



SOCIAL SCIENCES

REINTEGRATION OF DERADICALIZED BOKO HARAM EX-COMBATANTS IN MAIDUGURI METROPOLIS: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR PEACE SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract

This study examines the challenges truncating reintegration of deradicalized Boko Haram Ex-combatants and its impact on peace sustainability in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State, Nigeria. Employing a qualitative research method, the study analyses secondary data through thematic content analysis. It identifies persistent challenges facing Nigeria's reintegration programmes—particularly the Borno Model—including community distrust and stigmatization, negative perceptions of ex-combatants, recidivism, lack of effective transitional justice systems and ineffective victim support mechanisms. Despite these obstacles, the study argues that current programmes have laid a foundational framework for sustainable peace in Maiduguri Metropolis especially in the areas of strengthening social cohesion, preventing recidivism and new recruitment, and driving socio-economic development. The study recommends the establishment of transitional justice systems, effective victim support initiatives, addressing factors triggering recruitment and recidivism, countering negative perceptions about reintegrated individuals and enhancement of community awareness and engagement as pivotal for ensuring successful reintegration, and achieving lasting peace and stability in Maiduguri and beyond.

Keywords:

Boko Haram, Ex-combatants,
 Deradicalization, Reintegration,
 Peace Sustainability

Introduction

The insurgency of Boko Haram has caused colossal loss of lives and properties of people in Nigeria's northeast region with Maiduguri Metropolis being the most affected city. Since the group's transition to violent attacks in 2009, more than 35,000 lives were lost with another 2.5 million displaced across Nigeria and its neighbouring states – Cameroon, Chad and Niger (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2023). According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), Boko Haram has successfully carried out more than 4,000 violent attacks on military and civilians, resulting in a severe humanitarian crisis in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY States) (ACLED, 2023).

While Nigerian governments' series of military campaigns have glaringly become insufficient in curtailing Boko Haram insurgency, reintegration of the group's deradicalized ex-combatants appeared as a crucial component of achieving lasting peace in the country. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) is

one of the most widely recognized non-coercive approaches for restraining non-state armed conflicts in worldwide.

In Nigeria, governments at both national and state levels are implementing distinct forms of non-coercive programmes as strategies for curtailing the security threats posed by Boko Haram insurgency in the country. These programmes are being run by different organizations and designed to serve different people and unique purpose.

Notable among these giant strides is the Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC), which is designed to deradicalize, rehabilitate and reintegrate ex-members of Boko Haram and its splinter organizations majorly in BAY States (Blueprint, 2020; United State Institute of Peace, 2021). Commenced in 2016, OPSC is run by the Nigerian government in a temporary facility at Gombe State. The programme is specifically designed to deal with the surrendered ex-combatants focusing on combating violent religious ideologies and psycho-social grievances of Boko Haram ex-combatants (Bukarti & Bryson 2019).

There is also a prison-based deradicalization programme being run in Kuje prison in Nigeria's capital Abuja, which is majorly dealing with the high-risk combatants convicted of violent extremism and the inmates awaiting trials. This is also being implemented by the Nigerian Federal Government (FGN) since 2017 with the aim of combating violent extremism through religious ideologies and vocational trainings (Atta & Bryans, 2016). Similarly, there is a community-based deradicalization programme - alternatively called the Yellow Rebon Initiative - which also started in 2017. This deradicalization programme is currently being implemented in communities in Borno State by the Neem Foundation. The programme targets women, children and young people associated with Boko Haram. It focuses on providing psychosocial, behavioural and reintegration trainings to the participants.

At the state level, the Borno State Government (BSG) has launched a community-driven reintegration programme called the Borno Model, which combine dialogue and rehabilitation efforts. The programme aimed to facilitate exit and reintegration of Boko Haram Ex-combatants from violent to civil life through Disarmament, Demobilisation, De-radicalisation, Rehabilitation, Reconciliation, and Reintegration (DDDRRR) framework. Since its inception in 2021, thousands of former Boko Haram combatants have surrendered and were successfully reintegrated to communities in various Local Government Areas across the state (Borno State Ministry of Information and Internal Security, 2024). Maiduguri Metropolis is one of the largest hosts of reintegrated Boko Haram Ex-combatants. Reports indicates that, since 2016, over 35,000 fighters of Boko Haram have surrendered and enrolled in the programme and thousands of them were reintegrated to different communities across the city (DW, 2022), further complementing the efforts of the Federal Government.

Despite its phenomenal achievement, the reintegration of Boko Haram ex-combatants faced with myriads of challenges which hinder its potentials on preventing relapse to violent conflict and promoting long-lasting peace in Maiduguri Metropolis. Existing studies have examined the challenges associated with reintegrating former members of Boko Haram insurgent groups into society, but do not evaluate its localized impacts on peace sustainability. For example, Agbiboa (2015) x-rayed the reintegration of Boko Haram ex-combatant from conflict, security and development perspective using Nigeria as his focal point of analysis, while neglected its implication on peace sustainability. Also, in their study, Akinola and Adibe (2022) assessed the Reintegration of Boko Haram ex-combatants and Peacebuilding within the Nigerian context and overlooked its impacts in specific communities such as Maiduguri Metropolis, establishing significant gap in the literature.

This study evaluates the challenges of reintegration of ex-Boko Haram combatants and its prospects on peace sustainability in Maiduguri Metropolis of Borno State, Nigeria. This is crucial in providing evidence-based

insights and recommendations critical for designing and implementing post-conflict peace building programmes.

Conceptual Clarification

Boko Haram

Boko Haram is one of the deadliest insurgent groups responsible for the death of many people and destruction of properties in the Lake Chad region -encompassing northeast Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon – for over a decade (Thurston, 2016; Comolli, 2010; Barkindo, 2020). The group is established in the early 2000s by Muhammad Yusuf in Maiduguri – the capital city of Borno State, Nigeria. The group is named '*Boko Haram*' by the media owing to its strict Islamic practices and rejection of Western-style education and political principles such as democracy and constitution (Agbiboa, 2015).

Initially, the group started its operation as a non-violent religious movement with the soul aim of propagating for “true teachings of prophet Muhammad (Sunnah) before it later transitioned into full-blown violence in 2009 after a clampdown by the Nigerian army, which to extra-judicial killing of its founder (Okpe, 2023). Since then, the group orchestrated violence and its activities have caused the loss of human lives and severely undermining safety and peaceful coexistence of people across communities, particularly in Maiduguri Metropolis. As of 2021, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimated the death toll caused by the group at about 35,000 displaced over 2.2 million and put nearly 8.3 million people in dire need of humanitarian assistance across Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (UNDP, 2021; United Nations High Commission for Refugee [UNHCR], 2023).

In response, the Nigerian governments, under various political regimes, implemented a series of military actions to counter the group's terror. Understanding the strategic shortfalls of deploying kinetic approach as the major means of tackling Boko Haram terrorism, the Nigerian authority introduced various programmes as non-kinetic strategies to curtail Boko Haram insurgency. These programmes were designed to, among other things, offer alternative pathways for the repentant Boko Haram members to transition into a life of peace (Babajide, 2022). Despite notable success recorded by the programmes in taming the menace of insurgency, the question of how to ensure peace sustainability in communities hosting the reintegrated ex-combatants remains a significant concern.

While Borno Model and similar efforts have achieved modest successes in reducing active hostilities, significant concerns remain regarding community acceptance, justice for victims, and long-term safety and reintegration outcomes. These issues continue to raise important questions about the prospects for peace and reconciliation in communities hosting ex-combatants.

Ex-Boko Haram Combatants

Ex-Boko Haram combatants can be referred to individuals who have previously joined the Boko Haram insurgent group either voluntarily or through coercion but have surrendered and deradicalized by the authorities. Ex-combatants actively worked as frontline fighters, recruiters, logisticians, and intelligent gatherers (Bukarti & Bryson, 2019; UNICEF, 2020). This status is given to them because of their enrolment in structured programmes such as Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) processes or through surrender under deradicalization programmes. In Nigeria, ex-combatants are those individuals repented and participated in Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC), the Yellow Ribbon Initiative, and the Borno Model. This categorization is, however, complex as a result of challenges, ambiguity and legal issues surrounding the process such as consent, victimhood, and accountability especially in dealing with minors and abductees.

In Maiduguri Metropolis, reintegration of Boko Haram ex-combatants into civilian communities has posed significant social, psychological, and political challenges. Community perceptions of ex-combatants are often shaped by distrust, fear, and trauma, especially in areas where the insurgency had left deep scars. This tension is further complicated by unresolved justice mechanisms, the absence of formal transitional justice frameworks, and limited support for the victims of Boko Haram atrocities.

Deradicalization

Like many concepts in social sciences, deradicalization defies single universally accepted definition. Deradicalization can be broadly viewed as a process of countering violent extremism through rehabilitating individuals who have engaged in terrorist activities. Hamed El-Said (2020) defined deradicalization as a structured approach aimed at shifting individuals away from extremist ideologies and behaviours, facilitating their reintegration into society. It can also be seen as comprehensive support process involving both ideological and non-violent transformation of individual engaged in violent group activities such Boko Haram in the Northeast Nigeria (Fink, 2020).

It also underscored efforts seeking to address grievances that may have led to individuals to join violent groups. Hassan (2022) refers it to systematic efforts to disengage individuals from extremist groups and ideologies focusing on psychological and social reintegration strategies that address underlying grievances. In addition to this view, Brechenmacher (2021) opines that, deradicalization programme should combine psychological counselling, vocational training and community engagement to prevent recidivism among former extremists.

In Nigeria, deradicalization can be as a wide range of programmes designed to reintegrate former Boko Haram combatants into society by addressing ideological beliefs and the socio-economic factors that contribute to radicalization. One the of such programmes is Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC), which aimed rehabilitating and reintegrating low-risks defectors of Boko Haram. Deradicalized Boko Haram ex-combatants are former fighters of the group who transformed from being violent to civility through OPSC or other government recognized programmes. The deradicalized combatants are usually transitioned and reintegrated to their communities. Generally, the main goal of deradicalization programmes is to contribute towards changing the violent extremist views that triggers individuals to join terrorist organizations.

Reintegration

Reintegration can be referred to as an act or process of reinserting elements back into its integral part. Looking at it from counter terrorism and military perspectives, reintegration is the method of reintegrating soldiers or combatants back to civil life. According to the United Nations Development Programme (2006) reintegration is “a long-term social, economic, and political process aimed at helping ex-combatants or extremists regain their status as recognized and respected citizens within their communities” (UNDP, 2006; p15). Also, the Centre for Combating Terrorism (2023) defines reintegration as a formal process returning disengaged member of non-state armed groups to mainstream society. It encompasses steps aimed at facilitating individual's transition from violence to civility and a law-abiding member of citizen. Put differently, reintegration is a series of trainings designed to change the beliefs and violent ideologies of members of armed groups to surrender their arms and return to their communities. This is particularly evident in communities affected by armed conflict and political violence, where members of non-state armed groups contesting the state's legitimacy.

It is worth noting that reintegration is more than just bringing back the perpetrators of violent to civil life. It involves subjecting them to mental and psychosocial teachings and empowering them with practical skills for income generation. The success of reintegration programme is measured in terms of its positive impact on both the lives of the surrendered armed group members and the communities they were reintegrated to. This

underscored the potency of including the needs of the two parties in design and the programme's implementation (Owonikoko, 2022).

Having battled with the insurgency of Boko Haram for over a decade, Nigeria is currently operating one of the largest reintegration programmes in African continent. Since the programme's inception in 2021, it succeeded in reintegrating scores of “low-risked and surrendered” members of Boko Haram insurgent group in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States (Operation Safe Corridor, 2020). Despite this huge success, members of communities' express huge concern over the security threats the reintegrated members may likely posed. This prompted the design and implementation of Borno State Model programme centred on community dialoguing and rehabilitation. Under this scheme, the ex-Boko Haram combatants must undergo deradicalization and rehabilitation processes before being reinserted to society. Also, the deradicalized combatants are being sensitized about the potential challenges they may face with the community members and how to overcome them non-violently. The community members are also not left out, they received series of advocacy and trainings about to importance of peace and consider the reintegrated individuals as non-harmful.

It is significant to note that these assumed definitions by the federal government is one-sided and obviously overlooked the needs of the host communities. This presents a huge problem truncating the success of the programme. Objectively, reintegration programmes must be inclusive and comprehensively integrate the needs of its stakeholders. Involving and seeking the inputs of the members of host communities is very critical to success of reintegration programme.

Peace Sustainability

According to the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (2017) “sustaining peace encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict” (UNPS, 2017; p1) In practice, peace sustainability is an act of intended to minimize potential risks of lapse or relapse into violence. It denotes aspirational objectives aimed at facilitating individuals and groups' ability and capability to manage crisis and bolster long-term resolution of conflicts. “Sustaining peace requires a long-term perspective by national (state and non-state) counterparts and a long-term engagement by the UN system and international community in terms of political, technical and financial support” (United State Institute of Peace, 2021). In other words, peace sustainability implies altering people's mindset from reactive to proactive mode for a longer-term and collective outcome. It can also be defined as goal or process of preventing the outbreak, continuation, escalation and recurrence of violent conflict. Thus, peace sustainability goes beyond ending violent conflict, it involves establishing strategies for inculcating the culture of addressing conflicts using non-violent means among people.

Reintegration and Peace Sustainability

Reintegration of deradicalized members of violent groups is generally considered a crucial aspect in post-conflict peacebuilding. It involves efforts aimed at transforming the socio-economic and psychology of ex-combatants from violent-prone to civil life. The goal of this is to stop recidivism and foster lasting peace among people in communities (Operation Safe Corridor, 2016). Several scholars and practitioners agreed on the nexus between reintegration and peace sustainability, however, they tend to be differed on the extent to which it promotes peace sustainability and factors affecting it. Humphreys and Weinstein (2007) opined that, effective reintegration of ex-combatants reduces risks of revert into violence. However, they expressed concerned about the potential threats issues such as stigmatization and unequal economic opportunities for ex-combatants may pose to success reintegration programmes. To them, reintegration implies utilization of series of tactics that not

only address individual transformation but also foster community resilience and trust-building. Contrarily, Kaplan and Nussio (2018) viewed that, prioritizing reconciliation of victims and the former fighters of violent groups heightens the efficacy of reintegration programmes in enhancing peace sustainability. This is critical especially in communities replated with excessive distrust between members of host communities and deradicalized individuals (Olojo, 2021). In such an instance, therefore, efforts should be geared toward ensuring active participation of community members and stakeholders in the programmes' design and implementation processes.

Furthermore, economic reintegration is one the key factors recognized by scholars as the hallmark of maximizing the impact of reintegration programmes on peace sustainability. Research by Annan et al (2010) revealed that providing genuine economic support to ex-combatants increase the prospect of reintegration programmes in preventing further burst to violent conflicts in Sierra Leone. In other words, providing effective and sustainable income-generation opportunities to the reintegrated ex-combatants contributes to breaking the cycle of poverty, which has been identified as the main cause of violent extremism (Agbibo, 2015).

Parallel to this view, True (2019) argues that, acknowledging gender dynamics of both the victims and deradicalized ex-combatants is fundamental to achieving effective reintegration. True (2019) further posits that, ex-combatant women that either voluntarily or forcibly conscripted to violent groups face unique challenges, and that overlooking their gender specific needs in designing and implementing reintegration programmes will undermines peace sustainability. Beside gender inclusivity, addressing the psychological and ideological factors of former fighters also remains highly significant to effective reintegration. Scholars such as Horgan (2009) argue that, integrating therapeutic initiatives aim at relieving traumatic and cognitive experiences paramount to effective reintegration.

Ultimately, the success of reintegration programmes is deeply connected with the broader efforts to achieve peace sustainability. Addressing the needs and grievances of both the victims and ex-combatants should form part of the main strategies of effective reintegration programmes. Therefore, need for comprehensive approach that incorporates the perspectives of both ex-combatants and victimized communities is crucial for breaking the cycle of violence and ensuring long-term stability in conflict-affected regions.

Materials and Method

This study employed a qualitative research method, utilizing data from secondary sources. These sources included published works from reputable journals, government reports, newspapers, magazines, and reports from non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The aim is to assess the challenges and prospects of reintegrating deradicalized ex-Boko Haram combatants in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of existing knowledge on the subject. Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis to extract insights from the literature and draw conclusions.

Challenges of Reintegration of Deradicalized ex-Boko Haram Combatants

The challenges associated with reintegration of deradicalized ex-Boko Haram combatants are complex and deeply rooted in socio-economic, historical grievances and cultural dynamics. These challenges are impeding effective reintegration and posing significant threats to peace sustainability in North-east region and Nigeria at large.

i. Community distrust, resistance and stigmatization

Since the onset of reintegration programme in Nigeria, there is pervasive distrust, resistance and stigmatization by some members of the host communities toward ex-combatants. Owonikoko (2019) observe that, scores of

community members still recollect those heinous actions committed against them by members of Boko Haram during the insurgency. This made it extremely difficult for many to interact with them. International Alert (2023) notes that, these feelings oftentimes manifest in forms of stigmatization and ostracism. Evidence showed that, some reintegrated ex-Boko Haram combatants are marginalized and denied access to water social activities. In most case, this negatively affect the fragile peace existing in the communities.

Furthermore, some community members laments that the reintegration programme offer more economic opportunities and supports to the ex-combatants at the expense of the victims (UNDP, 2021). “Many feel that resources should prioritize victims of Boko Haram violence rather than those who perpetrated it, leading to resentment against reintegration programmes” (Akinola & Adibe, 2022; p,16).

ii. Perception of ex-combatants

Perceptions of community members is also one of the major problems affecting successful reintegration and often undermining sustenance of peaceful coexistence among people in many host communities in Maiduguri Metropolis. Studies reveal that, residents of communities in Maiduguri laments that society still perceived the deradicalized ex-Boko Haram members as fighters, who can never be reformed. In a report conducted by BBC, one of the responded viewed that, "It is almost impossible for society to accept them," reflecting a widespread belief that the government's narrative about their rehabilitation does not align with community sentiments (BBC News, 2022). This scary view is also reinforced by the opinion that the reintegrated members of Boko Haram may still have connection with the group and could likely inflict violence (Amnesty International, 2020).

iii. Recidivism

Recidivism is when the reintegrated former members returned to their violent activities. It is one of the major challenges affecting reintegration of ex-Boko Haram combatants in Nigeria. Evidence from host communities vindicates that many of the reintegrated fighters rejoined their group, while other acted as informers and intelligent gatherers. This could be attributed to ineffective reintegration strategies, which further undermine the entire process (Human Rights Watch, 2021). This trend poses a significant challenge to the objectives of reintegration programmes in Maiduguri Metropolis and raises concerns about their long-term impact on peace sustainability.

iv. Absence of robust transitional justice

Lack of effective justice systems and mechanisms that would help reconcile and resolve disputes between deradicalized ex-Boko Haram members and the victims is negatively affecting the reintegration and hindering long-term peace efforts. To some members of host communities this has formed a gap that remain unresolved. Owonikoko (2022) observe that, “communities affected by Boko Haram atrocities often feel that their suffering is overlooked by the government, which seemingly prioritizes the welfare of ex-combatants” (Owonikoko, 2020; p,1). This perception fosters resentment and distrust, leading to a situation where victims may feel compelled to take matters into their own hands. In such instances, community retribution and vigilante justice are made against the ex-combatants as a response to perceived injustices, thereby destabilizing the fragile peace in these regions (Brookings Institution, 2021).

v. Neglect and/or Insufficient support for victims

There is a considerable outcry by the victims of Boko Haram insurgency about the OPSC's neglect and outright disregard for supporting them. Reports showed that, some victims of Boko Haram insurgency are dissatisfied with the government periodization of the ex-combatants' needs over their own (International Crisis Group, 2021). According to Mustapha and Ajiboye (2022), this intensified frustration and resistance among many

people including some members of Civilian Join Task Force (CJTF).

Prospects for Peace Sustainability

Reintegration of deradicalized ex-Boko Haram members in Nigeria cannot foster peace sustainability unless it is redesigned and considered the social, political, economic and legal needs of both the victims and the ex-combatants. These can be achieved through:

a. Fostering community trust and acceptance of the reintegrated ex-members of Boko Haram

This can be done when government prioritize community engagement and consultations in the process. Reintegration programme can foster interaction between ex-combatants and community members. This would significantly promote trust and acceptance levels (Nilsson, 2005). Incorporating community and ex-combatants' needs in reintegration processes ensure mutual understanding and trust in conflict-affected communities (Abdullahi & Onapajo, 2024).

b. Acknowledgement of the harm been done on the victims

The ongoing reintegration of Boko Haram ex-combatant would help in reducing the grievances and bringing inclusive participation. For example, the programmes initiatives such as dialogue sessions could foster adoption and utilization of the culture of peaceful approach of conflict resolution among people. This would pave way for both the community members and the ex-combatant to forgive, forget and refrain from violent extremism.

c. Preventing recidivism and new recruitment to violent groups

This is one the most prominent area where reintegrating ex-combatant would potentially contribute to ensuring sustainable peace. When former fighters are disarmed, demobilized and successfully reintegrated back to their former communities, the tendency of rejoining the group or committing violent crimes would drastically reduce. This is because the poor livelihood conditions left from violent groups, and series of trainings and economic empowerment received in host community would push and pull them to civility and potentially cut the chains of persuading new recruits.

d. Promoting social cohesion

Reintegrating ex-combatants could play a pivotal role in weaving societies fragmented by years of armed conflicts. This will significantly help in reducing differences divided people, and foster unity between the victims and the reintegrated persons. This is essential in promoting lasting peaceful coexistence in conflict-affected communities of Borno State.

e. Promoting Economic growth and development

Reintegrating ex-Boko Haram combatant can contribute to enhancing the socio-economic advancement of people not only in Maiduguri metropolis, but Northeast in general. This would help end the colossal catastrophe made by decade-long insurgency and chart a new path for peace and development. Reports reveal that, some communities hosting reintegrated combatants have restored their farming activities and small and medium scale businesses especially in rural communities (Mercy Corps, 2016).

Conclusion and Recommendations

While reintegration of deradicalized ex-Boko Haram members involve complex process and pose multiple threats to the residents of host communities, it provides viable opportunities to help sustain long-term peaceful coexistence in Maiduguri Metropolis. This is largely conditional upon addressing the needs of both returnees and victims, building trust and acceptance; and establishing robust transitional justice mechanism. Government should adjust the programme design and include inclusive approaches that would involve all stakeholders and forge a resilient society capable of sustaining peace that would last longer. However, the study's strict reliance on

secondary sources of data has limits the empirical validity of its findings. Future studies should consider exploring it using mixed methods focusing on both primary and secondary sources of data.

Giving the comprehensive analysis of the challenges of reintegration of deradicalized ex-Boko Haram combatants on sustaining peaceful co-existence in Nigeria, its prospects on fostering peace sustainability is achievable if government consider addressing the social and economic needs as well as the grievances of the victims. Additionally, the following specific recommendations are worth noting:

- ***Establish Programmes to Reduce Community Distrust and Stigmatization Against Reintegrated Ex-Boko Haram Combatants:***

The Borno State Government should establish programmes aimed at reducing distrust and community stigmatization against former Boko Haram combatants. The programmes should also focus on building trust and strengthening relationships between victims and perpetrators. Critical things such as community's grievances should be judiciously addressed. Such programmes include organizing periodic peace education and community-based dialogue sessions combining both the ex-combatants and community members. Also, religious and traditional leaders should be actively involved in mediating and facilitating healings using psychosocial and conflict-sensitive communication strategies.

- ***Counter Negative Perceptions About Reintegrated Ex-Boko Haram combatants:***

Governments at both the national, state and local levels should empower local strategies for countering negative perceptions about reintegrated ex-combatants and creating community awareness about the goals and objectives of the reintegration programmes. Effective massaging and communication about the objectives of reintegration programmes can help change the fear and negative perception held by the people on ex-Boko Haram members. This perception-shifting process can help build trust, reduce stigmatization and foster community acceptance of ex-Boko Haram combatants. When community members see the reintegrated ex-Boko Haram combatant as peaceful and non-violent, they are more likely to support these efforts. Thus, incorporating things like success stories of successfully reintegrated individuals using radio stations and other local media platforms as well as conducting regular perception surveys will help in achieving that.

- ***Address Factors That Trigger Recruitment and Recidivism Among Ex-Boko Haram Combatants:***

The Borno State government and its implementing partners such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should tailor their interventions toward addressing the socio-economic and religious factors that push ex-Boko Haram combatants to join the group. This is crucial as it will help curtail re-recruitment and prevent new recruitment into the group. More innovative and entrepreneurial skills should be incorporated in the existing vocational training skill sets in addition to formal education and mental health supports. Also, community and religious leaders should be utilized in countering radical narratives in the communities.

- ***Establish an Effective Transitional Justice System to Address Grievances Between Returnee and Victims:***

Governments at both national, state and local levels should form effective justice platforms to handle the grievances through reconciliations and relationship building. Transitional justice systems will serve as mechanism to address the legacies of mass human rights violations and violence. It will ensure that victims receive justice for the injustices they suffered while holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. Moreover, civil society organizations (CSOs), traditional institutions and victim's representatives should be part of the designing and implementing processes to help enhance the programme's transparency and community trust.

▪ ***Establish an Effective Victim Support System for Boko Haram-Affected Communities:***

The Federal and State Governments should jointly form an effective victim support systems that would address the economic needs of people affected by the atrocities of Boko Haram. When the victims are supported with money and other means of livelihoods, can easily forgive and forget what happened and embrace peaceful coexistence with the reintegrated ex-Boko Haram members. This will help ameliorate the community outcries about the programmes' neglect about poverty, hunger and livelihoods problems affecting members of the communities. It will also reduce the fear about the returned fighters and foster community acceptance. This should include support in healthcare services, mental health, education, economic empowerment, reconstruction and resettlement, as well as job opportunities to vulnerable groups such as women, children, youths, people with disabilities, households among others.

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AN INTERPRETATIVE UNDERSTANDING OF GLOBAL PEACE INITIATIVE THROUGH THE PRISM OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

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Abstract

America assumed world leadership in 1949 after leading the rest of the world to defeat Nazis Germany in World War II. The desire to pursue peace and prosperity amid global partnership as well as protect the world against self-destruction has today formed the centerpiece of American foreign policy. American foreign policy is characterized by hegemony, which insists on American primacy and globalization predicated on international cooperation. Both are pointedly strengthened by existing institutions such as the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), United Nations Security Council, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is the global watchdog on nuclear armament, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the International Criminal Court (ICC). America also recognizes the use of force where necessary in enforcing its policy actions, as this may go a long way to prevent another Nazis Germany or Hitler. This usually comes into play when dealing with itinerant countries and/ or terrorist organizations. Although American foreign policies have witnessed tremendous success over the years, there are challenges: global warming, pandemics (HIV/AIDS, COVID-19); terrorism and violation of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The objectives of this paper include among others; to find out whether the American foreign policy has been able to promote and protect the sovereignty of nation states over the years; to ascertain if global peace is achieved through sanctions and arms control; to determine inter-agency cooperation among the nation states; to identify the challenges facing the American foreign policy and to proffer solutions on how global peace can be sustained. The sources of data in this research enterprise are purely secondary, while findings are discussed under the functionalist and Marxist perspectives.

Keywords:

The key words in this research are
global peace, global peace initiative,
foreign policy and America

Introduction:

America assumed world leadership in 1949 after leading the rest of the world to defeat Nazis Germany in World War II in 1945. In keeping with the Marxist philosophy, which believes that he who controls the economy also controls the infrastructure and superstructure and other relative indices therein, America is today at the head of world politics and its economy. Even though America according to the Hegemonist school is in a certain way influenced by the policy of isolationism or neutrality, which believes that America should exist for Americans, America according to the global school of thought believes it cannot prosecute these programme in isolation. Hence, the involvement of the institutions of governance such as the United Nations (UN), the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) on one hand and the European Union on the other. The World Bank sits pretty on a population of 187 member countries with America and the European nations controlling 54 percent of

World Bank shares, thereby commanding 54 percent of the voting rights. Voting at World Bank is conducted on the basis of share holding volume. Washington pockets the largest single voting share, and has often won the support of Japan, the World Bank's second largest voting member (Nwoye, 2014 in Seidensticker-Brineary, 2014).

America also has in its control the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the United Nations Security Council, which oversees the activities of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) (www-pub.inec.org/MTCD/publications/PDF/cnpp2004-Webpage/pages/countryprofiles.htm).

With the control of IMF/World Bank, it is little wonder then that America today holds court to the rest of the world through this machinery. With soft loans and grants-in-aid, compliance is often a fait accompli for Third World or developing countries. Apart from soft loans and grants-in-aid, the loyalty of these countries is often secured through submissive economic policies such as debt relief, debt cancellations and cash donations. To further cement its domineering influence over the rest of the world, America has her partners planted in Africa as in Europe, Middle East and South-east Asia. For instance, that Nigeria is widely perceived as big brother in the West African regional politics today is not just for her size alone, but also for her working alliance with the United States. This has been demonstrated times over in Guinea, Mali, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and more recently The Gambia, where Nigeria led the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to restore liberal democracy. Pronto, the hallmark of the American foreign policy is liberal democracy and trade liberalization through which America pursues the Millennium Development initiative on peace and conflict resolution. America has often argued that democracy should not only be sought after, but must be protected and promoted by all (Nwoye, 2012; Blackwill & Wright, 2020).

In East Africa, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and Rwanda arguably serve as favoured American fronts. For instance, while America used Kenya and Uganda to realize the ambition of semi-independence and full independence for South Sudan, it has used Uganda, Rwanda and Ethiopia to execute the programme of liberal democracy in DR Congo and Somalia respectively. Pursuant to the Millennium Development policy on peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, America also uses Ethiopia to do proxy war on terrorism in the East African sub-region, the same way as Kenya, Uganda and Burundi. For its high standing anti-terrorist tactics, Ethiopia is regarded as regional heavyweight in East African politics. In the past, America has also successfully used Nyerere's Tanzania to bring peace in Uganda by demising the terror and bloody regime of Idi Amin of Uganda. America also banks on Pakistan, reputed for its high standing military intelligence, to prosecute its wars in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and on Saudi Arabia, Syria and Egypt for assured peace in the Middle East, and on South Korea and India for proxy-control of Asia. Meanwhile, Horby (2010) defines global peace as world peace. (Hornby, 2010; Jacobs, 2012; Mugeru, 2012).

Apart from the partnership of these countries, America also enjoys the support of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), International Criminal Court (ICC) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). But liberal democracy and trade liberalization is not always an all conquering model for the United States. This explains the stiff naked opposition it is presently having with the likes of China, Russia, Germany and France, who like America are also working hard to assume dominance in global politics. Apart from these frontline states, other countries such as Cuba, North Korea, Argentina, Vietnam and Iran have bluntly refused to be influenced by the American foreign policy actions. For instance, North Korea has defiantly tested her newly

acquired nuclear weapons, while Iran is close to call on nuclear weaponry. For years on end, Iran has been having a running battle with both the United States and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on nuclear production. Encouraged by North Korea's defiance, Iran recently tested its newly acquired anti-ballistic missiles (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3403039>; Hart, 2005).

Against this background therefore, the main objective of this paper is to examine the antics deployed by America through its foreign policy actions in keeping the world together, thus averting another World War. Other objectives include; to find out whether the American foreign policy has been able to promote and protect the sovereignty of nation states; to determine if American foreign policy promotes global peace through sanctions and arms control; to ascertain the extent to which American foreign policy promotes inter-agency cooperation among the nation states; to identify the challenges facing the policy and proffer solutions on how global peace can be sustained. Divided into four stages, the paper opens the lid on this academic discourse by looking at the “introduction”, which also captures the statement of problem. It is followed by “theoretical framework”. For this purpose, two theories have been selected namely structural functionalist theory and Marxist theory. Theoretical framework shall then give way to “literature review”, which in essence captures the theme of this research: “An interpretative understanding of global peace initiative through the prism of American foreign policy” as emphasized by “the triumphs” and “the challenge”. The paper shall then round off with “conclusion and recommendation”.

Theoretical Framework

Structural theories are composed of the functionalist perspective and Marxist perspective. The functionalist approach originated from Radcliffe-Brown, Emile Durkheim, Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton. However, Parsons (1955) reported in Kendall (2003) is generally considered as the most influential contemporary advocate of functionalism. Developed from 19th century Anthropology, functionalism according to Lawson, Jones and Moores (2000), is a macro approach, which sees society as a system of interdependent parts, which function for the benefit of the whole. The approach is further narrowed down to an organic analogy in which society like a living organism operates with sub-systems called social institutions which function for the benefit of the entire society. According to Lawson et al. (2000), every society is instituted within the realm of its needs which are served by four major sub-systems namely economic, political, kinship and cultural institutions. Teleologically these four major sub-systems must bond together for society to survive. Pathologically when some parts become diseased, this will go a long way to affect the rest the same way too much crime in society disarms society. Etymologically, war crimes and crimes against humanity can disable, disarm society by affecting the active working population. In essence, functionalism preaches harmonious existence through consensus of values. This approach gives nominal recognition to the existence of conflicts in society, the same way it believes that social change in society should be gradual rather than certain or violent (Giddens, 1992; Giddens & Griffiths, 2008).

In their own contribution to this school of thought, both Igun (1994) and Willmott (1985) seem to operate from the same page by looking at functionalism from the spatio-temporal-situation of function. This approach believes that no situation exists in a vacuum. In other words, the spatio-temporal-situation of every society is determined by the teleology of its sub-systems the same way the spatio-temporal-situation of an organism is determined by the teleology of its parts. For instance, the heart performs a circulatory function when it pumps oxygen to the blood, while removing carbon dioxide as waste product. Relatively, the digestive system breaks food into smaller constituents. It is therefore natural that the functions of the parts and the whole are interdependent. For instance, the heart pumps blood to the brain. Any loss of blood to the brain may lead to

unconsciousness, fainting or even death of the organism. Conversely, any damage to the brain may lead to malfunctioning of the heart or even death. However, Willmott (1985) went a step further by likening society to a mechanical system with component parts all of which function to the benefit of the whole (automobile).

Like the organism in the study, all society needs functional pre-requisites which it must satisfy for society to survive. These functional pre-requisites like the major organs of the organism are maintained by major social institutions emphasized by a system of food production and distribution as well as services, the political institution elects the goals and priorities of society and allocates scarce resources, the legal system regulates conflicts and enforces norms of conduct for the attainment of stability in society, while pattern maintenance is enforced by consensus of values, which is defined by culture, values and systems of shared beliefs. Merton (1968), quoted in Kendall (2003) in his own typology distinguishes between manifest and latent functions. According to this approach, the manifest functions are the intended and more acclaimed goal of a participant, while the latent functions are the unintended, quiet or hidden goal of a participant. For instance, degree certificate could be the manifest function of a student at a College, while marriage or social relationship could represent his latent function.

This theory is considered in most quarters as an eye-opener or the first grand theory of society. Thus the proponents of the theory are applauded for using their theory to demonstrate links between the major social institutions such as the family, education and the economy. However, in spite of these strengths, its weaknesses provided a platform for the emergence of another structural theory. For instance, the theory is criticized for over-reaching itself on the claim of harmonious existence of society without caring as much to look at the other side of life, which is conflict. It is also criticized for offering an inadequate explanation of social change by assuming that change in society is purely evolutionary. The theory is further criticized for throwing its weight behind the prevalence of statusquo without caring as much to find out what some parties suffer under the prevailing statusquo. Functionalism critics have also dismissed the theory as abstract quantum because it relies on objectivity and subjectivity to explain its cases. Based on this, scholars who share this opinion concur that functionalism as a method of explanation in social sciences can hardly stand on its own.

Taking advantage of these apparent loopholes, Karl Marx came into his own with a new structural approach called Marxism. Against the traditional harmonious position adopted by functionalism, Marx according to Lewis and Bernard (1976); Kendall (2003); Hughes, Sharrock and Martin (2004) sees society as being characterized by what he calls historical materialism in which he argues that all societies are characterized by the nature of their mode of production. Dating back in history, this is defined as the slave mode of production, feudal mode of production and capitalist mode of production. Looking at the relationships that pervaded these modes of production vide the slave master and the slave, the feudal lords and the serfs, the owners of capital and the proletariat who are otherwise perceived as relations of production, Marx described them as not only unequal, but exploitative, oppressive, and subjugative. Based on this lopsided arrangement, Marx declared that the workers class or the proletariats will be able to shackle themselves out of this bondage if they are able to achieve a common ground by realizing that they are being oppressed, a platform upon which they can bond together to fight their common enemy-the capitalist class. Victory for the proletariats will throw up a situation where the common wealth of the people will be equally shared, leading to what Willmott (1985) has described as proletarian dictatorship. As Feuer (1959), quoted in Schaefer (2001) puts it: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of human struggle... the proletariats have nothing to lose, but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries unite!" (P.54).

Although Marx is credited with having unparalleled influence across a wide range of the human sciences such as sociology, anthropology, economics, political theory, philosophy, literary criticism and art history, his theory is criticized for overplaying the emphasis on the existence of conflict in society. Those who share this opinion in throwing themselves behind their argument, also argue that society does not always operate in the interest of the ruling class. Further, Marx's theory on the economic base is said to be deterministic, especially when the assumption that the infrastructure determines the superstructure has not been proven. Finally, the theory is criticized for ignoring the role of women in society.

The two theories have a bearing on the harmonious existence of society. Without the father-figure being played by the United States, perhaps weaker countries could have been worse for it today. In pursuit of the United Nations' Millennium Development goal on global peace and sovereignty of nation states, which seeks to reduce inequality among countries, America had to intervene to stop the annexation of Kuwait, an oil rich country by Iraq, leading to the invasion of Iraq by the United States and its allies in 1993 and 2003 respectively. America also supports Ukraine in cash and in kind in its war with Russia. Towards sustaining the global peace, America again plays the watchdog on nuclear armament, which today has saved the world from the danger of destroying itself (Nwoye, 2012; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/withdrawal_of_us_troops_from_Iraq).

Even so, critics of the American foreign policy such as Pons (2012) and Holloway (2012) believe that the latent function of American foreign policy is subjective interest. Yet, some others argue that even at that, these obtain at a high cost. Consider its campaigns on terror, where America lost over 2,000 of its personnel in Afghanistan, and 4, 500 of its troops in Iraq, all this to “promote peaceful and sustainable development” (Nwoye, 2012; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/biden-us-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan>; <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/28b2fb42-a8f6-4274-91c7-ea10df6b43c8/content>).

Literature Review

The Triumphs: Since becoming world leader in 1949, America has been working hard to sustain global peace. In collaboration with World Bank/IMF, it introduced the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), which has now transformed to the African Union Development Agency (AUDA). This is the economic policy, which seeks to salvage poverty-stricken developing countries. Under the Millennium Development programme on poverty eradication and development strategy in developing countries, economic policies such as grants-in-aid and debt relief, debt cancellations, donations and issuance of interest free loans readily obtain. For instance, Ethiopia received \$600 million foreign aid from America in 2009 and \$900 million in 2010. Ethiopia receives over \$2 billion foreign aid annually; Egypt receives \$1.5 billion annually from America, while over eighty percent of the funds on which Afghanistan is run come from foreign aid. In keeping with the Millennium Development agenda on pandemics and climate change, America has spent over \$600 billion in helping developing countries, especially towards the eradication of HIV/AIDs pandemics since inception. On Nigeria alone, it has spent well over \$8 billion. Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and Liberia depend on foreign aid to run their governments. Others include Mozambique, Niger, Chad, Somalia, Malawi, Mauritania, Haiti, Cambodia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt, DR Congo, Pakistan, Angola and Zimbabwe (Alhassan, 2010; Muger, 2012; Nwoye, 2012; www.raionigeria.com.org.ng; <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/28b2fb42-a8fb-4274-91c7-ea10df6b43c8/content>).

America is also interested in the global peace initiative. To check proliferation of arms, thus sustaining global peace, it introduced arms embargo. So far, this measure has been successfully used against noted African

and Third World countries such as Liberia, Iran, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Rwanda, Armenia and Azerbaijan. To further maintain the United Nations' development goal on safe, resilient and sustainable society, America has also introduced Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). Under this policy, the world super power keeps close tabs on nuclear giants like China, Russia, Germany, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, India and Pakistan. More importantly, it was for the fear of the use of weapon of mass destruction against the human race that America together with the allied forces invaded Iraq in 1993 and 2003 respectively. Even now, America through the workings of IAEA keeps a close eye on North Korea and Iran on possession and or application of nuclear weapons.

America also banks heavily on the instrumentality of warrant of arrest in its quest for global peace. In its effort to “access justice for all”, sometimes it uses arrest warrant or threats of arrest to make world leaders look up to human race with dignity. So far, noted world leaders have come under the sledge hammer of the International Criminal Court (ICC). For example, in Sudan, former President Omar el-Bashir had talked tough and looked tough in defiance of complicity in the Darfur crisis, war crimes and crimes against humanity. However, no sooner than ICC led by Louis Moreno Ocampo issued warrant of arrest against him, the rhythm of music changed as Bashir started rationalizing, organizing an arrange supporters' programme in an attempt to prove to the world that all was well in his country. Initially Bashir had dared ICC, when he travelled to Libya and Egypt, but he was scared hoot travelling to Uganda to attend an AU Summit in 2009. Uganda is regarded in many political circles as a strong ally of the United States (Jega, 2011; Nwoye, 2012; <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/28b2fb42-a8f6-4274-91c7-ea10df6b43c8/content>).

However, Nwoye (2012) argues that if Omar el-Bashir was lucky to escape arrest by the ICC, it was not so for Charles Taylor, former Liberian president. Declared wanted for war crimes and crimes against humanity, Taylor had escaped to Ghana. An attempt to have Taylor arrested in Ghana failed as Ghanaian authorities played fox. But he met his waterloo in Nigeria. George Bush, 43rd American president, had requested Taylor's extradition from an unwilling President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia much as the host President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria. However, both were arm-twisted into compliance as Taylor was arrested by Nigeria and handed over to the ICC through Liberia. He is presently doing a-50 year jail term in the United Kingdom (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36586010>; <http://www.com/news/world-africa-36411466>).

Apart from Charles Taylor, another success story of American foreign policy was the arrest and trial of former Chadian leader, Hissene Habre for war crimes and crimes against humanity. For his crimes, Habre was sentenced to life imprisonment by the court in Senegal. Once described as “Africa's Pinochet”, Habre was convicted of rape, sexual slavery and extra-judicial killings during his rule between 1982 and 1990. Tried and convicted in Senegal at the request of the United States, Habre would go down in history as the first time an African head of state was found guilty in another country. Others include former warlord and vice president of DR Congo, Jean Pierre Bemba, axed by ICC for war crimes and sexual violence, Thomas Lubanga, Sam Hinga Norman and Justina Mukoko for her role in the air-bombing of former Rwandan president in 1994 along with his visiting Burundi president (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36586010>; <http://www.com/news/world-africa-36411466>; MacDougal, 2012; Oni, 2019).

According to Nwoye (2012), American foreign policy is thought to have succeeded in Liberia, DR Congo, Sierra Leone and Rwanda. It has also succeeded in Libya, Zimbabwe and Sudan. In 1988 for instance, Libya was indicted shortly after an American-bound airplane carrying 270 passengers was downed in Lockerbie, leading to the death of all the passengers. Following this development, Libya was immediately

sanctioned, while Abdel Baset Megrahi, the man used as cannon fodder by Libya, was sentenced to life imprisonment by the ICC. Megrahi however regained his freedom in 2008 following the fence-mending between Washington and Tripoli. The latter had agreed to pay \$10 million compensation to each of the families involved in the plane crash. Muammar Gaddafi was badly mouthed for terrorism. He had provided money and training for terrorist groups such as the Arab National Youth Organization, which was responsible for skyjacking a Lufthansa airplane over Turkey and forcing the German government to free the surviving members of Black September. Black September was the terrorist group responsible for killing Israeli Olympic athletes in the 1970s (Parry, 1976 in Stark, 2004; Utomi, 2017).

In advisory capacity as world leader, America's working policy can make or mar the economy of any country. In 1986 for instance, it made the Babangida-led government to introduce the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which it used as a bargaining chip for \$2.4 billion loan. But this brought untold hardship to Nigerians as prices of goods rose beyond the reach of the common man. At the time, N25 exchanged for \$1. Today, around N1,500 goes for \$1 in the parallel market. But Nigeria was not the only country influenced by this policy. Others include Kenya, Uganda, Egypt, Niger and Chad. In Zimbabwe and Sudan, American foreign policy also generated economic crises, leading to the overthrow of Robert Mugabe and Omar el-Bashir (Nwoye, 2012; Utomi, 2017; www.radionigeria.org.ng).

But American foreign policy is not always the goodwill of hope and redemption. It is also peppered with invasion, often used where options fail. Invasion according to Hornby (2015) is an act of an army entering another country by force. This strategy has been successfully applied against Vietnam, Argentina, Libya, Iraq, Somalia, Pakistan and Afghanistan among others. For instance, for the fear of the use of weapon of mass destruction against human race, it led the allied forces to invade Iraq in 1993 and 2003 respectively. America also invaded Libya in 1986 following her disagreements with the North African country suspected to be a terror harbor. The period 1995 and 2001 was a turning point in the history of American foreign policy because it was most challenging and most excruciating in America terror-wise. It was enunciated with the bombing in April 1995 of a federal building in Oklahoma City, which claimed the lives of 168 adults and children and injured others. In 1993, there was an attack on New York's World Trade Centre that killed six people and injured more than a thousand, and another in 2001, which destroyed the Trade Centre's twin towers and caused damage to the Pentagon in Washington DC. In this onslaught, the hijackers used four passenger planes as lethal weapons, resulting in the death of over 3, 000 people. Earlier, there were bombings of a French airliner over Niger in 1986 and bombing at a disco in Germany in 1986, which killed many youngsters. There were also terrorist attacks on American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which claimed the lives of over 200 people. In 2002, another bomb attack occurred in Kenya in which 15 people lost their lives while twin bomb blasts in Uganda killed 74 people as they watched the world cup finals hosted by South Africa (Nwoye, 2012; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news>).

However, sometimes when it does not want its hand to be seen, America acts behind the clouds doing proxy war. This method was successfully used to effect regime change in Iran and Chad respectively. In both cases, Mohammed Reza Pahlevi, the Shah and Hissene Habre were the beneficiaries. Both leaders were helped to the throne by the CIA. This method also succeeded in Libya, when Muammar Gaddafi's regime was toppled by local forces, who were backed by NATO and CIA, while in Haiti, regime change is always by external influences, especially the CIA. Proxy war, which is presently ongoing in Iran was also partially successful in Niger and Mauritania (Odo, 2011; Manley, 2012; Morgan, 2012 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36586010>).

Proxy forces also removed Charles Taylor, former Liberian leader, from office. As Mahony and Sesay

(2012) reveal; “At the meeting with Gregg, Holbrooke agreed to a four-pronged approach to remove Taylor from Liberia. The American government would finance the armed insurgency against Taylor, impose sanctions to limit his capacity to fight back, sponsor a war crimes court to indict and politically stigmatize Taylor and underwrite Liberian political opposition...”

The Challenge-It is a truism that through her antics it has been able to sustain global peace since 1949, when it started holding court. However, even with the successes recorded in different aspects of governance, American foreign policy cannot be said to be a straight-jacket-success in all cases. For instance, its strong grip of Iran suffered a setback in 1979, when Ayatollah Khomeini, Iran's spiritual leader, put the Shah to flight, having coordinated the downfall of the Mohamed Reza-Pahlevi-led government from France, where he spent his last days in exile. To cap the humiliation, American Embassy was taken over by the students, who held American diplomats hostage for 444 days, released only after a peaceful negotiation with the Ronald Reagan-led administration on April 24, 1980. American foreign policy also failed in Cuba and Somalia, where liberal democracy suffered a setback. Holloway (2012) agrees no less. “Since the infamous “Black Hawk Down” retreat in 1993, Somalia has remained yet an unfinished business for the United States”. American foreign policy is centrally defined by trade liberalization and liberal democracy, and sustained by the notion that democracy must not only be highly sought after, but protected and promoted by all (Nwoye, 2012; <http://www.usatoday.com/story.news/politics>).

Sometimes attempts to bring a lasting peace to a country through regime change have ended up plunging country or countries into further crises. This was the case in Somalia, Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan. Trouble for Somalia began in 1969, when its Prime Minister, Abd ar-Rashid Shirmake, was assassinated. Ever since, Somalia has moved from one political crisis to another without any strong foothold on democracy. This political situation has today earned for Somalia a damning political sobriquet of a “failed state” or “functioning anarchy” (BBC Focus, vol.8, No 3 in Nwoye, 2016).

In 1993, America led the allied forces to invade Iraq on suspicion of acquiring weapons of mass destruction and for attacking neighbouring Kuwait, an oil rich country, in August 1990. It repeated the attack on Iraq in 2003, claiming with it its leader, Saddam Hussein. But Iraq has yet to become a haven of peace. In Libya, the situation is even worse. Although Libyan forces were defeated by NATO-backed rebels in a war that claimed the life of President Muammar Gaddafi, Libya is yet to witness the return of peace. Rather than peace, the situation has degenerated into a civil war between Northern and Eastern Libya, where Gaddafi came from. Morgan (2012) submits that “in Libya, ethnic strife has increased tenfold since the demise of Muammar Gaddafi”.

Not even in Afghanistan does the situation fare any better. After the September 11 incident in 2001, America led the allied forces to war on terror in Pakistan and Afghanistan thought to be terror harbours. Although the military campaign against al-Qaeda and Taliban claimed the life of Osama Bin Laden, fingered as the mastermind of the assault on the American towers, which claimed over 3, 000 lives, peace is yet to return to Afghanistan. Rather, it is back to statusquo ante as domestic violence against women, human right abuses, extra-judicial killings and forced disappearances became the order of the day following the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan. As Senate Minority Leader in America, Mitch McConnell opines; “It is retreat in the face of an enemy that has not yet been vanquished...” John Sopko, the independent special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction, had warned against an impending disaster following the withdrawal, while other pessimists reasoned that the exit of America “would lead to the collapse of the Kabul government, while jeopardizing gains made over the past decades in health, education and women's rights”. True to prediction, women in Afghanistan have been banned from going to school since the withdrawal of American troops and

since the collapse of the Kabul government. America formally withdrew its troops from Afghanistan on September 11, 2021, exactly 20 years after the attack on American towers (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/biden-us-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan>).

Critics of American foreign policy also believe that most times America has acted on impulse only to regret its actions much later. Not people to deny their mistakes whenever they occur, both George W. Bush, 43rd American president and Barack Obama, 44th American president, had in public statements admitted their mistakes on Iraq and Libya respectively. Bush had in an interview with journalists admitted that he was failed by a wrong intelligence report. According to Bush: “Not finding a weapon of mass destruction was a significant disappointment”. Like his predecessor, Obama also acknowledged his mistake on Libya. In a departing speech at the White House, Obama disclosed that failing to prepare for the aftermath of Muammar Gaddafi's ouster in 2011 was the worst mistake of his presidency. He told the Atlantic Magazine that the operation went as well as he had hoped, but “Libya was now a mess” (<http://www.telegraphindia.com/1160412/jsp/foreign/story79645>). Rather the much expected stability, it was confusion galore that prevailed, claiming with it the life of an American Ambassador, Christopher Stevens.

Even where issues are not resolved militarily, sometimes cold war or threats of cold war following disagreements on political ideology dominate relations. This bottom-line today defines the relationship between America and China, worsened by a new tariff regime imposed on goods coming from China by America, Russia, Germany and France and by extension Iran and North Korea, accused of developing nuclear war heads by the United States and the UN. As a result of these disagreements, America is never on one side of the political divide with China, Russia and by extension North Korea. Neither is he with Iran, Cuba, Argentina, Venezuela and Vietnam. For instance, North Korea to date has tested over 16 scud missiles in the high sea in defiance of United Nations' resolutions, while Iran is insisting on developing nuclear weapons (www.pub.iaea.org/MTCD/publications/PDF/cnpp2014/CNPP-webpage/pages/country_profiles.htm).

After the 2015 presidential election, which went in favour of Donald Trump, America accused Russia of using its electronic software to manipulate its election in favour of Trump. Only recently, Russia returned the salvo, when it accused America of meddling in its election. Not even with China is the relationship cozy. Not long ago, America gained in its diplomatic relations with Great Britain, when it influenced the latter out of her trade agreement with China worth billions of dollars. It further stirred the hornets' nest when it sent its Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, on high profile state visit to Taiwan, described by China as a runaway province (Emeozor & Orji, 2022).

Although America is working hard to sustain global peace, this effort is received with mixed grill in some quarters, and sometimes open accusation and suspicion. To this end, embers of enmity and suspicion dominate the relationship between America and the Arab world. The hallmark of this resentment was a shoe-throwing-assault on the 43rd American president, George W. Bush by a T.V. journalist, Muntadar el-Saidi, as he made a parting farewell speech in Iraq (Nwoye, 2012). Describing the presence of America in Iraq as “an army of occupation”, el-Saidi went further to state as his reason that “Bush had left his country in a mess and now he was going”.

The latent function of American foreign policy is subjective personal interest. As one writer argues; “In addition to major domestic challenges, “the reality is that the United States has big strategic interests in the world” (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/bidenus-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan>). Thinking along this premise, Pone (2012) and Holloway (2012) are agreed that America is in Africa to protect her business interests. However, the goodwill of personal interest comes under threat, when parties begin to sing dissent

tunes. That was the case in Iran, where America once decided its governance. That was precisely in 1953, when it used the CIA to topple the government led by Mossadeq. But in 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini took over the government of Iran by the storm, having coordinated the downfall of the Shah from France, where he finished his last few months in exile (Daily Sun, Feb. 1, 2011 in Nwoye, 2012).

Apart from the politics of personal interest, American foreign policy is also characterized by double standard. For instance, in the war between Iran and Iraq in 1980 over who controlled the gulf oil, America was reputed for playing double standard. While it made funds available to Iraq, at the back of Iraq, it supplied weapons to Iran. But it looked away as Iraq freely used chemical weapons on Iran, while it sanctioned others for doing the same (Nwoye, 2012; Blackwill & Wright, 2020). Characteristically this was not the first time America was displaying this feat. While it enjoyed the romance with the Hissene Habre-led administration in Chad, he looked away, while human right abuses were brazenly committed by the Chadian leader. It had also helped Habre to power in 1982, when it used the CIA to dislodge Goukoni Wadaye from power. Habre was himself shoved aside in a rebel action led by Idris Derby Itno in 1990. America now singing a different tune, called for the head of Hissene Habre for human right abuses and crimes against humanity. It only felt that justice had been served when Habre was sentenced to life imprisonment by the court in Senegal, where he was spending his exiled life (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36411466>).

A similar situation played out in Libya, where America's secretary of state during the Bush-led administration, Condoleezza Rice was a regular guest of Muammar Gaddafi. Yet, it was the same America that spurred to action the local population against Gaddafi, backed by the allied forces and NATO. To make the fall of Gaddafi a reality, “no fly zone” was declared on Libya by America even without meeting the mandatory requirement at the UN Security Council meeting. This made it difficult for Gaddafi to garner support from its foreign allies such as China and Russia (Jega, 2011; Odoh, 2011).

Even on the self-succession bid in Nigeria, America spoke through the two edges of the mouth. While at the initial stage it opposed Abacha's selfish ambition of succeeding himself in office, the wording to the music changed much later, when it threw its weight behind Abacha's government. For instance, Abacha, his son, Mohammed and their associate, Atiku Bagudu were believed to have purchased bonds in the United States with proceeds of corruption backed by America (Nwosu, 2011; Nwoye, 2012; Odiakose, 2022). American foreign policy was again on course on Charles Taylor, former Liberian president, who was made a scapegoat of war crimes in Sierra Leone even when Muammar Gaddafi, now late, who was smarting from a peace deal with America. Both Gaddafi and Blaise Compaore of Bourkina Faso were as equally involved as Taylor. Also guilty of aiding and abetting were Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda for sponsoring rebel actions in DR Congo. But America would not hear that because both are strong allies of the United States. Blaise Compaore, a close ally of Charles Taylor, was not found wanting in human right abuses and crimes against humanity even when his comrade-in-crime, Charles Taylor, was convicted for a similar offence. Even after the air travel embargo was imposed on Libya after the Lockerbie plane bombing, Compaore brazenly broke the embargo by welcoming Gaddafi to Ouagadougou. Yet, America looked away. Compaore became Bourkina Faso leader after its former leader, Thomas Sankara, was killed by a group of soldiers loyal to him. Before his death, Sankara was pursuing a radical agenda of socialism and was not having the best of relations with the West (Melly, 2012; Mahony & Sesay, 2012).

America is also believed to have behaved like a double-headed Janus by supporting the nuclear ambition of Iran during the puppet regime of Mohamed Reza Pahlevi, the Shah of Iran, but calls for the heads of

other successive leaders with similar ambitions. Jo-Anne Hart argues; “Iran is held to account for what the United States considers defiance of the international community in developing nuclear weapons. If we apply this same violations list to Pakistan, there are commonalities. The United States did not look on with favour as Pakistan developed nuclear weapons, despite the destabilizing effect of Pakistan's weapons on regional security”. Jo-Hart came into her own when she argued:

The Non-proliferation Treaty not only legally entitles Iran to produce civilian nuclear power, but during the 1970s the United States coaxed Iran to opt for nuclear energy and initially favoured the Bushehr facility. In fact, the United States perceived Iran's plans for using civilian nuclear power to enhance its economy, while the Shah controlled the country. Yes, as the Islamic Republic of Iran has attempted to benefit by restructuring its mix of domestic energy sources, it has faced a far different reaction from the United States (August 25 on-line at [www.Jpost.com/serviet/satellite?PageName=JPPost/JP Article/Show Full & ci=1122776414371 & p=1101615860782](http://www.Jpost.com/serviet/satellite?PageName=JPPost/JP%20Article/Show%20Full%20Article&ci=1122776414371&p=1101615860782)).

America has also come under the sledge hammer for its double position on self-rule. Thus, while it is busy campaigning for liberal democracy all over the world, behind its own backyard, it denies Puerto Rico voting rights (Nwosu, 2011; Nwoye, 2012). Even on war crimes and crimes against humanity, America is not entirely crime-free. In Afghanistan for instance, America was alleged to have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. But for daring to call Daniel to justice, Fatou Bensouda, the Gambian-born international prosecutor, was fired. American President, Donald Trump was unequivocal when he declared; “This administration will fight back to defend American constitutionalism, our sovereignty, and our citizens. As always, in every decision we make, we will put the interests of the American people first” This runs counter to the law of natural justice, which believes that he who goes to equity, must go to equity with a clean hand. America, Britain, Russia, France, Saudi Arabia and Israel are not signatories to the Rome Treaty. Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana, Sudan, Malawi, The Hague, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Chad and Kenya are among countries that are signatories to the Rome Treaty. Although America had signed the ICC's Rome Statute in 2000, it unsigned it in 2002 when its leader George W. Bush directed the Under Secretary of State, John Bolton to do so (Onabule, 2015).

American foreign policy is also criticized for its imperialist stunt. For instance, for failing to allow same sex marriage, Malawi was denied foreign aid by the Obama-led administration leading to the collapse of the Malawian economy. Former Malawian president, Bingu wa Mutharika ran into the murky waters with the West for refusing to heed to IMF and World Bank's advice to devalue their currency-kwacha. And for refusing to play lapdog to the West, the aids stopped, making the country to run short on foreign exchange. The situation however changed when Joyce Banda took over. A mouthpiece to West's prescriptions, Banda went on to devalue their currency to the tune of 48 percent 30 days after she was sworn in as president. In compensation, IMF together with the country's donors announced new aid packages to Malawi promptly. World Bank also withdrew \$90 million aid to Uganda on account of its anti-gay law (Sharra, 2012).

But it is not always war, war for the Americans as their foreign policy actions are also informed by dialogue and reconciliation. This policy action was witnessed more in the twilight of the Obama administration as America turned a new leaf with Vietnam, Argentina, Cuba and Iran. This action broke a-50 year sanction and diplomatic isolation on Cuba, 37 year sanction on Iran and 10 year sanction on Vietnam. Argentina also benefitted from the reconciliation move by the United States. Pope Francis had mediated a thawing of US-Cuba relations in 2014 following which America re-opened its embassy in Cuba. America also normalized relations with Argentina and Vietnam following Obama's fence-mending visit to the country 41 years after the end of the

Vietnam war. “Just a generation ago, we were adversaries and now we are friends”, Obama said during a news conference in Hanoi with Vietnamese President Tran Quang. Similarly relations between America and Iran entered a new phase after Iran had reached a truce with the International Atomic Energy, Agency, IAEA, a UN nuclear watchdog on nuclear deal(<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-340303>;

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/8205936>).

Conclusion and Recommendation: Following the import of this research undertaking, this paper candidly submits that American foreign policy has made more tremendous gains at global peace than losses. However, to sustain the peace, America needs to carry others along. Although on few occasions in the past it has acted like a one man riot squad relying heavily on the politics of hegemony, which believes that America can do it alone, there is need for collective involvement. It is to the credit of America and its allies that the world has yet to witness another World War since World War II in 1945, which claimed the lives of many people including those of over 8 million Jews (Stark, 2004). However, for global peace to be further sustained, America and the World Security Council should stamp their feet on the ground on the proliferation of nuclear weapons, which is presently a threat to global peace. It suffices to suggest that it is high time the world went beyond mere rhetorics into implementing sanctions against erring countries. More importantly, America should involve emerging powers like China in its global peace plans. Above all, it should ensure that the United Nations peace charter on the sovereignty of nations is adequately protected, especially where it concerns weaker countries of the world.

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BREASTFEEDING STATUS AND ITS DUAL INFLUENCE ON INFANT ANTHROPOMETRIC DEVELOPMENT AND MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH IN AFIKPO NORTH, EBONYI STATE

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Abstract

The mental and psychological well-being of mother-infant relationships under six months of age indicates good anthropometric outcomes and serves as a measure against growth-related comorbidities, demanding continuous, sustained attention. Researching on that would advance the promotion of sustainable policies towards optimal breastfeeding practices among mothers across states, thereby making Nigeria a global player. This study evaluated the relationship between the breastfeeding status of children under six months of age and their anthropometry outcome considering the psychological well-being of their mothers. Using MUAC (Mid-Upper Arm Circumference) and weight measuring instruments, data was collected and correlated with the mothers' psychological well-being score. The Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB) developed by Diener et al. (2010) was used to assess the well-being of the mothers used in this study. Pearson r correlation statistics was used for data analysis. Purposive and availability sampling techniques was used to selected mothers with children within six months of age. This is because the range of mothers of children under six months of age are rare variables. The result showed that MUAC outcome and body weight did not differ between exBF (Exclusive breastfeeding) and non-exBF (non-exclusive breastfeeding) infants throughout the first six months of life. However, exBF mothers reported higher psychological well-being ($r = p < .05 = .21$) than their counterparts ($r = p < .05 = .03$) on MUAC outcome measurement, and it was significant. The result also evidenced that exBF mothers reported higher psychological well-being ($r = p < .01 = .13$) than their counterparts ($r = p < .01 = .01$) on the outcome of their child's body weight and was also significant. It was concluded that infants in the early stage of life may display similar growth patterns despite the breastfeeding status, but mothers who practice exBF tend to experience greater postpartum maternal psychological well-being. Implications of the study and recommendations were made.

Keywords:

Breastfeeding status, anthropometry outcome, psychological well-being, mothers, infants.

Introduction

Often, the issue of postpartum maternal psychological wellbeing may not be fully defined without duly assessing the level of healthy growth and development of their babies in early stage of life. Psychological well-being of postpartum mothers is often disrupted by stressful situation originated from growth related comorbidities of their newly born babies. The need to optimize the infants' nutrition using either breastmilk only as prescribed by World Health Organization WHO (2014) or adding water and other food content at the early stage of life of an infant often pose challenges among mothers during postpartum period. Psychological well-

being of postpartum mothers is viewed as a positive construct that serve as safe immunity against stress, and it can seriously minimize the need for negative coping strategies (Ukeh & Hassan, 2018). Psychological well-being consists of positive emotions and moods such as contentment and happiness; the absence of negative emotions such as depression, and anxiety; satisfaction with life, fulfilment and positive functioning (Oniyangi, et al., 2019). Growth related comorbidities of newly born babies often lead to depression, anxiety and stress among postpartum mothers which may come as a result of the breastfeeding status adopted and its outcome on the infants' anthropometry outcome. These challenges always interfere severely with the psychological wellbeing of the mother-infants relationship under six months of birth age which is viewed unhealthy for normal postpartum mother.

Considering the effectiveness of Exclusive breastfeeding, as recommended by WHO, has been identified as one of the most efficient, natural, and cost-effective means of optimizing nutrition in early life (Jayasinghe et al., 2021). Exclusive breastfeeding (exBF) was defined as the infant receiving only breast milk from his/her mother or expressed breast milk, and no other substantial amount of liquids or solids with the exception of drops or syrups consisting of vitamins, mineral supplements or medicines since birth (Iorkosu et al., 2023). It is an important public health strategy for improving children's and mother's health by reducing child morbidity and mortality as well as helping to reduce healthcare costs (Iorkosu, et al., 2023). ExBF provides additional emotional benefits to the mother. In addition, evidence shows that exBF mothers are less likely to develop depressive symptoms (Stuebe, et al., 2013). A substantial body of literature supports the preventative capacity of breastfeeding during infancy on later life incidence of related comorbidities (Jayasinghe et al., 2021). The benefit to infants from prolonged breast milk consumption is not limited to cognitive, immune, and healthy digestive system development (Jayasinghe et al., 2021).

Exclusive breastfeeding provides a wide array of physical and psychological short-term and long-term health benefits for mothers, infants, and young children. According to the American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP, 2005) and the World Health Organization (WHO, 2011), there is strong evidence that infants receiving only breast milk with no other liquids or solids known as exclusive breastfeeding (exBF), have many health benefits to mothers, babies, the environment, and society. ExBF is recommended for the first six months of life as the best way of feeding an infant (AAP, 2005; WHO, 2003). ExBF in the first six months of life and continued breastfeeding from 6-11 months has shown to be the single most effective preventive intervention for reducing child mortality, with the potential of saving 1.3 million lives worldwide each year (Bai et al., 2011). Exclusive breastfeeding can also have a profound impact on maternal health as Jayasinghe et al. (2021) indicate that breastfeeding can reduce the incidence of numerous metabolic and physiological complications in mothers, including type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, and cardiovascular disease.

For the fact that breast milk has been identified as one of the most efficient, natural, and cost-effective means of optimizing nutrition in early life (Jayasinghe et al., 2021); early postnatal nutrition may play a significant role in reducing the risk of psychological distress among postpartum mothers. Thus, this present study sought to ask the following research questions;

1. Would there be differences between exBF and non-exBF on the anthropometry outcome of infants under six months of age?
2. Would there be differences in the psychological well-being of postpartum mothers practising exBF and non-exBF?

Research Objectives

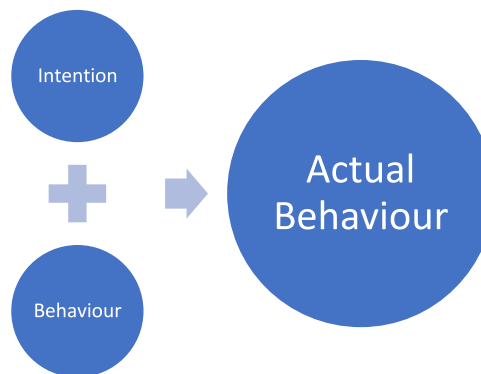
This present study specifically evaluated the relationship between the breastfeeding status of children under six months of age and their anthropometry outcome with the psychological well-being of their mother. Hence, it aimed to:

1. Determine if there would be differences between exBF and non_exBF on the anthropometry outcome of infants under six months of age.
2. Identify if there would be differences in the psychological well-being score of postpartum mothers practising exBF and those practising non-exBF.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical approach that has been widely used by health psychologists to help understand health behaviours and to develop appropriate interventions is Ajzen's (1991) theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The principal determinant of behaviour in TPB is intentions, and intentions are determined by three main constructs: (a) attitudes, (b) subjective norms, and (c) perceived behavioural control.

Theory of Planned Behaviour: Figure 1.



TPB in this context may be influenced by three focal categories of beliefs: (a) beliefs about the outcomes of a particular breastfeeding status, (b) beliefs about the expectations of others, and (c) beliefs about the presence of factors that might encourage or prevent a particular breastfeeding status (Giles, et al., 2010). According to Ajzen (1991), attitude toward behaviour in this context is determined by the individual's beliefs about outcomes or attributes about choosing a particular breastfeeding status (behavioural beliefs). Subjective norm is determined by normative beliefs, and normative belief is determined by the attitude of a society in valuing and appreciating a particular breastfeeding. Perceived behavioural control (PBC) is influenced by specific situational factors and is based on the factors that determine a mother's ability to choose or not choose a particular breastfeeding status. Perceived behavioural control is affected by both intentions and behaviours. The intention to choose a desired breastfeeding status is based on varying perceptions of mothers in adhering to the desired one (Ajzen, 1991). Women who have the perception that exBF is difficult to perform are less likely to breastfeed with breast milk only and may encourage the use of formula feeding among other postpartum women.

Literature has it that two thirds of the women had heard on exclusive breastfeeding (64.6%) and the (71%) of them knew that exclusive breastfeeding should be practiced for at least six months, Cascone et al. (2019). Nearly all mothers had breastfed their child (93.2%), but only (33.3%) of them had practiced exclusive breastfeeding for at least six months, Cascone et al. (2019). Women who agreed that breastfeeding creates a positive relationship between the mother and the child, who practiced exclusive breastfeeding during the hospital stay, and who had received breastfeeding advice at hospital discharge were more likely to practice

exclusive breastfeeding for at least six months (Cascone et al., 2019; Iorkosu, et al., 2023; Thomas, 2016). Mundagowa et al. (2019) found that the majority of mothers ($n = 193$; 89%) had knowledge about exBF, and 189 (84%) expressed a positive attitude towards the practice. However, only 81 (36%) practiced exclusive breastfeeding. The most common complementary food/fluid given to the infants was plain water ($n = 85$; 59%) Mundagowa, et al. (2019). Some studies have shown that ex-breastfeeding mothers are less likely to develop depressive symptoms (Thomas, 2016; Stuebe et al., 2013), indicating their potential to experience higher psychological well-being. The literature strongly supports the safeguarding impact of breastfeeding during infancy on the later-life prevalence of related illnesses (Thomas, 2016).

A study by Tuoyire et al. (2024) examined the association of breastfeeding duration with overweight and obesity among women in Ghana. Data on 8,516 women of reproductive age were pooled from the last five (5) Ghana Demographic and Health Surveys, and analyzed using descriptive proportions and logistic regression models. Results show that prevalence of overweight and obesity was about 8% lower for women who breastfed their children beyond 18 months (overweight = 13%, obesity = 5%) compared with women who did not breastfeed (overweight = 21%, obesity = 13%) their children at all. With reference to women who did not breastfeed their children, a significant lower-odds of obesity were observed for those who breastfed their children for 13–18 months (OR = 0.46, 95% CI = 0.268, 0.864) and >18 months (OR = 0.41, 95% CI = 0.216, 0.764), after adjusting for possible confounding factors.

Yenealem et al. (2024) assessed the prevalence and associated factors of maternal depression among mothers of undernourished children at comprehensive specialized hospitals in Northwest Ethiopia in 2023. An institution-based cross-sectional study was done among 465 participants. Outcome variables were assessed using a Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9). Data were analyzed using SPSS-25. Bivariate and multivariable logistic regression analyses were conducted. Variables with a p value less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant with a corresponding 95% confidence interval (CI). Results showed that prevalence of maternal depression among mothers of children with undernutrition was 36.4% (95% CI = 32%–41%). According to a multivariate analysis, lack of maternal education (adjusted odds ratio [AOR] = 2.872, 95% CI = 1.502–5.492), unemployment (AOR = 2.581, 95% CI = 1.497–4.451), poor social support (AOR = 2.209, 95% CI = 1.314–3.713), perceived stigma (AOR = 2.243, 95% CI = 1.414–3.560), and stunting (AOR = 1.913, 95% CI = 1.129–3.241) were factors significantly associated with maternal depression.

Abera et al. (2024) conducted a health facility-based cross-sectional survey of 1060 infants in rural Ethiopia, between October 2020 and January 2021. Data was from MMH status (main exposure) measured using the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) and infant anthropometry indicators (outcome); length for age Z-score (LAZ), weight for age Z-score (WAZ), weight for length Z-score (WLZ), mid upper arm circumference (MUAC), head circumference for age Z-score (HCAZ) and lower leg length (LLL). Using linear regression the result showed infants' mean (SD) age was 13.4 (6.2) weeks. The median score for MMH problem was 0 (inter quartile range 0–2) points, and 29.5% and 11.2% reported minimal and mild to severe depression score of 1–4 and 5–27 points, respectively. Mean (SD) LAZ was -0.4 (1.4), WAZ -0.7 (1.3), WLZ -0.5 (1.2), MUAC 12.4 (1.3) cm, HCAZ 0.4 (1.3) and LLL 148 (13.9) mm. In adjusted linear regression analysis, minimal MMH problem was negatively associated with infant LAZ marginally ($\beta = -0.2$; 95% CI: -0.4, 0.00; $p = 0.05$) and LLL ($\beta = -2.0$; 95% CI: -3.8, -0.1; $p = 0.04$), but not with other anthropometric indicators. Statistically significant associations were not found between mild to severe depressive symptoms and infant anthropometric outcomes. In conclusion, only minimal, but not mild, moderate or severe, maternal/caregivers' depressive symptoms are associated with infant anthropometry outcomes in the data set. Whilst there is a plausible relationship between

maternal mental health problems and offspring nutritional status. While infants with different feeding patterns may exhibit varying developmental characteristics in early life, sustained breastfeeding may contribute to greater postpartum maternal psychological wellbeing and prevent weight loss (Jayasinghe et al., 2021). As the literature reviewed has supported exBF as a means of boosting infants' healthy growth and development, it may also lead to the higher psychological well-being of postpartum mothers practising it. Thus, the following hypothesis were postulated;

Research Hypothesis

1. There would be differences between exBF and non-exBF on the anthropometry outcome of infants under six months of age
2. There would be differences in the level of psychological well-being of postpartum mothers practising exBF and non-exBF

The present study

This study evaluated the relationship between breastfeeding status of children under six months of age and their anthropometry outcome with the psychological wellbeing of their mother. Considering the fact that mental and psychological wellbeing of the mother-infants relationship under six months of birth age depicts good anthropometry outcome. However, it continued to stand as a measure against growth related comorbidities, and demands continuous sustained attention from both mothers and all stake holders. Researching on that could unveil the levels of psychological well-being experienced by these group of mothers and its beneficial measure to infants' growth and development in the family and the society at large.

Methods

This study adopted a cross-sectional design, and correlational analysis was used. A cross-sectional study was carried out between June 7th and June 11th 2024 during the Maternal and Health Child Week (MCHW) Training/Program that was held on 5th day of June 2024 against six (6) days "Give your child vitamin A Supplementation (VAS) program" conducted by UNICEF under the cooperation of HELLEN KELLER INTERNATIONAL AGENCY which started from 6th of June, 2024 and ended on the 11th day of June, 2024. In this program, the researcher was able to carry out the investigation in Afikpo North L. G. A., of Ebonyi State. Using MUAC (mid-upper arm circumference) and weight measuring instruments, the relationship between the breastfeeding status of children under six months of age and their anthropometry outcome with the psychological well-being of their mother were evaluated. The Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB) developed by Diener et al. (2010) was used to assess the well-being of the mothers used in this study as a survey. The scale had been adapted in Nigeria and validated by the present researcher (N = 50) with a Cronbach alpha correlation coefficient of .76. The data was collected and correlated with the mothers' psychological wellbeing score. The unit post was selected for this research as a stable place to duly carry out this investigation, and availability sampling was used. Therefore, the selected mothers with their children within six months of age were considered a representative sample because the range of mothers of children under six months of age are rare variables that can be seen immediately among all breastfeeding mothers. This made the researcher to focus purposively on those available ones. In addition, the available mothers were given a self-report measure of psychological well-being inventory to assess the level of their psychological well-being during this post-partum period. The researcher was able to sample 59 mothers with babies under six months of age precisely.

Result

The result is presented in two tables below

Table 1: Relationship between breastfeeding status (exBF/non-exBF) on MUAC outcome and psychological well-being of the mother

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
ex_BF	15.4593	1.03925	59
Not_ex_BF	14.2864	1.00952	59
Psy_wellbeing	52.0508	4.09972	59

The above table shows the mean and standard deviation of breastfeeding status on MUAC outcome and psychological well-being score. This output indicates that the mean score of people practicing exBF (15.46) is slightly higher than that of those practicing non-exBF (14.29) on the MUAC outcome of the child and the level of psychological well-being of the mother.

Table 2: Correlations

		ex_BF	Not_ex_BF	Psy_wellbeing
ex_BF	Pearson Correlation	1	.201	.165
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.126	.212
	N	59	59	59
Not_ex_BF	Pearson Correlation	.201	1	-.288*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.126		.027
	N	59	59	59
Psy_wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	.165	-.288*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.212	.027	
	N	59	59	59

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation table above indicates that non-exBF is negatively correlated with the psychological well-being score of the postpartum mother. This explained more of the relationship between the MUAC outcome of the child and the psychological well-being score of their mother. It shows that there is a slight push down of their satisfaction on the outcome measurement of their child's growth, which slightly depicts the negative significant relationship to their psychological well-being score ($r = -.29, p = 0.05$).

Table 3: Relationship between breastfeeding status (exBF/non-exBF) on Weight outcome of the child and psychological well-being of the mother.

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
ex_BF	10.2983	.44817	59
Not_ex_BF	9.0814	.71595	59
Psy_wellbeing	52.0508	4.09972	59

The above table shows the mean and standard deviation of the breastfeeding status on Weight outcome and psychological well-being score. This output indicates that the mean score of people practicing ex_BF (10.28) is slightly higher than that of those practicing non-exBF (9.08) on Weight outcome of the child and the level of psychological well-being of the mother.

Table 4: Correlations

		ex_BF	Not_ex_BF	Psy_wellbeing
ex_BF	Pearson Correlation	1	-.175	.201
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.184	.127
	N	59	59	59
Not_ex_BF	Pearson Correlation	-.175	1	-.428**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.184		.001
	N	59	59	59
Psy_wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	.201	-.428**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.127	.001	
	N	59	59	59

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation table above indicates that non-exBF is negatively correlated with the psychological well-being score of the postpartum mother. This explained more of the relationship between the Weight outcome of the child and the psychological wellbeing score. It shows that there is a slight push down of their satisfaction on the outcome measurement of their child's growth, which slightly depicts the negative significant relationship to their psychological well-being score ($r = -.43, p = 0.01$).

Discussion of the Findings

This study has actually evaluated the relationship between the breastfeeding status of children under six months of age and their anthropometry outcome with the psychological well-being of their mother. As it aimed to determine if there would be differences between exBF and non_exBF on the anthropometry outcome of infants under six months of age. The slight mean difference of ex_BF (15.46) against non-exBF of (14.28) in MUAC outcome and the mean difference of ex_BF (10.28) as slightly higher than those practising non-exBF (9.08) on Weight outcome of the child has actually determined. This is not consistent with the findings of Jayasinghe (2021), who found weak evidence for different fat mass index trajectories for eBF and neBF infants in the first 6 months of life (ANOVA, $F = 2.42$, $df = 1.9$, $P = 0.09$) months. This has also accepted the hypothesis, which stated that there would be differences between exBF and non-exBF on the anthropometry outcome of infants under six months of age.

Secondly, the study aimed to identify if there would be differences in the psychological wellbeing score of postpartum mothers practicing exBF and those practicing non-exBF . The correlation table of the MUAC outcome ($r = -.29, p = 0.05$) and that of the Weight outcome ($r = -.43, p = 0.01$) has actually identified this significant difference, respectively. This has also accepted the second hypothesis, which stated that there would be differences in the level of psychological well-being of postpartum mothers practising exBF and of those practising non_exBF. This specifically has not been determined in any breastfeeding research literature and, thus, has actually closed the existing gap, especially in recent literature.

Implication of the study

According to the literature, the majority of mothers do not exclusively breastfeed their infants in the early postpartum period, despite World Health Organization recommendations. However, this study has discovered significant differences in anthropometry outcomes among different breastfeeding statuses on children under six months of age. According to the TPB, intention has been demonstrated to be directly associated to behaviour, and identifying predictors of intention is a crucial step in developing breastfeeding promotion (Bai et al., 2011). In support of Sencan et al. (2013), exclusive breastfeeding education and assistance from healthcare providers should be encouraged to enhance the length and rate of exclusive breastfeeding.

Moreover, there is a dire need for a collaborative effort among all major stakeholders in mother and infant health to promote optimum breastfeeding practices across all populations. As demonstrated by the findings of this study, infants with diverse feeding patterns may have distinct development trends in early life. To gain a more thorough picture of baby growth, education and support for exBF at the population level should be complemented with the simultaneous evaluation of anthropometry outcomes. Accurate quantification of anthropometry outcomes can provide important insights regarding qualitative and quantitative differences in specific tissue types. Logical extensions of the current research include the utilization of subjective measurement approaches (e.g., self-report measure of psychological wellbeing) and a comprehensive evaluation of the role of good anthropometry outcome in increasing the psychological wellbeing the postpartum mothers, including infants' growth and wellness.

Conclusion

Breastfeeding considered the optimal start for infants, is closely linked to both infant growth and maternal mental health. Research suggests an association between maternal mental well-being and infant growth outcomes. Studies highlight the importance of breastfeeding for infant development. Breastfeeding impact spans beyond simple nourishment, affecting the child's physical development and the mother's emotional well-being. Breastfeeding positively influences infant growth indicators such as weight, length, and head circumference, especially in the first months of life. Breast milk provides optimal nutrients tailored for infant development, promoting healthy weight gain and linear growth. Studies show breastfed infants often have better body composition with appropriate fat and lean mass distribution. However, growth patterns can vary; some breastfed infants may gain weight more slowly than formula-fed peers but tend to have healthier growth trajectories overall. Proper exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months is associated with optimal growth and developmental outcomes. Additionally, factors like maternal education and income can influence both infant anthropometrics and potentially, the breastfeeding relationship and maternal mental state. Though this study did not look into that but suggested that other studies may wish to look into such variables.

Recommendations

This study evaluated the relationship between the breastfeeding status of children under six months of age and their anthropometry outcome with the psychological well-being of their mothers. Based on its findings, the below recommendations were made;

1. Since this study found differences in anthropometry outcomes between breastfeeding statuses, early postpartum interventions are likely to be an important factor in improving exclusive breastfeeding.
2. Breastfeeding education and the support of healthcare providers should be encouraged by child health practitioners to increase the duration of breastfeeding among postpartum mothers.
3. This study found that higher psychological well-being is one of the immune boosters for postpartum mothers after childbirth among those practicing exBF. Therefore, it should also be one of the social psychological interventions towards creating awareness of the social well-being of postpartum mothers.

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THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN HEALTHCARE DELIVERY: A STUDY OF MAIDUGURI METROPOLITAN, BORNO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effects of traditional medicine on healthcare delivery in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council, Nigeria. Using a mixed-method approach combining quantitative surveys (n=384) and qualitative interviews (n=42), the research examines utilization patterns, regulatory frameworks guiding traditional medicine. The quantitative data was analysed using SPSS version 24, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Results indicate widespread use of traditional medicine, with 91% of respondents reporting personal use and 94% acknowledging its significant role in healthcare practices. The study reveals a complex regulatory landscape, with 67% of respondents expressing satisfaction with current regulations, while 76% support implementing more rigorous testing protocols similar to modern pharmaceuticals. However, significant challenges exist in standardization and integration with modern healthcare systems. Analysis through the Health Belief Model frameworks suggests that cultural norms and perceived benefits strongly influence traditional medicine utilization, despite some scepticism about efficacy. The findings highlight the need for balanced policy approaches that preserve cultural healthcare practices while ensuring safety and quality standards.

Keywords:

Traditional Medicine, Healthcare Delivery, Maiduguri Metropolitan, Medical Integration, Healthcare Regulation.

1. Introduction

Healthcare systems worldwide have evolved through complex historical and cultural pathways, with traditional medicine serving as a cornerstone in many societies' approaches to healing and wellness. In Nigeria, particularly in the northern region, traditional medicine continues to play a vital role in meeting the healthcare needs of the population, operating alongside modern medical practices (Adeyi, 2016). Before the colonial era, Nigeria's healthcare system was predominantly traditional, with healers serving as primary caregivers in their communities. While colonialism introduced Western medical practices, traditional medicine maintained its relevance due to its accessibility, cultural resonance, and affordability (Aina, et al., 2020).

The current healthcare landscape in Maiduguri metropolis presents a complex interplay between traditional and modern medical practices. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2017), up to 80% of the population in developing countries, including Nigeria, relies on traditional medicine for their primary healthcare needs. This high utilization rate is particularly significant in regions facing substantial challenges in accessing modern healthcare services due to infrastructural deficiencies, shortage of medical personnel, and

prohibitive costs (Abubakar, et al., 2022).

Traditional medicine in this context encompasses a wide range of practices and knowledge systems, including herbal medicine, spiritual healing, and various therapeutic techniques passed down through generations. The World Health Organization defines traditional medicine as the sum total of knowledge, skills, and practices based on theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures, used in health maintenance and the prevention, diagnosis, improvement, or treatment of physical and mental illnesses (WHO, 2019). These practices often extend beyond physical healing to include psychological and social support, reflecting a holistic approach to healthcare that resonates with local cultural values and beliefs. Research by Abubakar et al. (2016) found that approximately 85% of participants utilized traditional medicine for various health conditions, ranging from common ailments to more complex conditions.

The integration of traditional medicine into the formal healthcare system has become an increasingly important consideration for healthcare providers and policymakers. This integration effort aims to harness the benefits of both traditional and modern medical practices while ensuring safety and quality standards. However, significant challenges exist, including the need to balance cultural preservation with evidence-based practices, establish regulatory frameworks, and develop standardization protocols (Abdullahi, 2011).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the historical significance and widespread use of traditional medicine in Nigeria, there is a critical lack of empirical evidence regarding its effectiveness and impact on healthcare delivery in Maiduguri Metropolitan. While approximately 80% of the population in Northern Nigeria relies on traditional medicine for their primary healthcare needs (WHO, 2019), the relationship between traditional medicine practices and healthcare outcomes in Maiduguri remains poorly understood and inadequately documented.

This knowledge gap is particularly problematic for three key reasons: First, the absence of systematic documentation and evaluation of traditional medicine practices in Maiduguri metropolis has led to missed opportunities for improving healthcare delivery. Healthcare providers and policymakers lack the necessary evidence base to make informed decisions about integrating beneficial traditional practices into the formal healthcare system.

Second, despite the significant role of traditional medicine in meeting the healthcare needs of the local population, there is insufficient understanding of its safety, efficacy, and interaction with modern healthcare services. This lack of understanding creates potential risks for public health and hampers efforts to develop effective healthcare policies that could leverage the strengths of both traditional and modern medical practices. Third, while studies have examined traditional medicine in various Nigerian contexts (Elujoba, et al., 2006; Eruaga, et al., 2024; Olsson & Akpan, 2023), there has been no comprehensive assessment of its effects on healthcare delivery specifically in Maiduguri Metropolitan. This regional gap in knowledge is particularly significant given Maiduguri's unique socio-cultural context and healthcare challenges.

These issues are exacerbated by the current healthcare situation in Maiduguri, where limited access to modern healthcare facilities, high treatment costs, and long waiting times have increased reliance on traditional medicine. Without a clear understanding of how traditional medicine affects healthcare delivery in this context, efforts to improve healthcare access and outcomes in the region may be compromised.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to examine the roles of traditional medicine on healthcare delivery in Maiduguri metropolis.

The objectives of this study are to:

- i. assess the utilization patterns of traditional medicine in Maiduguri Metropolitan.
- ii. examine public perceptions regarding traditional medicine practices in Maiduguri metropolital.

2. Conceptual Review

2.1 Traditional Medicine

Traditional medicine has been earlier defined to encompass a diverse range of healthcare practices, approaches, knowledge, and beliefs incorporating plant, animal, and mineral-based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques, and exercises applied singularly or in combination to maintain well-being, prevent, diagnose, and treat illness. These systems of medicine have evolved over centuries within specific cultural contexts and are deeply embedded in local knowledge systems and practices (Abdullahi, 2011). In the Nigerian context, traditional medicine includes various specialized practices such as herbalism, bone setting, traditional birth attendance, spiritual healing, and psychiatry, each with its distinct methodologies and theoretical foundations (Ezekwesili-Ofili & Okaka, 2019)..

The scope of traditional medicine extends beyond mere treatment of ailments to include health promotion, disease prevention, and maintenance of spiritual and psychological well-being. Unlike Western biomedical approaches that often focus on disease as a biological phenomenon, traditional medicine typically adopts a holistic perspective that considers the interconnections between physical, mental, spiritual, and social aspects of health (Iyiola & Adegoke Wahab, 2024). This approach resonates with many communities' cultural understandings of health and disease, contributing to traditional medicine's enduring relevance despite the advent of modern healthcare systems.

2.2 Healthcare Delivery

Healthcare delivery refers to the organized provision of healthcare services to individuals and communities. It includes the structures, processes, and resources dedicated to maintaining or improving health outcomes through prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and management of disease, illness, and injury (Golmei, et al., 2021). A healthcare delivery system typically comprises facilities, personnel, financing mechanisms, information systems, governance structures, and logistical support needed to provide health services to a defined population. In contemporary healthcare discourse, healthcare delivery is conceptualized through various frameworks, including the primary healthcare approach, universal health coverage, and integrated service delivery models. Each of these frameworks emphasizes different aspects of healthcare provision, such as accessibility, equity, efficiency, and quality of care. In many developing countries, healthcare delivery systems face significant challenges related to infrastructure, human resources, financing, and governance, which affect their ability to provide adequate care to all segments of the population (Barnes, et al., 2019).

2.3. Literature Review

Traditional medicine in Nigeria often lacks standardization, typically available in forms like liquid mixtures, powders, ointments, and crude plant parts (Kumadoh & Ofori-Kwakye, 2017). Its adoption is influenced by cultural elements (tradition, beliefs), supporting factors (economics, accessibility), external influences (media), and morbidity factors (Kasole et al., 2019). Slikkerveer (2019) describes medical pluralism where traditional, transitional, and modern medical systems coexist, conceptualizing health-seeking behaviour through blocks of variables in transcultural healthcare utilization.

Despite emphasis on traditional medicine globally, it faces significant obstacles including lack of standardized

assessment frameworks and absence of national regulatory policies (Abbott, 2014). Abdullahi (2011) notes that traditional medicine represents an ancient, culturally specific approach to healing that has endured throughout history, with diverse societies developing indigenous practices.

In Nigeria, a substantial population, particularly in remote and rural areas, relies heavily on traditional medicine (Oreagba et al., 2011). Despite abundant medicinal plant resources, the sector remains underdeveloped with limited access to standardized, quality herbal products. Countries with similar biodiversity and traditional medicine culture, like China and Thailand, have successfully integrated herbal medicine into their national healthcare systems (Yao et al., 2020). Integrating traditional medicine into Nigeria's healthcare system could expand access to alternative healthcare options while bringing economic benefits.

Research methodologies for studying traditional medicine include retrospective treatment-outcome surveys, prognosis-outcome methods, and dose-escalating prospective studies (Graz et al., 2007). These approaches aim to gather evidence for integrating proven herbal therapies into conventional healthcare. Translational herbal medicine focuses on applying existing knowledge to clinical settings by enhancing quality, standardizing protocols, and modernizing technologies (Shergis, et al., 2013).

Traditional medicine has been deeply embedded in human societies for generations, with perceptions shaped by factors like religion, folklore, and societal norms (Isola, 2013). In some communities, traditional healers are highly respected leaders with expertise in herbal treatments and spiritual practices, while Western societies often approach traditional medicine with scepticism. Knowledge transmission in traditional medicine is characterized by secrecy and tacit understanding, typically acquired through apprenticeship under family members with unique skills (Khumalo et al., 2018). Historically, this knowledge was passed down orally, but recent trends show a shift toward documentation of medical knowledge in Nigeria, with practitioners prioritizing record-keeping by children, siblings, or apprentices (Adefolaju, 2014; Kwame, 2016).

The efficacy and safety of traditional medicine remain subjects of debate. Advocates emphasize holistic benefits and cultural significance, while critics express concerns about insufficient scientific evidence and risks of unregulated treatments. Addressing this divide requires robust research and collaboration among traditional healers, healthcare professionals, and regulatory authorities.

Despite growing popularity and financial worth of traditional medicine globally, there is limited literature on how practitioners view formal preservation of their knowledge (Li et al., 2020). Many traditional healers have limited formal education, hindering their access to information that could enhance their services (Ajagbe, 2010). The integration of traditional medicine into modern healthcare systems has gained momentum, recognizing its potential to enhance healthcare accessibility and cultural sensitivity.

3. Methodology

This study utilised a survey research design to gather opinions and perceptions from a subset of the population in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State. Maiduguri, the largest commercial city in Northeastern Nigeria, spans 69,436 square kilometres and has a population of approximately 870,000 (Ikusemoran & Jimme, 2014). The city features a Sahelian savannah ecosystem with grasslands, shrubs, and trees. Its climate is predominantly hot and dry, with annual rainfall ranging from 500mm to 1000mm and relative humidity between 42% and 49%, and average temperature of around 30°C (Ikusemoran & Jimme, 2014).

The city represents a distinctive blend of cultural traditions and modern healthcare methods, with a diverse

population including Kanuri, Shuwa Arabs, Hausa, and other ethnic groups. The majority of the population consists of civil servants, traders, military and paramilitary personnel, and artisans (Bell & Card, 2021). This diverse demographic makeup creates a unique context for studying traditional medicine's role in healthcare delivery.

3.1 Sampling Technique

All male and female adults residing within the Maiduguri metropolis formed the population of this study. The sample size of 400 respondents was determined using Taro Yamane's formula (Equation 1):

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

(1)Where: n = Sample size required, N = Population under study and e = Sampling error = 0.05.

A multi-stage sampling technique was implemented in three phases. First, seven wards (Mafoni, Gwange 2, Gwange 3, Shehuri North, Hausari, Bolori 1, and Maisandari) were purposively selected based on their socioeconomic characteristics and reliance on traditional medicine. Second, two settlements were randomly selected from each ward: Bocolis and Abari (Mafoni), Layin Dan Bauchi and Sabon Gari (Gwange 2), Maifema and Ganyala (Gwange 3), Gangamari and Dimari (Shehuri North), Hausari Dandamari and Babban Layi (Hausari), Musari and Old Bolori (Bolori 1), and Madugari and Massa Malumbe (Maisandari). Finally, systematic sampling was used to select households within these settlements.

The qualitative component comprised in-depth interviews with 42 participants, strategically selected to represent various stakeholders: traditional practitioners (20), healthcare providers (6), health officials (4), ward heads (4), youth leaders (5), and religious leaders (3). These participants were purposively selected based on their involvement with and knowledge of traditional medicine in Maiduguri.

3.2 Data Collection Instruments

A convenience sampling approach was employed to distribute questionnaires to residents of Maiduguri metropolis. The qualitative data collection employed semi-structured interviews, with sessions lasting 15-20 minutes each. Interview guides were tailored to each stakeholder group, focusing on their specific perspectives and experiences with traditional medicine (Buba, et al., 2024).

3.3 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics was used to analyse demographic trends, utilization patterns, and perceptions using SPSS version 24. The qualitative data underwent thematic analysis, with initial coding performed to identify key concepts and issues. These were then grouped into broader themes including utilization patterns, regulatory frameworks, perceptions and beliefs, knowledge and practices, and potential benefits and risks of integration.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines, obtaining necessary approvals from the Department of Sociology and the Ministry of Health. Informed consent was secured from all participants, with clear explanations provided in local languages (Kanuri or Hausa) about the study's purpose, objectives, and potential benefits. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process, with personal identifiers anonymized in all documentation. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, and all interview recordings and transcripts were securely stored with access restricted to authorized personnel only.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The response rate for the quantitative data indicated that four hundred (400) copies of questionnaire were administered to the respondents and the response rate recorded three hundred and eighty-four (384) representing 96%. All were adequately filled and found usable for analysis. While 16 copies of questionnaire were not returned representing 4%, as non-response rate. The response rate of 384 (96%) was adequate for data analysis used in this study.

Table 1: Distribution of Sociodemographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	181	47
Female	203	53
Age		
20-30	260	68
31-40	84	22
41-50	28	7
51-60	08	2
Above 60	04	1
Educational Background		
No formal Education	13	3
Primary Six Certificate	16	4
Junior WAEC Certificate	28	7
Secondary School Leaving Certificate	91	24
B.Sc. or its Equivalent	132	34
Master's or its Equivalent	48	13
Others, Please Specify	56	15
Occupation		
Civil servant	204	53
Farmer	40	10
Businessman/Women	52	14
Others	88	23

Table 1 presents the demographic information of respondents, including gender, age, educational background, and occupation. The data show that 203 respondents (53%) were female, while 181 respondents (47%) were male, indicating that the majority of respondents were female. Regarding educational background, 132 respondents (34%) held a B.Sc. or its equivalent, followed by 91 respondents (24%) with a secondary school leaving certificate, 56 respondents (15%) with other qualifications, 48 respondents (13%) with a master's degree or equivalent, 28 respondents (7%) with a junior WAEC certificate, 16 respondents (4%) with a primary six certificate, and 13 respondents (3%) with no formal education. This suggests that the majority of respondents held a B.Sc. or equivalent.

In terms of age, 260 respondents (68%) were between 20-30 years old, 84 respondents (22%) were between 31-40 years old, 28 respondents (7%) were between 41-50 years old, 8 respondents (2%) were between 51-60 years old, and 4 respondents (1%) were above 60 years old. This indicates that the 20-30 age group had the highest number of respondents. For occupation, 204 respondents (53%) were civil servants, 88 respondents (23%) fell into other occupational categories, 52 respondents (14%) were businessmen/women, and 40 respondents (10%) were farmers.

were farmers. This shows that most respondents were civil servants. The sociodemographic data for the respondents in the qualitative research is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents interviewed

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	20	67
Female	10	33
Age		
20-30	6	20
31-40	6	20
41-50	7	23
51-60	7	23
Above 60	4	13
Educational Background		
No formal Education	4	2
Primary Six Certificate	2	7
Junior WAEC Certificate	4	13
Secondary School Leaving Certificate	10	33
B.Sc. or its Equivalent	9	30
Master's or its Equivalent	1	3
Others, Please Specify	0	0
Designation		
Traditional medicine practitioners	13	43
Ward heads	4	13
Religious leaders	3	10
Youth leaders	3	10
Health care practitioners	3	10
Ministry of Health officials	4	13

4.2 Results Based on Research Questions

1. What is the extent of utilization of traditional medicine in Maiduguri Metropolitan?

Table 3: The Utilization of Traditional Medicine in Maiduguri Metropolitan (N=384)

Statement	SA	A	SD	D
Traditional medicine plays a significant role in the healthcare practices of the Maiduguri community.	92 (24%)	268 (70%)	16 (4%)	08 (2%)
I have personally used traditional medicine as a form of treatment or therapy	100 (26%)	248 (65%)	22 (5%)	14 (4%)
Traditional medicine is easily accessible within Maiduguri Metropolitan	47 (12%)	283 (74%)	48 (12%)	6 (2%)
I trust the effectiveness of traditional medicine	82 (21%)	208 (54%)	76 (20%)	18 (5%)
I would recommend traditional medicine to family and friends	70 (18%)	223 (58%)	82 (21%)	09 (3%)
I believe traditional medicine has fewer side effects than modern medicine	50 (13%)	232 (61%)	82 (21%)	20 (5%)
I believe traditional medicine can complement modern medical treatments	60 (16%)	208 (54%)	92 (24%)	24 (6%)

Source: Field work (2024)

Table 3 presents a summary of respondents' views on traditional medicine in Maiduguri Metropolitan. The data indicates a generally favourable perception of traditional medicine within the community. A significant majority of respondents believe that traditional medicine plays a crucial role in healthcare practices, with 94% either strongly agreeing or agreeing with this statement. Additionally, 91% of respondents have personally used traditional medicine, highlighting its prevalent use.

Accessibility is also viewed positively, with 86% of respondents agreeing that traditional medicine is easily accessible in Maiduguri. This accessibility likely contributes to the high trust in its effectiveness, as 75% of respondents express confidence in its efficacy. Furthermore, 76% would recommend traditional medicine to others, suggesting a strong personal endorsement of its benefits.

Despite this positive outlook, there is some scepticism. About 25% of respondents are either neutral or disagree with the effectiveness of traditional medicine, and a notable percentage also question its side effects compared to modern medicine. This indicates a degree of caution and scepticism among the population.

Overall, the data reflects a positive view of traditional medicine's role and accessibility, coupled with a recognition of its potential benefits and risks. However, the presence of scepticism about its effectiveness and safety underscores the need for continued evaluation and education regarding traditional medicine practices.

There is a consensus among most traditional medical practitioners, ward heads, and youth leaders that traditional medicine is widely utilized in Maiduguri. They revealed that:

“Traditional medicine is not only accessible but also affordable, making it the first option for many people, particularly those from low-income households.” (Traditional practitioner).

“People trust traditional remedies for common ailments such as malaria and stomach disorders.” (ward heads)

“While older generations have historically relied on traditional medicine, even younger people are increasingly turning to it, especially in areas where modern healthcare is either unavailable or unaffordable.” (Youth leaders)

2. What is the regulatory framework governing traditional medicine in the Maiduguri metropolitan?

Table 4: The Regulatory Framework Governing Traditional Medicine in the Maiduguri Metropolitan

Statement	SA	A	SD	D
Do you believe that there is adequate regulation in place for traditional medicine in your area?	56 (15%)	198 (52%)	102 (26%)	28 (7%)
Do you think the current regulatory framework adequately addresses safety concerns related to traditional medicine?	26 (7%)	248 (65%)	86 (22%)	24 (6%)
Do you believe that traditional medicine should undergo rigorous testing similar to modern pharmaceuticals before being allowed for public use?	30 (8%)	263 (68%)	68 (18%)	23 (6%)
Do you think there should be more collaboration between traditional medicine practitioners and modern healthcare professionals?	52 (14%)	186 (48%)	108 (28%)	38 (10%)
Do you believe that traditional medicine should be covered by health insurance in Maiduguri Metropolitan?	20 (5%)	206 (53%)	110 (29%)	48 (13%)
Do you think there should be more public awareness campaigns about the benefits and risks of traditional medicine?	49 (13%)	168 (44%)	123 (32%)	44 (11%)
Do you feel that traditional medicine practitioners should undergo formal training and certification?	53 (147%)	188 (49%)	109 (28%)	34 (9%)

Source: Field work (2024)

Table 4 provides insights into respondents' opinions regarding the regulatory framework and policies governing traditional medicine in Maiduguri Metropolitan. The data indicates a mixed perception of current regulations and the need for further enhancements.

Regarding the adequacy of regulation, 56 respondents (15%) strongly agree, and 198 (52%) agree that the current regulatory measures are sufficient. However, 102 (26%) disagree, and 28 (7%) strongly disagree, suggesting that a significant portion of the population feels the regulations are inadequate. When asked if the regulatory framework addresses safety concerns, 26 respondents (7%) strongly agree, and 248 (65%) agree, indicating a general belief that safety concerns are addressed. Nonetheless, 86 (22%) disagree, and 24 (6%) strongly disagree, reflecting some concern about the current safety measures. On whether traditional medicine should undergo rigorous testing similar to modern pharmaceuticals, 30 respondents (8%) strongly agree, and 263 (68%) agree, showing substantial support for more stringent testing. In contrast, 68 (18%) disagree, and 23 (6%) strongly disagree, indicating that some respondents may not see the necessity for such testing.

There is notable support for increased collaboration between traditional medicine practitioners and modern healthcare professionals, with 52 respondents (14%) strongly agreeing and 186 (48%) agreeing. However, 108 (28%) disagree, and 38 (10%) strongly disagree, showing varied opinions on this collaborative approach. The idea of covering traditional medicine under health insurance garners mixed reactions. Only 20 respondents (5%) strongly agree, while 206 (53%) agree. Meanwhile, 110 (29%) disagree, and 48 (13%) strongly disagree, reflecting a divided view on insurance coverage for traditional medicine. A majority supports more public awareness campaigns about traditional medicine, with 49 respondents (13%) strongly agreeing and 168 (44%) agreeing. Yet, 123 (32%) disagree, and 44 (11%) strongly disagree, suggesting that while awareness is valued, there is still some debate about its necessity.

Finally, the need for formal training and certification for traditional medicine practitioners is supported by 53 respondents (14%) who strongly agree and 188 (49%) who agree. Nonetheless, 109 (28%) disagree, and 34 (9%) strongly disagree, indicating mixed feelings on formalizing training. Overall, the data reveals a general belief in the need for enhanced regulation, safety measures, and formal training in traditional medicine, with varied opinions on testing, insurance coverage, and public awareness.

The interviews revealed significant concerns about the lack of adequate regulation of traditional medicine. Both Ministry of Health officials and healthcare practitioners expressed a strong need for a structured regulatory framework. They noted that:

“While there have been some efforts to monitor traditional practices, these are insufficient. It's important to have policies to ensure the safety, efficacy, and standardization of traditional treatments.” (Ministry of Health official)

Many traditional practitioners welcomed the idea of regulation.

“Formalizing and validating our work would be beneficial,” said, but we're also concerned that too much government intervention could limit our ability to operate freely. We need government support in the form of training and resources, not strict oversight.” (Traditional medical practitioners)

4.3 Discussion

4.3.1 Utilization of Traditional Medicine

The study found widespread use and acceptance of traditional medicine in Maiduguri, with 91% of respondents

reporting personal use. This high utilization rate aligns with findings from other regions. For instance, a study by Elechi-Amadi, et al. (2021) in Port Harcourt found 80.9% prevalence of traditional medicine use. A review by Balogun (2021) asserts that between 80% and 90% of Nigerians receive their health care from traditional medical practitioners. Similarly, some research in other regions of the world also aligns with the finding from this study. For instance, a study by Van Andel and Carvalheiro (2013) found that about 66% of respondents in developing countries have used traditional medicine.

The study revealed that the high utilization rate can be explained by positive attitudes towards traditional medicine, strong subjective norms within the community, and high perceived behavioural control. The widespread acceptance suggests that cultural and social norms play a crucial role in influencing individuals' decisions to use traditional medicine. This aligns with research by Hughes et al. (2013) which found that community beliefs and family traditions significantly influence traditional medicine use.

When analysed through the Health Belief Model (HBM), the high utilization rate suggests that respondents perceive significant benefits from traditional medicine use. The 75% confidence level in traditional medicine's efficacy indicates strong perceived benefits, a key construct of HBM. This is supported by studies like Barnes, et al. (2019) which found that perceived benefits of traditional medicine include its accessibility, affordability, and cultural congruence.

However, the Maiduguri study reveals a more nuanced picture of trust and effectiveness. While 75% of respondents expressed confidence in traditional medicine's efficacy, a significant minority (25%) were sceptical. This scepticism is higher than that found in some other studies. For example, Mutombo et al. (2023) asserts that the use of herbal medicines for basic healthcare needs in Africa is still on the rise significantly and that only about 5-15% expressed distrust in herbal remedies.

The disparity between high utilization rates (91%) and lower confidence levels (75%) suggests that other factors beyond perceived effectiveness influence usage patterns. This phenomenon can be explained through the HBM's 'cues to action' construct, where factors such as accessibility, cost, and cultural familiarity may trigger use despite some scepticism. Similarly, the HBM would suggest that strong subjective norms might override individual attitudes in determining behaviour.

4.3.2 Regulatory Framework and Policies

The study highlights a mixed perception of the current regulatory framework, with 67% of respondents believing that existing regulations are adequate. This level of confidence is surprisingly high compared to findings from other African countries. For instance, a study by Chaachouay et al. (2021) in Morocco found that most traditional health practitioners felt the regulatory framework was inadequate.

This finding suggests interesting dynamics in perceived behavioural control. The relatively high confidence in existing regulations indicates that respondents feel the current regulatory environment supports rather than constrains their ability to use traditional medicine. This contrasts with findings from Obahiagbon and Ogwu (2024) where stricter regulations were perceived as barriers to traditional medicine practice.

Through the HBM lens, the confidence in regulatory frameworks can be interpreted as contributing to perceived benefits and reducing perceived barriers. The belief in adequate regulation may enhance users' confidence in traditional medicine's safety and efficacy.

The strong support (76%) for rigorous testing of traditional medicines, similar to modern pharmaceuticals, aligns with global trends towards evidence-based traditional medicine. This finding echoes recommendations

from the World Health Organization's Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023 (WHO, 2013), which emphasizes the need for quality assurance and appropriate regulation of traditional and complementary medicine products and practices.

This support for scientific validation can be understood through HBM. From the HBM perspective, it represents a shift in attitudes and subjective norms towards evidence-based practices, suggesting that traditional medicine users increasingly value scientific validation alongside cultural authenticity (Gyasi, et al., 2011).

The intersection of traditional practices and modern regulatory frameworks creates a complex environment where both theoretical models suggest that successful regulation must balance cultural sensitivity with scientific rigor. This balance is crucial for maintaining the perceived benefits highlighted in the HBM.

5. Conclusion

This study reveals the significant role of traditional medicine in healthcare delivery within Maiduguri Metropolitan Council, characterized by high utilization rates and complex public perceptions. The research identifies several key findings that have important implications for healthcare policy and practice. First, the widespread use of traditional medicine (91% of respondents) demonstrates its crucial role in meeting community healthcare needs, particularly in areas where modern healthcare access is limited. However, the disparity between usage rates and confidence levels suggests that factors beyond perceived effectiveness, such as accessibility and cultural familiarity, influence utilization patterns.

Second, the regulatory framework findings indicate a growing acceptance of formal oversight, with strong support for scientific validation and standardization of traditional practices. This represents a significant shift in attitudes toward evidence-based approaches while maintaining cultural authenticity. The support for increased collaboration between traditional and modern healthcare practitioners (62%) suggests potential opportunities for integrated healthcare delivery systems.

Third, the theoretical analysis HBM framework reveals how cultural norms, perceived benefits, and behavioural control mechanisms interact to influence traditional medicine use and acceptance. This understanding is crucial for developing effective policies that balance cultural sensitivity with medical safety standards.

These findings suggest several recommendations for policy and practice:

1. The Federal Ministry of Health, in collaboration with traditional medicine associations, should develop regulatory frameworks that ensure scientific validation while respecting cultural practices.
2. The Nigerian Institute of Medical research NIMR and tertiary institutions should introduce standardized training and certification programs for traditional medicine practitioners.
3. Primary healthcare agencies should establish referral systems and regular forums for collaboration between traditional and modern health providers.
4. Research institutions and universities, with support from government and partners like WHO, should conduct studies to document and validate traditional practices through joint efforts with practitioners.

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AN INTERPRETATIVE UNDERSTANDING OF BOKO HARAM CRISES

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Abstract

Since 2009, when Boko Haram first came into public consciousness, it has taken fourteen years to pursue an agitation. Yet Boko Haram is yet to dissipate. In reaction to this scourge, the Musa Yaradua-led Federal Government had adopted a radical measure, which ordered a shoot-on-sight, while the Goodluck Jonathan-led administration deployed a twin track called a “stick” and “carrot” approach. While the radical approach adopted by the Yaradua government cut a little ice, stick and carrot approach has failed to work a fine line. This brought about the de-radicalization programme of the Buhari administration. This is still work in progress as Boko Haram is still in the bush fighting with heavy casualties recorded on both sides of the divide, including collateral damage. In search of solution, this research tries to unravel the mystery behind the crises. The outcome shows widespread poverty and political thuggery as latent function. It also reveals conspiracy and betrayal among the fighting troops as another reason behind the unending crises. The paper is also critical of government approach to the crises which concentrates action on the perpetrators, while ignoring the victims. Following the outcome of investigation, the paper recommends a unilateral approach which involves both the perpetrator and victim or family of victim where the victim is no more. While cross-sectional survey is the method of inquiry adopted for this research undertaking, focus group discussion, in-depth interview and convenience sampling represent methods of data collection. The data so generated shall be examined under the Functionalist and Marxist perspectives.

Keywords:

The key words in this research are Boko Haram and crises

1. Introduction

Boko Haram, which means “Western education is forbidden”, is a group that pursues radical Islamic ideology. This group with widespread connection in high places though hidden, first emerged in Maiduguri, Borno State in 2002 under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf. Influenced by Marxism of sorts, this group in its activities was turned against the ruling class. Though not taken seriously at the time, the group continued with its underground activities until 2004, when it became a notoriety of outlaws, leading to the institution of Operation Flush by Borno State Government, led by Dr. Ali Modu Sheriff. At the time, open confrontation with constituted authorities, especially the police became a recurring decimal. But the turning point was in 2009, when the Federal Government led by Umaru Musa Yaradua, ordered a crackdown. The high point of this onslaught was the arrest of its leader, Mohammed Yusuf, who later died at the hands of the police (MacDougall, 2012; Olanrewaju, 2014).

Thereafter, the group went underground only to re-appear in 2011 with serious concerns. The federal government under Goodluck Jonathan had under-estimated the problem adopting a twin-track, also known as carrot and stick approach to the situation. To date, neither the carrot nor stick has worked a fine line. Its modus

vivendi includes surprise attacks of the enemy camps, ambush, suicide bombing and use of Improvised Explosive Devices, also known as IED. The volatile activities of this sect led to mass exodus of Maiduguri inhabitants in 2011. Ever since, the group has carried out successful attacks on police formations within and without including Police Headquarters, Abuja as well as UN building. Even now, it is thought to be doing collaboration with AQIM and al-Qaeda. It is also known to be working with the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP). Graphically the group attacked police formations in Maiduguri and churches in 2009, leading to loss of lives and property. In 2010, detained criminals at the Federal Correctional Centre in Maiduguri were forcefully released. But the high point of these attacks was the kidnapping of over 200 Chibok school girls in 2014 (MacDougall, 2012; Dan-Ali, 2012; Olanrewaju, 2014; Ukeh, 2014).

2. Theoretical Framework

Functionalist perspective sees society as a living organism in which each part of the organism contributes to the survival of the organism (Schaefer, 2001). In other words society is perceived as a vast network of connected parts each of which helps to sustain the system as a whole. Talcott Parsons (1902-1979), a Harvard University sociologist was the major proponent of this theory, having been influenced by the works of Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and other European sociologists. This school of thought believes that if an aspect of social life does not contribute to a society's stability or survival, it will not be passed on from one generation to another. The elephant in the room here is Boko Haram. Traced to 2009, when the activities of this group became public consumption, these were however taken to a new high in 2011, when lives and property were destroyed, leading to a crackdown by the Federal Government and mass exodus of inhabitants from Maiduguri and its environs. Although normalcy was restored to Maiduguri and its environs thereafter by the Multinational Joint Task Force, especially with the coming of the Civilian JTF in 2014, total peace is yet to prevail (Dan Ali, 2012; MacDougall, 2012; Ukeh, 2014; Sokunbi, 2015).

A refinement on this theory was conducted by Robert K. Merton (Kendall, 2003), who coined the terms, “manifest” and “latent” functions. The manifest functions according to this school of thought connote open, stated and conscious functions of an aspect of life, while the latent functions exhibit unintended, unconscious or hidden functions of an aspect of life or institution. For instance, the intended or manifest function of a College student may be to obtain a degree certificate and subsequently pursue a bigger career in life. However, in pursuit of this goal, he or she may start a relationship which ends up in marriage. Kendall (2003) also presents functionalism as a stable system defined by societal consensus in which majority of members share a common set of values, beliefs and behavioral expectations. By extension, this approach believes that society is made up of inter-related parts each of which serves a function thereby contributing to the overall stability of the society. Societies thus develop structures that strengthen these conditions such as the family, education, government, religion and the economy. By implication, if anything adversely happens to any of these institutions, all other parts are affected, which in turn makes the system not to function properly. This launches us to the third wing of explanation. Schaefer (2001) defines dysfunction as an element or process of society that may actually disrupt a social system or lead to a decrease in stability. This also explains the destabilization brought about by Boko Haram on the nation and its citizens. It was also for the fear of multiplier effect on the nation that over 2, 000 women impregnated by Boko Haram were allegedly forced to terminate such pregnancies by the Multinational Task Force (Okoye, 2022).

Stark (2004), came into his own by arguing that structures and culture are determined on the basis of their consequences for other parts of the system. Rooted in Biology, sweat glands for instance, prevent the body from rising too high for our organs to survive by releasing water shared in the body each time the body gets too hot.

Such a cooling system is required because the environment often is warm enough to endanger the organism. Willmot (Nwoye, 2016) also shares in this biological analogy by positing that a function of circulation is performed by the heart or an organ when it takes oxygen to the blood and removes carbon dioxide as waste product. Similarly the digestive system breaks down food into simple constituents or smaller particles assimilated by the circulatory system. The brain controls the functions of all the other organs.

Marxist or conflict perspective is another platform on which this research is explained. The philosophers that are easily associated with Marxist or conflict perspective include Karl Marx (1818-1893) and Frederick Engels (1820-1895). For Marx, society is characterized by conflict between the proletariats and the capitalists, who control the economy, while the proletariats have nothing but their labour. By extension, while the capitalists control the means of production, the proletariats or working class provide nothing but their labour. But the workers are exploited because they are paid less than the value of their labour, resulting in the workers' alienation (a feeling of powerlessness and estrangement from others and from themselves). Marx predicted that the working class would become aware of its exploitation consequent upon which they overthrow the capitalists and establish a free and classless society or what Willmot (1985) calls proletarian dictatorship (Schaefer, 2001; Kendall, 2003; Stark, 2004). Marx went on to conclude that the capitalist economic system was responsible for the overwhelming poverty that he observed in London at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (Marx & Engels, 1967/1848 in Schaefer, 2001).

Though an apostle of revolution, Marx himself never witnessed revolution in his lifetime. Born German, Marx fled his native country when the paper which he wrote was confiscated. In Paris, he met Frederick Engels (1820-1895), with whom he formed an age-long friendship. In 1847, both attended in London an illegal meeting of trade unions called the Communist League. Thereafter they raised a platform called the Communist Manifesto on which they urged the workers to overthrow the capitalist system. Marx had concluded that the capitalist economic system had occasioned the overwhelming poverty, which he saw in London at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (Marx & Engels, 1967/1848 in Schaefer, 2001; Kendall, 2003). In Nigeria, poverty is responsible for those who are being used as cannon fodder by the politicians. Some schools of thought believe that it is poverty rather than ethnicity or religion that is responsible for the Boko Haram crises. In a comparative survey between Nigeria and Indonesia, Cunliffe (2010) argues that while life expectancy for Indonesia has soared to 70 years from 45 years, in Nigeria life expectancy obtains at 47 years. Cunliffe also argues that after three decades, the population of people living in poverty in Indonesia shrank from six to seven. Dr. Sidi Ali Mohammed, a member of the Presidential Committee on the North-east Initiative (PENI), agrees no less. In Ukeh (2019), Ali argues that while the Federal Government pays each Nigerian troop at war front N1, 000 daily allowance, Boko Haram pays each of its fighters N3, 000 daily. It is on this ground that some of the suicide bombers used in the operation, in most cases collect their money upfront before embarking on the suicide mission. In a related circumstance, one of the cannon fodder and a member of the ECOMOG who later transformed to Boko Haram in an in-depth interview in 2004, said;

These politicians after risking our lives to work for them have now resorted to the gambit of giving us N 2 million, N3 million and sometimes N5 million to share. How can we sustain our families with these stipends? (IDI, Musa, 25 years; ECOMOG member).

By using street urchins for campaign, who were later dropped, the Nigerian political class according to Marx had planted seeds of disintegration, which exploded in the Boko Haram crises (Schaefer, 2001; Kendall, 2003; Stark, 2004; Nwoye, 2012).

3. Techniques of Research

The method of research elected for this research exercise is cross-sectional survey. In this type of inquiry, studies are carried out to obtain comprehensive descriptions of existing phenomena with the objective of involving data to justify current situations (Punch, 2004; Koul, 2012).

4. Themes and Perspectives

Deep down into the archives, a notorious Islamic sect known as “Maitatsine” was occasioned by the popularity of an Islamic preacher known as Marwa, who hailed from Cameroun. Marwa was based in Kano. According to MacDougal (2012), Marwa had in his sermons preached against perceived government oppression. He was killed in 1980 by the Nigerian security forces. But in 2000, another religion-based organization known as “the Nigerian Taliban” emerged. Like the one before, the group had head-on confrontations with the security forces, leading to its dissipation in 2004. MacDougal further argued that it was around this time that the idea of Boko Haram was mooted. Armed with radical Islamic ideology, the group headed by Mohammed Yusuf began to form schools around the teachings of radical Islamic ideology. Yusuf also advocated the imposition of Islamic law across the Northern states.

It thus suffices to argue that in the early 2002, Yusuf was perceived by many as a likely heir to the renowned late Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam in Maiduguri on account of his brilliance and closeness to the late renowned Islamic cleric. However, all this perception changed following Yusuf's contact with one late Mohammed Alli, who had approached him with reasons why he should turn his back on democracy, civil service and Western education-oriented-schools. According to Olanrewaju (2014), Yusuf had disengaged his services from Yobe State Government before the new orientation. It stated that “much as Islam permitted them to subsist under a modern government like Nigeria, it has also explicitly prohibited them from joining or supporting such governments in so far as their systems, structures and instructions contain elements contradictory to love, Islamic principles and beliefs”.

However, Yusuf refused to buy into the philosophy of his visitor, Alli. Nevertheless Alli proceeded to Kanamma in Yobe State. The group would later launch an insurgent attack on the police at Kanamma and later Gwoza in Borno State, which resulted in the loss of many lives and property. While Alli died in this attack, some of his followers who escaped from the attack later joined Yusuf. For preaching against the state, Yusuf was himself denied both radio and T.V. appearances. For attacking the government, Yusuf was on more than one occasion summoned to Abuja by the security agencies. But for as many times as he was picked, he had always regained his freedom. This offered Shekau who dismally deputized for him the opportunity of radicalizing the group against known religious norms. By 2009, things were already getting out of hand, leading to the intervention of the federal government. By 2014, the crisis had escalated, resulting in the death of over 10,000 people and displacement of over 19,000 people. Although injustice was professed as the manifest function, which provoked agitation from the group, poverty defined by the yawning gap between the rich and poor was generally perceived as the major reason for the agitation. Among their known weapons of war are Improved Explosive Devices (IEDs), Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) and kidnap (Selkindo, 2014; Olanrewaju, 2014; Omipidan, 2014; Ojodhale, Agba, Yakubu & Ahmed, 2024).

5. The Challenge

For over ten years, the separatist group called Boko Haram, has been doing battle with the joint forces of the Nigerian security organization. It all started in 2002. But in 2004, the Ali Modu Sheriff-led administration introduced “Operation Flush” to tackle the menace. In 2009, things got out of hand, leading to the deployment

of the joint forces of the Nigerian security. Under the watch of Umaru Musa Yaradua as president, he had ordered a shoot-on-sight at the sect. Following the operations of the joint forces, normalcy appeared to have returned to Maiduguri and its environs. But that only appeared to be for a while. As the security situation of the state and by extension Nigeria appeared to have dwindled abysmally in 2011, leading to mass exodus of inhabitants from Maiduguri. President Goodluck Jonathan had adopted what he called a carrot and stick approach. As it were, neither the carrot nor the stick approach has produced the much desired result. Rather than improve on the security situation of the country, the system was near collapse. On Christmas day of 2011, three churches in Maiduguri were attacked by suicide bombers who deployed Improvised Explosive Device (IED) as weapon of mass destruction. Abuja also came under siege much as the United Nations (UN) building. This was subsequently followed by the kidnap of over 200 Chibok school girls. Lack of trust among the fighting forces appears to be one of the problems bedeviling the campaign on Boko Haram crises today. This researcher ran into two soldiers involved in the campaign. One was a member of the Nigeria Air Force, ranked as Flight Lieutenant, while the other was a member of the Nigerian army, a foot soldier and non-commissioned officer. Their conversation revealed high rate of betrayal even among the fighting troops, making troops to become suspicious of each other even as it rubs off negatively on the campaign. The Flight Lieutenant in reply to the question thrown at him by the non-commissioned officer had thundered back:

What kind of information do you want from me? At one point, you are made to believe you are working together as colleagues. Yet in another circumstance, you are fighting watching over your shoulders, afraid you might be stabbed from behind (IDI, Anonymous, Male, 42 years, Flight Lieutenant)

The researcher sandwiched by the two combatant soldiers was a major beneficiary of this interaction. For one, both acknowledged that there was a betrayal among the soldiers involved in the campaign against Boko Haram. The Flight Lieutenant went on to disclose to this researcher that he came close to tears on two occasions. One, was when one of their officers recently wedded, was killed in the line of duty. According to him, the officer had just resumed after travelling home to contract a new marriage. On the first day he went fighting after his marriage was the day he went down while in the line of duty. Another was a soldier whose wife had just put to bed. He had a beautiful conversation with his wife, who sent a video picture of the baby to him. Soon after this interaction, he went fighting in the war front. He never returned alive.

Apart from these revelations, there were others that painted a gory picture of betrayal by troops. A few years ago, a team of technicians drafted ahead of governor's visit to a certain local government location in Borno State was arrested and detained by Boko Haram. They were however released after several weeks in captivity. One of them in the course of interaction with this researcher disclosed that an Air Force fighter jet on combat mission went beyond its location and was busy bombing an empty space. His word:

There are a lot to tell as to why Boko Haram crises may not end so soon. While in captivity, we realized that Boko Haram rebels were getting regular supply of food items some of which were even tinned foods. However, I was shocked to the bone marrow when I discovered that a Nigeria Air Force fighter jet made several return trips after bombing empty locations. How can they win the war with this kind of betrayal and absolute lack of commitment from troops? (IDI, Anonymous, Male, 35 years, technician).

Even so, a school of thought believes that Boko Haram crises are a political creation. Former chief of army staff, Lt. Gen. Yusuf Buratai lent his weight to the claims on political Boko Haram. In a public statement in November 2022, Buratai said; "Insurgency is a people's war. Sometimes people create a situation of insurgency because there is something they want to take from it" (BBC Focus on Africa). In another interaction with a repentant Boko Haram member, Mohammed, he disclosed to this researcher that one of the problems faced by

returnee Boko Haram members was one of hostility from the local communities. Mohammed:

On the surface, the whole thing looks seemingly alright, behind the scene it is a different thing entirely. Our members are finding it difficult to break into the local communities because of lack of acceptance. Behind-the-scene act is dominated by hostility” (IDI, Mohammed, 34 years, ex-Boko Haram fighter).

Even where that is not the case, some soldiers on their own volition are known to be deliberately working for Boko Haram. For instance, a soldier committed suicide in Taraba State after he was caught squatting information to the sect, while another was caught while he was sending N60 million to Boko Haram in the North-east. Responding to this allegation, Abdulrahman Abdulhamid, blames the trouble on government policy, which is so concerned with the plight of ex-Boko Haram members, while paying little or no attention to victims. He also revealed that sometimes there are growing suspicions between soldiers and members of the Civilian Joint Task Force (Civilian JTF). He further reiterated that the problem was witnessed more during the early stages of the campaign.

6. Solution

“Jaw, jaw”, as always argued, “is better than war, war”. The first shot at dialogue was through the former president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, which could not resolve the crises. Then there was a Fred Eno initiative, which handled the politics of swapping. Boko Haram had offered to release 200 Chibok school girls being held by the group for 16 of its war lords being held by the military. The collapse of talks gave way to Aishatu Alkali, also known as Mama Boko Haram, which like others did not produce any significant result. In all human settlements where there is conflict, dialogue is an acclaimed approach to peace. In resolving Boko Haram crises, this approach has been applied in consonance with the de-radicalization programme of the federal government. So far, about 4,254 Boko Haram fighters are believed to have thrown in the towel, while 1,400 of them have been released into the society (Adibe, 2020 in Ojodhale, 2024). Yet this approach is still quite a distance away from total peace. This paper therefore thinks that an inclusive approach, which involves the perpetrators and victims or victims' families could be the one-stop-shop required to settle the crises. In this situation, what is expected of the perpetrator is to own up to his crime, seek forgiveness before making reparation to the victims or victims' families, where the victims are no more. In Uganda, Mozambique, Angola and Sudan, Mato Oput is a popular model. In Mato Oput standard, both the perpetrator and victims subject themselves to the realities of the moment by the perpetrator first recognizing that he has committed a crime of murder against a fellow mortal, before seeking forgiveness and finally making reparation. This activity is formally rounded off by both drinking the Mato Oput substance. Mato Oput is not only working for these countries today; it is also recognized by the United Nations as a conflict resolution model (Nwoye, 2012). Looking at the Mato Oput model, federal government can go a step further to re-integrate genuinely repented Boko Haram fighters into the national army. The present situation which only concentrates on the perpetrators in utter neglect of the victims will not only promote suspicion among the concerned parties, but aggravate the situation. In an in-depth interview conducted in this research, victims admitted forgiving suspects on the surface, but behind the curtains, it is a different ball game altogether. Mallam Isa Bukar Maidugu is a fisherman from Doro in Kukawa Local Government Area of Borno State. Under in-depth interview, he disclosed to this researcher that Boko Haram crisis has not only forced him out of business, but claimed the life of his older brother. As he put it:

There is no denying the fact that Boko Haram has done more harm than good to our people. Apart from collateral damage, I have suffered a personal grave harm in my business and in the loss of an older brother. Since the crises, I've not only been forced out of business, but also that I have lost my older brother (IDI, Isa Bukar, Male, 45 years, fisherman).

Like seven others who were asked whether they could take vengeance on Boko Haram if given the opportunity, Bukar admitted that although he has forgiven them, he has not forgotten. Another, Mahmud Ibrahim, disclosed that he was not comfortable with the approach to Boko Haram crises, especially where a government policy is working hard to resettle repented Boko Haram fighters without paying much attention to victims of the crises. Of the eight of them who perceive things this way, five believe that if given a chance, they would take vengeance. Mahmud Ibrahim:

Our government is moving like a one-sided train, which seeks to address the problem of Boko Haram fighters without making any attempt to heal the wounds suffered by the victims of the crises. I have lost a sibling, father-in-law and a cousin to Boko Haram crises. If I had my way, I will take vengeance (IDI, Mahmud Ibrahim, Male, 25 years, farmer).

Although some of the victims claimed they have forgiven their perpetrators, the reality is that repented Boko Haram members are not well accepted back into the fold of the normal society. This research uncovers that those who tried to break into the society after the formal acceptance and forgiveness have suffered hostility at the hands of the locals as some of these chaps were fished out at night and killed.

7. Conclusion

Looking at the results, this paper concludes that Boko Haram crises remains an albatross today because of ensuing personal interests, supported by conspiracy, and not necessarily because of the invincible nature of Boko Haram combatants. The paper also believes that the crises will become a forgotten issue if government adopts a comprehensive approach which not only speaks to the concerns of the victims and perpetrators, but also reduces poverty in the land. More importantly, government should also try to address the problem of de facto attitude of the politicians who may want to win election using an underhand method. These underhand methods sometimes find expression in unlawful use of arms, which in most cases disappear into private hands after the elections. Such was the case in Rivers State during the transition period of Peter Odili, who eventually became the governor of Rivers State (1999-2007). It was also the same thing in Borno State during the time of Senator Ali Modu Sheriff, who ruled Borno State between 2003 and 2011 (Odunfa, 2006).

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KA'AJI CULTURE AMONG THE KANURI PEOPLE: EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, AND SOLUTIONS THROUGH THE LENS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

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Abstract

Ka'aji, the traditional incense of the Kanuri people, holds deep cultural, spiritual, and socio-economic significance, serving as a symbol of identity, hospitality, and communal cohesion. However, its sustainability is threatened by environmental degradation, reliance on imported ingredients, declining intergenerational knowledge transfer, and market competition from industrially produced alternatives. This study explores Ka'aji culture in Maiduguri, Nigeria, through the lens of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), examining its role in heritage preservation (SDG 11.4), economic empowerment (SDGs 1, 5, 8), and responsible consumption (SDG 12). Using qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews with Ka'aji producers, elders, and traders, the research highlights its contributions to livelihoods, women's economic participation, and cultural continuity. Findings reveal systemic challenges, including raw material scarcity, financial constraints, and weak policy frameworks, which hinder its long-term viability. The study proposes actionable solutions, such as localizing ingredient sourcing, enhancing knowledge transmission, and formalizing the trade through cooperative models and policy interventions. By aligning Ka'aji preservation with the SDGs, this research underscores the importance of integrating indigenous practices into sustainable development strategies to foster cultural resilience, economic inclusion, and environmental stewardship.

Keywords:

Ka'aji, Kanuri culture, sustainable development, cultural heritage, economic empowerment, SDGs.

Introduction

Ka'aji is a traditional Kanuri incense renowned for its aromatic properties and deep cultural significance. Composed of natural materials such as fragrant woods, resins, and essential oils, *Ka'aji* is meticulously crafted to produce distinctive and enduring scents. Beyond its olfactory appeal, *Ka'aji* occupies a central role in Kanuri social and ceremonial life, particularly in events like *wushe wushe* (weddings), where it symbolizes purity, hospitality, and communal well-being (BRTV Maiduguri, 2023; Ndarason, 2023). Rooted in the heritage of the Kanem-Bornu Empire, *Ka'aji* embodies the Kanuri people's connection to their natural environment and ancestral knowledge. However, the sustainability of this cultural practice is increasingly threatened by modernization, globalization, and environmental degradation. These challenges intersect with global sustainability concerns addressed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 11.4 (Safeguarding Cultural and Natural Heritage), and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015 as a universal framework for addressing pressing global challenges including poverty eradication, inequality reduction, environmental sustainability, and cultural preservation, explicitly recognize cultural heritage as both a driver and enabler of sustainable development (UNESCO, 2023). This integrated approach acknowledges that cultural practices like *Ka'aji* serve as vital bridges between traditional knowledge systems and contemporary sustainability efforts, while simultaneously supporting economic livelihoods, social cohesion, and ecological balance. SDG 8 promotes inclusive economic growth, full employment, and decent work conditions—objectives that align with *Ka'aji's* role in supporting livelihoods, particularly for women and small-scale entrepreneurs in Maiduguri (VOA News, 2023). The trade of *Ka'aji* provides critical income in a region with high unemployment, demonstrating how cultural industries can foster local economic resilience. Furthermore, SDG 11.4 explicitly seeks to “strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage,” recognizing that traditions like *Ka'aji* are not merely artifacts but living practices that sustain community identity and intergenerational knowledge. Environmental sustainability is another critical dimension. SDG 12 advocates for sustainable consumption and production patterns, urging the responsible use of natural resources. *Ka'aji's* traditional production methods, which rely on locally sourced organic materials, inherently align with this goal. However, the increasing reliance on imported ingredients and deforestation pressures threaten its ecological sustainability. Addressing these challenges requires policies that incentivize sustainable sourcing while preserving indigenous knowledge.

Additionally, *Ka'aji's* cultural and economic viability has been amplified through digital platforms, illustrating the intersection of tradition and innovation. Social media has expanded market access, enabling artisans to reach broader audiences—a phenomenon that resonates with SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). This digital shift underscores the potential for cultural industries to adapt to contemporary markets while retaining their traditional essence. Despite these opportunities, *Ka'aji* faces risks from cultural erosion, environmental depletion, and economic marginalization. Without intervention, the decline of such practices could result in irreversible losses to intangible cultural heritage. This study examines *Ka'aji's* socio-economic contributions, the challenges it confronts, and strategies for its preservation within sustainability frameworks. By aligning traditional knowledge with the SDGs, policymakers and stakeholders can ensure that *Ka'aji* continues to thrive as a vehicle for cultural continuity, economic empowerment, and environmental stewardship.

Statement of Problem

Ka'aji, the traditional incense of the Kanuri people, holds profound cultural, social, and economic significance as a cornerstone of ceremonies, daily life, and regional trade. Existing scholarship has examined various aspects of incense traditions globally—Berhanu et al. (2020) quantified the economic contribution of frankincense trade in Ethiopia, Negus (2020) documented the cultural-religious significance of incense in Tigray, and Yadav et al. (2020) analyzed competitive dynamics in India's commercial incense market. However, these studies did not address the critical sustainability challenges specific to *Ka'aji* production.

The sustainability of *Ka'aji* faced three interconnected threats: environmental degradation from unsustainable harvesting of ingredients, erosion of indigenous production knowledge among younger generations, and market distortions caused by heavy reliance on imported ingredients. These issues were exacerbated by socioeconomic pressures, including unfair competition from commercial producers, financial constraints limiting technological upgrades, and the absence of regulatory protections for traditional practitioners—problems similarly observed in Yussuf et al.'s (2023) study of the Ethiopian resin trade but not yet examined in the Kanuri context. This study addressed these gaps by investigating *Ka'aji's* unique sustainability challenges through the lens of SDGs 8 (decent work), 11.4 (cultural heritage), and 12 (responsible production),

proposing context-specific preservation strategies before this intangible cultural heritage becomes irreversibly compromised.

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives:

- 1- To examine the cultural significance of *Ka'aji* among the Kanuri people.
- 2- To analyze the socio-economic contributions of *Ka'aji* production and trade to livelihoods and community development.
- 3- To investigate the sustainability challenges of *Ka'aji* production

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the sustainability of *Ka'aji* production in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council, analyzing its cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions through the lens of SDGs 8, 11.4, and 12. Under SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), it explores how *Ka'aji* supports local livelihoods and traditional craftsmanship, while addressing challenges such as market competition, financial constraints, and dependency on imports. In relation to SDG 11.4 (Strengthening efforts to protect cultural and natural heritage), the study emphasizes the preservation of indigenous knowledge and the safeguarding of *Ka'aji* as intangible cultural heritage in the face of rapid urbanization. Concerning SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), it investigates the environmental impact of unsustainable ingredient sourcing and explores eco-friendly methods that retain cultural authenticity. By focusing specifically on Maiduguri—recognized as the primary hub of *Ka'aji* trade—this study offers detailed insights into urban sustainability challenges, with findings that may not fully generalize to other Kanuri communities.

Review of Related Literature

In many parts of the world, incense and goods made from resin have long been essential to economic, religious, and cultural activities. The Kanuri people's *Ka'aji* culture is a long-standing incense ritual with cultural and socioeconomic value. Examining previous research on the production, trading, and socioeconomic effects of commodities related to incense is essential to examining potential, problems, and solutions through the lens of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Key discoveries from research on frankincense, myrrh, and other incense items conducted in Africa and elsewhere are summarized in this survey of the literature.

The Economic Contribution of Incense Trade Berhanu et al (2020). According to their research, frankincense ranked second after livestock in terms of annual household cash income, accounting for 35%. It was a vital source of income for lower-income households, making up about half of their entire income. Including *Ka'aji*, the production of incense has financial advantages, but issues including antiquated extraction techniques and shaky market connections make it difficult to commercialize. According to the results, increasing market accessibility and processing methods may boost economic returns (SDG 1: No Poverty & SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth).

Yussuf et al. (2023) explored gum and resin production in the Somali Region of Ethiopia, their study revealed that resin harvesting produced substantially more revenue than gum collection. Although there were many players and channels in the market structure, the main barriers were a lack of infrastructure and market expertise. To increase productivity and sustainability, the study emphasized the necessity of appropriate tapping methods and market interventions. The *Ka'aji* trade can benefit from these insights to improve its value chain (SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production & SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure).

Cultural and Religious Significance Negus (2020) provided an ethno-archaeological perspective on the incense trade in Tigray, Ethiopia. The study asserted that its dual function in elite and non-elite markets was highlighted by the study. Non-elite incense had strong cultural significance and was utilized in family rituals, whereas elite trade was regulated by approved organizations. The Kanuri also employ *Ka'aji* for everyday and spiritual purposes, especially in religious rituals and wedding celebrations. In light of SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities and SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, this study emphasizes the importance of recording and conserving indigenous knowledge systems related to incense.

Birhan et al. (2023) examined the supply chain practices of myrrh, frankincense, and grape used in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOTC) rituals. Despite their worldwide importance, the study discovered that these commodities had problems like insufficient standardization and inefficient supply chains. Because it is so important to Kanuri culture and religion, similar problems could impact its trade and sustainability, requiring better regulatory measures.

Global Market and Competitive Insights Yadav et al. (2020) analyzed the Indian incense stick market, which is one of the largest globally. India has advantages from abundant raw materials, robust export markets, and cheap labor costs. The Indian economy greatly benefits from the incense sector, especially in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The Indian market's performance indicates that Kanuri *Ka'aji* producers might strengthen their competitive edge by implementing branding, value-addition tactics, and export-focused production (SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities & SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals).

Obstacles and Sustainability Concerns. The incense trade suffers several difficulties despite its significance to the economy and culture. The viability of the resin and incense sectors is hampered by recurrent droughts, limited market access, a lack of technical know-how, and inadequate institutional support (Yussuf et al., 2023). Likewise, Berhanu et al. (2020) stressed that better market structures and sustainable harvesting methods are critical to preserving resource availability. These issues are similar to those that *Ka'aji* farmers confront, suggesting that interventions including skill development, cooperative growth, and sustainable sourcing practices are necessary (SDG 13: Climate Action & SDG 15: Life on Land).

Therefore, according to the reviewed studies, incense production is important to the economies and cultures of many different regions. Enhancing harvesting methods, market structures, and policy frameworks can improve the sustainability and profitability of the *Ka'aji* trade, according to lessons learned from Ethiopia and India. The value chain of *ka'aji*, the contribution of women to its manufacturing, and the effects of globalization on indigenous incense customs should be the main topics of future studies. Kanuri heritage will be preserved, and sustainable development and economic resilience will be encouraged by coordinating these initiatives with the SDGs.

The Role of Traditional Practices in the Sustainability Discourse

This review summarizes important findings from the literature on the ecological, social, and cultural aspects of traditional practices' contributions to sustainable development. Traditional practices, which have their roots in indigenous knowledge systems and cultural heritage, have become essential parts of the sustainability discourse.

Traditional Knowledge and Environmental Sustainability

The customs, abilities, and beliefs that indigenous cultures have cultivated over many generations are collectively referred to as traditional knowledge (TK). These methods offer useful approaches for sustainable resource management and are frequently customized to local environments. For example, it has been demonstrated that TK improves agricultural output, water management, and biodiversity conservation.

According to Tennakoon et al. (2024), traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) provides adaptive management techniques that complement contemporary sustainability objectives, especially when it comes to tackling environmental issues like habitat loss and climate change. Through their resource usage, architectural styles, and community governance, traditional villages also contribute to sustainability, according to empirical research. The economic, social, cultural, and environmental pillars of multifaceted sustainability frameworks are integrated into these settlements (MDPI, 2023). Therefore, the Kanuri people have traditional ways of farming, managing resources, and leading their communities that help increase food production and protect the environment. According to Tennakoon et al. (2024), their knowledge of nature helps them find smart ways to deal with environmental problems like climate change. The *Ka'aji* culture is a good example of this because it uses natural, eco-friendly methods that help keep the environment healthy.

Cultural Heritage as a Sustainability Enabler

Sustainable development heavily relies on cultural heritage, both material (such as monuments) and immaterial (such as rituals). Research shows that cultural practices boost sustainable tourism and economic activity while fostering resilience and community cohesiveness (Chahine et al., 2023). It is becoming more widely acknowledged that including cultural heritage in sustainability plans is crucial to tackling issues like environmental degradation and poverty reduction. The literature also emphasizes how important it is for sustainability studies to have a sophisticated understanding of culture. To make it easier to use the term "culture" across disciplines, Chahine et al. (2023) argue for a more accurate definition. This method guarantees that initiatives intended to achieve intergenerational equity appropriately take cultural factors into account. This approach ensures that cultural dimensions are adequately incorporated into policies aimed at achieving intergenerational equity.

However, in Kanuri culture, cultural heritage plays a key role in building community resilience and supporting economic growth. According to Chahine et al. (2023), cultural practices foster social unity and encourage sustainable tourism. The rituals and traditions of *Ka'aji* help preserve cultural identity while promoting sustainable community activities, emphasizing the importance of cultural heritage in addressing environmental and poverty-related challenges.

Challenges in Integrating Traditional Practices

In contemporary sustainability discourses, traditional techniques encounter considerable obstacles, notwithstanding their potential. Conflicts between experience-based assertions based on conventional knowledge and evidence-based methods are revealed by environmental policy analysis (Feindt & Oels, 2019).¹ Furthermore, the successful incorporation of TK into international sustainability frameworks is frequently hampered by the marginalization of indigenous voices in decision-making processes. To overcome these obstacles, academics support inclusive governance frameworks that honor traditional knowledge systems and encourage cooperation between legislators and Indigenous populations. Innovative solutions that strike a balance between ecological modernity and cultural preservation may result from such initiatives.

However, traditional practices in *Ka'aji* culture struggle to be included in today's sustainability efforts because indigenous voices are often ignored (Feindt & Oels, 2019). This happens in many African communities where locals aren't part of important decisions about managing resources. To fix this, there needs to be inclusive leadership that respects traditional knowledge and encourages teamwork between communities and policymakers.

Theoretical Frameworks and Emerging Trends

The need to incorporate traditional practices into larger frameworks is becoming more and more

acknowledged by theoretical developments in sustainability research. For instance, a thorough lens for examining the contributions of traditional villages to sustainability is offered by the four-pillar theory of sustainable development, which covers economic, social, environmental, and cultural aspects (Zheng et al, 2023). Furthermore, thorough literature evaluations highlight new developments like multidisciplinary cooperation and adaptive management techniques that improve environmental conservation initiatives by utilizing conventional methods. These patterns highlight how TK's function as a link between traditional knowledge and contemporary sustainability objectives is changing.

Therefore, because traditional methods are culturally significant, ecologically adaptable, and community-centered, they are essential to the sustainability conversation. Through the incorporation of these practices into contemporary frameworks, policymakers can create comprehensive plans that tackle environmental issues and protect cultural assets. However, doing so necessitates removing structural obstacles via interdisciplinary cooperation and inclusive governance. However, Academic studies are now giving more attention to the role of traditional practices in sustainability. The four-pillar theory of sustainable development helps explain how cultures like *Ka'aji* contribute to sustainability (Zheng et al., 2023). This theory shows how economic, social, environmental, and cultural aspects are connected and how traditional knowledge can link local practices with global sustainability goals. However, the *Ka'aji* culture of the Kanuri people shows how traditional practices play an important role in sustainability. By using indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage, communities can tackle environmental issues while keeping their cultural identity alive. To achieve this, it's important to remove barriers through teamwork and inclusive leadership. Including traditional practices in modern sustainability efforts helps protect the environment, promote fairness, and preserve culture. This proves that traditional knowledge is not outdated but a useful tool for reaching goals like reducing poverty, ensuring food security, and protecting the environment. Therefore, the *Ka'aji* culture of the Kanuri people offers an important example for exploring how traditional practices contribute to sustainability. With its deep-rooted indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage, this culture closely aligns with sustainable development principles, especially the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Therefore, this study addresses several gaps in the existing literature. While much of the research focuses on incense practices in regions like Ethiopia and India, there is limited attention given to *Ka'aji* culture among the Kanuri people. This research fills that gap by focusing specifically on the unique cultural and socio-economic significance of *Ka'aji* within the Kanuri community. Although previous studies examine traditional incense practices, few explore how *Ka'aji* directly contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This study seeks to analyze how *Ka'aji* can foster local economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability in the SDGs.

Additionally, while existing literature identifies challenges in incense production, it lacks an in-depth exploration of how *Ka'aji* can be effectively integrated into sustainable development practices. This study addresses this gap by proposing actionable solutions, such as improved market access, skill development, and sustainable production methods, to enhance the profitability and sustainability of the *Ka'aji* trade. Lastly, although some research touches on the role of women in incense production, it does not thoroughly examine how *Ka'aji* contributes to gender equity and community cohesion. This study provides a deeper analysis of how *Ka'aji* culture supports women's empowerment and strengthens social solidarity within the community.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore *Ka'aji* culture among the Kanuri people,

examining its opportunities, challenges, and potential solutions through the lens of key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): poverty reduction (SDG 1), gender equality (SDG 5), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), heritage preservation (SDG 11), and responsible consumption and production (SDG 12). Data is collected through in-depth key informant interviews (KIIs) with community elders, local artisans, and long-standing practitioners (with at least a decade of experience in Ka'aji culture) to ensure rich, culturally embedded insights. A semi-structured interview guide is used to explore the cultural, economic, and social dimensions of Ka'aji, its sustainability challenges, and its alignment with the selected SDGs. The study employs purposive and snowball sampling techniques to select 15 participants from diverse wards in Maiduguri, ensuring representation across age, gender, and occupational roles within Ka'aji traditions. To strengthen validity, triangulation through observational notes (where feasible) supplements interview data. All interviews are audio-recorded with consent, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis (with manual coding) to identify recurring patterns. Ethical considerations—including informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for cultural sensitivities—are strictly upheld.

Findings and Discussions Findings and Discussion

This section presents and analyzes the key findings obtained from in-depth interviews with Ka'aji producers, traders, and cultural custodians in Maiduguri. The results are organized according to the study's three principal objectives, revealing critical insights into Ka'aji's cultural significance, socio-economic role, and sustainability challenges.

Cultural Significance of *Ka'aji* among the Kanuri People

The data revealed *Ka'aji's* profound role in Kanuri society, with the following key themes emerging

- Symbol of Cultural Identity
- Preservation of Traditional Knowledge
- Expression of Hospitality
- Integral Role in Ceremonies and Rituals
- Symbol of Femininity and Elegance
- Spiritual and Emotional Well-being
- Artistic Craftsmanship and Cultural Expression
- Strengthening of Social Bonds
- Cultural Legacy and Intergenerational Education

These themes underscore *Ka'aji's* function not merely as a material good but as a vessel of intangible cultural heritage (SDG 11.4), a point we explore further in the discussion.

Socio-Economic Contribution of *Ka'aji* Production and Trade

The analysis identified *Ka'aji's* substantial economic value, particularly for women and local artisans, through these themes:

- Source of Livelihood and Economic Empowerment
- Employment Generation and Skill Development
- Contribution to Local and Global Markets
- Women's Economic Empowerment and Enhanced Social Status
- Seasonal Demand and Economic Stability
- Community Development and Economic Growth

These findings align with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), highlighting *Ka'aji's* dual role

as both a cultural practice and an economic engine.

Sustainability Challenges of Ka'aji Production

Despite its cultural and economic importance, the data highlighted systemic threats to Ka'aji's future, including:

Raw Material Scarcity and Supply Chain Vulnerability
 Economic Constraints and Financial Insecurity
 Declining Knowledge Transmission and Shifting Cultural Values
 Market Competition and Evolving Consumer Preferences
 Regulatory Barriers and Policy Limitations

These challenges, tied to SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), frame the urgent need for interventions to ensure *Ka'aji*'s continuity. The discussion that follows interrogates these themes in depth, proposing pathways to address these tensions.

Cultural significance of Ka'aji among the Kanuri people:

Ka'aji holds deep cultural value, serving as a symbol of identity, heritage, and tradition. Its significance extends beyond fragrance, influencing social interactions, rituals, and communal practices. The perspectives of community elders and members are categorized into the following themes:

Symbol of Cultural Identity

Ka'aji embodies the Kanuri people's cultural identity, ingrained in both daily practices and special occasions. Its distinctive use differentiates Kanuri traditions from others, reinforcing a strong connection to ancestral heritage.

Ka'aji symbolizes Kanuri identity and heritage.

This assertion aligns with theories of cultural sustainability, which emphasize the role of traditional practices in preserving a community's identity.

Preservation of Traditional Knowledge

The knowledge and skills involved in *Ka'aji* production are transmitted across generations, ensuring cultural continuity. It plays a significant role in life events such as weddings and childbirth, symbolizing blessings and new beginnings.

Using Ka'aji has been part of our lives for as long as I can remember. My mother taught me how to make it, just as her mother taught her. During weddings, the special scents we use are not just fragrances; they carry blessings and symbolize the start of a new chapter in life.

This highlights the importance of family-based education and oral traditions in maintaining intangible cultural heritage.

Expression of Hospitality

Ka'aji serves as a gesture of hospitality, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere for guests. Its presence during gatherings signifies respect and appreciation for visitors.

When expecting guests in our home, we make sure to light the Ka'aji and let it cool. It's

our way of showing respect and making them feel welcome. The scent creates a peaceful atmosphere and reflects how much we value their presence.

This practice resonates with anthropological perspectives on material culture, where objects function as vehicles for social interaction and communication of values.

Integral to Ceremonies and Rituals

Ka'aji is an essential element in ceremonies such as weddings, naming ceremonies, and religious gatherings. It is believed to bring blessings, ward off evil, and signify important life transitions. Specific types, such as *Sandal*, *Hawi*, and *Halut*, are particularly valued for their lasting fragrances.

It is a must for weddings... brides are escorted to their marital homes with Ka'aji as part of tradition.

We use Ka'aji during wedding ceremonies (wushe wushe), especially when the groom and his family are entering the arena to cast away evil and seek blessings. When others catch the scent of Ka'aji, it signifies the arrival of either the groom or the bride.

This aligns with cultural anthropology theories on ritual practices, where symbolic objects reinforce societal norms and transitions.

Symbol of Femininity and Elegance

Among Kanuri women, *Ka'aji* represents refinement, femininity, and social status. It is central to personal grooming, enhancing the appeal of clothing and reinforcing traditional gender roles.

Ka'aji is what defines a woman's elegance among us. When you wear it, your clothes carry a pleasant scent, and it adds to your charm. It's something we cherish and pass down because it represents our pride and femininity.

This observation is consistent with gender studies that examine how cultural artifacts shape and uphold societal expectations.

Spiritual and Emotional Well-being

Certain types of *Ka'aji*, such as *Kajinguru*, are believed to provide spiritual protection and promote emotional well-being. They create a calming environment, warding off negative influences and fostering inner peace.

In our tradition, certain Ka'aji, like Kajinguru, are more than just scents; they are protections. When we burn them, we believe they keep bad spirits away and bring blessings to the home. The fragrance also calms the mind and makes the house feel peaceful.

This dual role—as both a fragrance and a spiritual safeguard—reflects Kanuri's holistic worldview, where health, spirituality, and environment are deeply interconnected.

Marker of Social Status

Using high-quality *Ka'aji*, such as *Sandal* or *Frami*, at social events signifies affluence and refined taste. It reflects not only wealth but also adherence to cultural norms.

The use of high-quality Ka'aji, like Sandal or Farce, during social events is a sign of status and refined taste. It shows not just wealth, but respect for our traditions and an effort to uphold our cultural values."

This finding aligns with sociological theories on consumption, which emphasize how material goods serve as markers of social distinction.

Artistic Craftsmanship and Cultural Expression

Ka'aji production is an artistic craft that showcases the skilful blending of ingredients, reflecting creativity and cultural identity. Each scent embodies personal and regional expressions of Kanuri heritage.

The production of Ka'aji is an art. Every ingredient is carefully chosen, and the blending of scents requires skill and creativity. It's more than just making incense—it's a way of expressing our culture, with each scent reflecting personal or regional identity.

This perspective supports the argument that traditional crafts are both economic activities and expressions of cultural identity.

Strengthening Social Bonds

Ka'aji fosters a sense of community, often exchanged as gifts during festive occasions and shared among families and neighbours. This practice strengthens social ties and reinforces communal solidarity.

Ka'aji brings people together. During festive occasions or visits, we exchange them as gifts, and it's always shared among families and neighbours. It strengthens our bonds and reminds us of our connection to one another.

This insight aligns with gift exchange theories, which highlight the role of material culture in maintaining social networks and reinforcing shared values.

Cultural Legacy and Education

Beyond its practical use, *Ka'aji* serves as an educational tool, teaching younger generations about Kanuri values, traditions, and identity. This ensures the continuity of cultural knowledge.

Ka'aji is more than just incense; it teaches our children about who we are. When they see us make it, use it, and talk about its importance, they learn about our values and traditions. This is how we keep our culture alive for future generations.

This finding supports the argument that cultural heritage is not static but actively reproduced through everyday practices.

Therefore, the findings revealed that *Ka'aji* is not merely a material object but a living expression of Kanuri's identity, social values, and historical continuity. Its production, use, and symbolism are deeply woven into the fabric of Kanuri society, serving as both a cherished tradition and a medium for cultural transmission. By remaining an active part of daily life, *Ka'aji* plays a vital role in preserving Kanuri heritage, reinforcing the interconnections between material culture, social cohesion, and historical continuity.

Socio-Economic Contribution of *Ka'aji* Production and Trade:

The production and sale of *Ka'aji* generate employment, promote local businesses, enhance market activities, and uphold cultural heritage, contributing to economic growth and social cohesion, the socio-economic contributions of *Ka'aji* production and trade can be analyzed through themes such as livelihood sustainability, employment generation, gender empowerment, market expansion, and community development. These themes align with economic and sociological theories such as the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (Chambers & Conway, 1992), Informal Economy Theory (Hart, 1973), and Gender Empowerment Theory (Kabeer, 1999).

Source of Livelihood and Economic Empowerment

Ka'aji production serves as both a primary and supplementary source of income for many individuals, particularly women. In line with the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, which highlights the ability of

households to sustain themselves through diverse income sources, many *Ka'aji* producers rely entirely on this trade for financial stability.

Ka'aji business improves my livelihood because it is through the profit I make, I use to support my family.

Despite inflation, I continue to sell and make a profit, and I am grateful to the Almighty for it.

Ka'aji is not only my culture and identity but also my pride and my business.

These narratives illustrate that *Ka'aji* production provides a stable and sustainable income, particularly for women, fostering economic empowerment and financial independence. The trade also supports local markets by ensuring continuous demand for raw materials and finished products, aligning with the principles of informal economic activities that sustain livelihoods outside formal employment structures (Hart, 1973).

Employment Generation and Skill Development

The *Ka'aji* industry creates direct and indirect employment opportunities, engaging producers, ingredient suppliers, traders, and apprentices.

My children assist me in making Ka'aji, which keeps the business running.

I started making Ka'aji for others after I got married, initially working based on requests. Over time, I began producing and selling Ka'aji to people in my community and beyond.

I stayed with my master for several years until I finished secondary school. Now, I own my shop.

Ka'aji production fosters entrepreneurship and skills transfer, reducing unemployment, particularly among women and youth. This supports human capital development, as identified by Becker's (1964) Human Capital Theory, which emphasizes the role of skills and knowledge in improving economic productivity. The apprenticeship model ensures the sustainability of the trade, equipping future generations with financial stability and artisanal expertise.

Contribution to Local and Global Markets

Ka'aji trade strengthens local economies and facilitates international cultural exchange, aligning with global market expansion theories. The business thrives in markets such as the Maiduguri Monday Market and is exported internationally.

I sell my Ka'aji locally and internationally, with some customers from London, America, Saudi Arabia, and other countries.

When you go to the market, you'll see those selling both the already-made incense and the raw materials for making them.

The expansion of *Ka'aji* into international markets highlights its potential as a profitable cultural product, contributing to trade growth and economic globalization (Appadurai, 1996). This also strengthens cultural diplomacy, allowing Kanuri traditions to gain recognition beyond local boundaries.

Women's Economic Empowerment and Social Status

Ka'aji production is a female-dominated industry that provides financial independence and social recognition for women. According to Kabeer's (1999) Gender Empowerment Framework, economic participation enhances women's decision-making power and social status.

The profit I make from Ka'aji enables me to take care of all my expenses.

Despite being a civil servant, the profit from my Ka'aji business is what sustains me.

Ka'aji is not only my culture and identity, but also my pride and business.

The trade reduces financial dependency and boosts women's roles in household decision-making,

reinforcing gender equality and economic agency.

Seasonal Demand and Economic Stability

The demand for Ka'aji is steady throughout the year but peaks during specific seasons, ensuring continuous income flow for producers.

Ka'aji keeps rooms warm during the cold season and takes away dampness during the rainy season.

The demand for Ka'aji is consistent throughout the year, but it increases during the rainy season and harmattan.

These findings align with economic stability theories that emphasize how seasonal industries can ensure long-term financial security through cyclical income patterns (Schumpeter, 1934). Seasonal demand fluctuations create strategic opportunities for increased production and revenue generation.

Community Development and Economic Growth

The Ka'aji trade contributes to broader community development by supporting local businesses, fostering entrepreneurship, and promoting cultural tourism.

Ka'aji contributes economically to the community by creating livelihoods for producers, traders, and suppliers.

It supports local businesses, fosters entrepreneurship, and generates income, especially for women and small-scale artisans.

By stimulating economic activity beyond just the producers, Ka'aji trade benefits local markets, transport services, and other small enterprises. This aligns with endogenous development models that emphasize the role of community-driven economies in fostering sustainable growth (Amin, 1999).

However, the analysis demonstrates that Ka'aji production and trade significantly contribute to socio-economic development through livelihood enhancement, employment generation, women's empowerment, market expansion, and community growth. By integrating economic and sociological theories, it is evident that Ka'aji serves as both a cultural artifact and a sustainable economic venture. To strengthen its impact, policymakers and stakeholders should consider strategies such as formalizing the trade, enhancing training programs, and promoting cultural tourism initiatives.

Sustainability Challenges of Ka'aji Production:

The long-term sustainability of Ka'aji production is increasingly threatened by various socio-economic and structural challenges. Thematic analysis of the collected data revealed five key issues: raw material scarcity, economic constraints, declining knowledge transmission, market competition, and regulatory barriers. These challenges highlight the broader implications of globalization, resource dependency, and shifts in cultural practices that impact the Ka'aji industry.

Raw Material Scarcity and Supply Chain Vulnerability

The availability of essential raw materials for Ka'aji production has become increasingly limited, posing a significant challenge to producers. Many ingredients are either scarce due to environmental degradation or primarily sourced from external markets, making procurement both costly and unpredictable.

The cost of materials keeps rising, and some ingredients are becoming difficult to find.

Previously, the materials were affordable and readily available, but now, due to heavy reliance on imports, the price of ingredients has significantly increased.

This dependency on external supply chains raises concerns regarding resource sustainability and production resilience. The increasing costs and limited availability of raw materials threaten the economic

feasibility of traditional *Ka'aji* production, making it less accessible to producers and consumers alike.

Economic Constraints and Financial Insecurity

Economic instability, inflation, and limited access to financial support present substantial barriers to *Ka'aji* producers.

Many artisans operate within the informal economy, lacking capital investment, access to credit facilities, and business development opportunities.

These challenges align with informal economy theories, which highlight the vulnerability of small-scale enterprises in unregulated sectors. The absence of institutional support prevents producers from expanding their businesses, improving production processes, or competing effectively in broader markets.

Declining Knowledge Transmission and Shifting Cultural Values

The continuity of *Ka'aji* production is further challenged by a decline in intergenerational knowledge transfer. While traditional production techniques have historically been passed down through apprenticeships, younger generations increasingly show disinterest in engaging with the trade due to evolving career aspirations and modern economic opportunities.

I learned Ka'aji-making from my mother, but younger people today are more interested in office jobs.

Although my children assist me, I am unsure if they will continue the trade in the future.

Most of the young ka'aji vendors are not the real producers; they buy from us and resell.

This trend reflects broader concerns in cultural sustainability, where traditional industries face the risk of gradual decline as younger generations prioritize alternative professions and engage more in commerce rather than production. Without deliberate efforts to facilitate knowledge transfer, the continuity of *Ka'aji* craftsmanship remains at risk.

Market Competition and Consumer Preferences

The expansion of industrially produced and imported incense presents significant competition for locally produced *Ka'aji*. Factory-made alternatives, often marketed with modern packaging and lower prices, influence consumer preferences and reduce demand for traditional incense.

Due to the economic situation, some customers go for imported incense because it is more affordable and comes in attractive packaging, and is easy to use.

Traditional Ka'aji has a richer scent, but the market is shifting towards factory-made alternatives because the cost of ka'aji keeps increasing by the day due to heavy reliance on imported ingredients used for producing ka'aji.

It is evident from the narrations that the sustainability of *Ka'aji* production faces challenges due to rising costs and shifting consumer preferences. Economic constraints push customers towards cheaper, factory-made incense, making traditional *Ka'aji* less competitive. The heavy reliance on imported ingredients further increases production costs, creating supply chain vulnerabilities. Despite its richer scent and cultural value, *Ka'aji* struggles against mass-produced alternatives that benefit from lower costs and convenient packaging. To sustain the industry, strategies such as local ingredient sourcing, cost reduction, and consumer awareness campaigns are necessary to maintain its market relevance and cultural significance.

Regulatory Barriers and Policy Limitations

The informal nature of *Ka'aji* production means that producers often lack formal recognition, legal protections, or industry-specific policies that could support business growth. The absence of government intervention and trade regulations limits opportunities for industry development and economic integration.

There is no organized association or government framework regulating Ka'aji production.

Policymakers should support local producers to reduce reliance on imported incense.

This challenge aligns with development policy frameworks, emphasizing the need for institutional support to foster sustainable economic growth. Without adequate regulation, *Ka'aji* producers face difficulties in securing trade protections, accessing financial assistance, or expanding their market reach.

Therefore, the sustainability of *Ka'aji* production is hindered by multiple interrelated factors, including resource scarcity, financial instability, generational knowledge gaps, market competition, and policy constraints. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach, including:

Encouraging local cultivation of raw materials to reduce reliance on imported ingredients and ensure supply chain stability.

Expanding financial support mechanisms, such as microfinance initiatives and cooperative funding for small-scale producers.

Implementing structured knowledge transfer programs to preserve traditional skills and engage younger generations in the trade.

Enhancing market competitiveness through branding, packaging innovation, and digital marketing strategies.

Developing policy frameworks that formalize the trade, offer incentives for producers, and promote cultural tourism linked to *Ka'aji* heritage.

By addressing these sustainability challenges through strategic interventions, *Ka'aji* production can be preserved as both a viable economic activity and a culturally significant tradition, ensuring its continuity for future generations.

Conclusion

This study underscores *Ka'aji's* profound cultural, socio-economic, and spiritual significance among the Kanuri people. As both a symbol of identity and a driver of social cohesion, *Ka'aji* sustains traditional knowledge and livelihoods, yet faces threats from imported ingredient dependency, eroding knowledge transmission, and modernization. From a sustainable development lens, revitalizing *Ka'aji* production aligns with multiple SDGs: poverty reduction (SDG 1) through artisan livelihoods, gender equality (SDG 5) via women's participation, and decent work (SDG 8) and responsible consumption (SDG 12) through localized value chains. Critically, safeguarding *Ka'aji's* intangible heritage directly supports SDG 11.4 by protecting cultural traditions as assets for sustainable communities. To ensure *Ka'aji's* continuity, policies must integrate traditional knowledge with sustainable practices, fostering resilience while advancing broader development goals.

Recommendations

To ensure the cultural, economic, and environmental sustainability of *Ka'aji* production, this study proposes the following evidence-based interventions:

Local Cultivation Research: Agricultural institutions should conduct feasibility studies on domestic cultivation

of key ingredients (e.g., sandalwood, agarwood, and aromatic herbs), including climate adaptability trials and cost-benefit analyses to reduce reliance on imports.

Policy Support for Local Sourcing: Governments should incentivize local ingredient markets through subsidies for small-scale farmers and tariffs on non-essential imports to strengthen supply chains.

Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer: Integrate Ka'aji-making techniques into school curricula and community workshops, partnering with elders to document oral traditions digitally (e.g., via open-access archives).

Artisan Empowerment Programs: Provide microloans, vocational training, and e-commerce platforms to Ka'aji producers—particularly women-led enterprises—to expand market access and ensure fair trade practices.

Implementation Pathway: Prioritize partnerships between universities, policymakers, and Kanuri community leaders to co-design interventions, ensuring cultural authenticity and equitable benefits.

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