraging being, just and fair to one another within the society (139).

These festivals are therefore, important indicators of group interest and values. As such, they affect various aspects of human socialisation. The context of this paper agrees with Krama when he views that; ‘socialisation is the process by which a person learns and generally admits the laid down rules of a particular environment or society’ (5) A child is therefore, directly or indirectly indoctrinated into the norms of the society through the process of socialisation. Socialisation involves teaching and learning of essential rules and values of a society, which ensures the continuity of the social characteristics. The core essence of socialisation is for an individual’s personality development. This includes the productive processing of both the internal and external realities. Meyer observes that ‘the physical outlook, mental qualities and traits constitute the internal essence, while the social circumstances and physical environment forms the external essence of human existence’. Mead as cited in Uzongu equally agrees that ‘the key to developing the self is embedded in learning to take the roles of others.’ (26) This substantiates Bandura’s theory which states that children learn through imitation of actions by the elderly ones in their environment. With

limited social experience, children can cultivate a sense of distinctiveness through imitative learning until they get to adulthood. As such, all the activities or reactions of man in his environment are regarded as behaviour. Hence, the key concept to the study of personality from the view point of social learning theory is basically modelling. According to Baran:

Social cognitive theory posits that people model behaviours they see, and that the modelling happens in two ways. The first is imitation, the direct replication of an observed behaviour... The second form of modelling is identification, a special form of imitation in which observers do not copy exactly what they have seen, but make a generalised but related response. (425)

One can state that children, who grew up in a particular environment and society will have no option than to adopt and adapt to the social life style that is inherent within them through imitation and identification. They equally try to make certain observations and alterations on socio cultural system that threatens their existence. In contemporary times, one can notice that the symbolic connotations of some indigenous cultures are losing their essence and substances. Many children do not have close contact with their traditional cultures; as they seem not to be communicative and impactful in their existence. In effect, many of these cultures are going into extinction. Duruaku posits that:

There is a growing urgency to stem the death of cultures and particularly languages, even as the extant languages are not increasing. It is estimated that several hundreds of cultures are dying out and, in few years, many more would join the growing rank of dead languages. Indeed, over four hundred and seventy-three languages are classified in the Ethnologue as nearly extinct. These are languages that only the few elderly speakers are still living (p.4)

This could be attributed to lack of integration and proper culture orientation on children into the societal system of belief. Over the years, children have remained in their observers' status in many festival theatres without adequate knowledge of their relevance. Hence, the respect and appreciation of cultures are better instilled in the middle childhood and early adulthood.

The Celebration of the New Yam and Ogene Nkirika Festival

The annual celebration of the new yam has left the impression within the people of Nkwessi community and indeed the Igbo nation that yam is the chief of all farm produce. This could be a fact because crops such as; cassava, maize, melon, cocoyam, local beans, pumpkins and others are planted, harvested and eaten without any kind of ceremony attached to them. On the contrary, the new yam festival has become a yearly cultural event that depicts the prominence of yam in the social-cultural lives of the Igbo nation. In most communities in Igbo land, yams from previous harvest must either be consumed or wasted on the eve of the new yam celebration. This is because only meals made of the new yam are expected to be offered to guests on the prodigious occasion.

The new yam festival is however, a significant occasion that marks the end of strenuous farming season and harvest. Conversely, it is a veritable socio-cultural medium, where the Igbo people among other ethnic groups in Nigeria celebrate

successful farming season and harvest. In essence, once new yams are harvested from the farms in good quantities and conditions, it is believed that the year will be remarkable, and that the soil promises to be fertile enough for the next planting season. As such, the god of fertility and harvest must be appreciated through the medium of the festival. If the harvest is equally on the reverse, the gods must also be appeased in order to avert hunger and strife in the community. In this auspicious occasion, several entertainment mediums such as; masquerading, ritual dance ceremonies with colourful and elaborate costumes accompany the festival.



Fig. III Assemblage of titled men (Ezeji's) (on line source)



Fig. IV A ritual dance display (Extract from new yam festival)

One can unequivocally state that the socio-cultural life of Igbo people is structured largely around children. In fact, the arrival of a child in any family or community is a great occasion. The birth of every child is often celebrated with fanfare and merriment. In some communities, the naming ceremonies are conducted in the full view of all the members of the extended families, relatives and friends. Special rites are performed by the head of the family and in the euphoria of the ceremony; the child may be given several names in relation to the circumstance(s) of his/her birth. They are given names such as; Nwamaka (A child is beautiful), Nwadiuto (A child is sweet), Nwadiobimma (A child gladdens the heart) Nwakachamma (a child is the most beautiful thing) and many more. This is owed to the fact that children are institutions that must be consciously recognized and valued for the continuous existence of a generation. Again, the crucial roles of children towards family survival; domestic chores and economies, casual labours in agricultural and food-processing activities, trade and artisanship cannot be over looked. In essence, they are particularly the human category that looks forward to a period of break, relaxation, fanfares and entertainment through festivals. Children basically form the greatest number of audience members that add colour to most events. They see festivals as a period of rest, with lots of food to eat, drink and share with one another. This social intermingling helps to sustain the enthusiasm of the festival to the next season.

The celebration of the new yam in Nkwessi community begins with Ogene nkirika festival. This festival could be said to be one of the most popular festival theatres in Oguta local government area of Imo state. Okam supports this assertion by positing that ‘‘Ogene nkirika is a total theatre which uses myriad art forms to represent the experience of an event which can be real, prophetic and imagined’’(417) Ogene

nkirika as a traditional art form uses songs, dance, drama, music, mime, puppetry, folklores among others in performance. This festival restricts children between the ages of six to seventeen years from active participation in the Omerife (main new yam festival). Therefore, these demographic characteristics of children see no reason why they should not be integrated into the main new yam festival, which is more elaborate with all pomp and pageantries; rather than participating only in the Ogene Nkirika which takes place in the evening of the eve of main new yam festival, between 6-10pm without audience participation.

Ogene Nkirika is seen as the children's version of the new yam festival that marks the beginning of the new yam festival activities. The ceremony is considered the most important event of the seasonal cycle in Nkwessi community. This could be based on the elaborate myth built around the origin of the yam crop among the people of Nkwessi on its sacredness. *Nkirika* in Igbo dialect means rag or something of less value. As a crucial event that must happen before the main new yam festival (Omerife), children are expected to put on rags on the eve of the new yam festival to run around the five villages, singing joyfully in welcoming the great day of the festival. According to Ezeji Nnaji for: this is a cleansing ceremony, which children within the ages of six to seventeen years are to participate in. It is assumed that they are pure. The rag they put on signifies impurities accumulated in the five villages within a seasonal cycle; which they will remove and discard at the end of the ceremony. This ceremony prepares the community for the sacredness of the new yam festival. (Personal interview held on 1st of February 2022)

A day after the Ogene Nkirika is the new yam festival (Omerife) which is basically for adult participants. As such, children do not have roles other than to observe the proceedings of the festival. In protest, these children in recent times have refused to partake in Ogene Nkirika which they view as a mundane practice. Some of the children frown at this cultural segregation and seemingly manipulation processes. Children of Nkwessi community believe that their roles in planting and harvesting are strategic, but not in the celebration of the proceeds of their labour. In fact, there are some crops that are believed that when children plant them, they will attract bountiful harvest, crops such as; yam, maize, melon local beans among others. As such, most homes that do not have children endeavour to hire the services of other people's children to ensure this bountiful harvest.

It is based on this sentiment that the children are agitating for their right of inclusion in the main festival. Okonyia posits that: the children's rejection of Ogene Nkirika is an affront to the elders and custodians of culture who understands the ways of gods of the land better. They are too premature to be included in the Omerife. That is how we inherited it from our ancestors and that is why we are prevailing on our children and close relatives to help us in the ceremony since other children are resisting it. (Personal Interview held on the 3 February 2022). In reaction to the agitation, Chikadibia opines that:

We are objecting to this cultural practice because there are no fanfares, we are not allowed to put on good cloths, but rags. In fact some children have turned to mischief makers because no one is supervising the exercise. It begins from evening and run into the night. Some children use it as an avenue to misbehave, by learning and engaging

in immorality. This is because adults are not watching or overseeing what we are doing. No food, no drink, no fun generally. We prefer the Omerife that has lots of side attractions with dignitaries that grace the occasion. We do not even know the relevance of Ogene Nkirika. The title of the ceremony is enunciating because Nkirika means rag. The real Omerife is grandiose and gorgeous. We cannot be putting on rags in this 21st century (Personal interview held on 4th of March, 2022)



Fig V. Titled men dancing with masquerade
(on line source)



Fig.VI. Guest of honour appreciating the Yams
(Extract from the new yam ceremony)

There is no doubt the fact that the main new yam festival (Omerife) embodies rich cultural display of a people in the presence of dignitaries who grace the occasion. There are masquerades exhibitions and dances from different age grades that provide fun and entertainment, unlike the Ogene nkirika.

Conceptual Clarifications on Agitation

Agitation comes from a Latin word *agitare*, which means “move to and fro.” Agitation can occur whenever human beings perceive the slightest physically or emotional threat. It is a feeling of stirred emotions which gradually leads protest. Agitations could be seen as a social process undertaken by individuals or groups, in order to express their opinions on any perceived injustice or subjugation of right within their environment. It is usually a reaction to a dissatisfied position or occurrence in the social system, with the intention of either changing the narratives or improving on the existing situation to accommodate the interest of everyone. According to Tugbikorowei and Ogu:

Man as a social animal desires constant change and development aimed at fostering a harmonious relationship among different groups and interests in a geographically localized community. Such relationships when consolidated upon, no doubt, can help to maintain peace and consequently growth and development socially, economically and politically. (118)

Most agitations could be said to be purpose driven and worthwhile, while some could be insightful, with wanton exhibition of complex, hatred and aggression. Such agitations could be highly intense and destructive; especially when they are expressed through strike actions, riots, picketing, and violent approaches. Agitators may have various reasons ranging from deprivations, power tussles, unequal distribution of resources, gender discrimination, status, religious, culture exclusion, among others.

These individual or group agitations may either be intended or unintended; because the social consciousness, sentiments and emotions of man is most often spontaneous. In either ways agitation manifests itself, it could be seen that democracy has given the citizens of Nigerian the entitlement to express their opinions, and also grounds to stand on their personal or group viewpoints, actions and reactions. Therefore, the outcomes of agitation are supposedly perceived as freedom to right of expression. In furtherance to this opinion, Tugbokorwei and Ogu insist that ‘right pertains to man and other living things, essentially in the sense that it is such living things that can express the rights as they spring from a sense of wellbeing and worth’ (115).

In other words, the paper perceives that the social mindfulness of children is on a daily increase; through shared considerations and obvious utilisation of current knowledge advancement. Hence, modernisation appears to have expanded individuals and groups social assets towards safeguarding their rights. The positive recognition of modern socialisation on young people, fill in as current strategies in dealing with certain institutionalised rules and regulations which they remark as deliberately crafted to undermine their rights and effective functioning in the society. This social mindfulness has given children less threatening frame to be assertive in addressing the status quo. Egbule observes that Nigerian children like their western counterparts, are crying for status, independence, achievement and a satisfying philosophy of life to be important, to be recognized, to have a standing in the group and to have privacy and security... (228) In other words, the younger generation utilizes the medium of agitation to lend their voices towards remaking and rebuilding the social structures and cultural institutions that are not favourably exposed to them. This can be established in their agitations towards the Ogene Nkirika (mock new yam festival) of Nkwessi in Oguta local government in Imo state.

Conclusion

This paper has critically examined the traditional African festival theatre, using the new yam festival in Igbo land and Nkwessi community as a paradigm. The new yam festival is one the greatest festival theatres in Igbo land. This festival (Omerife) happens to be more exciting and entertaining as people put on beautiful costumes, to dance and dramatize in the ceremony. Many dignitaries and government functionaries grace the occasion amidst pomp and pageantries. The paper equally notes that knowledge advancement has given most children a less threatening frame to think outside the box. This has led to the rejection of Ogene Nkirika which tradition has bequeathed on them. They believe that such roles are intended to undermine their effective functioning and infringe on their fundamental right of participation in the main festival. The paper notes that lack of inclusion of children in cultural practices is one of the factors that contribute to loss of interest of the young generation towards culture appreciation and participation.

Recommendations

Based on the objectives of this study, it recommends that the fundamental roles of children should not be undermined. Integration into the culture through appropriate

socialisation and orientation will help in the development of cultural intellectual abilities of children. This will give them the opportunity to decipher the relevance of culture and its appreciation. Again, for peaceful co-existence, continuous practice and sustenance of cultures, there is need for adjustment and moderation of some cultures in order to accommodate the dynamism, sentiments and emotions of children in contemporary times.

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**THE DYNAMICS OF PLAYING EARTH IN GREG
MBAJIORGU'S *WAKE UP EVERYONE***

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Abstract

Greg Mbajiorgu is a leading exponent of ecological theatre and his play, *Wake up Everyone*, captures and contextualizes the eco-discourse as it pertains to Africa. The objective of this study is to X-ray the underlying issues in Africa's quest to contend with and re-navigate its course within the chequered global matrix of the planetary crisis. Mbajiorgu's play provides a homegrown approach and engagement with issues of the environment as well as excavate the philosophical and social contestations within the climate debate. The paper, among other things, recommends that arts and indeed the humanities need to further engage with contemporaneous matters, especially the ecological crisis affecting all facets of human existence across the world.

Keywords: Eco-drama, Climate change, Ecology, Eco-humanities, Environment.

Introduction

Global warming and climate change issues basically hinge on the need to rescue the environment from an impending ecological crisis. Over the years, changes in climate conditions have intensified to a near desperate quest to salvage humanity from eco-degradation (Igomu 15). The irony, however, is that these changes are largely orchestrated by human activities. This study investigates the preoccupation of drama and the dramatic text in Nigeria with a view to unpacking its relevance to the eco-challenges of sub-Saharan Africa. The thematic thrust of this work is to excavate the eco-engagement of a play written by Greg Mbajiorgu and how his dramatic voyage overtime has brought the scientific phenomenon of ecology to connect with arts. The eco-humanism theory forms the bedrock of this study. This theory concerns itself with ideas and practices of environmental preservation and conservation, especially those

that stir up the consciousness of the human race to the role it plays in eco-degradation and what it can do to create an eco-friendlier and more sustainable world.

The study interrogates the discourse in the field of ecology for which a dramatist can engage and reinvigorate the needed awareness on the plight of humanity in the face of a fast-eroding environment. Drama has a lot of significance in educating humanity and creating the needed awareness on how human beings should relate with their environment. This paper engages the problem of conflict and its relationship with the dwindling natural resources in Nigeria. The hatred and seeming genocide that is being experienced in parts of the country is perceived as having an ecological twist. Therefore, the paper is aimed at finding out the ways in which literary drama has interrogated or is interrogating the eco-crisis and environmental degradation in Nigeria. It also seeks to establish areas of critical engagement and the intersection between drama and ecology and to further engender academic discourse for Nigeria's participation in sustainable development using drama as a tool. The research is a textual analysis of *Wake up Everyone* and the purpose is to seek out its relevance to the eco-discourse that has taken centre stage in contemporary literary criticism.

Drama and the Discourse of Eco-humanism

One of the most interesting discoveries of the 21st century is the intersections between the arts and sciences (Omoera, Ojoniyi and Ihidero xviii). Recent studies have given credence to the fact that the arts constitute the means through which science finds expression. One of such scenarios is the field now known as eco-humanism. Vikka sees the connection between ecology and humanity as an imperative which emphasizes values of humanity and at the same time ecological values (107). The ecological imperative is in the naturocentric language which states thus: "act in such a way that you always treat nature, whether in your own life or in the life of any other, never simply as means but always at the same time as an end" (Vikka 107). The point being made by the proponents of this theory is that human species should as a matter of requirement have an attitude of respect for animals, and nature by ascribing anthropogenic intrinsic value to them.

Pinn in his description of eco-humanism, hinges this concept on the recognition that human beings principally identify as inhabitants of a coherent though fragile and interdependent ecosystem known as planet earth. "It is the planet that sustains us, rather than some supernaturalist abstraction. This means that homosapiens need to be understood in the context of being members of the system of nature" (Pinn 311). The discourse of the eco-humanist, therefore, lies in the interactions of human beings and other eco-elements in the global life-world. However, eco-humanism is a highly dynamic and fluid concept. As novel as this theory may seem, it has been reviewed in various fields other than just being straitjacketed within the space of mainstream ecology. Cocks in his study took a different trajectory stating that eco-humanism offers the individual the existential challenge of being responsible for their own morality. Viewed as a moral philosophy, eco-humanism suggests that quality survival as an overarching goal for global society and, hence, as broad criterion for guiding social and individual choices (Cocks 371).

“Eco-humanism is an adaptive doctrine, not rigid. It is built around a revelatory and ever-richer story of an evolving cosmos. In the spirit of science, all its ‘truths’ are provisional and open to question” (Cocks 371). The concern, therefore, is that eco-humanists are interested in the greater ideal of a world where both the flora and fauna interrelate in all fairness and respect for one another. Nature’s good is only possible when it is accorded a sense of greater value not just for its continued existence but also for all that depends on it for survival. Dunbar corroborates this position that eco-humanists consider nature’s value as dependent on its usefulness to humans and that despite pursuing sustainable environmental relations, eco-humanists support hierarchical structures and grant human superiority when the common good or interests of species come in conflict (116). These have formed the primary concerns of eco-drama.

Even though scholars like Loschnigg and Braunecker still believe that drama has done very little in this regard holding a further view that scholarly work on dramatic depictions of environmental issues are relatively small, however, they agree that eco-drama itself has gathered momentum in the new millennium, in particular with regard to theatrical engagements with change concerns (29). Ecology and environmental issues in the last four decades have caught the prying eye of drama and dramatists are beginning to use their craft to interrogate ecological and climate change issues. One of such artists is Mbajiorgu who has consistently used his craft to engage on a global scale problem associated to the environment. His plays which can largely be classified as one of many inroads into the sphere of science stages what Arons and May call the reciprocal connection between humans and the more-than-human world (23). Speaking further on what eco-drama is, they describe it as that which encompasses not only works that take environmental issues as their topic, hoping to raise consciousness or press for change, “but also work that explores the relation of a ‘sense of place’ to identity and community” (23). No doubt the earth lies under peril and the urgency of climate change awareness is indubitable. This urgency and its associated effects for Woynarski have created an ecological imperative for all fields to address. “Theatre and performance can offer something distinctive in their engagement with ecology. They can upend reductive narratives and images, embodying and performing contradiction, erasures and imaginative possibilities” (2).

Greg Mbajiorgu’s *Wake up Everyone*

This three-act play written in simple language brings to its audience the reality of climate change and several adaptive measures that can be employed to ameliorate its effect. In the play, we have Professor Aladinma, Desmond, a PhD student from the UK and the Professor’s Green Theatre Troupe – an assemblage of fresh graduates brought together to dramatize the message of global warming. On the other hand, we have peasant farmers who dwell and depend on the land for survival and there is also the political class as typified by the Hon. Ochonkeya, the Local Government Council chairman.

Professor Aladinma, armed with enough information on climate change and the pending danger it poses to Ndoliland, goes to the Hon. Ochonkeya, with a proposal

on how to arrest this looming catastrophe. The chairman pretentiously accepts to look into the proposal with the promise to present it before the legislative council, only to cast it aside soon after the professor leaves his office. Meanwhile, Professor Aladinma returns to his rehearsal studio and with the arrival of Desmond, continues with the sensitization of local farmers. The farmers in the characters of Odukwe, Okosisi, Nnadozie and others are to be taught local ways of adapting to climate change by planting drought resistant crops and other modern methods of agro-practice that take into cognizance the reality and unpredictability of a changing climate. However, a bigger disaster lies in wait for the land.

This is further aggravated by the refusal of Hon. Ochonkeya, the chairman to attend to the professor's proposal which would see the government and other international agencies working together to arrest the coming flood. Ndoliland lies in the coastal plains and has been under severe threat of eco-degradation owing to years of exploitation by oil companies. The topography of the land also makes it susceptible to flooding. The play ends with the flood submerging the farmlands as predicted by the professor. The farmers are enraged by this development and in the full knowledge of the nonchalant attitude of the council chairman; they decided to go for their 'pound of flesh' at his residence.

Thematic Concerns of the Play

One of the clear messages we get from Mbajiorgu's *Wake up Everyone* is that natural disasters are a direct consequence of human insensitivity to the plight of the environment. Professor Aladinma in Act One, Scene One says that:

What we are witnessing now is nothing else but planetary reactions to man's mindless activities, period. Our soil and rivers have become unproductive because of chemicals and oil spillages. The floods and erosions we experience are caused by our senseless attempts to reclaim wetlands. What about the carbon monoxides from power generators and poorly maintained automobiles, and the unfriendly substances flared up into the air by oil companies on daily basis? The problems of our world today are caused by us and yet we are reluctant to find solutions to them. (Mbajiorgu 2)

Natural disasters as natural as they seem do not just occur. They are triggered by humanity's actions and inactions. What the world faces now in the name of global warming, ecological degradation or climate change are nothing but offshoots of what humans do or fail to do. Quite typical of this is the level of corruption in oil politics at the expense of the land and the people who depend on it for survival. The play brings this dimension to the fore and raises questions about the so-called amnesty programme for Niger Delta militants. The disarmament of the youths to a reasonable extent calmed the frayed nerves in the region but the continued plundering and mindless destruction of the environment has continued unabatedly and the creeks smell of the filthy continuous oil spillage. The chairman, Hon. Ochonkeya in this same scene dialogues with his long-time friend and partner saying:

Chairman: I saw the oil spillage incident a grand opportunity to get back at the multinational oil companies. When the event occurred, I got a fiery lawyer that has

been at the vanguard of environmental issues to institute a legal action against the oil companies. When they perceived the legal consequences and the attendant damages, they resolved to invite me, as the plaintiff, for alternative dispute resolution.

Jango: Choi!! Na lie – o – o, how the mata come take disappear nah?

Chairman: Through my lawyer, of course. We agreed that they pay three hundred million naira. (Mbajiorgu 11)

This situation chronicles the hypocrisy and approach to the agitations and so-called environmental activism that has been the lot of the Niger Delta for many years. The level of damage done to the ecosystem in this region ends up in compensations that are largely unaccounted for and virtually nothing is done to commit the oil companies to clean the filth and make the land safe once more for human habitation. The impact of climate change on agriculture is another matter of topicality in the play. Dimkpa, one of the farmers in the play draws attention to the deteriorating farms saying that: —Go there and see for yourself. My farmland is dry and barren, with nothing at all to justify all my efforts during the planting season (Mbajiorgu 16).

We also see in the play that the reality of a changing climate especially in Nigeria calls for an urgent response in the area of education and empowerment. There is a great need to educate the masses and rural dwellers whose mainstay is farming on the new strategies of combating or adapting to the effect of global warming (Omoera and Guanah 1-3). Ugodiya, another farmer responds to Dimkpa's dilemma blaming him for his loss saying: You have nobody to blame but yourself. We had series of meetings with the Professor on what species of seed yam to plant and how to plant in this difficult time of change in climate. We were also introduced to different crop varieties and animal species (Mbajiorgu 16; Nwanya 1). This shows that climate adaptation remains one of the remedies for Africa and Nigeria in particular. When people cannot change the reality of a warming planet, they have to adapt and the mode of adaptation remains the greatest challenge in a continent where literacy and access to information remains elusive.

The question of sustainable development is another issue of thematic concern in the play. In Act Two, Scene One, Obioma recounts that —humanity's brutal and outrageous quest for wealth and development has nothing but the promise of doom and poverty for the children's generation (Mbajiorgu 28). To mortgage the survival of an economy on one resource – oil, is not only suicidal but smacks of a notion that the country is not thinking ahead. What will become of the fate of the next generation fifty years from now when oil may no longer be what powers the world's industrial, political, economic and locomotive machinery? This is the question sustainable development is asking. Today we are seeing the effects of an industry-driven economy sparked off by the age of modernity. Emission of greenhouse gases, deforestation, and loss of natural landscape and subsequent extinction of the lifeworld are just a few possibilities that stare all in the face.

The intellectual discourse between the Professor Aladinma and Desmond in Act Two, Scene Two reveals a dimension to this trend that is increasingly becoming a reality in modern day Nigeria. Here we see in vivid pictures that the pursuit of modernity has further aggravated humanity's crisis with the environment. The impact

of climate change and its causative factors are staring all in the face even in the rural areas of Nigeria. Desmond blames it on the quest for so-called development fuelled by Western-style civilization and modernity saying: —That’s why we are discharging all kinds of poisonous substances into the atmosphere in the name of industrialization and modern technological supra-efficient machines (Mbajiorgu 37). The play also brings to light the causes and effects of climate change. Act Two, Scene Three sees Professor Aladinma using his Green Theatre Troupe to narrate the story of climate change. With his cast working in his studio, they use various dramatic techniques as a tool for raising the consciousness of the local farmers on the possible causes of climate change and the resultant effect of this crisis on human habitation. The scene of the rehearsal shows the current reality of global warming and where the world stands today. Obioma, Adaora, Ekene and Nweke engage in this dialogue:

Obioma: What have you done? Biodiversity minimization and emission of harmful and dangerous substances into the atmosphere and you know the adverse effects?

Adaora, Ekene & Nweke: We don’t.

Obioma: They are numerous, where do I even start, (counting with her fingers as she lists them). Increase in global atmospheric temperature, melting of polar ice, rising sea temperatures, sea level rise, appearance of radiation-related concerns, change in the pattern of precipitation, change in agricultural yield, proliferation of a thousand other diseases and health problems.... (Mbajiorgu 39)

This shows that the eco-crisis as it is today is the making of changing climate. This eco-catastrophe is felt in every part of the globe and more and more on African shores. Changes in rainfall patterns across Nigeria have gravely affected food supply and the rise in the cost of foodstuff in recent times is a testament to growing effect of climate change. Nigeria’s response to these ecological challenges over the years has been that of silencing the voices that dare to speak out either by military might or by monetary inducement in the name of paying compensations. Nweke reminds us in this same scene that the nation has not responded with the right antidote to arrest this situation. She states:

Look at those men carrying heavy weapons. Look at them, all around us, murdering our heroes for daring to stop the spillage of oil and flaring of gas. And there is the mighty rig, the monstrous equipment that rapes and pollutes our waters. (*Stares in the distance*). What am I seeing? (*Pause*). What are they doing? (*Runs to the imaginary scene*). Hei! Stop! Leave those little boys alone, they are too young, too young to handle that heavy military equipment. Take your fetish amulets off their necks! Can ‘t go find something better to do than turning this whole land into corpses and coffins? All you know is how to shoot and maim (Mbajiorgu 40).

The Ken Saro Wiwa saga and how he and his fellow activists were summarily executed by the then military junta comes to mind as one ponders on the scene above. The resultant militancy that grew soon afterwards, the merchants of death armed by oil thieves ferrying off stolen oil overseas is also captured by Nweke’s statement. We also see the effects of hunger precipitated by poisoned sea life. Nweke further illustrates

this, saying: Here in Ndoli, our source of living has gone forever, our fishermen have exhausted what is left of our sacred waters, carting home tender fingerlings that hold the secret of future harvest (Mbajiorgu 41).

This explains the current spate of importation of sea life. Nigeria 's waters lie empty due to the prolonged and desperate quest to harvest whatever is left from a once rich and abundant sea life. Fishermen now grovel through the filth of the waters in search of fish that no longer exist. Even the famous preserved and conserved waters that once served as an international tourist destination such as the Argungu Fishing Festival has gone with the winds because the giant fishes that were the attraction of this festival can no longer be found. The ineptitude, nonchalance and indifference of the nation 's political leadership to the reality of climate change is another subject matter in the play. In Act Three, Scene Three, Professor Aladinma captures this message in this dialogue with Desmond saying:

Look, Desmond, this country is asleep. Great leaders in other parts of the world are busy, embracing serious ideas like how to produce alternative energy sources that will replace fossil fuel. Here, our leaders are busy sharing oil wells and buying fuel tankers. (Mbajiorgu 50)

Desmond's response to this statement brings to light another dimension to the eco-discourse by exposing the nation 's lack of will to adapt to the realities of climate change. He states thus: It is despicable, most of the cities in this country are stuffed with hotels, filling stations, shopping malls, exotic mansions, and no breathing space at all; no trees, no flowers, no parks, no forest reserves and no pedestrian walk-ways. In every corner, you will find one structure or another without adequate waste disposal system, unfriendly buildings facing and suffocating one another. Yet more people are procuring cement and moulding blocks in these already congested cities (Mbajiorgu 50). A look at cities across Nigeria today reflects this reality. The slums are swelling daily as more people migrate from the hinterlands in search of a better life. As the cities grow in population, nearly non-existent infrastructure is over-stretched and this also impacts greatly on the environment.

Conclusion

One of the plays that prides as Nigeria's play on climate change is Greg Mbajiorgu's *Wake Up Everyone*. William Heim says the play has a purpose: to support impoverished farmers, to educate, to build resilience against the effects of climate change in rural Nigeria. The information on climate change is familiar, too, the belief and disbelief, the sometimes-awkward juncture of different kinds of experience, the social power implicit in different kinds of knowledge (122). The playwright in the preface to the play states that his effort was quite taxing as the subject of climate change is scientific and hence not easily adaptable to the stage (6). Mbajiorgu said he was quite surprised that despite the frightening effect of climate change, only a few plays have been produced on it globally. With climate change encroaching on us and the global future looking bleak, our world is in dire need of a paradigm shift with regards to how we relate to our planet. To guarantee the future of our world, drama is one of those

salient strategies we can employ. This is the time for action, let's join hands and bring about the needed change (Mbajjorgu 3).

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