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Editor's Introduction

Welcome to the Volume 2, Number 1 issue of the ASEAN Journal of Research published by the International College of Krirk University. As editor, I am delighted to announce that we have eleven peer-reviewed academic research papers in this issue, covering a range of subjects in the social sciences and the arts and humanities.

Just as Krirk University as a whole has begun a new phase of internationalization, with students now of 13 different nationalities, so too does the ASEAN Journal of Research welcome authors from a wide range of countries: Thailand; China; Taiwan; India; Nigeria; Czech Republic and Bangladesh. I hope and anticipate that the next issue will be able to offer an even wider range of expertise.

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It would be disingenuous to claim that 2024 more broadly has begun in anything other than a disastrous way. This is evident in Israel's war against Gaza, the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, the massive forced displacement of people in Sudan and the continually intensifying global climate emergency. Setting against these goliaths of misery, it sometimes seems futile to try to redress the balance even by a tiny amount by helping produce academic research but this is, nevertheless, the purpose of this journal. By standing on the shoulders of giants, we can help to advance knowledge and enable people to make better decisions. It may not be a huge issue when set against the overall picture but it is at least something.

*

The English Language Program at the International College of Krirk University has begun to flourish, with students joining us from Myanmar, Nigeria, Uganda and Vietnam. We hope that many more will join our courses which, in addition to our BBA (Business Computing), MBA (Managing Innovation) and DBA programs, now also includes a BTech in ICT, which will begin teaching in August 2024 and an undergraduate degree in tourism and hospitality management which we hope will also be in operation for that semester.

John Walsh, Krirk University

**Peer Reviewed Academic Papers:
Social Sciences**

Impact of Overtourism: The Dark Side of Urban Renewal

Jan Souřezný, National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan. Email: jan.sourezny@gmail.com.

Lin Fan, National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan. Email: linfan@cm.nsysu.edu.tw.

Lavanchawee Sujarittanonta, Rajamangala University of Technology, Phra Nakhon. Email: lavanchawee@aya.yale.edu.

Abstract

Every city and nation aspires to create the best living environments for their residents. This pursuit has led to numerous urban transformation initiatives aimed at making areas more attractive, accessible, and economically viable. These approaches vary depending on the specific context, ultimately shaping the affected areas and entire cities differently. In this paper, we explore the motivations behind urban transformations and the challenges posed by overtourism, an inevitable consequence of revitalising areas. We particularly focus on the factors influencing the decision to prioritise tourism as a primary economic driver and the variables impacting such a transformation. To investigate this, we analyse two locations in Taiwan and the Czech Republic, highlighting the distinctions in design, context, outcomes, and impacts. Our research combines observations, interviews, and secondary data to provide insights into the intricate relationship between urban transformation and overtourism.

Keywords: *city development, Kaohsiung, overtourism, Pier-2, Prague, tourism, urbanism*

1. Introduction

The urge to cultivate public spaces grows as many cities worldwide expect to attract tourists and new workers by renovating abandoned or non-attractive urban areas. There seem to be efforts towards modernising places that do not necessarily need it. The reasons for this change reflect recent trends and the authorities' need for making certain iconic, busy, or central areas more appealing.

Aside from boosting the economy and maintaining prosperity, the aim is often to attract tourists, which is partially connected with the economic growth of the areas. But where is the line? What can it cause? And what to watch out for to keep things in our hands? In this article, we will be looking for answers to the following questions: (1) How does overtourism impact on urban revitalisation projects' long-term viability and sustainability? (2) What are the key factors influencing the success or failure of urban renewal initiatives in mitigating the negative effects of overtourism?

We used observation, interviews, and secondary data analysis to analyse the background and features of the renovation of Pier-2 in Kaohsiung (Taiwan) and the Karlín district in Prague (Czech Republic). We used these two locations because of their different characteristics, enabling us to do a comparative analysis. We propose a hypothesis suggesting that regional variations exist, influenced by both the geographical location of the renovated area and the objectives set by city officials. Consequently, our focus extends to striking a balance between attracting tourists and addressing the essential needs of local communities.

2. Literature Review

In the field of urban planning and city development, historical perspectives have played a significant role. However, the modern concept of urban regeneration, which emerged in the 1980s as a response to revitalising areas affected by industrialisation (Jones & Evans, 2013:7), has injected fresh energy into this

domain. As a result, urban planning and development hold promise for the emergence of innovative ideas and concepts.

There are many definitions of urban transformation, where every author understands the scope and individual aspects with slight nuances and from different perspectives. For instance, Hurlimann, Moosavi and Browne (2021) consider urban transformation to be primarily environmental and introduces a three-part typology: coping, malaction, and transformation. Similarly, Hölscher & Frantzeskaki (2021) suggest that "... urban transformation narratives have been driven by the recognition of the need and opportunity for radical change towards sustainable and resilient cities," which in the context of recent events reflects the negative human impact on nature.

According to Caves (2004:710), the purpose of urban transformation is to restore economic viability to a given area. He believes that attracting external private and public investment is the key purpose to boosting a given area to make the transformation successful. Lastly, Inam (2013:5–7) avoids the standard definition of urbanism altogether. Instead, in his repeatedly asked question "What can urbanism be?" and "What purpose does urbanism serve?" he refers to urban transformation as a bridge that connects the gap between planning and architecture as a morphological definition. The last, more direct definition that complements the previous statements is by Akkar:

"As a fundamental outline definition, urban transformation is the sum of the comprehensive and integrated approaches, strategies and actions implemented to improve the economic, social, physical and environmental conditions of urban space that experienced collapse and degradation (Salihoğlu, Albayrak and Eryilmaz, 2021)."

We would like to challenge this definition by suggesting that urban space doesn't have to undergo collapse or degradation. Considering our earlier claims that urban transformation is often driven by contemporary trends, the objective of enhancing an area to align with these trends is a valid rationale. It's possible that Akkar defined the area's obsolescence as a form of degradation; in such a scenario, the definition aligns perfectly.

Overall, the scope of urban transformation's definition is fairly broad and hard to capture, but the consensus remains – as every development relates to money and investment in mind, it reflects recent tendencies driven by society. Sustainability and environmental protection are the cases here.

Factors of money and recent trends go hand-in-hand. The reason for this link is understandable – transforming the area to reflect the trending topics raises the attractiveness of the specific area. This evolution attracts new demographic groups of inhabitants and workers, and creates demand for various services, resulting in prosperity growth and money turnover. Generally mentioned drivers of modern urban transformation are economic, social, and environmental factors. These are described in various sources with different focuses. Jones & Evans (2013:7), for instance, emphasise the need to balance these three factors, regarding developing from an obscure concept in the late 1980s, which tried "... to locate developments on the cheapest land in areas with the highest demand. In the UK context, this would result in pressure to relax constraints on greenfield development, particularly around London and the southeast." According to the Eurostat report (2022; see also Kabisch *et al.*, 2018: 237), environmental preferences, along with economic factors (such as income), influence residents' decisions. Moreover, economic factors that determine individuals' position within society, directly impact the social aspect of life, which is the last main factor defining urban transformation. If the residents identify with their district, their street, and their social bubble, the society becomes more unified, communities grow stronger, and cultural institutions or events set up and organised by residents can attract more visitors to the area, resulting in a greater economic boost.

Business and tourism represent a significant impact on urban transformation and vice versa. Successful urban transformation attracts owners and vendors, and without a proper plan for establishing conditions for business development, there is no guarantee that the urban transformation project will be successful. Intensive increases in the number of buildings, offices, job positions, and people seeking jobs in areas that undergo urban transformation (each of the mentioned items leads to another) are an inevitable effect of the process. Even if the subject of the transformation is a city park, there will still be new job positions related to staff operating at facilities, guards, or vendors. This example suggests that even if the significance of business in the renovated area is marginal, it should never be neglected. Operating firms that arrive in a transformed area are expected to be willing to advance and progress. Digital technologies and their implementation are, according to the study about sustainable businesses in smart cities, one of the ways to retain sustainability and participate in bilateral agreements with the city, since firms and smart cities live in symbiosis (Dana *et al.*, 2022). Another trend of recent years is the growing demand for alternative food markets with a local identity, nature, health, and trustworthiness products, which can help businesses using agricultural transformation focused on small business models, entrepreneurship, and human relations (Wiśniewska *et al.*, 2023).

There are several concerns about integrating businesses into new areas. Ambitions of many local authorities are a very radical change because they do not want to risk bad results by not putting enough effort into the project and losing even the little that they would have always done. This might result in the destruction of the local character by introducing chain stores to the area and discriminating against small vendors (Zukin, 2009: 1–5). With more and more firms coming, property values and rents can rise high. There is usually little to no effort from the authorities to regulate this because higher prices offer faster financial healing after such massive investment in the whole area. As a result, low-income residents and entrepreneurs are disadvantaged (Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2014:4). Some concerns are being raised, however, the advantages (led by economic boosts and improving quality of life) in most cases far outweigh, and with proper planning, urban transformation can be a game-changer. Some locations are just not meant to be “touristified”. While the impact of tourism on local communities can be negative in the perspective of raising prices, and displacement of local residents in favour of shared housing services (Goodwin, 2016:11), it can also act as a catalyst for change in cities, encouraging investment in infrastructure, cultural amenities, and public spaces (Dwyer & Forsyth, 1994:535). One of the positive examples of tourism connected to revitalized areas will be thoroughly discussed in the research part – Pier2 in Kaohsiung has transformed from an industrial hub that was closed to the public into a thriving and busy place that has offered many opportunities (Hung, Lin & Hsueh, 2018).

Tourism is one of the darker sides of urban transformation – strongly connected to the topic of business development (where there is demand, so there will be supply), even tourism is a side effect of almost any renovated area. Whenever we tried to find some purely positive examples, there was always a “but.” Kaohsiung seems to be the most positive case we have found, nevertheless, the future of the limited area and growing population is uncertain as well. While acknowledging the negative aspects, it is important to highlight that a well-managed tourism sector has the potential to generate employment opportunities and stimulate the local economy positively. Tourism can serve as a means to promote a city's unique character and cultural heritage, fostering a sense of pride among its residents. To benefit everyone involved, urban transformation should aim for a harmonious equilibrium between the needs of the community and those of tourists. It is also up to local authorities how they will regulate the inflow of tourists, how much power they will give to business owners, and if they manage to strike the balance between residents and companies, as it should be in an ideal world.

3. Methodology

When selecting the locations, we took our familiarity with the environment into consideration. It would be extremely difficult to capture the essence of the environment and all aspects of it without any personal connection and deeper previous knowledge about the area.

Having this condition in mind, we decided to make a Pier-2 area (駁二) in Kaohsiung (Taiwan) to be the main area for the primary research. The reasons that play in favour of this selection were the proximity to our residences (the area is easily accessible from there) and the fact that the transformation it has undergone over past years is remarkable; it is being given as an example of a successful urban transformation of the entire country. The case of northern Prague (namely districts called Karlín and Holešovice) was selected as a secondary location, which serves as a comparison and verification that areas in different parts of the world do differ. The reason for this decision was the same as Pier-2; even though it is not our current place of residence, we have contextual knowledge about the area and are capable of introducing the story and different ways to renovate the place without having to stay there physically. Residency in the Sizihwan area which lies beside Pier-2 has provided the opportunity to study it for nearly two years. Therefore, observation immediately became the top choice for the research because of already obtained data to the extent of hundreds of pages of notes and observations. In the analysis part, we will summarise those notes into a list of perspectives, containing the relevant key points to each of them (the full set of notes is too long for the scope of the article).

It is certainly crucial to document the situations that we passively observe. However, actively engaging in communication with individuals who frequent Pier-2 refines research findings. Sometimes, initial impressions can be deceptive. Through interviews with visitors, business proprietors, and individuals who contribute to the area in various ways (for instance, we were able to interview one of the artists responsible for a mural on the primary promenade), our objective is to corroborate the impressions gathered from our observations.

We used semi-structured interviews for all cases. We see this approach as the most effective; while having a clear picture of what questions we want to ask and what topics we want to cover, we leave room for improvisation for both the interviewees and interviewers in case some topic gets more interesting to talk about. Analogously to different groups of people, we used different forms of interviews – we contacted some respondents in advance and organised a focus group once, but we mainly focused on approaching the people without any heads-up or discussions. During our interviews, we considered various viewpoints. We amalgamated the perspectives of "regular visitors" with those of business owners and vendors operating within Pier-2. We accorded slightly greater significance to the latter group since our research primarily focuses on perception. The secondary sources we used are the brochure provided by the Pier-2 Art Center office. The data bank related to the Prague case consists of online articles and social media posts from the authorities who manage the district. Searching for unified views and frequently discussed keywords is an important part of conducting research. However, since all the interviews had a semi-structured character and therefore were not easily comparable, we decided not to use any statistical software for qualitative analysis.

4. Findings

Unlike standard urban development projects, Pier-2 is a specific case in terms of being built in a former-abandoned area. Therefore, we do not have much data about the previous situation there. Instead of a time comparison then, we do a geographic one which has two parts – a cultural comparison with northern Prague which is the secondary source, and an occasional association with other urban areas in Kaohsiung, to accent the difference from the rest of the city and examine the city identity shaping of Pier-2.

4.1. The Story of Pier-2

In the book that Pier-2 Art Center recommended as a reliable source of information, Liming Xu (許立明), the former acting mayor of Kaohsiung City mentions in the preface called “A Wave of Cultural Innovation in the Old Warehouse in Minato”:

“(…) Although the Third Boat Canal in Kaohsiung Inner Harbour is no longer popular for commerce, and the warehouse cluster located on the edge of the port has been silent for a long time with time, the Pier 2 Art Special Zone, which starts with the Pier 2 Warehouse, has enthusiastically promoted the new use of the old warehouse by virtue of the envoys of art and literati” (駁二營運中心, 2018, prefix, translated).

There was a part-time worker at the Cultural Affairs Bureau who mentioned the inspiration from Europe: “At the beginning of Pier-2, the city wanted to use the abandoned containers and warehouses at the wharf to create value in this area, so they borrowed foreign experience, such as the Netherlands” (Interview 7). The result is a very exotic vibe of the place that draws many different groups of visitors to the place, as one of the respondents also supposes:

“...the environment is so different from a typical Taiwanese street, it’s very attractive for Taiwanese to come and see it with their own eyes. And for tourists, I think it has somehow become an iconic place that they want to see. (...) I see many young foreigners who I suppose are students (...) for them it’s some kind of comfort zone because it’s closer to the environment in their country, either Europe or the US (Interview 3).”

4.1.1. Transportation Composition

The area’s promotion materials state proudly that one can find a connection to MRT, LRT, bus, and ferry. Without a doubt, LRT (short for Light Rail Transit) is the connection with the boldest presence. It runs directly through the area and, according to an associate professor of the Institute of Taiwan Studies of Kaohsiung Normal University, Wen-Huan Li (李文環), it includes all four stations located on the right bank of the Love River (Hamasen, Penglai Pier-2, Dayi Pier-2, and Love Pier [駁二營運中心, 2018:171, translated]). This conclusion has been derived from the brochure passages and no other detailed facts about the LRT are further mentioned. The reason might be because the book records only the 2008–2018 period, while the LRT in this section has been finished in 2017 (駁二營運中心, 2018:13, translated).

The impact that the light rail has brought to the area is immense. The respondents from the focus group (Interview 4) said that LRT has made the area much more accessible: “... Kaohsiung citizens like to ride motorcycles, but tourists may not necessarily do so. There may be places that can be reached by the ‘tram’, and then Pier-2 becomes a good choice” and admitted that if there was no LRT and they had to walk for several minutes to reach the place, they would probably pick another destination. All respondents agreed that the LRT is a good idea.

Another plus is that even though it may seem like tourists primarily take the tram, it can be a pleasant alternative to take a look at the area when the weather conditions are not good:

“It’s early June, the beginning of the ‘tough times’ – the temperatures exceeded 30°C (...) I see the people moving steadily in the stream like a line of ants. They’re heading from the LRT station over the Great Harbour Bridge to the Kaohsiung Warehouse Depot buildings (Observation, Perspective 1).”

Foreigners, however, do not seem to share the excitement to the extent of locals about this choice. A visitor from the Czech Republic, who is currently studying in South Korea for one semester and came to Kaohsiung for the first time, did not expect this kind of area at first, but is not so surprised about the LRT: "...for us, having a tram is quite normal. In Prague, I use them all the time (...) But here it's become an attraction! I was so surprised! There's only one line, only tourists take it, and they're so excited about it... (Interview 8)." However, the respondent admits at the same time that it is a very convenient and attractive choice and does not deny its impact.

Naturally, people have different opinions about all aspects of Pier-2, we observed the most differences in the topic of art you can find in the area. There was also one complaint about the LRT from a mother-son couple when the mother wanted to know the difference between LRT (light rail) and MRT (subway). After the son mentioned that LRT is slower, the woman could not understand the meaning of the LRT and screamed "Why do we even have this then? Why there's no MRT instead?" (Observation, Perspective 8). The speed of the trains that operate in the area is definitely a downside, also according to our observation and previous experience: "To my surprise, the journey of around 12 km took me almost 50 minutes! That's when we realised how incredibly slow this system is (Observation, Perspective 8)." However, the route is very well resolved, and it offers many beautiful views and delightful scenery as the train goes by.

The second option to move around Pier-2 other than walking is riding a bicycle. Despite undeniable advantages such as being an ecologically aware while relatively fast way to get from point A to B and accessibility (according to Google Maps, there are five charging stations for YouBike [a bicycle-sharing service] that are at or in immediate proximity to Pier-2), although it must be said that we have some reservations about the execution of bike lanes at the area. Pier-2 is generally oriented toward pedestrians and the bikes either have to zigzag their way through the people (which is not safe) or take a bike lane on the other side of the LRT tracks. However:

"... the construction and finishing renovations on the buildings make it incredibly narrow (...) even if all construction is finished, the narrow path is defined by grass strips from both sides, meaning that it probably won't get wider (...) Bikers also need to get off their bicycle and walk while crossing the Lingyaliao Iron Bridge (...) in the end, they won't save much time by riding around Pier-2 at most times (Observation, Perspective 8)."

We would generally advise the bike riders not to enter the Pier-2 area directly and use the regular streets that run parallel to it.

Overall, the hit of the Pier-2 area is the LRT. Despite serving mainly tourists because of its specific character of being relatively slow and offering sceneries that are good for pictures, it gained so much recognition that it became a focal point not only from the perspective of transportation but regarding all elements that can be found here. Aside from bicycles, no other vehicles are allowed to enter the area which is safe and meaningful for the purpose Pier-2 has.

4.1.2. Stores Composition

Since the project was created from scratch, there was no data in the "before" period to compare with the current situation, which is something quite unique when revitalizing urban areas – we can observe this phenomenon in expanding the cities or deforestation and cultivating nature for a living, among other things. However, we can provide a comparison between Pier-2 and other urban areas in Kaohsiung.

When conducting interviews, the opinions on the situation at Pier-2 area were quite similar – it is very difficult, and not so much in a good way for locals. The tourism objective of the area principally predetermines the character of stores and the choices of goods you can buy. The first factor that is

“discriminating” against the locals and dissuading them from coming often to buy things is the price, as mentioned by one of the respondents:

“I think the stores here are quite expensive, so it's not really beneficial for the residents. Because I think they will just complain: ‘Why are the noodles so expensive? I can have NT\$25 for one bowl but here it's like NT\$45 or NT\$50 (Interview 2)?”

It is true that going to a restaurant or for a coffee is significantly more expensive than taking a few stops by MRT or just walking a few blocks away to get something cheaper. This gap coexisting within a few metres confirms our assumption about targeting tourists as the primary source of income. As mentioned in the literature review, decisions made by authorities have an impact on the inflow of tourists. By choosing and retaining the current composition, the dominance of tourists is encouraged.

The second issue to discuss is the types of stores that are located on Pier-2. Usually, the tourist purpose of the area reflects not only the price but also the range of goods that are offered to customers. According to the men from the focus group, the biggest disadvantage is that there is no convenience store. One of them said: “Overall, the shops in Pier-2 are unique, but not very practical (Interview 4).” Another respondent observes:

“If you look around, you can see two T-shirt print stores (I have no idea why two), there is a souvenir shop across the bridge, the majority of Taiwan-themed things to buy in KW2, and the rest is pretty much food. No convenience stores, no ‘normal’ stores. There is for example Cosmed around the corner behind the tram station, but I believe that’s not a part of Pier-2 anymore, they’re just lucky to have it there (Interview 2).”

Business owners share the same feeling as the visitors. The owner of Golden Mango agreed that most of the visitors are tourists, mainly because “... there are cruise ships nearby that bring a lot of people from Hong Kong and Macau twice a week (Interview 6).” Staff at one of the T-shirt print stores said that their usual customers are exchange students from France. The employees of the gift shop in the KW2 building said that “... most of the tourists are from the United States, Britain, Japan, or Macau (Interview 10).” They also mentioned the freshest addition to KW2 – a hostel. One of them says:

“I think the whole atmosphere has changed after the hostel moved in. Although the layout has become a bit crowded, it is still quite lively, and more people come to inquire, so it is basically a good influence.”

On the other hand, it is admirable how many stores there are on Pier-2. According to my experience, if an area is being revitalized as dramatically as Pier-2 and there is no need for housing development, the place gets turned into a park with not so many stores, which is, in my opinion, another extreme with lost potential. Not this place, though. The area across the Great Harbour Bridge (Kaohsiung Depot) has been added just recently and the expansion is not done yet, as found by the Golden Mango ice cream shop owner:

“As far as I know, the government wants to develop the entire harbour area, from KD1 to KD10. You can also see that there are still some undeveloped areas here, which are still being repaired, so I expect them to become more prosperous in the future (Interview 6).”

There are also some construction areas to be seen beside the Kaohsiung Depot buildings which confirm this impression, but so far, the progress is not very fast. It seems like the area itself can expand only in terms of new space, not redevelopment of the existing space.

The financial aspect in terms of support from the authorities is one to praise. The world has been challenged by several global disasters, but luckily, things are going back to normal, as mentioned by the Golden Mango owner: “Of course, after the epidemic weakened, the crowds returned, and the number of tourists also increased (Interview 6).” After sharing that she has “a little positive” feeling about the development, we asked her if it is because of insufficient financial support from the government. She denied that and added that Pier-2 “... holds some annual events or small local events at a fixed time, which can actually stimulate tourists and crowds.”

4.1.3. Art as a Catalyst

Art and visual exhibitions are one of the boldest elements that every visitor will notice when coming to Pier-2. Houses covered with murals of all colours, motives, ornaments, and illustrations watch visitors wandering around and admiring various art pieces. Interactive elements are incorporated into buildings, such as a giant swing, where “... there are more adults on it to see rather than kids (Observation, Perspective 5)!” or a “peeing boy” statue with a faucet that is a part of one of the Dayi Warehouse buildings. Architectural giants like KW2 and Kaohsiung Music Center dominate the space and set the vibe for the whole area. The statues accompany tourists on their stroll along the promenade.

The area is vibrant and lively, attracting many visitors. After all, our interviewees also mentioned art a lot and they agree that it shapes and distinguishes the area from regular Taiwanese streets, unlike historical centres of European cities:

“Kaohsiung City learned from many European countries, but at that time there was no clear goal, so many artists were recruited to do the planning and design of the area at that time. In fact, I am very grateful to the artists who came in at the beginning. From the Dayi Warehouse at the beginning, to the Penglai Warehouse later, and then to the Pier 2,” says the Cultural Affairs Bureau worker (Interview 7).

The art we value the most is the one that reflects some culture or trends. In that sense, we admire pieces that present Taiwan and its culture the most. Aside from the “Hao Ke Ai” mural, we would like to mention one more installation that is quite new to the area – “The Taiwan Dream”. It consists of “... many signboards that present Taiwanese culture (...) – a barber shop with red, blue, and white strip lights, a traditional clinic for curing injuries from accidents, and the sign with roads names consisting of numbers in Mandarin that exist in Kaohsiung, for example, Yisin (一心), Ersheng (二聖) and Sanduo (三多) (Observation, Perspective 5).”

4.1.4. Visitors’ Demographics

The summary from Perspectives 1, 2, and 7 of our observations is that the busiest time for Pier-2 is, aside from special events such as Christmas, New Year, or CNY, weekend evenings in Spring and Fall. This suggests that most visitors consider both the most suitable and stress-free time to come to visit and the weather (summer days are not the best periods because of the lack of shadow). Another factor that plays a role is traditional weekend markets which attract around 25% more people (as per observation). At those times, Pier-2 is on the very edge of its capacity which is most visible at the market areas and LRT station and trains that are packed with people.

Special occasions we experienced in person were the Christmas light show and New Year Countdown on the facade of Kaohsiung Music Center, New Year concerts near Banana Pier, and a drone show during the Lunar New Year festival. In all cases, Pier-2 experienced its most difficult moments as the masses of people were flowing in all directions with no spare space. LRT trains could not handle the demand and people were overflowing the stations' platforms. Only during the concert, the organizers managed to keep people

spread on the entire surface of the area by setting up two locations of the concerts, each on one side of Pier-2 (Observation, Perspective 4). Aside from the breathtaking shows that always come with those events, respondents complained quite a lot in our interviews, one respondent even said the weekends are enough reason for her not to come:

“...for the weekend, it will be more tourists because they have more tourist attractions like the shops, the bridge, the view, and everything. That’s why I almost never come to Pier-2 on weekends because there are just so many people, I don’t like it (Interview 9).”

After all, we describe a story from the drone show during the Christmas light show and CNY drone show which even became dangerous at times because of the crowds and poor organization:

“I’m meeting my friends near the LRT ‘Love Pier’ station which is directly beside the music center. But before they can conquer those 30 metres full of people to the bridge where I’m holding a spot for them, the show is almost over. Whenever there’s an event, the area becomes extremely stressful – people are confused, so many of them try to find their way through the crowd to the other side (...) People could only see around half of (the drones), the rest was covered by the music centre. When some of them find it out, they tried to run around the building to catch the rest of the show. This caused a panic in the crowd and many people started running in all directions, dangerously close to the harbour edge (Observation, Perspective 4).”

4.2. The Case Study of Karlín

Almost the entire city of Prague was paralysed after a devastating flood came in August 2002. The chaos and damaging conditions lasted for over two weeks. Karlín, however, suffered the most from it because of its geographical conditions and proximity to the Vltava River. Several buildings collapsed, all transport connections were interrupted (the water flooded all metro stations), and in total 17 people and 134 animals (from the Prague Zoo) died consequently ((Ray, 2006). Karlín as an area was sealed off for several days because it was too dangerous to move around.

After the disaster, the authorities began to repair all buildings and renovate the area. The flood was a catalyst to begin a radical renovation which resulted in original classicist houses with freshly painted colourful facades coexisting with modern minimalist office buildings, green squares, and many restaurants, cafés, and other businesses.

The renovation is running continuously; the construction of Kasárna Karlín has been finished six years ago. Negrelli Viaduct (a dominant construction, an important train connection, and cultural heritage) was rebuilt in 2020. The novelty here is the incorporation of shops and cafés into the arches of the viaduct, which brings the area back to life.

We see the biggest difference in the integration of the entire area into the rest of the city. Since Karlín had a reputation as a busy district before the floods and the renovation and not being far from the city center, it had a better starting point in becoming an organic district for both tourists and locals. We mentioned that “... it feels like Pier-2 still has a label of an oasis in the middle of concrete jungle (...) I’m certain that this will change in the future once there are more areas to be renovated, and there will be some connection between them.” However, Pier-2 can help eliminate the reputation of being an isolated tourist attraction by utilizing more public transport modes (not only slow and touristic LRT) and introducing local-friendly shops.

One of the similar features of both renovations was the thought of breathing a second life in the particular area; whether it was the case of Pier-2 where the authorities wanted to bring back to the “golden era” from

the 1930s (Interview 2), or renovating Karlín after the floods which destroyed parts of the city. It is, in a way, a revolutionary idea, too; Prague wanted to integrate pedestrian-friendly zones into a bustling city, while Pier-2 looks like no other area in Kaohsiung. Both locations also collaborated with many artists and designers, and there are many events to enhance the rate of visitors.

The character of both revitalizations is naturally different – Karlín and Holešovice are more connected to other Prague districts, the infrastructure has been developed enough in the early times, and the population density of Prague is much smaller than Kaohsiung. From this point of view, Pier-2 could have tried to build some office buildings or taller apartment buildings directly in the area which could both utilize the space that Kaohsiung is in need for and at the same time, the buildings could break down the area a little bit, making it more interesting and providing a shade that is lacking during the day as a bonus.

What we see as the worst downside is Pier-2's initial orientation towards tourists at the expense of locals, who do not want to drink overpriced coffee, buy a funny T-shirt, and fight their way through endless crowds on weekends and during events.

5. Discussion and Recommendations

This article formulated two research questions: (1) “How does overtourism impact urban revitalisation projects' long-term viability and sustainability?” and (2) “What are the key factors influencing the success or failure of urban renewal initiatives in mitigating the negative effects of overtourism?”

Regarding the first question, the most significant finding of this research is the crucial role of the purpose of urban revitalisation projects in their long-term viability and sustainability, especially concerning overtourism. The study underscores that the initial clarity and alignment of the project's purpose, whether it leans primarily towards tourism, caters to local needs, or adopts a hybrid approach, strongly affect its vulnerability to overtourism.

In the case of Pier-2, the data gathered suggests that the area failed to serve the needs of residents and local communities as it shows apparent signs of the purpose which is in this case to attract masses, which inevitably means outweighing tourists and oppressing locals mainly through the character of stores, nationwide events, and transportation solutions. The excessive concentration of events and the heavy promotion of Pier-2 as a tourist hotspot has disrupted the daily lives of the nearby communities and the natural harmony of the location. This imbalance in providing primarily to tourists has negated the area's potential to act as a city identity shaper, deepening the differences between Pier-2 and the rest of the city, and resulting in an isolated island in the middle of a concrete jungle.

However, there are positive aspects to Pier-2's renovation efforts. The transformation of the area into a pedestrian-friendly space that Taiwan so desperately needs and its commitment to fighting the climate crisis by incorporating green spaces have been successful. Despite some concerns about the lack of shade and trees, Pier-2 has still made significant progress compared to other urban areas in Kaohsiung. The area has brought people to the district, serving as a tool to liven up the abandoned space.

To ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of urban revitalisation projects like Pier-2 in the face of overtourism, it is crucial to find the balance between attracting tourists and satisfying the needs of the local community. The composition of stores within the area shall be adjusted to cater to both tourists and locals, making it more inclusive and affordable. Additionally, aligning Pier-2's operations with the mindset of environment protection, namely through sustainable development goals (SDGs), can further boost its value and contribute to its long-term success.

Concerning the second research question regarding the primary factors that collectively impact the success in managing overtourism in refurbished urban areas, the study identifies three key factors: the area's purpose, the composition of stores, and transportation choices.

The research findings emphasise the purpose of the area as a character shaper. While Pier-2 has primarily focused on attracting tourists, our research suggests that to achieve prosperity, the area should consider becoming an organic and seamless part of the whole metropolis, not just a touristic attraction. This involves aligning the composition of stores with the needs of both tourists and locals, striking a balance that fosters inclusivity and affordability. Transportation choices also have an impact on the success of urban renewal initiatives in mitigating the negative effects of overtourism. The problem of Pier-2 is integrating the touristic LRT as the only mean of transportation that has a direct connectivity with multiple anchors, making the most convenient and only choice to travel around. In that regard, we propose integrating more choices that are more local-friendly and available to use daily to commute to work or school. By resolving this issue, the previously mentioned concern about the area not being an organic and seamless part of the metropolis is partially taken care of as a result.

By creating pedestrian-friendly areas and limiting vehicle access, Pier-2 has successfully created a space where people can slow down, enjoy the environment, and improve their physical and mental well-being. Furthermore, integrating Pier-2 with other restored areas and promoting minor events can contribute to cultural integration and a more inclusive environment. The implications and contributions of this research extend to the societal level, emphasising community well-being, unity, connectivity, and cultural integration. By adopting a local-oriented approach, aligning with SDGs, and embracing a city identity-shaping mindset, urban renewal initiatives can create spaces that are not only attractive to tourists but also foster the well-being and inclusivity of the local community.

As for future research directions, it would be beneficial to further explore the implications of store composition, transportation choices, and the impact of urban renewal initiatives on the overall character of the city's identity. Additionally, studying the financial aspects of Pier-2's renovation and conducting a comparative analysis with similar context areas would provide valuable insights for further studies.

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The Effect of Registration System Reform on IPO underpricing of GEM in China

Binyan Zhao, International College, Krirk University, Thailand. Email: 6318312@student.krirk.ac.th.

Zhuoying Liao, School of Finance, Guangzhou Huashang College, China. Email: 1093804834@qq.com.

Yunshi Huang, School of Finance, Guangzhou Huashang College, China. Email: 2038574527@qq.com.

Abstract

Compared to other countries, the Chinese stock market has a more serious IPO underpricing issue. On July 22nd, 2019, China's registration system was officially implemented by the Sci-tech Innovation Board. With the first batch of companies successfully listed on August 24th, 2020, the Growth Enterprise Market (GEM) transferred from the approval-based initial public offering (IPO) system to the registration-based IPO system, while, the Main Board was still under the approval issuance system. We collected 889 IPOs across the Main Board and GEM from July, 2019 to August, 2023 and divided the sample into treated and control groups based on the implementation of registration reform on GEM. We conducted the DID and OLS regression analyses. The empirical results of this paper suggest that the registration reform policy plays a positive role in IPO underpricing and net assets per share before the issuance of GEM IPOs is negatively related to the underpricing rate in the background of the registration system. Overall, our findings show that registration system reform of the GEM does not improve the IPO pricing efficiency. However, as a financial indicator, net assets per share before the issuance alleviates information asymmetry between investors and issuers on the GEM in the background of the registration system.

Keywords: *DID model, Growth Enterprise Market, IPO underpricing, OLS regression, registration system reform*

1. Introduction

Initial public offering (IPO) underpricing is a common phenomenon in the global IPO market and is one of the problems plaguing the financial community. IPO underpricing occurs when an IPO in the stock market is priced significantly lower than the initial market price of the listing. Loughran and Ritter (2004) researched IPO underpricing in the U.S. IPO market from 1980 to 2000. They reported that IPO underpricing was almost 7% in the 1980s and then rose to 15% in the 1990s; during the Internet bubble period, they noted that underpricing exploded, with a 65% first-day return. Similarly, Unlu, Ferris and Noronha (2004) found that the mean IPO underpricing rates in the UK from 1993 to 2001 ranged between 2% and 64.48%. In addition to this, other scholars have found lower IPO underpricing rates than in China, e.g., the average market adjusted initial return for the first three trading days was about 17.8% in Tunisia (Boudriga, Ben Slama & Boulila, 2009); the average underpricing level of the Italian Stock Exchange from January, 2001 to December, 2012 was 6.75%, which is far below previous studies (Dell'Aqua, 2014). In China, this phenomenon is more prominent. Chan, Wang and Wei (2004) investigated 570 A-share IPOs issued in China and observed that the average IPO underpricing rate was 178%. From the above research results, it can be seen that Chinese stock market has a more serious IPO underpricing phenomenon than other countries.

Scholars have studied the negative impact of IPO underpricing on stock markets. Luo, Lin and Kou (2020) argue that high levels of IPO underpricing mean that the actual amount of capital raised by enterprises is

lower than the desired value, which is an expensive hidden cost borne by the issuing company. This will not only prevent the issuing company from realizing the expected fund-raising goal but also lead to the pursuit of excessive returns brought about by IPO underpricing by investors, triggering a mismatch of funds between the primary and secondary markets and lowering the operational efficiency of the capital market. Huang and Li (2021) support this analysis by stating that high IPO underpricing not only reflects inefficient pricing in the primary market, but also exacerbates the speculative atmosphere in the secondary market. On July 22nd, 2019, as part of the reforms carried out in China's financial market, the registration system was formally implemented, along with the establishment of the Sci-Tech Innovation Board. This triggered a discussion on stock market IPO underpricing under the registration system. The purpose of this study is to address the impacts of the registration system on IPO underpricing in China.

Prior literature seeking to explain IPO underpricing includes information asymmetry theories (Loughran & Ritter, 2004), institutional theories (Ibbotson, 1975; Lowry & Shu, 2002), ownership and control theories (Brennan & Franks, 1997) and behavioural theories (Ljungqvist, 2007). Our paper is part of a literature on the effect of issuance system change on IPO underpricing. We expand the IPO underpricing analysis by providing a new perspective and posit that registration reform influences it. Existing studies examine IPO underpricing from a perspective of financial market reform. Cheung, Ouyang and Weiqiang (2009) demonstrate that the Chinese IPO market has been transformed from a tightly-controlled system to a more market-oriented system. This study shows that the size of the underpricing decreases over the sample period and has policy implications in demonstrating the impacts of regulatory frameworks on IPO underpricing. Chu and Zhang (2019) empirically studied the IPO underpricing and influencing factors from 1992 to 2017. They conclude that pricing control is a key factor in the high IPO underpricing rate, and the IPO underpricing rate has a significant positive correlation with the issue price, fund-raising scale, and turnover rate. Some Chinese scholars analyze the causes of IPO underpricing based on information asymmetry theories. For instance, Luo *et al.* (2020) point out that the information asymmetry between issuers and investors is the main reason for IPO underpricing. Investors can only understand a company's business status through information published by the issuing company; thus, there is a risk that the company may hide or even falsify information. Information asymmetry between investors and issuers results in underpricing on the issuance day.

Compared with the former issuance system, the registration system is deemed to be a milestone in Chinese financial market reform towards marketization (Zhang & Zhang, 2023). The registration system is characterized by the requirement for continuous and full disclosure of information (Wei, 2017). However, from the perspective of information asymmetry theories, it is not clear how the implementation of the registration system affects IPO underpricing in China's stock market, and whether it improves IPO pricing efficiency. China's publicly traded stock market consists of four main boards: the Main Board, the Sci-Tech Innovation Board, the Growth Enterprise Market Board, and stocks listed on the Beijing Stock Exchange. Existing literature on China's financial market registration system reform has focused on the Sci-Tech Innovation Board since its implementation of the registration system (Chen & Fu, 2022; Pan & Ma, 2023) or examines the effect of the implementation of the registration system on premarket and aftermarket pricing efficiency (Liao, 2023). Few studies aim to analyze IPO underpricing on the Main Board and Growth Enterprise Market Board (GEM) in the context of the registration system. On August 24th, 2020, the GEM transferred from the approval-based to the registration-based IPO issuance system. However, China's Main board market did not implement an IPO registration system until April, 2023. This represents a prerequisite for comparing these two markets. Difference-in-differences (DID) analysis is used to estimate the effects of interventions and event dispositions in social science research. Cole, Floros and Ivanov (2019) perform DID to test whether the two changes in over the counter (OTC) rules are associated with lower information asymmetry for the two-stage IPOs. Thus, we selected the Main Board and GEM to conduct a DID analysis to test the effect of China's registration system reform on IPO underpricing.

Combining the features of higher disclosure requirements of the registration system and the theory of information asymmetry, we posit that registration reform improves IPO pricing efficiency, namely reducing the IPO underpricing rate. Besides, net asset value per share before issuance serves as a financial indicator that can mitigate the information asymmetry between investors and issuers. We analyze the relationship between this indicator and the IPO price suppression rate after the implementation of the registration system. Our sample contains 889 IPOs across the Main Board and GEM from 2019 to 2023. In this study, we divide the sample period into two sub-periods based on issuance system changes. We conducted the DID and ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analyses. We find that the registration reform policy plays a positive role in IPO underpricing, and net assets per share before the issuance of GEM IPOs is negatively related to the underpricing rate in the background of the registration system.

Possible contributions of the study: this study uses updated data and conducts the DID analysis to analyze the changes in the degree of IPO underpricing in the registration system context by comparing IPO underpricing on the GEM and Main Board, which expands the scope of the study. In addition, the finding that net assets per share before the issuance of GEM IPOs is negatively related to the underpricing rate verifies that, as a financial indicator, net assets per share before the issuance alleviates information asymmetry between investors and issuers on GEM in the background of the registration system. Thus, it is negatively related to the IPO underpricing rate.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the background of the study. Section 3 provides a literature review and develops the hypotheses. Section 4 presents data collection and variables. Section 5 illustrates the results of analyses and discussion. Section 6 proposes the conclusions of this paper.

2. Background

2.1. Differences between Registration and Approval Systems in China

Table 1 shows the differences between registration and approval systems in China. From 2000-2019, the Chinese stock market adopted the approval system. Companies that plan to go public must obtain approval from the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC). CSRC examines the comprehensiveness, accuracy, authenticity and timeliness of the declaration documents and conducts substantive examinations of the issuer's business nature, financial status, operating capacity, development prospects, issue quantity, and issue price. Following these procedures, the securities regulator makes a value judgment on whether the issuer meets issuance conditions. CSRC has the power to reject applications for stock issuances that do not meet prescribed conditions. On July 22nd, 2019, the Sci-tech Innovation Board (SIB) opened, and the registration system was officially implemented, which was the first trial. Since then, the registration system has been gradually implemented in different Chinese stock markets. The securities regulatory authority is no longer responsible for the quality of listed companies. The right to judge the value of the company will be given to the investors, to give better play to the decisive role of the market in resource allocation. This change requires regulators to strengthen disclosure oversight to ensure market transparency and fairness.

Table 1: Differences between China’s registration system and approval system; source: Authors

Issuance System	Period	Features
Approval System	2000-2019	The issuance and pricing of securities are subject to the review and approval of CSRC. The CSRC not only has to review and approve the content of the documents declared by the proposed listed companies for compliance, but also makes substantive judgment on the financial quality of the companies.
Approval System and Registration System	2019-2023	CSRC no longer conducts substantive audits on the financial status of the enterprises to be listed, but only conducts formal audits on the listed companies, and sets higher requirements on the accuracy and truthfulness of the information disclosure of the companies.

2.2. Differences in Listing Requirements of GEM between the Registration System and the Approval System

As part of the Chinese stock market, GEM is mainly used for high-tech, high-growth, and high-risk small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), such as those in the Internet, biotechnology, and new energy industries. Enterprises on GEM have strong innovation ability and development potential but also face greater market risks and uncertainties. On August 24th, 2020, the GEM piloted its registration system. The differences between the listing requirements under the GEM registration system and those under the approval system are reflected in the following aspects:

(i) Profit requirement: under the registration system, GEM-listed companies are only required to have made profits in the last two years, and the net profit is calculated based on the lower net profit before and after deducting non-recurring gains and losses. Under the approval system, GEM-listed companies are required to have made profits in the last three consecutive years; the net profit of each of the last two years is not less than RMB20 million, and the net profit of the last year is not less than RMB30 million.

(ii) Operating Income Requirement: under the registration system, GEM-listed companies are required to have an operating income of not less than RMB50 million and RMB60 million for the last two years or a net cash flow of not less than RMB20 million and RMB30 million for the last two years, respectively. Under the approval system, GEM-listed companies are required to have an operating income of not less than RMB30 million, RMB50 million, and RMB80 million for the last three years.

(iii) Net asset requirement: under the registration system, there are three criteria required for an ordinary enterprise to be listed on the GEM. Criterion 1: Positive net profit for the last two years and cumulative net profit of not less than RMB 50 million; Criterion 2: Estimated market capitalization of not less than RMB 1 billion, positive net profit for the previous year, and operating revenue of not less than RMB 100 million; Criterion 3: Estimated market capitalization of not less than RMB 5 billion and operating revenue of not less than RMB 300 million in the most recent year. Under the approved system, GEM-listed companies are required to have a net asset of not less than RMB20 million for the most recent year, and to have a certain percentage of capital surplus.

(iv) Market capitalization requirement: under the registration system, GEM-listed companies are not required to have a specific market capitalization requirement but are only required to have no less than 40 million shares after the issuance. Under the approval system, GEM-listed companies are required to have a market capitalization of no less than RMB400 million after issuance.

3. Literature Review

After the implementation of the registration system, the conditions for enterprises to go public changed. Some studies have examined the impact of registration system reform on IPO underpricing. However, scholars have not reached a consensus on this issue, and two scenarios have emerged from the research findings.

Some scholars have found that the registration system significantly increased IPO underpricing on the first day of the IPO or reduced IPO pricing efficiency. Feng, Zhou and Ren (2022) analyze the impact of the registration system reform on the IPO underpricing and short-term returns of GEM new shares. They find that the success of the reform of the registration system of the Science and Technology Innovation Board (STB) has aroused the enthusiasm and speculative sentiment of investors, which has significantly increased the IPO underpricing in ChiNext after the implementation of the registration system. This finding is also supported by Chen and Fu (2022). They illustrate that the registration system relaxes the listing conditions and increase the IPO pass rate. The introduction of the registration system has effectively stimulated the enthusiasm of SMEs to go public and brought new vitality to the market.

Lyu (2022) uses a stochastic frontier model to analyze the impact of the registration system reform on the IPO pricing efficiency of the GEM and the STB. The results show that the registration system reform reduced the IPO pricing efficiency of the GEM from 93.2% before the reform to 80.8% after the reform, whereas the IPO pricing efficiency of the STB was 77.9%.

However, some scholars hold the opposite view, believing that the registration system alleviates IPO underpricing and improves IPO pricing efficiency. Adopting the PSM-DIM model, Geng (2021) proposes that the threshold for RFQ respondents in the offline subscription phase of the primary market is raised, which optimizes excessive competition among institutions and leads to improved IPO pricing efficiency, thus reducing the IPO underpricing rate. Pan and Ma (2022) perform the stochastic frontier analysis and state that the registration system reform improves the efficiency of Chinese IPO pricing. Additionally, IPO pricing efficiency is negatively affected by underwriter reputation.

Registration system reform reduces the administrative intervention of IPO and increases the market-oriented inquiry pricing method, which is conducive to improving the fairness and reasonableness of IPO pricing. The registration system is characterized by the requirement for continuous and full disclosure of information (Wei, 2017). Compared with the former issuance system, the registration system is deemed a milestone in China's financial market reform towards marketization (Zhang & Zhang, 2023; Luo, Wang & Zuo, 2023). Combining the features of the registration system's higher disclosure requirements and the theory of information asymmetry, we posit that registration reform improves IPO pricing efficiency. Hence, this thesis proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The degree of IPO underpricing in the GEM is negatively affected by the registration system reform.

Under the registration system, there are three criteria required for an ordinary enterprise to be listed on the GEM. Criterion 1: Positive net profit for the last two years and cumulative net profit of not less than RMB 50 million; Criterion 2: Estimated market capitalization of not less than RMB 1 billion, positive net profit

for the previous year, and operating revenue of not less than RMB 100 million; Criterion 3: Estimated market capitalization of not less than RMB 5 billion and operating revenue of not less than RMB 300 million in the most recent year. Under the approved system, GEM-listed companies are required to have a net asset value of not less than RMB20 million for the most recent year, and to have a certain percentage of capital surplus. It is clear that after the implementation of the registration system, the requirement for profitability of companies listed on the GEM has increased.

Through an empirical study of the effectiveness of the primary market for IPOs in China, Wang (2015) points out that net asset value per share (NAVPS) is positively related to firms' IPO offering prices. The larger NAVPS indicates that the larger the NPV of the company, the stronger the company's financial strength and its ability to resist risks in the face of a crisis. Besides, the higher the NAVPS, the greater the investment value of the company and the greater the value of the investor's investment. Since NAVPS can help mitigate information asymmetry between investors and issuers, the IPO price of a company with a larger NAVPS is likely to be higher. On this basis, we further deduce that a high IPO offering price leads to a lower IPO underpricing rate. Accordingly, we assume that the net asset value per share before issuance is negatively related to IPO underpricing rate. Based on the increased net worth requirement under the GEM registration system and information asymmetry between investors and issuers, Hypothesis 2 is proposed.

Hypothesis 2: IPO underpricing is negatively related to net assets per share before issuance in the GEM market in the context of the registration system.

4. Methodology

4.1. Data Collecting of Growth Enterprise Market and Main Board

The GEM and the Main Board have different characteristics. GEM is mainly for high-tech, high-growth and high-risk SMEs, such as the Internet, biotechnology, new energy, and other industries, whereas the Main Board has no industry restrictions and is mostly for large and outstanding enterprises, such as banking, petroleum, power, and other industries. Enterprises on the GEM have strong innovation ability and development potential, but also face greater market risks and uncertainties, while enterprises on the Main Board are relatively stable and mature, but may also lack vitality and competitiveness. Enterprises on GEM are smaller in size and raise smaller amounts of capital, whereas enterprises on the Main Board are larger in size and raise larger amounts of capital. Based on the Wind database, by the end of 2023, the average market capitalization of GEM is RMB 8.545 billion and the average financing size of GEM is RMB 1.13 billion, respectively, while the average market capitalization of the Main Board is RMB 12.559 billion and the average financing size of the Main Board is RMB 1.24 billion, respectively. Companies on the GEM are better suited to raising smaller amounts of capital, while companies on the Main Board are better suited to raising larger amounts of capital.

According to the timetable for the implementation of the registration system reform in the Chinese stock market, the GEM piloted the registration system on August 24th, 2020. On that day, the first batch of registered shares was listed prior to which the GEM implemented the approval system. Meanwhile, the China's Main Board kept on implementing the approval system until April 2023. To test whether there is any change in IPO underpricing in the GEM after the implementation of the registration system, this study applies the difference-in-differences ((DID) model, which is also called the double-difference method. This is a common method used in social science research to estimate the effects of interventions and event dispositions. Some studies have used the DID model to analyze stock markets (Xie & Mo, 2014; Campello, Ribas & Wang, 2014; Xu *et al.*, 2020) and IPO underpricing (Cole *et al.*, 2019). This method requires that

the data contain at least two periods, and that all samples are divided into two categories: treated and control groups. The treated group is unaffected by the policy during the first period. After that the policy starts to be implemented, the second period is the result of the implementation of the policy. On the other hand, the control group is not affected by the policy intervention all the time, so its first and second periods are the result of no policy intervention.

In our research, the IPOs from the GEM were selected as the treated group, and the Main Board acted as the control group. Using the DID model, this study analyzes the impact of two different issuance systems – the registration system and the approval system – on IPO underpricing. The data selected for the DID model in this study are the economic indicators of the GEM and Main Board IPO companies from July 1st, 2019, to March 31st, 2023. The data comes from the CSMAR and Choice Database, including 291 IPO companies in the GEM and 292 IPO companies on the Main Board.

4.2. Variables and Models

In terms of measuring IPO underpricing rate, some researchers are apt to use initial return as the proxy. Chalk and Peavy (1987) investigate the distribution of IPO daily returns. The formula involves that first listing day's closing price minus offering price divided by offering price and it often appears in Chinese literature (Wu, Wang & Dong, 2009; Lu & Yang, 2012).

$$R_L = \frac{P_{i1} - P_{i0}}{P_{i0}} \quad (1)$$

Where P_{i0} is the i^{th} stock's offering price and P_{i1} is its listing day's closing price. R_L represents the listing day's return of an IPO stock. The formula of the first listing day's closing price minus the offering price divided by offering price shows the IPO underpricing degree on the listing day. A positive listing day's return indicates that the closing price is above the offering price, providing investors with capital gains, and negative listing day's returns indicate capital loss. However, this implies the existence of inefficient IPO pricing.

We construct the OLS regression model as follows:

$$R_L = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{NAPS} + \sum \beta_1 \text{controls}_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (2)$$

Model 2 focuses on the effect of net assets per share on IPO underpricing rate (R_L) on GEM, where net assets per share is the independent variable, R_L is the dependent variable, and 10 other variables are selected as control variables, namely offline over-subscription multiple, offline placing ratio of total issuance, market return on listing day, online over-subscription multiple, issuance costs per share, net assets per share before issuance, earnings per share before issuance, capital raised through IPO, price-to-earnings ratio on listing day, stock turnover rate on listing day and total assets in the year before issuance. Table 2 shows the definition of variables and literature that explore the relationship between these variables and IPO underpricing.

Table 2: Definition of Variables; source: Authors

Symbol	Name	Literature
OFFOSM	Offline over-subscription multiple	Zou <i>et al.</i> (2020)
OPR	offline placing ratio of total issuance	Zou <i>et al.</i> (2020)
MR	market return on listing day	Ljungqvist (2007)
ONOSM	online over-subscription multiple	Geertsema and Lu (2016)
ICPS	issuance costs per share	Wang and Yao (2021)
NAVPS	net assets value per share before issuance	Yu, Shao and Yi (2021)
EPS	earnings per share before issuance	Rudianto <i>et al.</i> (2022)
CR	capital raised through IPO	Su and Fleisher (1999)
PER	price-to-earnings ratio on listing day	Sohail <i>et al.</i> (2018)
STR	stock turnover rate on listing day	Fernando, Krisnamurthy and Spindt. (2004)
TA	total assets in the year before issuance	Liu (2024)

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5.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1. Results of DID model

Table 3 shows the distribution of the samples in the treated and control groups, as well as before and after the treatment. From the table, we can see that the number of IPOs in the GEM (treated group) is 494, and the number of IPOs in the Main Board (control group) is 395. Using August 24th, 2020, as the time demarcation, the two boards implemented the approval system for issuance before this time, which was represented by before. After this time, the GEM implements the registration system, and the Main Board is still under the approval system, which is represented by after. The sample size of GEM IPOs before the treatment is 69 and after it is 425, while the sample size of Main Board IPOs before the treatment is 107 and after it is 288.

Table 3: Sample Statistics for the DID model; source: Authors

	Before	After	Sum
Control	107	288	395
Treated	69	425	494
Sum	176	713	889

DID models typically require parallel trend testing. The central assumption of the parallel trend test is that the trends in the treated and control groups were similar before the treatment was introduced. In other words, the treated and control groups were trending parallelly on factors other than the treatment itself before the treatment was introduced. If this hypothesis holds, then the treatment effect can be attributed to the treatment itself and not to other factors that may have contributed to the differences between the groups. This paper uses the graphical method and analyzes whether the trends of the treated and control groups before the introduction of the treatment are similar.

Figure 1 Trend Plot of Treated and Control Groups; source: Authors

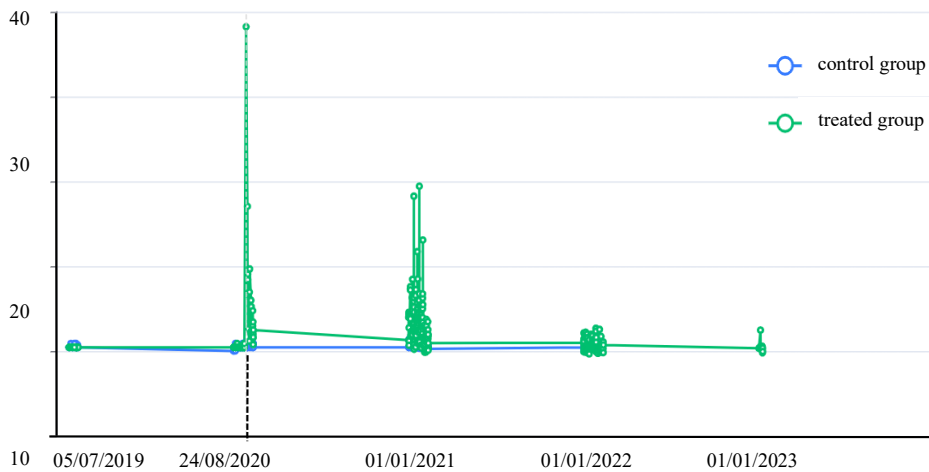


Figure 1 illustrates the trend of listing day's returns on IPO stocks (R_L) for the treated and control groups. The figure shows the changes in the listing day's returns on the GEM and Main Board before and after the implementation of the registration reform policy. The vertical axis represents R_L , and the horizontal axis represents time. The green line represents the change in the GEM and the blue line represents the change in the Main Board. As shown, before August 24th, 2020, the trends of these two lines are similar, but after the implementation of registration, the trends of the two lines are quite different. Based on Figure 1, it can be determined that the data satisfies the parallel trend assumption.

Table 4 presents the final results for the DID model. It includes the levels of effect sizes for the control and treated groups at pre- and post-treatment, as well as the double-difference (DID) effect values.

First, if the Diff value before the treatment presents significance, it means that there is a significant difference between the effect values of the control and treated groups before the treatment. For the pre-treatment, the Diff effect value is -0.038 but does not present significance ($p = 0.853 > 0.05$), which means that the effect value of the treated group before the treatment does not have a significant difference from the effect value of the control group. This satisfies the requirement of the DID model for the assumption of a parallel trend of data.

Table 4: Result of DID model; source: Authors

Time	Item	Effect Sizes on R_L	Standard Deviation	t -value	p -value
Before	Control	0.419			
	Treated	0.381			
	Diff (T – C)	-0.038	0.204	-0.185	0.853
After	Control	0.425			
	Treated	1.55			
	Diff (T – C)	1.125	0.153	7.375	0.000***
DID		1.163	0.227	5.118	0.000***

***, **, and * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Second, the Diff-value after the experiment, if it shows significance, implies that there is a significant difference between the control group and treated group effect values after the experiment. For the post-experiment, the Diff effect value is $1.125 > 0$ and shows significance at the 1% level, implying that the post-experiment treated group effect value is significantly lower than the control group effect value.

Third, DID is a double-difference value, in which, if the effect value presents significance, implies that the policy of the study plays a role. A double-difference effect value (DID) of $1.163 > 0$ and significance at the 1% level means that the registration reform policy plays a positive role in IPO underpricing. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is not accepted.

5.2. Results of the OLS Regression Model

Table 5 demonstrates the results of the regression analysis of the GEM IPO underpricing. It can be seen that the adjusted R^2 is 0.555, which implies that the explanatory variables in general can explain the changes in R_L . The standardized coefficient beta of NAVPS is -0.095 ($p = 0.099 < 1\%$), indicating that net asset value per share before the issuance is significantly negatively related to IPO underpricing in the GEM. Hence, hypothesis 2 is accepted. Among the other control variables, five variables are positively related to R_L , including OFFOSM, MR, EPS, PER and STR. Two variables, ICPS and CR, were negatively related to R_L .

Table 5: Results of the OLS Regression Analysis of the GEM; source: Authors

Variables	Standardized Coefficients Beta	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
NAVPS	-0.095	-1.655	0.099*
OFFOSM	0.276	3.379	0.001***
OPR	0.100	1.578	0.116
MR	0.177	2.843	0.005***
ONOSM	0.027	0.659	0.510
ICPS	-0.273	-4.704	0.000***
EPS	0.271	3.813	0.000***
CR	-0.479	-5.599	0.000***
PER	0.339	4.204	0.000***
STR	0.512	10.779	0.000***
TA	0.304	4.030	0.000***
R ²		0.575	
Adjusted R ²		0.555	
D-W		1.772	

***, **, and * denote significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

5.3. Discussion

Offline over-subscription multiple can reflect institutional investors' expectation and demand for the new IPOs. Typically, information asymmetry exists in the primary market and institutional investors have access to more information. Hence, the positive relationship between OFFOSM and R_L may indicate that the party with the information advantage is in a better position to determine accurately the intrinsic value of an IPO. MR is positively related to R_L . We conjecture that this is caused by market conditions: Market returns increase in a rising or bullish market. Investors tend to buy stocks and at the same time, the demand for IPO stocks also increases under such conditions, which aggravates the IPO underpricing rate. The EPS and PER positively affect the listing day's return of IPOs on the GEM. We conjecture that a firm's financial condition prior to an IPO can positively affect the degree of IPO underpricing on the GEM. The results of the OLS regression show that the higher the STR, the higher is the IPO underpricing rate. This can be explained by the fact that STR is an indicator of investors' enthusiasm for trading on IPO listing days, reflecting the impact of investor sentiment on IPO underpricing. A high investor sentiment leads to higher demand, thus a higher trading price of IPO stocks. The standardized coefficient beta of ICPS is -0.095, indicating that issuance costs per share are negatively correlated with R_L of IPOs, which is consistent with the analysis of

Wang and Yao (2021). In addition, CR has a negative relationship with the IPO underpricing rate of the GEM, which shares the same conclusion as Su and Fleisher (1999).

Through the DID model, we find that the registration reform policy plays a positive role in IPO underpricing, which is contrary to our assumption. However, the results of the OSL regression provide us with ideas for further research on the reasons for the increase in the IPO underpricing rate. Among the 11 variables selected, five – OFFOSM, MR, EPS, PER, and STR – are positively related with the IPO underpricing rate of the GEM after the implementation of the registration system. NAVPS has a positive impact on the IPO underpricing rate as an indicator of an enterprise's financial position. This conclusion is consistent with hypothesis 2. However, the other two financial indicators, EPS and PER, have different effects on IPO underpricing rates, which requires further research on the underlying causes.

6. Conclusion

By conducting the DID analysis, this study shows a double-difference effect value (DID) of $1.163 > 0$ significant at the 1% level. This means that registration reform policy plays a positive role in IPO underpricing. We also find that IPO underpricing is negatively related to net assets per share before the issuance of the GEM in the context of the registration system. This verifies that, as a financial indicator, net assets per share before the issuance alleviates information asymmetry between investors and issuers on GEM in the background of the registration system.

One of the main limitations of this study is that the registration system has not been implemented in the GEM for a long time; therefore, the time span of the data in this study is relatively short, and future research can provide more research conclusions based on a longer period of time.

Another important research question related to the recent IPO reform is that financial indicators Measuring GEM Firms Have Different Impacts on IPO underpricing. The net asset value per share before issuance negatively affects the IPO underpricing rate, whereas earnings per share before issuance and price-to-earnings ratio on listing days positively affect the IPO underpricing rate. The underlying reasons for this require further research.

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Application of Indigenous Knowledge and Survival Strategies of Kutubdia Islanders during Natural Disasters

Mahima Ferdousy Mithila, Dhaka University, Bangladesh: Email: mahimaferdousy7@gmail.com

Abirr Hasan, Dhaka University, Bangladesh. Email: hasan.abirr111@gmail.com

Abstract

Historically, indigenous knowledge practice is common for the people of disaster-prone areas. In this paper, we have attempted to explore the indigenous knowledge-based strategies that are used in the management of disasters like cyclones from the micro perspective in a small island named Kutubdia, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh based on a series of intensive fieldwork interviews. It reveals that Kutubdia islanders practice indigenous knowledge as their survival strategy at three levels of cyclone management, particularly in minimizing the potential damage of any cyclone, while technology-based information and knowledge rule the world. We use one theoretical perspective to interpret the matter, which is Appadurai's scape theory. The specific strategies derive from indigenous knowledge, which is practiced by Kutubdia islanders associated with frequent cyclones, including disbelieving in modern meteorological information and age-old practices. However, the empirical pieces of evidence show that the effectiveness of these pre-, during and post-disaster management strategies adopted from the existing indigenous knowledge is the reason for delaying the acceptance of modern meteorological information and the existence of this traditional indigenous knowledge practice in disaster management.

Keywords: cyclone; indigenous knowledge; modern knowledge; natural disaster; strategies

1. Introduction

“We are the ocean people, we live on the ocean, and we die in the ocean, our grandfathers taught us to survive in the ocean.”

That was the response of one of our participants when we asked about the indigenous knowledge-based strategies the Kutubdia islanders use to survive the many cyclones that are prevalent in that region. We could sense the hint of the application of this indigenous knowledge and its practice in this statement.

Indigenous knowledge, or local knowledge, is the specialized knowledge prevalent among the permanent inhabitants of a place with different natural characteristics (Luthfa, 2014). The indigenous knowledge of a community is one of the elements of that community's culture and it plays a unique role in facilitating their daily activities and coping with special situations. The main focus of this paper is to determine what strategies Kutubdia islanders follow which derive from their indigenous knowledge practice, and the effectiveness of those strategies in disaster management, particularly cyclone management. This paper showed how and to what extent the islanders are practicing these strategies during pre-disaster, mid-disaster, and post-disaster periods during the current era of modern technologies which produce the now available modern meteorological knowledge.

This paper focuses on the role of indigenous knowledge in disaster management in the Kutubdia Upazila of Cox's Bazar district, a natural disaster-prone area that faced massive cyclones in 1991 (Dove & Khan, 1995). The research will focus on one main question: what effective indigenous knowledge-based strategies do Kutubdia islanders use in disaster management?

To provide an answer to our research question, we have formulated two sub-questions to understand the research problem:

1. What are the existing strategies in pre-, during, and post-disaster (particularly cyclone) management, and how they are effective during this era of modern technology-based meteorological knowledge?
2. How do the people of Kutubdia Island respond to this experience-based (indigenous) knowledge and modern (technology-based) knowledge when it comes to disaster management?

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to explore the reasons behind the practice of indigenous knowledge-based strategies in predicting surviving disasters by the Kutubdia islanders. The objectives of this study are to identify the existing practice of indigenous knowledge and the reasons behind this, associated with disaster management and to explore how modern and traditional (indigenous) knowledge co-exist in Kutubdia island in the matter of disaster management

In this paper, there is a brief discussion on how the accumulation of data occurred, the existing literature that supports the main theme of this article, and finally the findings of the research with meaningful discussion. It includes the literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, results and discussion.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Indigenous Knowledge, Modern Knowledge

Indigenous knowledge encompasses the understandings, abilities and philosophies that local communities have formed through their long histories and interactions with their natural environment (Bag & Pramanik, 2012). They recognized the utilization of indigenous knowledge at many levels of communities, which is a longstanding tradition. Our paper discusses how Kutubdia islanders have developed survival techniques based on distinct indigenous knowledge practices to deal with natural disasters such as cyclones. Modern knowledge or scientific knowledge is considered more developed as it contains written documents and encourages the use of scientific technology in raising awareness about natural disasters like the “signal systems” before cyclones but it lacks relevance at the local level (Luthfa, 2014). Therefore, this paper examines how the Kutubdia islanders are practicing traditional or indigenous knowledge in preference to this modern knowledge

2.2. Disaster Prediction Strategies: Indigenous and Modern Methods

Hassan’s (2000) study on disaster management culture in Japan and Bangladesh's coastal regions reveals local knowledge of early warning signs of natural disasters. They highlight five indicators: changes in wind speed; sea water temperature; cloud colour; fish catch; sea wave sound and bird behaviour. Although some outsiders may understand some of the signs, understanding and recognizing them requires specific local knowledge. This paper helps fill the gap in Akhand's (2003) study on prediction strategies because it contains the survival strategies of Kutubdia islanders.

Alam and Javed (2015, in his paper entitled “Cyclones and Causes of Cyclones over the South West Coastal Area of Bangladesh,” articulates some definitions related to the cyclone, anti-cyclone and gradient wind equation, which are in essence the types of cyclones that occur in the coastal areas of Bangladesh. Our paper on the other hand provides information on the cyclone-related management strategies.

2.3. Response, Survival, Adaptation

Roy and Kovordanyi (2015) examined the Bangladesh Meteorological Department's early warnings for cyclones and depressions in Patuakhali and Bagerhat regions. They found that some people followed the warnings, while others were dissatisfied due to their perceived lack of credibility. The article also explored the reasons behind this. Our article focuses more on the local response of the people during this disaster management process.

The authors in Zhou, Wang and Wang (2016) differentiate between tolerance and adaptation in disaster management for future extreme weather events in southern China, focusing on agricultural disasters in Hunan Province. In the case of Kutubdia, survival strategy is more important than the adaptation process because cyclones are not something people can adapt to, consequently, this paper provides information regarding indigenous knowledge-derived strategies rather than the adaptation process.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical perspective used in this article is Arjun Appadurai's (2010) Scape Theory, which emphasizes the rapid pace of technology's movement from one region to another. This rapid pace of movement can lead to significant changes in social and cultural structures, potentially causing entire cultures to disappear. This paper highlights the importance of indigenous knowledge and the transfer of this knowledge, as the widespread development and spread of information technology are reducing the practice and importance of folk knowledge.

3. Methodology

The researchers went for several fieldwork trips and relied on both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the issue. Though we mainly focused on empirical pieces of evidence, we also reviewed some secondary sources (such as journal articles and books) for useful insights. We completed an empirical study between August, 2022 to January, 2023. We conducted a household survey among 150 inhabitants of three villages of Kutubdiya island, namely Uttar Boro Ghop, Matbor Para and Romai Para. We also collected 15 case study interviews from the village community members.

Moreover, we talked with three key respondents to have a clear understanding of the application of this traditional knowledge in issues like disaster management. We also used the snowball sampling method to include more respondents in the study. That is, during the interviews, we asked respondents about other people who could provide well-articulated perceptions about this local knowledge regarding cyclones.

However, we mostly relied on observation in our fieldwork as it entailed people's actual behaviour and perceptions. We focused on the prevailing practice of indigenous knowledge practice and what is the actual difference between this indigenous and modern knowledge practice in the field of disaster management

3.1. Field Dilemma

At the primary stage of the research, the remoteness of this particular island made it a mysterious place which was not convenient to study. As we are from an urban background, it was quite difficult for us to build a connection with the islanders. While building a strong rapport with the community people, which was quite hard because of our socioeconomic background and presumptions about the island but was successful in the end, we began to challenge our assumptions which was very helpful in overcoming our inherent biases.

3.2. Detailed Description of the Study Area

We have selected Baraghope Union of Kutubdia Upazila (sub-district) of Cox's Bazar district as the fieldwork area. Kutubdia Upazila has been known for hundreds of years as a disaster-prone area and so this was a suitable area to investigate indigenous knowledge about disaster management.

3.2.1. Geographical Position:

Kutubdia is an island separated from the mainland by the Kutubdia Channel. The land area of Kutubdia Upazila is 215.8 square miles. Of the population overall, 93% are Muslims, 7% are Hindus and there are small minorities of Buddhists and people of other religions. The population is estimated to be a little over 125,000 in all (Hossein & Alam, 2023).

3.2.2. Island Access

It is possible to reach Kutubdia Island by means of Magnama Ghat via two main roads from Chittagong city to Banskhali Upazila, Baraitali or Chakaria bus stand. The sea is around Katardia but it is possible to reach Illaroyoga by speedboat. From Magnama Ghat, travellers can reach Baraghop Ghat by speedboat or trawler. Baraghop Bazar, with administrative facilities like a police station, hospital, court, weather office and cyclone shelters, is easily accessible from the market.

3.3. Data Collection and Key Variables

We used two types of questionnaires: for the household survey questionnaire, we prepared close-ended questions, whereas both open-ended and close-ended questions are used for key respondent interviews. On the other hand, checklists were useful for collecting case studies. All the interviews and case studies were collected in the local language (Bangla). Before the final data collection, we undertook a pilot survey to check the questionnaire. The average time for each interview was 25-30 minutes. For the three key informants, interviews were conducted and recorded with audio tape after getting permission from the people involved. The whole data collection process involved several fieldwork trips. We had to do two or three follow-up fieldwork trips to ensure we had obtained a comprehensive view. After every fieldwork trip, we noted the topics which were needed to be addressed later using a checklist system.

3.4. Data Analysis

We analyzed our acquired data and identified the gaps to fill for the next day. We also employed a mixed method approach to analyse the data in this study. We classified and organized all our data per the research questions and objectives. We used percentages to illustrate the socio-demographic information about the Kutubdia islanders. On the other hand, we chose case study and narrative analysis for qualitative data analysis where participants' points of view were explicitly presented. In light of these quotes, we tried to situate our analysis. We tried to take care of all the ethical boundaries and during translation from Bangla to English we took appropriate steps to ensure accuracy and sensitivity. To get a clear understanding of the theme of this paper, we incorporated a table of the research participants from whom we gathered the information and analyzed the following qualitative data analysis steps.

Types	Numbers	Gender
Fisherfolk and their spouses	70	Males and females
Retired Fisherfolk	40	Males
Others	40	Males and females
Total	150	

Table 1: Socioeconomic Profile of Research Participants (Including Key Informants); source: Fieldwork 2022

4. Results

4.1. Indigenous Knowledge and Pre-Disaster Survival Strategies

Cyclone threat to coastal communities in Bangladesh has been a significant issue, with over 25 major cyclones causing displacement, deaths, and missing persons from 1970-2022 (Fieldwork, 2022). However, some individuals have managed to survive these disasters, highlighting the role of indigenous knowledge and modern science.

4.1.1. Indigenous Knowledge in Cyclone Forecasting

Research in Kutubdia reveals that islanders can predict cyclones and take necessary precautions. They refer to cyclones as *tufan* in their language and observe natural signs such as wind direction, sky colour, sea water temperature, slow environment, rough sea, sparkling water, turbidity, drizzling rain, and bird movements. The 'northerly' winds usually start from the north and move towards the south. A reddish sky indicates a more severe cyclone, with rough seas and increased fish catch. These signs are known as *kurid* in the local language, meaning ominous.

4.1.2. Cyclone Preparation

Cyclones can be predicted early, so people prepare accordingly. Nearby shelters are visited with families, wrapped in polythene and tarpaulin, tied to trees, and provided with dry food. To reduce cyclone damage, people take carryable furniture and cash with them, they make *portals* (bag made of clothes) to carry their utmost necessities, which is their protection strategy during cyclone weather events.

4.2. Traditional versus Modern Weather Signals

It has been observed that despite all the warnings issued by the Meteorological Department that are scientific in basis, people still do not have much faith in modern weather forecasting. It is another strategy derived from indigenous practice. The people of Kutubdia prefer their observations to weather reports. As a result, it can be seen that many times they cannot predict a major disaster very well and, at the last moment, they are forced to move to a safe place according to a government announcement.

Respondent A, a retired fisherman from Kutubdia island, recounted the events of the devastating 1991 cyclone. He described the storm's magnitude, causing him to realise it had achieved full force. Despite radio warnings, he and his crew were unsure of the storm's severity due to it being the month of Baisakh [April-May]. The storm lasted three days, with drizzling being a significant sign. They did not believe radio warnings, as they did not see any other signs of a cyclone. Similar experiences occurred in 1997 and 2007.

Again, it is not the case that everyone is prioritizing traditional or local knowledge over modern science. Many of the younger generations are familiar with modern communication systems in disaster management

and attach priority importance to them. They feel that thanks to modern communication systems, weather conditions are received faster and more accurately than before, so they find it more effective.

Respondent B, a graduate with a master's degree, argues that traditional knowledge, based on local knowledge, is no longer valid due to the advent of modern communication systems. With the availability of government weather stations, satellite television channels and social media, disaster early warning, preparedness and post-disaster management information are now easily accessible. While there is no need to deny the value of folk wisdom, the need for it is becoming increasingly scarce as the world becomes more modern.

4.3. Indigenous Knowledge and Strategies during the Disaster (Cyclone)

Cyclones pose a significant threat to coastal communities, with struggles varying based on location and situation. Kutubdia has 27 shelters (Fieldwork, 2022) but experiences vary due to proximity and distance of families and communities from them. Case studies are provided for each situation to better understand the challenges faced.

4.3.1. Survival Strategies during Shelter Stay

To prepare for a cyclone, begin by dismantling roofs, fences and large items of furniture, wrapping them in polythene and tying them to trees. Bring small amounts of dry food, water, money and valuables.

Respondent C, a housewife, and her family, including her son, daughter-in-law and 15-year-old granddaughter, take shelter in the nearest cyclone centre. The higher the danger signal numbers, the more dire the situation. They keep themselves dry by using polythene and bring food, drinking water and valuables if needed.

4.3.2. Out-of-Shelter Survival Strategies

Cyclones often cause people to struggle to survive if they are not able to take shelter in a cyclone centre. They raise boats and houses away from the water's edge, tie them up and climb up into tree branches to protect themselves. They eat pre-prepared and preserved dry food and various other fruits and food items.

Respondent D, a dry fish trader, lost his boat and house in the 1991 cyclone and moved to his current address with his family. The cyclone was so terrible that most people died and many families were swept away by the tidal water. The number of government shelters was very low, and many families were far away from shelters. They took shelter in a mosque, where they faced a "snake issue." Respondent D's family was constantly made aware of the horror of the cyclone.

Respondent E, a cyclone centre manager, explained that the increase in cyclone centres makes it easier to take shelter. However, earlier, when there were not many shelters and people were far away, it was difficult to survive. Many families survived by collecting cans, coconuts and sweet potatoes which were floating in the water. They also took some dry food and drinking water with them when they went to shelter during the storm.

4.3.3. Survival Techniques at Sea

During a cyclone, survival at sea is challenging. Fisherfolk use special techniques like tying empty drums to their boats to prevent them from sinking and hold onto them if the boat does sink, hopefully thereby ensuring their safety.

Respondent F (19) explains that when fisherfolk face storms while at sea, they try to control their boats with empty gallons [large plastic containers] tied around them. If the boat capsizes, they stay afloat with the gallons. When distress signals are broadcast, they avoid entering the sea.

4.4. Indigenous Knowledge and Post-Disaster Survival Strategies

After the disaster, people started to revive traditional knowledge and practiced local medical systems, using tree bark and golden vine juice for fever, diarrhoea and dysentery. This led to a reduction in the amount of bamboo used in construction. Post-cyclone rehabilitation was difficult due to delayed government relief and limited medical supplies. Previously, they used Arjuna (*Terminalia arjuna*) tree bark and Patharkuchi (*Alstonia scholaris*) leaf juice for fever and diarrhoea.

Respondent G, a cyclone survivor, collected money and built a new house.

5. Discussion

This portion of the paper explores the data we obtained from the case studies and subjects them to narrative analysis. We will discuss how these survival strategies are impacted by globalization in Kutubdia island nowadays, how the effectiveness of these survival strategies help in the preservation of indigenous knowledge, and what might be the future of this practice

5.1. Indigenous Practice and Globalization

The age of globalization has been greatly influenced by the invention of the Internet and social media systems. The widespread use of smartphones has made the world a global village, in which the entire world can access news and activities instantly. This has led to a shift from traditional methods of communication, such as physical exchange or letter exchange, to the Internet, which allows for quick access to information. This has led to a decline in folk wisdom and the extinction of some forms of traditional knowledge. The Internet has transformed the world into a village, making it easier to access information and engage in daily life.

Respondent B argued that the reliance on local knowledge and folk wisdom in modern communication systems is not logical as it lacks a scientific basis. With modern technology like weather stations, satellite television and social media, news is easily accessible, and disaster early warnings, preparedness and the need to take appropriate action are also available. While there is no need to deny the importance of folk wisdom, the need for it is running out as the world becomes more modern.

After a disaster, only the indigenous knowledge-based strategies cannot bring impactful results to the island. In these cases, Government relief for post-cyclone rehabilitation is arranged by government institutions like ASHA (accredited social health activities) and BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) (Fieldwork, 2022).

5.2. Effectiveness of Indigenous Knowledge-Derived Survival Strategies

Indigenous knowledge is a valuable asset for a region, helping people survive in adverse environments. However, as modern technology advances, its importance seems to diminish in modern literature, which is not fully true because many people on the island still use this knowledge consciously. Traditional knowledge, which lacks written records and tested certificates, is less accepted than modern science. Coordination between indigenous knowledge and modern science is crucial for sustainable conservation

and development projects in the country. It will not be possible to understand people's response to these natural disasters without considering their local knowledge which includes such types of survival strategies.

6. Conclusion

This paper looks into the indigenous knowledge-derived survival strategies of natural disaster management among the inhabitants of Kutubdia from a micro perspective. The analysis employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and gathered data from multiple secondary sources. The study shows that those who live on Kutubdia island apply disaster prediction strategies, such as awareness of wind direction, sky colour, sea water temperature, fish capture and bird flight behaviour to anticipate cyclones and make necessary preparations. They use the during-disaster survival strategy by seeking refuge in Government Cyclone Centres during cyclones, storing dry food, and sustaining themselves by consuming floating food items with minimal reliance on modern technology. Another survival strategy during cyclones involves wrapping houses and furniture in polythene and securing them to trees to shield them from the water. Finally, the inhabitants of Kutubdia employ their indigenous medicinal expertise to expedite recuperation from any ailments resulting from the disaster as a survival tactic. This paper primarily focuses on the application of traditional knowledge in pre-, during- and post-disaster management strategies among Kutubdia islanders. It briefly touches on the residents' reactions to modern information systems and knowledge, which are becoming more prevalent on the island due to globalization.

6.1. Limitations and Recommendations:

Kutubdia is a small, isolated island that remains underdeveloped compared to other islands that offer more contemporary amenities and facilities. There is a lack of clear conflict between the utilization of indigenous knowledge and up-to-date weather-related information. Our paper only includes case studies relevant to the survival strategies of Kutubdia islanders during cyclones, so the perspectives of the younger generation on survival strategies in disasters are not discussed. This article is distinctive in its ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of applying indigenous knowledge in survival strategies. This paper is beneficial for readers and authors interested in indigenous knowledge preservation, climate change policymakers, government-led development projects and strategy planners focusing on natural catastrophe risk management.

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Influence of Covid-19 Pandemic on Personal Health and Hygiene Practices among Commercial Bus Drivers in Lagos Metropolis

Aaron Akinloye, Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education University of Lagos, Lagos,
Nigeria. Email:

Adeleke Opeyemi, Department of Anatomy, College of Health Science, Osun State University, Osogbo,
Nigeria. Email: opeyemi.adeleke@uniosun.edu.ng.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on personal health and hygiene practices among commercial bus drivers in Lagos Metropolis. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study, with a multistage sampling technique. A stratified sampling technique was adopted to select the study locations, while a simple random sampling technique was used to pick 603 respondents who formed the sample for the study. The researchers used a revalidated questionnaire with a test-retest method yielding a Cronbach alpha score of 0.94. Data were analyzed using inferential statistics and regression analysis to test the stated hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. Results indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly influenced the personal health of commercial bus drivers, significantly influenced the hygiene practice among commercial bus drivers, the rate of compliance with COVID-19 guidelines was significantly low among commercial bus drivers and the knowledge of prevention strategies for COVID-19 significantly affected the hygiene practices of commercial bus drivers in Lagos Metropolis.

Keywords: COVID-19, hygiene practices, personal health

1. Introduction

Personal health and hygiene are important factors to consider in disease prevention around the world. Good personal hygiene involves keeping all parts of the body clean and healthy. It is important for maintaining a good physical health status. For people with poor personal hygiene, the body provides an ideal environment for germs to grow, leaving it vulnerable to infection. The coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19), a global pandemic, is an example of how adequate personal health and hygiene practices can reduce the chances of getting infected. However, public transport, which a large amount of the population undergoes on a regular basis, could serve as a super spreader of diseases when workers fail to follow basic personal health and hygiene practices. Good personal hygiene benefits an individual's health and impacts the lives of those around them.

Most health experts believe that the new strain of coronavirus likely originated in bats or pangolins. The first transmission to humans was in Wuhan in China. Since then, the virus has mostly spread through person-to-person contact. COVID-19 is defined as an illness caused by a novel coronavirus called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2; formerly called 2019-nCoV), which was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. It was initially reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) on December 31st, 2019. On January 30th, 2020, the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak to be a global health emergency (WHO, 2021a). On March 11th, 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, its first such designation since declaring H1N1 influenza a pandemic in 2009 (World Health Organization, 2021b).

After spreading through East Asia, Europe, and North America in early 2020, the COVID-19 global pandemic started affecting countries in Africa and Latin America (WHO, 2021b). With the largest population in Sub-Saharan Africa, and long-standing travel and trade links within Africa and to the rest of the world, it seemed inevitable that the pandemic would eventually reach Nigeria. According to the Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC, 2021a) coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are normally transmitted between animals and people. The Federal Government of Nigeria initiated a Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 to provide high-level strategic national response to the disease in the country. The Federal Ministry of Health activated an NCDC-led national COVID-19 Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to coordinate the national public health response. At state-level, preparedness and response activities were coordinated through Public Health EOCs in each State (Ajibo, 2020). The NCDC also launched a campaign themed “Take Responsibility.” This was a call to all Nigerians and residents in the country to join forces and be proactive in taking greater individual and collective responsibility in preventing and controlling the spread of COVID-19 in the country (NCDC, 2021).

The impact of COVID-19 on public transport varied depending on the stage of the coronavirus spread in the area of study. Public transport was one of the most disrupted sectors of the COVID-19 pandemic with early estimates suggesting that the drop in ridership during lockdown periods was as much as 80%–90% in major cities in around the world (Gkiotsalitis & Cats, 2020). While concerns about using public transport have partially been alleviated since the initial restrictions, passengers remain reluctant and there are higher levels of concern about public transport hygiene than pre-COVID (Beck & Hensher, 2020). Risk perceptions may thus not only impact immediate travel decisions and trade-offs made between time and crowding, but may also have major implications for the ridership levels of public transport in the post-lockdown period and possibly even at the aftermath of the pandemic. Public transport workers should display a high level of hygiene practice so as to reduce the spread of the virus on an even larger scale (Shelat, Cats & van Cranenburgh, 2020).

As the transition to the new normal progresses, governments, public health authorities, transport providers and communities worked towards achieving three main objectives which focused on ensuring the health and safety of travelers and transport workers; sustaining the short-term gains in safer, healthier and more sustainable modes of transport that have been observed during the lockdown and preparing for a possible future occurrence of events of a similar nature and responding to all transmission scenarios (Ozili, 2020). The ultimate goal of the COVID-19 lockdown measure was to flatten the curve of the novel virus. Central to attaining these objectives was maintaining the functioning and economic viability of public transport systems, while rebalancing the distribution of different modes of transport towards reduced car dependency and increased safe walking and adequate physical and social distancing in shared rides (Ajide, Ibrahim & Alimiab, 2020).

Supporting healthy urban transport and mobility in the context of COVID-19 is part of the World Health Organization’s sustained effort to provide up-to-date guidance on COVID-19 to Member States. Despite the unprecedented national measures in combating the outbreak, the success or failure of these efforts is largely dependent on public behaviour. Specifically, public adherence to preventive measures established by the government is of prime importance to prevent the spread of the disease. Adherence is likely to be influenced by the public's knowledge and attitudes towards COVID-19. Evidence shows that public knowledge is important in tackling pandemics (Chirwa, 2019).

The UK NHS guidance on coronavirus defines "close contact" as being within two metres of an infected person for more than 15 minutes. However, this might be a challenge for a mega-city like Lagos in which the majority of the population depends on public transport to go from place to place. It is estimated that about 50% of all trips in Lagos are made by public transport (BRT, LAGBUS, Semi-Formal Mini Buses, Federal Mass Transit Train) and shared taxis, LAMATA. In Abuja, about 57% of trips are by public transport and shared taxi. The situation is similar in many other cities of Nigeria (Emmanuel, 2020).

To help fight the spread of COVID-19, public transport workers should thoroughly and frequently clean and disinfect facilities, public transport vehicles, bus, tram and train stations and equipment (elevators, escalators, handrails, seats, ticketing devices and other surfaces). There should be provision of public hand-hygiene stations at all transport locations (bus stops and train stations, as well as on buses and trains). Drivers should always be with their personal protection equipment such as non-medical masks, disposable gloves and hand sanitizer. By ensuring public awareness and knowledge about the coronavirus, deeper insights into existing public perception and practices can be gained, thereby helping to identify attributes that influence the public in adopting healthy practices and responsive behaviour (Podder *et al.*, 2019).

Governments, at both national and local levels, have an important role to play in maintaining the trust of users while providing safe and efficient public transport options that reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection. This support may include government subsidies and investment in the public transport sector to compensate for the loss of revenue from lower rates of usage and additional operating costs resulting from new sanitation measures, such as more frequent cleaning and disinfection of vehicles (WHO, 2021c). Assessing public knowledge is also important in identifying gaps and strengthening ongoing prevention efforts. Moreover, in order to control the spread of the disease, knowledge and awareness of the virus should be disseminated among the public from official sources, including the WHO (Al-Hanawi *et al.*, 2020). This study therefore aims to examine the influence of COVID-19 pandemic on personal health and hygiene practices among commercial bus drivers in Lagos Metropolis.

The researchers observed the poor nature of personal hygiene among public transport workers in Lagos state. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals, including public transport workers, were required to wash their hands properly, wear face masks, ensure social distancing and proper sanitization among others. Infectious diseases pose a significant risk to the global population and enhancing public awareness during an outbreak is essential because adequate civic action during an outbreak is driven by a public understanding of disease transmission. In case of failure to comply with preventive measures, as well as a lack of adequate healthcare facilities and infrastructure, this could multiply the danger caused by disease outbreaks in developing countries like Nigeria. The researchers have observed that the available COVID-19 regulations and guidance on how to maintain the recommended social distance when taking public transport was scarcely enforced.

Transport workers in Lagos hardly provided public hand hygiene facilities at bus stops where drivers and passengers could sanitize and wash their hands, which is vital in preventing the spread of COVID-19. The hygiene status in public vehicles in Lagos is appalling. Public transport workers are also perceived as untidy as they usually do not stay clean because of the nature of their job in a city like Lagos. The researcher wants to find out if public transport workers have gone through a major change in their personal health as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This present study aims to determine the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on personal health and hygiene practices among commercial bus drivers in Lagos Metropolis.

2. Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. This was carried out in Somolu, Lagos Mainland and Mushin local government areas of Lagos State among commercial bus drivers using a multistage sampling technique. A stratified sampling technique was used to select the study locations while a simple random sampling technique was adopted to choose 603 commercial drivers that eventually formed the sample for the study. The research instrument used was a revalidated questionnaire with a test-retest method yielding 0.94 (Cronbach alpha).

Thirty-three question items were generated on a 4-point Likert-type scale. After field testing of the instrument on respondents, ambiguous and redundant variables were deleted. In order to reduce the items to a meaningful and manageable structure, a principal component factor analysis with varimax correlation,

extraction and rotation was conducted for predictive and convergent validation of the instrument. The items were further subjected to exploratory factor analysis setting the retention criterion at 0.70. At the second stage of validation of the instrument, the final version of the research instrument comprised twenty question items representing the personal health and hygiene practice of commercial bus drivers as it relates to the COVID 19 pandemic. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages for demographic attributes of the respondents, while inferential statistics such as multiple regression analysis were used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results

3.1. Demographic Data Presentation

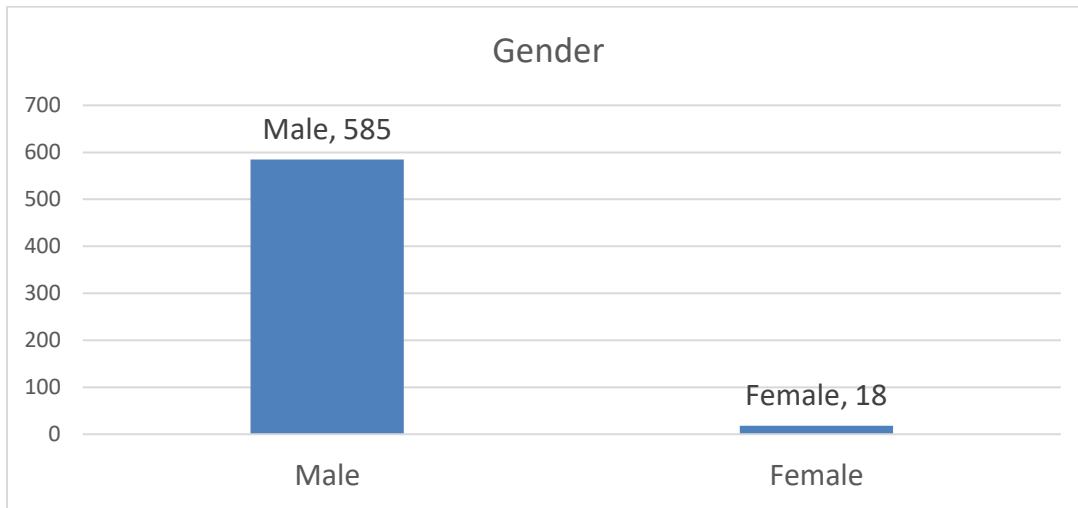


Figure 1: Bar chart representation of respondents by gender; source: original research

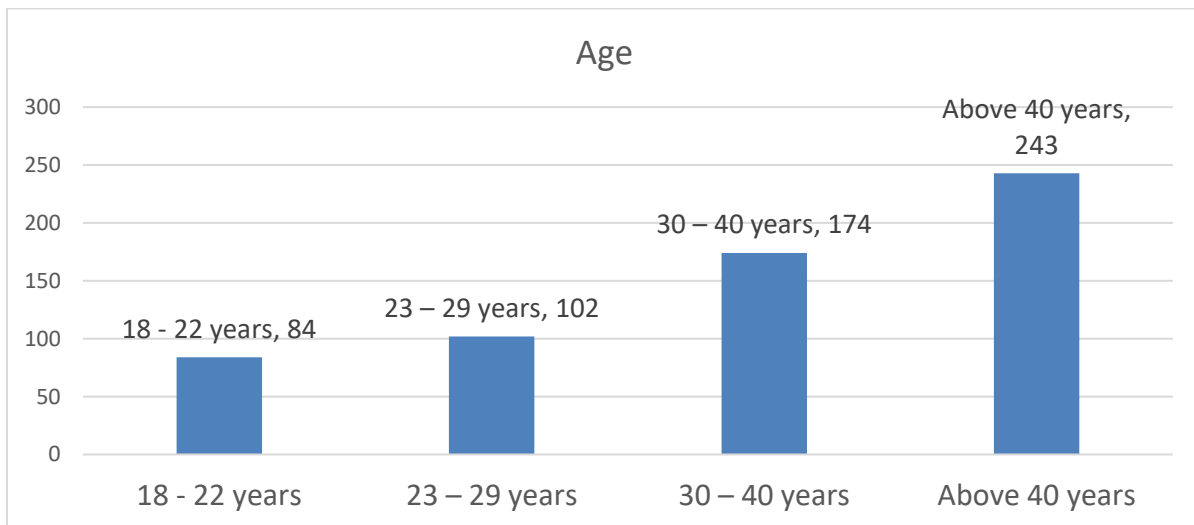


Figure 2: Bar chart representation of respondents by age; source: original research

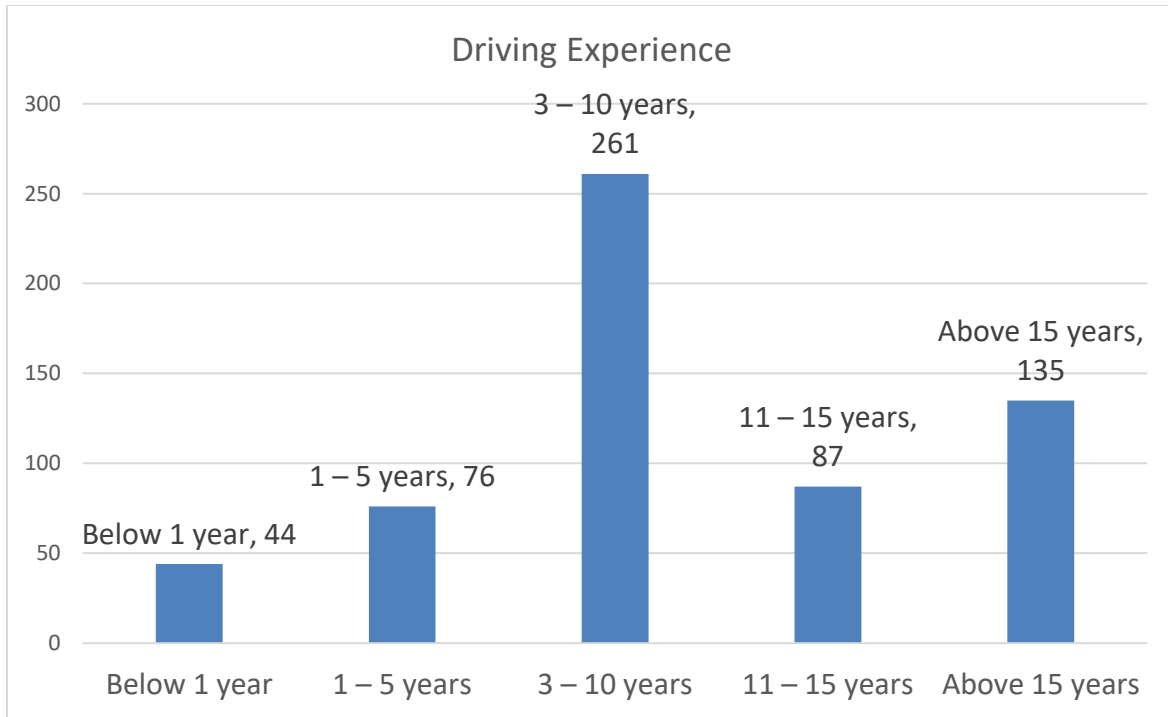


Figure 3: Bar chart representation of respondents by driving experience; source: original research

3.2. Testing of Hypotheses

Regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 1: COVID-19 pandemic will not significantly influence the personal health of commercial bus drivers in Lagos Metropolis.

Table 1: Multivariate Regression Coefficients for COVID-19 Pandemic Influence on the Personal Health of Commercial Bus Drivers in Lagos Metropolis; source: original research

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	Sig
Regression	4.011	2	1.224	6.31	0.00
Residual	23.630	601	0.815		
Total	27.641	603			

$P < 0.05$

The table above showed that the F-Value (6.31) is significant at 5%. This implies that COVID-19 significantly influenced the personal health of commercial drivers, hence the null hypothesis is hereby rejected.

Hypothesis 2: COVID-19 pandemic will not significantly influence the hygiene practices among commercial bus drivers in Lagos Metropolis.

Table 2: Multivariate Regression Coefficients for COVID-19 Pandemic Influence on the Hygiene Practice Among Commercial Bus Drivers in Lagos Metropolis; source: original research

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	Sig
Regression	5.882	2	2.302	8.42	0.00
Residual	29.359	601	0.667		
Total	35.241	603			

P<0.05

The table above showed that the F-Value (8.42) is significant at 5%. COVID-19 significantly influenced hygiene practice of drivers, hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 3: The compliance rate with COVID-19 guidelines will not be significantly low among commercial bus drivers in Lagos Metropolis.

Table 3: Multivariate Regression Coefficients for the Compliance Rate to COVID-19 Guidelines Among Commercial Bus Drivers in Lagos Metropolis; source: original research

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	Sig
Regression	7.471	2	1.247	11.68	0.00
Residual	32.105	601	0.601		
Total	39.576	603			

P<0.05

The table above showed that the F-Value (11.68) is significant at 5%. COVID-19 significantly influenced the compliance rate of commercial drivers, hence the null hypothesis is hereby rejected.

Hypothesis 4: The knowledge of prevention strategies for COVID-19 will not significantly affect the hygiene practices of commercial bus drivers in Lagos Metropolis.

Table 4: Multivariate Regression Coefficients for the Knowledge of Prevention Strategies for COVID-19 Influence on the Hygiene Practices of Commercial Bus Drivers; source: original research

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	Sig
Regression	4.922	2	2.293	8.04	0.00
Residual	25.063	601	0.571		
Total	29.985	603			

P<0.05

The table above showed that the F-Value (8.04) is significant at 5%. This implies that COVID-19 significantly influenced the knowledge of prevention of commercial drivers, hence the null hypothesis is hereby rejected.

4. Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly influenced the personal health of commercial bus drivers in Lagos Metropolis. The result of this finding correlates with Greenhalgh *et al.*, (2020), who noted that transport workers tend to improve their personal health by following guidelines that

prevent disease spread during the global COVID-19 pandemic. They further said that public transport service providers in many countries have to transform their services to adhere to physical distancing measures and proper personal hygiene practices. It is against this reality that service providers around the world are currently implementing measures that result in significant reductions in service capacity. Many public transport service providers have resumed services following the national regulations of 1–2 metre physical distancing and this will imply a major capacity drop of 60%–90%. The COVID-19 pandemic generally improves drivers' attitude towards their personal hygiene, so as to reduce and prevent disease spread (Gkiotsalitis & Cats, 2020). A number of health problems can arise due to poor personal health practices. Poor personal health could increase one's chances of getting infected with a wide range of diseases.

Hypothesis two revealed that COVID-19 pandemic significantly influences the hygiene practice among commercial bus drivers in Lagos Metropolis. The result of this finding agrees with Podder *et al.* (2019), that COVID-19 pandemic made public transport workers focus more on good hygiene practices, such as proper hand washing, sanitization and wearing of face masks, among other measures, to curb the spread of COVID-19. It may also, help to fight the spread of COVID-19, public transport workers should thoroughly and frequently clean and disinfect facilities, public transport vehicles, bus, tram and train stations and equipment (elevators, escalators, handrails, seats, ticketing devices and other surfaces). There should be provision of public hand-hygiene stations at all transport locations (bus stops and train stations, as well as on buses and trains). Drivers should always be with their personal protection equipment such as non-medical masks, disposable gloves and hand sanitizer. By ensuring public awareness and knowledge about the coronavirus, deeper insights into existing public perception and practices can be gained, thereby helping to identify attributes that influence the public in adopting healthy practices and responsive behavior (Podder *et al.*, 2019). Viruses such as COVID-19 can be spread by hand contact. Many people often touch their nose or mouth with their hands, without even noticing. One of the important recommendations to prevent the spread of the virus is to follow the hygiene guidelines. The greatest benefit of practicing hygiene is the reduction in disease transmission and improved health. Safely managed water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services are an essential part of preventing and protecting human health during infectious disease outbreaks, including the current COVID-19 pandemic (WHO, 2021a).

The finding of the test of hypothesis three revealed that the compliance rate with COVID-19 guidelines was significantly low among commercial bus drivers in Lagos Metropolis. The result of this finding correlates with Olapegba, Ayandele and Kolawole (2020), who observed that public transport workers in Lagos state struggled to comply with some of the guidelines for preventing the spread of COVID-19. They noticed that ensuring physical distancing was a major challenge among commercial bus drivers because they tend to be about making profits. It was discussed that compliance with COVID-19 preventive measure is a double-edged sword cutting through the fabric of the everyday life of the Nigerian citizen and even among commercial bus drivers in Lagos state, to be precise. In Nigeria, where the majority of its citizens make a living in the informal economy, their means of livelihood was threatened by the lockdown since much of their activities and businesses involve face-to-face contact. This in turn led to a low degree of compliance with the government directives among public transport workers over time during the COVID-19 pandemic (Olapegba *et al.*, 2020). However, different studies suggest that a major obstacle to compliance with personal health guidelines is concern over the loss of income or employment due to prolonged absence from work. Meanwhile, public health officials tend to assume high compliance rates among the public for self-quarantine instructions (Hernandez, 2020).

The finding of the test of hypothesis four revealed that knowledge of prevention strategies for COVID-19 significantly affected the hygiene practices of commercial bus drivers in Lagos Metropolis. The result of this finding correlates with the study by Lee, Kang and You (2021) about the knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) towards COVID-19. They noted that knowledge directly affected both attitudes (e.g., perceived risk and efficacy belief) and practices (e.g., personal hygiene practices and social distancing). It

was observed that among the influencing factors of COVID-19 preventive behaviours, efficacy belief was the most influential and significant practice factor. It mediated the relationship between knowledge and all three preventive behaviours (wearing facial masks, practicing hand hygiene and avoiding crowded places). The level of knowledge varied by sociodemographic characteristics (Lee *et al.*, 2021). It is important for public transport workers to show a high level of knowledge, awareness and practice towards reducing the spread of COVID-19. The dramatic changes in ridership levels and patterns, as well as the introduction of measures aimed at preventing the virus spread, pose unprecedented challenges to the public transport sector. Moreover, these changes are subject to great uncertainty and the dynamics of the pandemic often do not follow a consistent recovery path. Public transport service providers had to rely on limited knowledge and ad-hoc procedures to cope with these rapid and dramatic changes (Gkiotsalitis & Cats, 2020).

5. Conclusion

The study, therefore, concludes that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly influenced the personal health of commercial bus drivers in Lagos Metropolis. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly influenced the hygiene practice among commercial bus drivers in Lagos Metropolis. The compliance rate with COVID-19 guidelines was significantly lower among commercial bus drivers in Lagos Metropolis. The knowledge of prevention strategies for COVID-19 significantly affected the hygiene practices of commercial bus drivers in Lagos Metropolis.

5.1. Limitations

The following limitations were observed:

- Commercial drivers often have tight schedules and finding a suitable time for them to participate in the survey was challenging. In fact, the questionnaire was redrafted to be simpler and shorter.
- The mobile nature of commercial drivers makes it difficult to reach them consistently. They seemed to be always on the move, making it hard to organize face-to-face interviews or distribute paper surveys.
- Some individuals were skeptical of surveys, fearing potential consequences or misuse of information. Establishing trust is essential to encourage participation and ensure honest responses.
- Literacy levels among commercial drivers varies. Complex language or written surveys posed challenges for those with lower literacy levels, affecting the quality of responses.
- A lot of bureaucratic processes involved in obtaining permissions to conduct surveys were faced and this led to delay in reaching the relevant authorities.
- Some areas within Lagos State are insecure as thugs regularly harassed us. Researchers need to be aware of potential risks and take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of both participants and themselves.

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Research on the Factors Affecting the Quality of Cross-Border E-Commerce Talent Cultivation and Optimization Strategies of Guangxi University of Finance and Economics

Liu Juan, Graduate School, Bansomedjchaopraya Rajabhat University, Thailand. Email: liujuan03292021@163.com.

Sirikorn Tosati, Graduate School, Bansomedjchaopraya Rajabhat University, Thailand. Email: sirikorn.to@bsru.ac.th.

Tanaput Chancharoen, Graduate School, Bansomedjchaopraya Rajabhat University, Thailand. Email: tanaput1090@hotmail.com.

Abstract

Currently, universities in China urgently need to improve the quality of talent cultivation to meet the rapid development of the cross-border e-commerce industry. In this context, the authors used a questionnaire survey to investigate the current situation of cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation in Guangxi University of Finance and Economics. Based on the descriptive statistical analysis of the obtained data, this paper summarizes the main factors that affect the quality of cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation in the university, and proposes optimization strategies to improve the quality of cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation from seven dimensions: the talent cultivation goals, the construction of teaching staff, curriculum settings, teaching methods, teaching contents, assessment methods, and school-enterprise cooperation, which can provide reference for other universities in this field.

Keywords: *cross-border e-commerce, Guangxi University of Finance and Economics, talent cultivation*

1. Introduction

The development of cross-border e-commerce majors in China is very rapid but there is a mismatch between the demand for talented people from enterprises and the cultivation and supply of talents from universities. Lian Yuanqiang (2021) pointed out that there was a mismatch in China's current cross-border e-commerce talent supply, which has developed from quantity to quality. According to the data released by the Ministry of Commerce of China in October 2021 in the 14th Five Year Plan for E-commerce Development, the number of relevant employees in the e-commerce field in China will reach 70 million by 2025. In the next three years, it is expected that the e-commerce talent gap in China will reach 9.85 million, including 4.5 million cross-border e-commerce talent gaps.

Located in southwest China, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region is a minority region with relatively backward economic and social development compared to other provinces. Cross-border e-commerce education in Guangxi is also correspondingly later than that in other developed provinces. Most universities have not yet established a systematic and complete cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation model (Lian, 2021). The quantity and quality of talent cultivation cannot meet the requirements of cross-border e-commerce enterprises.

Guangxi University of Finance and Economics is located in Nanning, the capital of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. The university was founded in 1960 and has three campuses: Xiangsihu Campus,

Mingxiu Campus, and Wuming Campus. There are 15 colleges and 59 undergraduate majors. As of June 2022, the university had a total of 1,764 faculty members and 21,989 students. The university started cross-border e-commerce education in 2014 and this gradually improved. At present, a cross-border e-commerce department has been established, with a large number of full-time cross-border e-commerce teachers. This was established earlier than other universities in Guangxi and has good representativeness. The cross-border e-commerce department has a total of 124 staff (116 cross-border e-commerce course teachers and 8 administrative personnel) and 1,021 students, divided into four grades. Compared to other similar universities, this university has a larger number of cross-border e-commerce teachers and students, which is conducive to the development of this study. The university has been collaborating with cross-border e-commerce enterprises on cross-border e-commerce training projects for many years, and has also cooperated with other universities for many years. The university has good representativeness in terms of cross-border e-commerce curriculum design, teacher team construction, assessment and evaluation, and cross-border e-commerce university enterprise cooperation.

Regarding the current situation of talent cultivation in universities, Zheng and Zhao (2020) and Sun and Wang (2018) among others believe that cross-border e-commerce in China currently requires versatile talents, and the quality of talent cultivation in universities deviates from the actual market demand. Hu and Zhang (2021) proposed that the ability composition of cross-border e-commerce talents has evolved from mastering the basic skills of operating cross-border e-commerce platforms to being familiar with relevant laws and policies in the sales market, and using the latest online sales models.

For the model of cultivating cross-border e-commerce talents, Lian (2021) analyzed the cross-border e-commerce majors in applied universities and proposed a dynamic teaching method and a multi-pronged cultivation method of practical teaching. Meanwhile, Cao (2019) believes that the cross-border e-commerce curriculum system should follow the path from orientation to comprehensiveness and ultimately to modularity, guiding students to build internet thinking and embark on the development path of the e-commerce industry.

Regarding the cultivation of cross-border e-commerce talents in Guangxi universities, You and Liu (2020) pointed out that the cultivation of cross-border e-commerce talents in Guangxi universities faces the critical problem of insufficient teaching staff, and suggested increasing cooperation with regions with earlier cross-border e-commerce development such as Guangdong Province. Su (2020) proposed that Guangxi universities have the advantage of non-universal languages and should increase the training direction of foreign languages and internationalization. Other scholars have proposed different perspectives on curriculum design, school enterprise cooperation, and modular teaching. However, current research lacks in-depth research on representative universities for cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation in Guangxi.

This study is based on stakeholder theory and conducts a correlation study on the current situation of cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation at Guangxi University of Finance and Economics. This is intended to provide reference for the development of other universities in Guangxi that involve cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation.

2. Research Objectives and Methods

2.1. Research Objectives

The research objectives of this paper are, first, to analyze the main factors that affect the quality of cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation at Guangxi University of Finance and Economics and, second, to propose an optimization strategy to improve the quality of cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation.

2.2. Research Methods

This study conducted an electronic questionnaire survey on cross-border e-commerce teachers and students of Guangxi University of Finance and Economics in a randomly selected manner. Then descriptive statistical analysis was conducted using the questionnaire data.

2.2.1. Population

The population of this study is cross-border e-commerce teachers and students majoring in cross-border e-commerce at Guangxi University of Finance and Economics. According to the official website of Guangxi University of Finance and Economics, as of June 2022, the Department of Cross border E-commerce has a total of 124 staff (116 teachers and 8 administrative personnel) and 1,021 students (four grades) majoring in Cross border E-commerce.

2.2.2. Sample Group

The research was conducted using a random sampling method. This involved a sample size of 100 teachers and 300 students, based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The researchers distributed a total of 100 teacher questionnaires in June 2022, with a recovery rate of 100% and a valid rate of 100%. A total of 300 student questionnaires were distributed, and 298 were collected, with a recovery rate of 99.3%. There were 296 valid questionnaires, with an effective rate of 98.7%.

Based on existing research, researchers have identified seven dimensions that affect the quality of cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation at Guangxi University of Finance and Economics: the talent cultivation goals, the construction of teacher staff, curriculum settings, teaching methods, teaching content, assessment methods, and school enterprise cooperation. On this basis, a Questionnaire on Cross Border E-Commerce Talent Culture of Guangxi University of Finance and Economics was prepared, and reliability and validity analyses were conducted using statistical analysis software.

The Cronbach's α values range from 0.794-0.935 (teachers) and 0.788-0.931 (students), both greater than 0.7. The overall reliability of the questionnaire is 0.931 (teachers) and 0.864 (students), indicating that each dimension of the questionnaire has good reliability (see Tables 1 and 2).

The validity test results show that the KMO value of the teacher questionnaire is 0.910, and the value of the student questionnaire is 0.876, and the Bartlett Sphericity significance test passed.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis Results of Teachers' Questionnaire

Dimension	Questions	Cronbach's α
Talent Cultivation Goals	4	0.853
The Construction of Teaching Staff	3	0.893
Curriculum Settings	4	0.817
Teaching Contents	3	0.794
Teaching Methods	4	0.826
Assessment Methods	4	0.914
School-enterprise Cooperation	3	0.935
Total	25	0.97

The Cronbach's α coefficient of teacher structure, talent training goals, curriculum settings, teaching methods, teaching content, assessment and evaluation, and school-enterprise cooperation are greater than 0.7.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis Results of Students' Questionnaire

Dimension	Questions	Cronbach's α
Talent Cultivation Goals	3	0.798
The Construction of Teaching Staff	3	0.912
Curriculum Setting	3	0.863
Teaching Contents	4	0.788
Teaching Methods	4	0.931
Assessment Methods	3	0.892
School-enterprise cooperation	3	0.879
Total	23	0.98

The Cronbach's α coefficient value of 7 dimensions such as teacher structure and talent training goal are 0.788-0.931, all of which are greater than 0.7.

3. Data Analysis

The reliability analysis of the Cronbach's α of the dimensions of the questionnaire is as shown in Table 3.

Dimensions with higher scores are teaching methods, teaching content, and school enterprise cooperation, with scores of 4.27, 4.12 and 4.09. The lowest score for evaluation is 3.35. It can also be seen that the lowest scoring areas are talent cultivation goals, the construction of teacher staff and assessment methods. This also indicates priorities for future efforts.

Table 3: Mean Rankings from Teachers' Questionnaires

Dimension	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Talent Cultivation Goals	100	1	5	3.92	0.93
The Construction of Teacher Staff	100	1	5	3.82	0.92
Curriculum Settings	100	1	5	3.55	0.91
Teaching Contents	100	1	5	4.12	0.96
Teaching Methods	100	1	5	4.27	0.98
Assessment Methods	100	1	5	3.35	0.89
School-enterprise Co-operation	100	1	5	4.09	0.95

As can be seen from Table 3, in the view of students, "school enterprise cooperation" and "teaching methods" are currently doing better, with average values of 4.23 and 4.02. "Teaching content" and "current settings" are closely following. The lowest score is for "assessment methods", which is 3.46. This echoes teachers' evaluation of this aspect, which should become an important area for future activity.

Table 4: Mean Rankings from Students' Questionnaires

Dimension	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Talent Cultivation Goals	296	1	5	3.56	0.92
The Construction of Teacher Staff	296	1	5	3.78	0.99
Curriculum Settings	296	1	5	3.87	1.02
Teaching Contents	296	1	5	3.89	1.04
Teaching Methods	296	1	5	4.02	1.03
Assessment Methods	296	1	5	4.02	1.03
School-enterprise Co-operation	296	1	5	3.46	1.09

From Table 5, it can be seen that teachers have a high degree of recognition for using modern information technology to improve teaching quality (Q3), and have reached a good consensus on the formulation of talent cultivation goals (Q17). In terms of school-enterprise cooperation (Q26), more efforts should be made to improve it.

Table 5: Overall Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Questionnaire

Dimension	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Q1 I can clearly and completely understand the talent training goals of this major.	100	1	5	3.67	0.94
Q2 The goal of cross-border e-commerce talent training is consistent with the actual demand for talents in society.	100	1	5	3.80	0.99
Q3 The formulation of cross-border e-commerce talent training goals requires the coordination of schools, governments, enterprises and other parties.	100	1	5	4.25	1.01
Q4 The school can provide a good training mechanism.	100	1	5	3.98	0.96
Q5 The school supports cross-border e-commerce teachers to improve their academic qualifications.	100	1	5	3.95	0.98
Q6 The school provides a good opportunity for teachers to enter the practice of cross-border e-commerce enterprises.	100	1	5	4.23	1.02
Q7 The school has a good reward mechanism for high-level teachers.	100	1	5	3.89	1.05
Q8The current cross-border e-commerce curriculum is reasonable.	100	1	5	3.73	0.92
Q9 The curriculum is arranged in a reasonable order for each grade.	100	1	5	3.25	0.96
Q10 The ratio of theory class to practical class is appropriate.	100	1	5	3.69	1.01
Q11 Cross-border e-commerce course credits and hours are reasonably allocated.	100	1	5	3.87	0.98
Q12 The teaching content completely covers the requirements of the major.	100	1	5	3.66	0.92
Q13The content of the course closely follows the reality of the development of the cross-border e-commerce industry.	100	1	5	3.71	1.03
Q14 The current teaching method does not need to be optimized.	100	1	5	3.47	1.00
Q15 I was able to teach according to the actual situation of students.	100	1	5	3.68	0.97
Q16 I will design teaching according to the characteristics of the curriculum and teaching objectives.	100	1	5	3.87	0.92
Q17 Modern information technology can effectively improve the quality.	100	1	5	4.26	1.07
Q18 I use modern information technology to assist teaching.	100	1	5	3.45	0.99
Q19 I am proficient in the use of information technology.	100	1	5	3.21	0.93

Q20 I can clearly and completely understand the cross-border e-commerce teacher assessment and evaluation mechanism.	100	1	5	3.84	0.94
Q21 The assessment and training mechanism of cross-border e-commerce teachers is reasonable and perfect.	100	1	5	3.88	0.97
Q22 The assessment and evaluation mechanism of teachers is conducive to the introduction and retention of high-level talents.	100	1	5	3.53	1.04
Q23 The assessment and evaluation mechanism for students is reasonable and perfect.	100	1	5	3.21	1.01
Q24 The assessment and evaluation mechanism of students needs to increase the collaboration of cross-border e-commerce enterprises.	100	1	5	4.23	0.93
Q25 School-enterprise cooperation can effectively promote the training of cross-border e-commerce talents.	100	1	5	3.97	0.99
Q26 The current school-enterprise cooperation mechanism is reasonable and perfect, and does not need to be modified.	100	1	5	3.16	0.94
Q27 School-enterprise cooperation should increase the depth of cooperation and innovation.	100	1	5	3.87	1.01

The researchers counted the average number of items in the student questionnaire. Students who agree with modern information technology will enhance my interest in learning and learning effectiveness (Q15) have the highest score of 4.57 Teachers should consider this feedback from students in terms of teaching methods. The item with the lowest score is the current assessment method is fair and reasonable (Q18), with a score of 3.31. This indicates that in the view of students, the current assessment method needs to be further optimized (see Table 6).

Table 6: General Description Statistics of Students' Questionnaire

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Q1 The goal of talent training is consistent with my employment direction	296	1	5	3.67	1.01
Q2 The goal of human resource training is in line with the needs of society	296	1	5	3.8	0.99
Q3 The formulation of talent training goals requires the coordination of the school, the government and enterprises	296	1	5	4.25	0.94
Q4 Your cross-border EC course teachers have practical experience in enterprises	296	1	5	3.32	1.03
Q5 Your cross-border e-commerce course teachers have strong ability	296	1	5	3.85	1.04

Q6 Your cross-border EC course teachers include corporate mentors	296	1	5	3.57	0.94
Q7 The current cross-border e-commerce curriculum is reasonable	296	1	5	3.69	0.96
Q8 The curriculum is arranged in a reasonable order for each grade	296	1	5	3.74	1.06
Q9 The ratio of theory class to practical class is appropriate	296	1	5	3.92	1.03
Q10 Cross-border e-commerce course credits and hours are reasonably distributed	296	1	5	3.57	0.95
Q11 teaching content completely covers the requirements of the major	296	1	5	3.49	1.03
Q12 The content of the course is closely related to the reality of the development of the cross-border e-commerce industry	296	1	5	4.0	1.07
Q13 The teaching content can meet my learning needs	296	1	5	4.25	0.94
Q14 At present, teachers' teaching methods do not need to be optimized	296	1	5	3.36	0.97
Q15 Modern information technology will enhance my learning interest and learning efficiency	296	1	5	4.57	1.02
Q16 Teachers use the latest digital technology to assist lessons	296	1	5	3.93	1.05
Q17 Teachers are proficient in the use of modern teaching equipment	296	1	5	3.66	0.96
Q18 The current assessment method is fair and reasonable	296	1	5	3.31	0.92
Q19 The assessment method should be in line with the characteristics of cross-border e-commerce major	296	1	5	4.36	0.99
The Q20 assessment method can increase the collaboration of cross-border e-commerce enterprises	296	1	5	4.25	1.01
Q21 School-enterprise cooperation can effectively promote my professional learning	296	1	5	3.98	0.98
Q22 The current school-enterprise cooperation is reasonable and perfect, and does not need to be modified	296	1	5	3.42	1.03
Q23 School-enterprise cooperation should increase the depth of cooperation and innovation	296	1	5	4.41	0.89

4. Interpretation of Research Results

4.1. Main Factors Affecting the Quality of Cross-border E-commerce Talent Cultivation in Guangxi University of Finance and Economics

Based on data analysis, the researchers summarized the main factors affecting the quality of cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation in Guangxi University of Finance and Economics.

4.1.1. The Formulation of Talent Cultivation Goals Has Not Kept Pace with the Development of the Industry

The development of cross-border e-commerce industry is very rapid, and relevant platform rules, sales models, payment methods, etc. are in a state of rapid change. Guangxi University of Finance and Economics lacks foresight in formulating talent cultivation plans, lacks sensitivity to the development trends of the industry, and fails to grasp the latest development trends of the industry in a timely manner. As a result, it cannot provide enterprises with the high-quality talent that meets the development requirements of the industry.

4.1.2. The Structure of Teaching Staff Is Unreasonable

The proportion of teachers participating in the questionnaire who have experience in cross-border e-commerce enterprises is 42%, while the proportion of double qualified teachers is only 29%. Such a low proportion is a huge hidden danger for a highly practical profession. The proportion of young teachers under the age of 35 is 87%. There are also situations such as short teaching experience and low professional titles. Such a teacher team structure has become a potential crisis in improving the quality of cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation. This is one of the important reasons hindering the improvement of the quality of cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation at Guangxi University of Finance and Economics.

4.1.3. The Curriculum Settings Are Not Reasonable

One characteristic of cross-border e-commerce courses is that the position of practical courses is relatively prominent. Guangxi University of Finance and Economics has indeed increased the proportion of practical courses in its curriculum, such as establishing a training base, but it lacks pertinence. The requirements of cross-border e-commerce enterprises for innovative practical abilities of talent are constantly improving, but the practical courses of Guangxi University of Finance and Economics still focus on simple platform operation skills, without promptly expanding the depth and breadth of practical content. Consequently, it is difficult to match the enterprise's requirements for talent capabilities.

4.1.4. The Teaching Content and Teaching Methods Lag behind Industry Development Requirements

The compilation and updating of textbooks lags behind what is required. At Guangxi University of Finance and Economics, there are problems with cross-border e-commerce teaching, such as outdated teaching materials, inappropriate teaching content and the development of cross-border e-commerce industry. This is a relatively common phenomenon in colleges and universities in Guangxi. During the survey, researchers found that the cross-border e-commerce textbooks of Guangxi University of Finance and Economics mainly come from purchasing existing textbooks on the market. Firstly, there will be certain restrictions on the selection of teaching materials. Secondly, the updating of teaching materials will become a serious practical

problem in teaching. The slow frequency of updates directly results in the decoupling of teaching from the cutting-edge development of cross-border e-commerce.

4.1.5. The Evaluation Mechanism Is Unreasonable

Guangxi University of Finance and Economics mainly focuses on "summative evaluation," ignoring "process evaluation." This is also common in other universities. For example, Guangxi University of Finance and Economics encourages cross-border e-commerce students to innovate and start businesses, but does not provide systematic guidance and support for their innovation processes. However, with the deepening of students' entrepreneurship, the problems and difficulties encountered increase, and the assistance and support provided by the school cannot keep up with this. This increases the risk of student entrepreneurship failure.

4.1.6. The Depth of Cooperation between Schools and Enterprises Is Insufficient

Researchers found that although Guangxi University of Finance and Economics has established cooperation with some cross-border e-commerce enterprises, that has not gone deep. The first reason is from the enterprise side. School-enterprise cooperation produces slow benefits. Many enterprises usually focus more on their own business development and are only willing to engage in high-frequency interactions with schools during talent recruitment. Secondly, cross-border e-commerce enterprises in Guangxi are normally small in scale and do not have more funds to invest in school-enterprise co-operation.

4.2. Optimization Strategies for Improving the Quality of Cross-Border E-Commerce Talent Cultivation at Guangxi University of Finance and Economics

4.2.1. Create a Talent Cultivation Goal Setting Process that Keeps Pace with the Times

When setting talent cultivation goals, Guangxi University of Finance and Economics needs to investigate fully the cross-border e-commerce industry and enterprises, and fully understand the demands of relevant subjects in cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation. At the same time, it is necessary to optimize the formulation process of talent cultivation objectives. Representative enterprises in the cross-border e-commerce industry can be actively invited to participate in the formulation of talent cultivation goals, forming a linkage between relevant entities. Introduce corporate participation at the very beginning of talent development.

4.2.2. Optimizing the Structure of the Teaching Staff

Guangxi University of Finance and Economics should actively develop a good talent introduction and talent training system. Provide more opportunities for further education and training of cross-border e-commerce teachers, encourage teachers to deepen frontline practice in cross-border e-commerce enterprises, and encourage more teachers to obtain dual qualification teacher qualifications. Secondly, increase capital investment and increase the introduction of high-level talent.

4.2.3. Encourage Enterprise Advantageous Resources to Intervene in Advance and Closely Integrate Them with Curriculum Settings, Teaching Contents, Teaching Methods and Assessment Methods

Guangxi University of Finance and Economics needs actively to establish a linkage mechanism with cross-border e-commerce enterprises in the process of setting up cross-border e-commerce courses, and invite

enterprises to participate in various aspects of talent cultivation, including course settings, selection of teaching content and materials, teaching methods and evaluation mechanisms. Establish a pool of assessment and evaluation experts, invite cross-border e-commerce professional managers to serve as experts and issue employment certificates. Let enterprise experts participate in the daily evaluation and assessment of teachers and students, as well as the evaluation and assessment of important competitions, to achieve a more fair and impartial evaluation.

4.2.4. Actively Innovate the Mode of School-Enterprise Co-operation

Guangxi University of Finance and Economics should make full use of relevant regional support policies and strive for multi-channel government financial support. Increase the leading and coordinating role of the government in school-enterprise cooperation. Make full use of the coordination and guidance role of the government. Actively design and propose innovative suggestions for school-enterprise cooperation, break through the conventional cooperation model, innovate cooperation forms through multiple channels and ways, and establish a long-term and short-term cooperation plan centered on projects based on the local characteristics of Guangxi to achieve a win-win situation for cooperation.

5. Discussion

Through the questionnaire, it was found that one of the primary factors affecting the quality of talent cultivation is that the formulation of talent cultivation goals has not been closely aligned with industry development. This is consistent with the views of Cao Dongyan, (2020), Lian Yuanqiang (2021) and others. This also points out a breakthrough for future efforts. Other areas such as the construction of teacher staff and assessment methods are also areas that continue to improve. Su Qiaoqin, (2020) and Beaumont (2020) and others hold the same view.

Based on the above analysis, the researchers have proposed strategies for improvement, including fully understanding the demands of cross-border e-commerce talents and inviting representatives of the cross-border e-commerce industry to participate in the formulation of talent cultivation goals. This is consistent with the views of Peng Wenjuan (2018), Wu Nanzhong (2019) and others.

All stakeholders should focus on optimizing the professional development and teaching evaluation of cross-border e-commerce teaching staff, and do their best to leverage their respective strengths. Encourage enterprises to intervene in advance with advantageous resources and closely integrate them with curriculum design, teaching content, teaching methods, and evaluation methods, which is targeted for improving the quality of talent cultivation.

6. Conclusion

This study focuses on the problem of improving the quality of cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation at Guangxi University of Finance and Economics. Through a questionnaire survey, researchers summarized the main factors affecting its quality improvement and, based on this, proposed optimization strategies. It provides a reference for other universities to improve the quality of cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation.

In future research, the study needs to go further to explore the deep-seated factors that affect the cultivation of cross-border e-commerce talents in universities, such as increasing comparative research on cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation in developed and underdeveloped regions, increasing research on the

characteristics of regional cross-border e-commerce enterprises, finding their laws and proposing targeted solutions.

6.1. Limitations

Owing to the limitations of capabilities and environment, the current research has problems such as narrow research scope and single data analysis methods.

There are many universities in Guangxi that are involved in cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation. This study only selected a representative university - Guangxi University of Finance and Economics - to study the current situation of cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation, and did not conduct research on all universities in Guangxi that are involved in cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation.

6.2. Suggestion

In future research, it will be important to explore the deep-seated factors that affect the cultivation of cross-border e-commerce talents in universities, such as increasing comparative research on cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation between developed and underdeveloped regions, increasing research on the characteristics of regional cross-border e-commerce enterprises.

At the same time, more effective research methods should be applied to enhance further research on the impact of cross-border e-commerce talent cultivation quality.

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Role of Misinformation and Hate Speech on Social Media in Communal Violence: The Indian Context

Md. Zarif Rahman, Graduate Student, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Email: zarifrahman111@gmail.com

Nafiya Ferdous, Graduate Student, University of Aalborg, Denmark. Email: nafiyaferdous@gmail.com

Abstract

Communal violence, or violent conflict between different religious groups, is a major threat to social harmony and human rights in India. This paper investigates how social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp, facilitate the spread of false or misleading information and hateful or inciting messages that exacerbate communal violence in India. We used the concept of a conflict triangle to analyse the behaviour, attitudes, and context of different cases of communal violence that occurred in India from 2016 to 2022. We found that social media platforms play a dual role in communal violence: they trigger or escalate violence by manipulating people's emotions, perceptions, and actions; and they reflect the underlying factors that influence communal violence, such as historical legacies, ideological differences, and political interests. We conclude that enhancing media literacy among the public and promoting interfaith dialogue among the religious leaders are essential steps to prevent or reduce communal violence in India. We also discuss the limitations of our study and suggest directions for future research.

Keywords: communal violence, India, misinformation, religion, social media

1. Introduction

Communal violence in South Asia is rooted in historical enmity, differences in faith, malpractice of politics and politicization of religion (Tambiah, 1990). Communal violence on the Indian sub-continent is frequently regarded as a consequence of British colonization, and is also acknowledged as a distinctly contemporary occurrence. This assertion possesses partial validity; nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge an additional aspect. During the precolonial era, the emergence of Hindu and Muslim identities occurred, and the progression of both religious communities was significantly influenced by acts of violence. As an illustration, while considering a dataset including a duration of nine centuries (1000-1850 CE), an approximation of the quantity of intercommunal violence between Hindu and Muslim polities at the district level may be observed. It is evident that the occurrence of postcolonial Hindu-Muslim rioting is intricately linked to religious violence. However, this correlation can be traced back just to the Mughal-Maratha struggle, which commenced around the latter half of the 17th century (Verghese & Foa, 2018).

Since the time of the British colonial period, the intercommunal violence in the sub-continent, particularly between Hindus and Muslims, has become more of a result of structural effects. The range of ethnic violence was not as visible as in the colonial period. According to some researchers the ethnic groupings were poorly defined before the colonial period and conflict was quite uncommon due to permeable boundaries between different neighbourhoods which helped to encourage peace and tolerance. Afterwards, colonial administrators "constructed" contemporary ethnic groups through the methods used to create states, such as censuses, maps, and the construction of museums. Finally, systems of ethnic partiality were implemented by colonial powers. This is the 'divide-and-rule' policy that eventually led to interpersonal conflict (Verghese & Foa, 2018). In fact, the British colonial authority first used the term 'communalism' to describe how it struggled to control Hindu-Muslim riots and other forms of violence between different ethnic, religious, and racial groups in its colonies. After independence, India has become the biggest democracy of

the world (Teitelman, 2019). The electoral system, development of a successful mechanism for dispute resolution, cultural diversity and so forth have made India a perfect candidate for a successful democratic country. However, the communal tension, lack of tolerance and rising extremist ideologies keep the society of India divided enough to be a fertile land for communal violence.

Instances of communal violence in India in the 21st century can be traced from the Gujarat riots, which are considered one of the worst riots since independence. The riots started on February 27th, 2002, when 59 Hindu pilgrims were slain while returning from Ajodhya by train after it was set on fire. Hindus accused Muslims of igniting the pilgrim train. Hindus started to take retribution after Hindu pilgrims were killed in a train that passed through Muslim areas and through Muslim homes, shops, and commercial buildings. Thousands more people lost their lives during the riot (Datta, 2014). In parliament, the Indian home minister stated that between 2004 and 2017, there were 10,399 incidences of communal violence in India, resulting in 1,605 fatalities and 30,723 injuries. According to a different survey, from 2014 to 2017, communal violence in India increased by 28% (Monitoring Desk, 2018). At this same period of time, smart phones and different social media platforms become more available in the region. Misinformation circulated through social media and played a big role behind this spike of violence.

A report on communal violence in 2018, published by Buniyaad, a Gujarat-based human rights organization, shows that 46% of episodes of communal violence in rural Gujarat in 2018 were sparked by the dissemination of hate messages through social media (TNN, 2018). In the past, communal unrest was confined to cities. But the report claims that in the past couple of years, it has been clear that communal animosity and violence are spreading to rural communities, and this trend has persisted in 2018. According to the study, social media platforms are used to foment religious hatred. In other words, social media is playing a pivotal role in communal violence in India. According to Banaji & Bhat (2019), there have been more than a hundred lynchings since 2015. Owing to claims of cow slaughter, cow trafficking, and cattle theft, many of these instances target members of marginalized communities (Dalits, Muslims, Christians, and Adivasis). Despite the fact that the victims are targeted for various reasons, these episodes have one thing in common: vigilante groups who use social media to propagate false information about the victims and to mobilize, defend, and in some cases, to record and disseminate images of their actions. These findings uphold the importance of social media in the context of communal violence.

Thus, the aim of this study is to analyse the role of misinformation and hate speech on social media in communal violence in the context of India. The paper has tried to address three specific objectives. To address the first objective, we discuss the root causes of communal violence in India and the misuse of social media in this context. In the second objective, we analyse the types of misinformation that motivate people to engage in communal violence. For the third objective, we present three case studies to show how social media is playing a role behind mobilizing people for communal violence. This study was carried out using a qualitative methodology, and data were gathered from secondary sources such as books, journals, pertinent reports and websites.

2. Social Media and Communal Conflict in India

Almost every adult in India now owns a personal electronic device. Even before becoming an adult, many children own mobile phones, laptops and other devices. On those devices, they use the internet and, with that, various types of social media apps also. Overall, two out of three Indians who have a mobile phone use some kind of social medium. Indian users downloaded over 19 billion apps in 2019, representing a 195% lead in the number of apps downloaded by users in any other nation (The Global Statistics, 2022). More than users in China and the US, the average Indian social media user spends 17 hours per week on the sites. The number of social network users in India is predicted to reach 448 million in 2021, up significantly from the expected 351 million in 2019. The most used social networking platform in the nation

is Facebook. In 2019, there were around 270 million Facebook users in India, making it the nation with the highest global Facebook user base (Rao, 2021) (see Table 1 below).

Social Networking Site	Monthly Visits	Mobile Traffic Share	Desktop Traffic Share
Facebook	1.6 billion	99.3%	0.8%
YouTube	1.2 billion	60.0%	40.0%
Qoura	215.8 billion	98.9%	1.1%
Instagram	191.1 million	99.0%	1.0%
Twitter	125.2 million	97.8%	2.2%
Pinterest	49.8 million	98.4%	1.6%
LinkedIn	29.9 million	91.0%	9.0%

Table 1: Social Media Profiling- Indian Context; source: Rao, 2021.

From the above chart, we can understand that mostly Facebook or Meta posts are helping to spread all forms of information, while YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter also play vital roles in the spread of news. Though people in India use Quora, Pinterest, and LinkedIn, these are quite different. Quora aids in knowledge acquisition, Pinterest keeps people informed about the world, and LinkedIn is primarily used to find a suitable job. As a result, it is claimed, these media outlets are less likely to spread false information about any given issue. The introduction of WhatsApp to the Indian digital market increased app adoption, which has recently doubled in rural areas as well. WhatsApp (534.30 million active users), Instagram (503.37 million users), Facebook (491.53 million users), Telegram (374.40 million users), and Facebook Messenger (324.39 million users) are the top five social media platforms in India for messaging (The Global Statistics, 2022).

Social media is being utilized as a tool to control society and the individual. On a community level, it is steadily attempting to achieve psychological dominance over the individual. Many of the people who use these platforms of social media do not have media literacy. So, hoping for fact-checking protocols in them is a luxury. The people of India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan have a tendency to be emotional, so, whenever they see anything negative about their sensitive issues like religion, people can react vigorously. For example, when people of any religion see that there is a post roaming in the Facebook newsfeed portraying their holy person in a negative way, they may find it very offensive. At that moment, they do not need to establish the truth behind it. They do not want to see that this can be a trap and that someone may be benefiting from such activities, which can cause chaos, riots, and conflicts between the two communities. Though a newspaper is also a kind of social medium, there are some differences in using social media like Meta or Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. Anyone can post or share any content in these platforms. The problem is that youngsters mainly use such social platforms as information sources and can get triggered easily. They rarely read newspapers for information and are highly dependent on social media. With such social media platforms, there are inadequate central monitoring systems. By contrast, newspapers maintain some rules and there are specific authorities to monitor all the news they publish. It is also very easy to take action against any newspaper agencies if they spread false or misinformation. In case of social media in most of the cases people who spread gossip, misinformation, false or fabricated news to create communal grievance among people stay far away from giving any explanations. One major problematic side of these platforms is that such false or fabricated news can go viral in the blink of an eye. When sensitive issues like religion, race and identity go viral it becomes really difficult to punish or track all the people who were involved in dissemination. The number might be huge and it becomes quite difficult to find out each and every one. As a result, they avoid punishment, which emboldens them and others to do such things again and again.

India, the most populated nation in the world, has an extremely high proportion of young people who are well-connected with social media. Social media were initially used to connect with people online, form connections, conduct commerce, and communicate with the public, but more lately, they have been used to

organize youth for uprisings and riots. In 2011–2012 and 2013, India saw a variety of agitations and road protests in places like New Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore (Datta, 2014). Social media was fully utilized during the anti-corruption movement and the mass mobilization against the Delhi gang rape to organize people, bring them together, and raise awareness of injustice and the broken system that leads to high-level corruption and poor law-and-order conditions in urban areas. However, in certain other instances, as during the ethnic conflicts in Assam in 2012 and 2013, during the communal riots in Muzaffarnagar, they also served as a means of spreading rumours, distributing false information, and causing panic and mayhem among the general populace. Non-state actors who are domestic and international anti-elements have abused social media to undermine law and order by disseminating rumours and posting misleading information and photographs online (Datta, 2014).

2.1. Ruralization/Decentralization of the Conflict

According to data from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, Gujarat had 10.06 million internet subscribers in rural areas as of December, 2018. This availability of the internet as well as social media affects the rural people in different ways. The sociologist Gaurang Jani remarked that social media has given the rural population a forum to express their ideas (TNN, 2019). However, rural residents typically have extremely traditional mindsets, which makes it very easy for fabricated information or messages about interfaith weddings to become viral and cause strife. For instance, a brawl between two communities broke out at Fatehpura in Vadodara following a claimed incident of stone-pelting during a Ram Navami parade. Locals claim that unknown criminals threw stones at the parade, brushing the Lord Ram monument atop an open vehicle. Then, provocative WhatsApp messages spread, igniting the rioting. The triggering point of communal conflicts in this area include different religious festivals, processions, rallies, inter-religious romantic affairs, offensive/controversial music, eve-teasing (i.e. street-level sexual harassment) and hate speech.

3. Framework of the Study

As mentioned above, this research has tried to address three objectives. In the context of the first objective (root causes of the conflict), we follow the ABC triangle developed by Galtung (1969). Three elements of a conflict situation are highlighted by the triangle: B, which stands for behaviour (people's actions, words, insults, etc.); A, which stands for attitude (which includes feelings, prejudices, and beliefs); and C, which stands for contradiction or context. Arguments based on economic, geographical, or inequality issues can define the final one. The triangle is divided into two sections, one upper (with side B on top) and one below (with sides A and C hidden), similar to an iceberg.

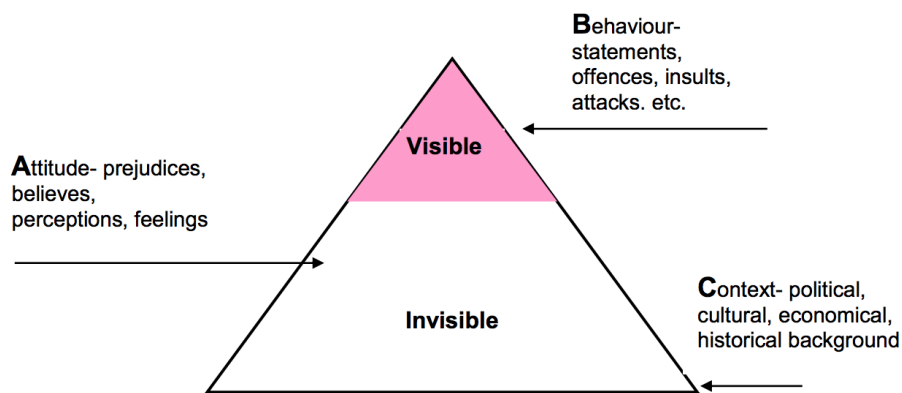


Figure 1: ABC Triangle; source: adapted from Galtung, 1969

In the context of identifying types of the misinformation, this study adopts the framework developed by Wardle (2017). Wardle identifies seven types of mis- and disinformation, which are satire/parody, misleading content, imposter content, fabricated content, false connection, false context and manipulated content (see Figure 2).

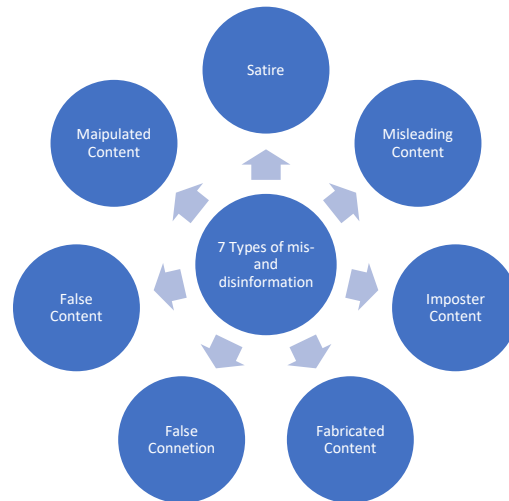


Figure 2: Typology of Mis/Disinformation; source: adapted from Wardle, 2017

Wardle also identifies the factors behind producing different types of mis/dis-information by developing a matrix. For example, people try to assert political influence through misleading information, false context, manipulated content or fabricated content. On the other hand, people distributing propaganda through misleading content, false context, imposter content, manipulated content and fabricate content.

	Satire	False Connection	Misleading Context	False Context	Imposter Content	Manipulated Content	Fabricated Content
Poor Journalism		Yes	Yes	Yes			
To Parody	Yes				Yes		Yes
To Provoke Passion				Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Partisanship			Yes	Yes			
Profit		Yes			Yes		Yes
Political Influence			Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Propaganda			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 2: Misinformation Matrix; source: adapted from Wardle, 2017.

To expand the scope this study also consider the typology of misinformation developed by Wu *et al.*, (2019) which are: urban legend, fake news, unverified information, rumour, hate speech, cyberbullying, spam and trolling. In particular, hate speech is important for our study and it refers to offensive, xenophobic and threatening content on social media that targets particular groups of people.

For the third objective of our study, we develop a framework based on the work of De Juan & Hasenclever (2015). In the process of mobilization, first of all there must be a triggering event which may activate the

underlying communal hate. Often time, the incident becomes viral through the social media. So, social media also plays a role to activate a dormant conflict. In the second stage, there should be some elements that motivate people to engage in violence. In our study, it is the misinformation in social media. In the later stage, there should some organizing actors who have credibility in the society to lead the mobilization. In addition, there should be some institutional resources, such as a favourable political situation. Sometimes, religion itself becomes a great institutional resource, if the majority are from the same religion. In the final stage, a violent demonstration may take place if all the conditions have been fulfilled (see Figure 3).

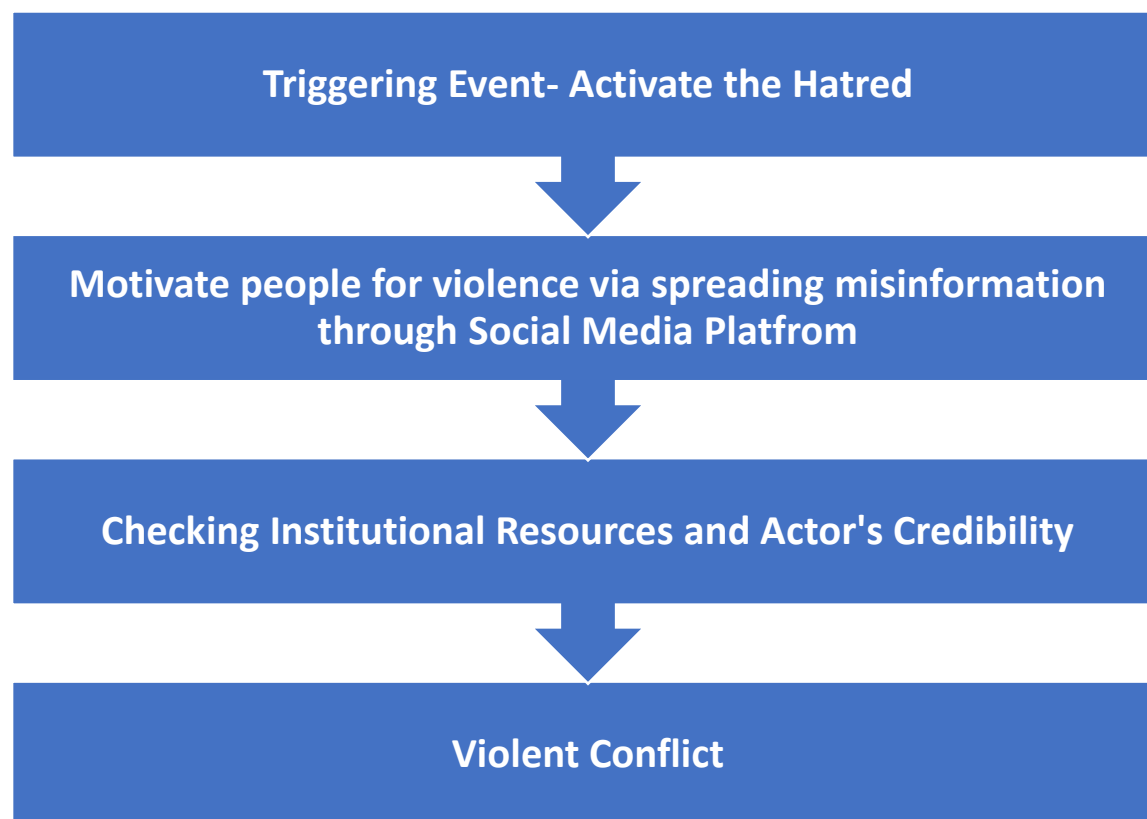


Figure 3: Process of mobilization for communal violence (developed by the authors)

4. Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative approach to examine the role of social media platforms in misinformation, hate speech, and communal violence in India. We used secondary data as our main source of information, as primary data collection was not feasible due to ethical and practical constraints. We collected secondary data from various online sources, such as newspapers, blogs, reports, and websites, that reported or analysed the trend of misinformation and hate speech on social media platforms in India, as well as three recent cases of communal violence that were triggered or mobilized by social media platforms. We searched for these sources using keywords such as "social media," "misinformation," "hate speech," "communal violence," "India" and the names of specific incidents or locations. We also used snowball sampling to find additional sources by following the references or links provided by the initial sources.

We used two methods to analyse the secondary data: literature review and case study analysis. For the literature review, we reviewed and synthesized the existing literature on the topic of misinformation, hate speech and communal violence in India. We identified and discussed the main concepts, theories and

frameworks that are relevant to our research question. We also highlighted the gaps and limitations in the current literature and explained how our paper contributes to filling them.

For the case study analysis, we selected three cases of communal violence that occurred in India from 2016 to 2022 and that were influenced by misinformation and hate speech on social media platforms. These cases were:

- The Tripura anti-Muslim riot in 2016;
- The violence related to love jihad in Rajasthan in 2017 and
- The 2022 Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) remarks row.

We used a multiple-case study design to compare and contrast these cases in terms of their context, causes, consequences and responses. We used the concept of a conflict triangle (Galtung, 1969) as our analytical framework to examine the behaviour, attitudes and context of each case. We used a thematic analysis method to identify and code the themes related to these aspects in each case. We also compared and contrasted the themes across the cases to find similarities and differences.

One of the limitations of our methodology is that we relied on non-academic sources that may not be reliable or accurate. We tried to overcome this limitation by using multiple sources for each case and cross-checking the information for consistency and validity. We also acknowledged the biases and perspectives of the sources and considered them in our interpretation of the data. Another limitation is that we could not access some sources that were blocked or deleted by the authorities or the platforms due to legal or ethical reasons. We tried to overcome this limitation by using alternative sources or proxies that could provide some information about the missing sources.

5. Root Causes of Communal Violence in India

This section of the paper discusses four root causes of communal violence in India from the lens of conflict triangle mentioned above, which are: historical aspect (context of the triangle), ideological aspect (attitude), political aspect (behaviour), and technological aspect (context of spreading misinformation through social media).

5.1. Context: Historical Legacies

The root of communalism can be traced back to the history of Indian tradition, which was then intensified by the manipulative colonial policy of "divide and rule," and a mixture of caste and sect loyalties (Fox, 2006). Divisions and tensions caused by colonialism and decolonization, migration of populations, institutional choices made by the first leaders of the independence era and historical violence amongst groups all contribute to the causes of modern violence (Jaffrey & Slater, 2018). Some behaviour of the colonial masters also deepened the division between Hindu and Muslim communities. For example, they were the first to introduce the concept of census in this area, which led to the formalisation of a Hindu majority and a Muslim minority, first as demographic data and subsequently as political designations. Again, when Persian was being supplanted by English in higher courts and Urdu in lower courts in the late 19th century, there was one of the earliest systematic divisions between Hindu and Muslim elites. Urdu was rejected by significant portions of society in favour of Hindi. Elite Muslims, however, favoured Urdu. Two communities were further divided as a result of this (Sahai, 2020). These behaviours of the British colonizers created a negative attitude between two communities (Verghese, 2018). When the All-India Muslim League was founded in 1906, the demand for Muslim communal representation also served as a prelude to communal tension. The integrity of the Muslim community was a priority for the League. The

democratic structure India sought under British rule was considered as inherently incompatible with the Islamic model of social organization. According to the Muslim perspective, political institutions must be ingrained in the "community make-up of society (Sahai, 2020)."

While attempting to reach a constitutional agreement in the 1940s, the dispute between the Congress and the Muslim League grew more intense (Nandy, 2002). The League was concerned with the sharp ideological split between Muslims and Non-Muslims and considered numerical arrangements to be irrelevant, whereas the Congress supported majority rule for political representation. The Muslim minority perceived the individual representation required by the new politics as a threat because it went against the Islamic understanding of the "... relationship between the individual and his [sic] communal group (Sahai, 2020)," the nature of political consensus, and the distribution of power in society. This posed a threat to their unity as Muslims. This manifested in Muslim separatism, which ultimately resulted in the creation of Pakistan while also leaving lasting psychological scars on the Muslims who remained and their non-Muslim neighbours (Sahai, 2020). This led to further violence against minorities which has been sparked in part by ongoing interstate competition. Minorities are frequently accused of acting as fronts for hostile states due to historical legacies. Gujarat's proximity to Pakistan and a lengthy political narrative of terrorist infiltration over the border can both be used to explain some of the anti-Muslim riots that occurred there in 2002 (Eckert, 2009).

5.2. Attitude: Ideologies

Communal violence in India has also been fueled by radical beliefs. In this setting, Hindutva supremacism, which is connected to right-wing Hindu nationalist organizations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), has taken the lead. While the RSS claims to be apolitical and to be concerned with the strength and integrity of the Hindu country, in reality, this results in vehement rhetoric directed at Muslims and undocumented immigration (Wilson, 2017). Muslims are seen in Hindutva discourse as Pakistani agents and a danger to the unity of the Hindu nation. Violence is encouraged by this rhetoric in many contexts. The Babri Masjid mosque in Ayodhya, which is thought to have been constructed on the former location of the Ram Temple, was demolished in 1992 under the leadership of the VHP and RSS by hundreds of people. The demolition sparked months of unrest that resulted in almost 2,000 fatalities (Eckert, 2009).

The idea of aggressive Hindu nationalism is based on a collective historical interpretation that places nationalism in the Aryan kingdoms that were founded and sustained on Vedic principles. The Golwalkar-Hedgewar tradition, which Savarkar promoted in the Indian political discourse as "Hindutva," is characterized by the retelling of history to distinguish between Muslim and Hindu monarchs as the invaders and defenders, respectively (Wilson, 2017). Their core argument is that the dynasties that rebelled against Mughal rule were the first nationalists and that Indian nationalism must turn back to ancient empires for its foundations. This brand of nationalism was placed and built on the foundation of a never-ending confrontation with Islam. Hindutva revivalism offers Hindus a sense of pride through the concept of a great old Hindu culture and this shared sense of glory has been an excellent instrument to form a community (Brass, 2005). In addition to blatantly creating the perception of Muslims as the "other," revivalist beliefs also sought to glorify old Hindu culture, which would have produced an in-group. In the post-independence era, this manifested in two ways: a more moderate form of Hindu pride, supported by the Congress's nationalist movement, and a more militant one, promoted by groups like the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha (Jaffrelot, 2008).

5.3. Behaviour: Political Demonstration

The connections between politics and communal violence in South and Southeast Asia have been shown in a large body of literature (Brass, 2005). Attacks on minorities frequently result from political power

struggles between factions of the majority. The riots in Gujarat in 2002, which were previously discussed, offer a more recent illustration. Following the anti-Muslim violence, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led state administration called for a state election, which it easily won and performed best in the regions with the worst violence. Leading political parties frequently have profitable affiliations with militant groups that carry out atrocities against minorities. Sometimes there is little distinction between a movement's militant and political strands. The Gujarat case is just one illustration of how closely the BJP is linked to right-wing nationalist groups like the VHP and RSS (Wilson, 2017).

The revival of Hindutva in the 1980s was designed by years of methodical, coordinated and creative political initiatives. One of these political tactics was the long-running debate over the Babri mosque in Ayodhya and its destruction. It is the desire of Hindu nationalists to alter Indian culture so that it can stake a claim to being a more advanced but still ancient Hindu civilization (Sahai, 2020). The politics of reproduction and conversion emerged to aid in the mobilization of Hindus as electoral politics began to turn into a numbers game. One of the most troublesome political challenges in the new India was the rise of the Muslim community. The difference between Muslim and Hindu reproductive rates contributed to the development of the relationship between religion and sexuality. Muslims are perceived as sexual predators who pose a threat to Hindu bodies (Teitelman, 2019).

By presenting itself as a defensive response to Muslim dangers to the safety of both individual Hindus and the community, Hindu nationalism normalizes a politics of fear and hatred. Political leaders take advantage of social inconsistencies rather than placing the responsibility for the system's inability to realize development objectives. They instil a sense of fear in the minds of the community members by continuously bringing up the subject of backwardness and relative deprivation, which enhances their identification as a collective, not as individuals (Sahai, 2020). The processes of urbanization, industrialization and migration make social groups more aware of their class and communal identities, which furthers their contribution. The combination of politics and religion in a society is seen to promote communalism (Tambiah, 1990).

Democracies appear to be becoming more and more susceptible to commonplace types of violence like vigilantism as they grow older. Hindu-Muslim unrest peaked in India in the middle to late 1990s as the nation moved from decades of Congress Party dominance to more of a multiparty democracy. Local electoral variables in India had a considerable impact on subnational patterns of violence (Jaffrey & Slater, 2017). Additionally, it is connected to the rise of vigilantism as a significant form of communal violence. Since 2010, more "cow protection group" members have attacked innocent bystanders who have been accused of eating meat. Although the immediate goal of these attacks is to stop the sale of cows for slaughter and the eating of beef, the majority of its victims have actually been members of India's vulnerable Muslim minority (Teitelman, 2019).

5.4. Lack of Media Literacy: Context of Spreading Misinformation through Social Media

The capacity to comprehend information offered to us and respond properly is known as media literacy (FutureLearn, 2021). It includes identifying fake news, rumour, misinformation, disinformation, fabricated news, satire and so forth. Traditionally, television and print media are the main sources from which the mass gets most of its information. Consequently, media literacy was then limited to the skill of analysing and evaluating information properly from TV and print media (Teitelman, 2019). However, in this age of the internet, the skill of media literacy expands to the capability to access the internet through gadgets like cell-phones or computers. It encompasses using websites and applications, finding material there and, to some extent, comprehending how and why someone posted that content online. In the age of social media, media literacy means learning how to analyse critically the information given from a technical, cognitive and emotional standpoint on social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp or Twitter (McNulty, 2021).

In 2006, Facebook and Twitter were made available in India. India has the second-largest Facebook viewership in the world by 2017, and there were over 112 million mobile users there. In terms of active users, India became the Twitter market with the fastest growth in 2018, rising at a rate that was about five times faster than the worldwide average (Rao, 2021). With more than 200 million active monthly users, India's favourite chat app, WhatsApp, which is currently owned by Facebook, was launched in 2009. By March 2018, YouTube, which was started in 2005, had over 180 million Indian mobile users, with a rise of 70 million users over the previous two years (Teitelman, 2019).

A volatile mix has emerged in India as a result of the low cost of mobile phones and the engagement-driven businesses that are in turn driven by users' fear and rage. The majority of Indian people is from the villages or has access to inexpensive data but lacks a formal media literacy (McNulty, 2021). There is a sizable portion of the public whose media literacy is close to zero and who do not know what to believe, according to Pratik Sinha, founder of the fact-checking website Alt News (Teitelman, 2019). Rumours are being fed to them easily.

Figure 4 (below) is a diagram that shows the different factors that contribute to communal violence in India, based on the concept of a conflict triangle. As mentioned above, the conflict triangle is a model that explains how violence is influenced by three interrelated aspects: behaviour, attitudes and context. The figure illustrates these aspects as three levels of a pyramid, with the most visible and direct causes of violence at the top, and the most hidden and indirect causes at the bottom. The figure also divides the pyramid into two sections: visible and invisible. The visible section is on the left side of the pyramid and represents the aspects that can be easily observed or measured, such as behaviour and some attitudes. The invisible section is on the right side of the pyramid and represents the aspects that are more hidden or difficult to measure, such as some attitudes and context.

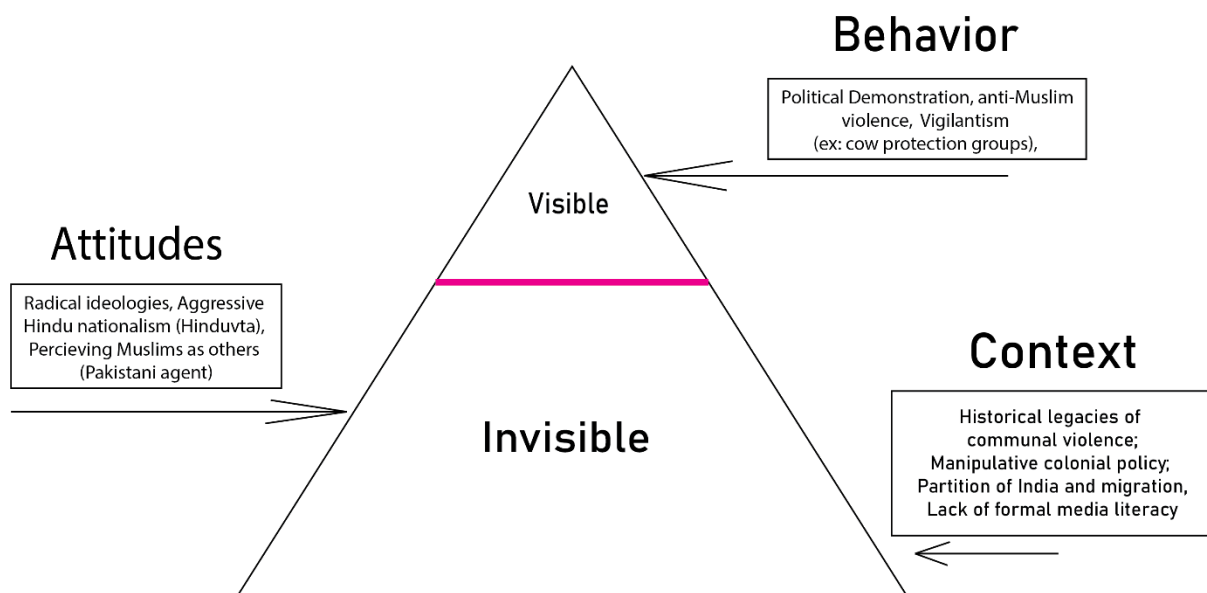


Figure 4: Root Causes of Communal Violence in India- A Conflict Triangle

Context is the bottom level of the pyramid, thus the most invisible part of the conflict, and it refers to the structural and environmental factors that create the conditions for communal violence to emerge and persist. Some examples of context are historical legacies of communal violence, such as manipulative colonial policy, the partition of India and migration, and the lack of formal media literacy. These factors shape the

social, political and economic realities of different religious groups and influence their perceptions and expectations of each other. *Attitudes* is the middle level of the pyramid, comparatively more visible than context, and it refers to the beliefs and emotions that shape how people view and relate to each other across religious lines. Some examples of attitudes are radical ideologies, aggressive Hindu nationalism (Hindutva) and perceiving Muslims as others or Pakistani agents. These factors affect how people interpret events and situations, how they express their identity and interests, and how they respond to perceived threats or opportunities. Finally, behaviour is the top level of the pyramid, the most visible part of the conflict and it refers to the actions that trigger or escalate communal conflicts. Some examples of behaviour are political demonstrations, anti-Muslim violence and vigilantism by groups such as cow protection groups. These factors are the most visible and direct causes of violence, as they involve physical or verbal aggression, coercion or provocation.

6. Types of Misinformation Fuelling Communal Violence in India

This section of the study particularly addresses the types of misinformation which are spreading through social media and fuelling communal violence. Most items of misinformation are divided into misleading contents, manipulated contents, false context/connection and hate speech.

6.1. Misleading Contents

This type of content includes events such as pictures or videos of accidents, dead bodies, natural disasters, unexplained violence and so forth. In the majority of cases, these images or videos depict violent incidents against children, such as a man exploding while handling explosives carelessly, a child being abducted with voiceover added, a kidney being snatched, a braid being cut or a person being brutally lynched by a mob. These materials cause consumers to experience unsettling emotions (shock, awe, disgust and perverse curiosity), which interrupt everyday routines and erode faith in mainstream, non-sensational media. Users have the impression that the true news, which is only available on Facebook, WhatsApp, and other social media, is hidden by the mainstream media (Banaji & Bhat, 2019).

6.2. Manipulated Content, False Context/Connection and Hate Speech

This kind of false material frequently includes nationalism, religious themes or ethno-religious intolerance, such as statements, banners or videos that are hostile to Pakistan, Kashmir, Muslims, Dalits, Hindus, the BJP, Modi, the Congress, Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi or meat consumption. For instance, these can include making fun of Pakistan's military prowess or memes that doubt Kashmiris' devotion to India, moving pictures, written texts, contents purporting to show Muslims praising Modi and the BJP (including women praising the Triple Talaq Bill), excerpts from speeches by Rahul Gandhi taken out of context and bracketed with commentary from the Hindutva movement and notes claiming that the Gandhi family has a hidden Muslim heritage are all examples of this. These kinds of materials foster a militant nationalism that forbids dialogue or questioning; a sense of false victimhood coupled with a conspiratorial exaggeration of Muslims' resources, abilities and motivations. It also contributes to verbal and physical abuse of marginalized groups, as well as to bullying and intimidation of anyone who dares to challenge the status quo (Banaji & Bhat, 2019).

Most of the disinformation in the context of religious issues relates to Hindutva/Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Sikhism, for instance, images or videos of Hindu gurus defending their brand of Hinduism or mocking other religions, insulting lower caste communities, oppressing Muslim women, defending and honouring Dalit and Adivasi leaders, images or videos that appear to show Muslims slaughtering cows, defiling Hindu idols or engaging in violence against Hindus or Muslim men seducing and luring Hindu women into marriage and conversion to Islam, still and moving images of Muslims and so forth. Grandiose illusions regarding the moral/ethical and historical superiority of one religion over others may be shown in

these items. Additionally, they give people a sense of authority and strength within their own religious community as well as a religious or spiritual framework for interpreting many parts of daily life. It causes users to feel agitated, angry, anxious, disgusted and other emotions, which they subsequently share with others or express through participating in violence (either immediate or anger builds up for violence later) (Mirchandani, 2018).

6.3. Manipulated Contents and Gender

This type of content often carries misinformation or disinformation related to sexual violence, misogyny, patriarchal dictates and so forth. For instance, there can be still and moving depictions of males abusing women; pictures of dead women and ideological metaphors with misogynistic undertones. Meanwhile, conflict between India and Pakistan is portrayed as a man raping a woman, in jokes, pornography, written rumours about the unreliable nature of women and the like. These kinds of materials encourage intimidation and self-censorship, dread of using technology, family monitoring of technology use, rape and blackmail, sadness and withdrawal, as well as possible suicide (Banaji & Bhat, 2019).

6.4. Miscellaneous

This kind of false information is spread by the same individuals that spread false information that causes violence but it does not itself contribute to violent results. It also includes spam text messages requesting individuals to click links or forward messages to others in exchange for money, as well as notes with photographs of different types of vegetables and recipes that can treat both minor and significant health issues. It acts as the foundation on which people build their online sociality (forwarding entertaining content to friends, religious content to family, motivational content to colleagues and so forth). Additionally, it encourages people to forward communications carelessly without reading the material first (Banaji & Bhat, 2019).

7. Instances of Mobilization for Violence

This section of the paper presents three recent case study of communal violence in India. The first one is about the anti-Muslim riot in Tripura state, the second one is about a violent incident related to Love Jihad and the third one is about controversial remarks about the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and its aftermath.

7.1. Case 1 - The Tripura Anti-Muslim Riot

The Tripura state did not witness any major Hindu-Muslim riots since partition. However, in late October 2021, a wave of anti-Muslim riots took place. The riots broke out through vandalism of "mosques" in the state, which began on October 20th, 2021. Following many protests held by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) from October 21st to October 26th, the situation worsened (Bhaumik, 2021). During these gatherings, some miscreants broke into a tiny mosque and a few shops and homes owned by families from the minority Muslim population. Around 19 violent incidents took place across five districts of Tripura. Muslims-owned businesses were allegedly burned down or destroyed, along with at least 15 mosques (Daniyal, 2021). The anti-Hindu violence in Bangladesh prompted the organization of these riots in Tripura. The week beginning October 13th saw attacks on Durga puja pandals all around Bangladesh. Right-wing organizations including the VHP, Bajrang Dal, RSS and Hindu Jagran Manch organized rallies in Tripura among other places throughout the nation. Notably, the Comilla region of Bangladesh, which borders Tripura directly and has been a substantial source of post-Partition migration into the northeastern state, was the epicentre of this violence. Different rumours about the "genocide" of Hindus in Bangladesh were repeatedly brought up in posts on social media and in WhatsApp groups, inciting this outbreak of religious rioting (X, 2021). Political parties like TMC and CPI(M) said that BJP and its allies were attempting to polarize the electorate in

advance of the municipal elections in the state in November 2021 by utilizing the recent unrest in Bangladesh and Tripura (Bhaumik, 2021).

Analysing the Case

Triggering Event - Activate the Hate

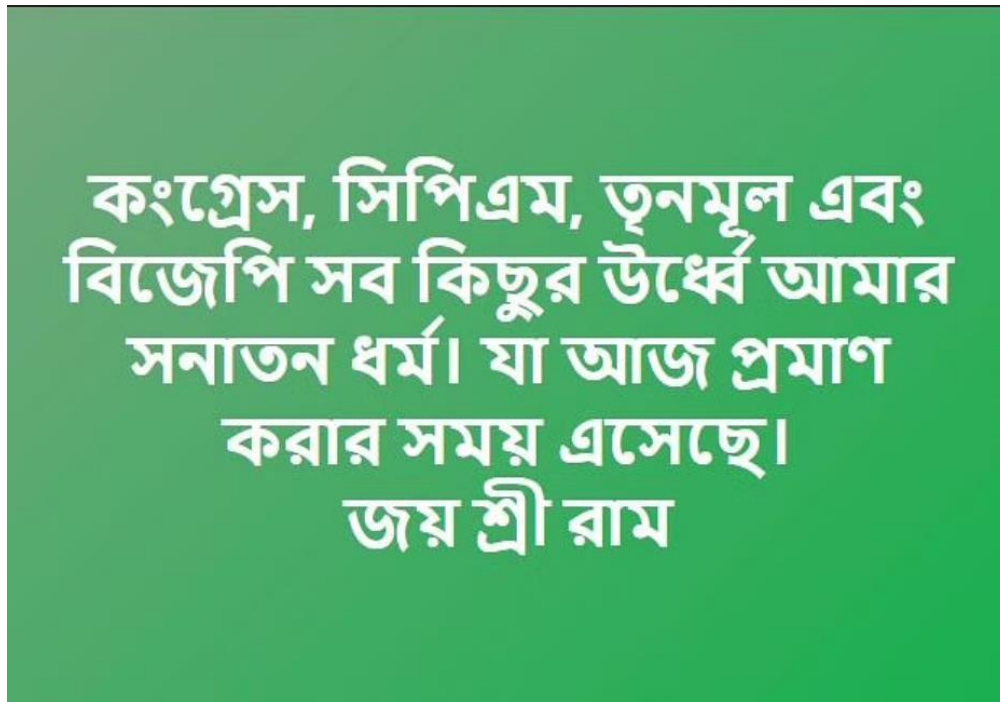
The Tripura riot is the spillover effect of the communal violence perpetrated against the Hindu minority in neighbouring Bangladesh. In fact, communal violence in both countries has affected each other in recent years. The extremists from both Bangladesh and India use the other country's incidents as a pretext for attacking the minority in their own country.

Motivation for Violence: Framing through Rhetoric

In the context of this case, to motivate the people to mobilize, the actors mainly used different attractive and nationalistic rhetoric. For example, by stating something along the lines of "If you are a true Hindu then you must act now," several posts attempted to evoke "Hindu pride." Additionally, the posts emphasized the importance of putting politics aside because "being Hindu is above all."

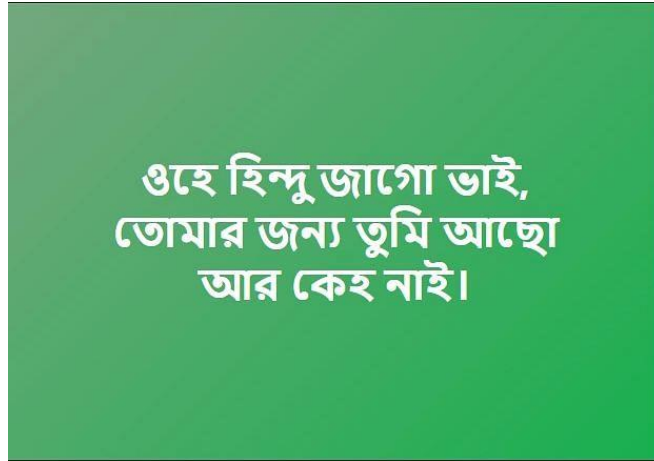
In some posts, Hindus were urged to "unite" in circulars sent on WhatsApp groups. It was stated that even though they followed many "gurus," they were still "Hindu at the end of the day," and as such, it was their duty to uphold the dignity of their religion. These posts, which were primarily published between October 17 and 21, urged people to gather for "Hunkar rallies."

Figure 5: A Facebook post which speaks about the importance of demonstration (collected from The Quint)



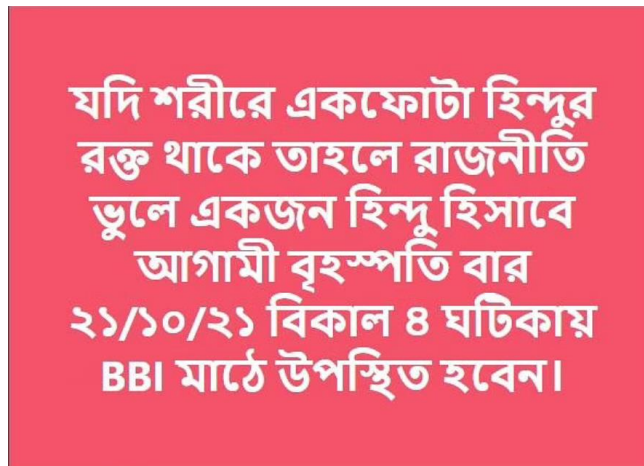
Translation: My Sanatan religion is above all the political parties (Congress, CPM, Trinamool and BJP). It's time to prove that today. Jai Shri Ram

Figure 6: A Facebook Post containing a Passionate Rhetoric (collected from The Quint)



Translation: O Hindu, wake up brother, you are there for you and there is no one else.

Figure 7: A Facebook post/Whatsapp message containing a Call to Action (collected from The Quint)



Translation: If there is a drop of Hindu blood in your body then forget politics and appear as a Hindu at BBI ground next Thursday 21/10/21 at 4 PM.

Even a controversial tone was present in some posts. In this particular post, for instance, the author discusses how "... there are many Hindus, but the only difference between them is who has a spine and who doesn't."

Figure 8: A Facebook post/Whatsapp message containing an edited image use for Call to Action (collected from The Quint)



Translation: Do you also want something like West Bengal and Bangladesh to happen in Tripura?

WhatsApp groups have seen posts highlighting the unrest in Bangladesh that ask, "Do you want the same to happen in Tripura?" Additionally, the groups frequently received posts that featured unreliable films critical of the minority religion over topics like "Love Jihad" and "how Pakistan treats Hindus." The most concerning piece of evidence was a photo of guns with the statement, "I am preparing a few of these quickly," that was discovered in one of the user's profiles. This was published during the same timeframe as the protests (The Quint, 2021).

Figure 9: A Facebook post containing image of Sharp weapon (collected from the The Quint)

আমি একটা রেডী করতাই অতিস্বল্প
কয় একটারে। 😞 😞 😞



Translation: I am preparing my weapon.

The emotion permeated both rallies and social media. Following the viral video of the demonstration in Tripura when disparaging slogans against Muslims were sung, some rallies saw the chanting of such epithets, but some went farther and demanded that the Bangladeshi government arm the Hindus. Other rallies featured signs warning against the Taliban administration (in Bangladesh) and urging Hindus to band together in the battle against Jihadists. The aforementioned statements and trends do make suggest why mosques and businesses owned by Muslims were burned or trashed, even though a direct call to violence could not be found (Dutta, 2021).

Institutional Resources and Actor's Credibility

The existing political environment in India is the biggest resource for communal tension as the Bangladesh card became important in Indian radical politics from 2013–14 (Daniyal, 2021). Two important events occurred in the period. Assamese citizens had to certify that they were not Bangladeshi migrants when the Supreme Court began updating Assam's National Register of Citizens in 2013. They frequently have to present official records from decades ago in order to do so. Secondly, the BJP worked hard to court Hindu Bangladeshi migrants the very next year as it launched its 2014 Lok Sabha campaign in an effort to gain a foothold in West Bengal. Narendra Modi, for example, said at a rally in Bengal, India, in May 2014, that India would only accept Bangladeshis who worshipped Durga. On the other hand, the BJP linked a new proposed law dubbed the Citizenship Amendment Act with a National Register of Citizens during the 2019 Lok Sabha election campaign. The purpose of the Citizenship Amendment Act was to grant citizenship to non-Muslims who had entered India illegally from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan; nevertheless, the BJP exploited it as a tool to intimidate Indian Muslims by connecting it to the National Register of Citizens (Daniyal, 2021).

As a continuation of this politics, many of the VHP rallies in Tripura were held with the administration's approval. The extremist groups in Bangladesh see this anti-Bangladesh discourse in India as a great opportunity to regain lost momentum. In order to incite majoritarian feelings within Bangladesh, news of the communal situation in India is now often reported on Bangladeshi social media, which the government has limited control over in contrast to newspapers and TV networks (Daniyal, 2021). Islamists in Bangladesh instigated rioting during Modi's visit to the nation in March 2021. Thirteen people lost their lives in the ensuing rioting, which also witnessed attacks on Hindu institutions. Additionally, in October 2021, Bangladeshi majoritarian elements invoked India as excuse for the violence. In both of the case, social media, especially Facebook and WhatsApp, played major roles. In a similar vein, extremists in India have tried to use the bloodshed in Bangladesh to foment polarization within their own country in states like Tripura and West Bengal (OpIndia Staff, 2021).

Actor's Credibility

The VHP, also known as the World Council of Hindus, is a right-wing Hindu organization that was formed on Hindu nationalism in India (Jaffrelot, 2009). "To organize, consolidate the Hindu society and to serve and safeguard the Hindu Dharma," is its proclaimed goal (Jaffrelot, 2008). It was founded to deal with issues of cow slaughter and religious conversion, as well as to build and maintain Hindu temples. The VHP has come under fire for its role in the 1992 destruction of the Babri Masjid due to the Ayodhya dispute, which is the most notable instance of how it contributed to violence against Muslims in India (Hansen, 1999). The Sangh Parivar group, an umbrella name for Hindu nationalist organizations led by the RSS, is thought to include the VHP.

7.2. Case 2: Violence Related Love Jihad in Rajasthan Led to Mobilization

Mohamed Afrazul, a Bengali Muslim migrant laborer, was killed with a meat cleaver on December 6th, 2017, in Rajsamand, Rajasthan. His body was then set afire nearby. Shambhulal Regar, the defendant in the

murder case, had the entire assault captured on camera and posted online along with a speech condemning the "entrapment" of Hindu girls by Muslim men. Many people voiced their disgust at the horrifying act of violence and the impunity with which the video was distributed as soon as it went viral. Regar, meanwhile, gained admirers for his deed, particularly from the VHP, who hailed him as a hero for taking action to stop the "love jihad," which is a divisive term for the union of a Muslim man and a Hindu woman that gained popularity on social media and was unquestionably accepted by many in the mainstream (Mirchandani, 2018).

Analysing the Case

Motivation for Violence

Despite the fact that there were a number of inflammatory tweets about 'love jihad' posted on different social media platforms across India in the months prior to the attack, none of them were geotagged within a hundred kilometres of Rajsamand. This suggested that it was improbable for the internet content that radicalized Shambhulal to have been produced within his community. Instead, divisive tales created elsewhere were broadcast and then propagated far afield. According to the chargesheet filed against Regar, "He gathered information related to videos of Hindu extremists, love jihad, Section 370, Islamic jihad, the state of terrorism in Kashmir, the rise in Muslim population, Ram Mandir, Padmavati, PK (the movie), the division of castes in the Hindu religion, and reservation, among other topics. He had five films on his phone about social and religious issues ready before the murder. The crime was described by authorities as a "merciless killing (Mirchandani, 2018)."

Mobilization in Support of the Murderer

Regar was honoured with a tableau during Ram Navami, a Hindu festival where followers commemorate the birth of Lord Rama, an avatar of one of Hinduism's holy trinity, Lord Vishnu, nearly five months after the attack and even as Regar awaited trial in Jodhpur Jail. This shows a reverse effect of communal violence that how the violence may mobilize group of supporters and then further intensifies the division of society (Mirchandani, 2018).

7.3. Case-3: The 2022 Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Remarks Row - A Counter Mobilization?

The 2022 Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Remarks Row controversy started on May 27th, 2022, when Nupur Sharma, a spokesperson for the BJP, the government of India, made contentious comments regarding the Islamic prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during a *Times Now* debate on the Gyanvapi Mosque controversy (Mallick, 2022). The remarks were directed at Muhammad (PBUH) and the age of his third wife, Aisha, at the time of their nuptials and marriage. Mohammed Zubair, the co-founder of the fact-checking website Alt News, posted the video of her remarks on social media a day later (Pandey, 2022). When Delhi BJP media chief Naveen Kumar Jindal made statements on Twitter supporting Ms. Sharma on June 1st, the situation heated up. By the fourth of June, all of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations and Turkey had trended the remarks among the top 10 hashtags on social media. Internationally, the remarks received vehement condemnation. Numerous police cases were opened in India against Sharma and Jindal. Protests in several regions of the nation turned violent, resulting in multiple fatalities and injuries (PTI, 2022). Homes of several alleged rioters were demolished as punishment as a result of the unrest in Uttar Pradesh. Numerous Gulf nations, including India's allies and partners, strongly condemned the incident and threatened to boycott Indian goods (Saaliq, 2022). The Indian government responded to the incident by claiming that the remarks were made by "fringe individuals" and did not reflect the beliefs of the government. The BJP suspended Sharma and kicked Jindal out of the organization.

On June 28th, 2022, a tailor who had purportedly posted on social media in support of BJP spokeswoman Nupur Sharma, who had been placed on administrative leave, was brutally murdered in his store in Udaipur, India. Local tension has been brought up by the incident. The two suspects have been detained in Rajsamand (Star Digital Report, 2022). They are accused of filming the murder and boasting about it on camera on social media. They entered the tailor's store and pretended to be clients. The other person used a mobile phone to record the tailor taking one's measurements as it happened. One of the individuals assaulted the tailor with a sharp object as he was taking the measurement, killing him instantly. The assailant and his accomplice made their getaway and then produced a second video in which they admitted to slitting the tailor's throat and also threatened Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. According to our New Delhi correspondent, they disseminated the films on social media, which led to communal conflict in Udaipur town (Pandey, 2022).

Motivation for Protest and Violence

According to critics, Ms. Sharma and Mr. Jindal's remarks represent the extreme religious division the nation has been experiencing over the past few years. Since the BJP took office in 2014, hate speech and assaults against Muslims have drastically increased (Maizland, 2022). Their remarks, especially Ms. Sharma's, incensed the nation's minority Muslim population and sparked occasional demonstrations and violence in various areas. Notably, the remarks went viral through different platforms of social media. In other words, the protest against the remarks is an outcome or demonstration of grievance from the Muslim community (Swinnen, 2021).

Institutional Resources and Credibility of Actors

One of the exceptional matters about this case is the involvement of international actors. The involvement of different Muslim countries, especially those who are the major trade partners of India facilitated the domestic protesters and imposed challenges to the ruling party of India. The condition imposed by those countries ultimately made the authority to take step against Ms. Sharma and Mr. Jindal. At the same time, the involvement of these actors indirectly encouraged some violent incidents and mobilization. In other words, once it showed how divided the society and how social media had been playing a big role behind this division.

8. Discussion

The paper argues that social media platforms have become an integral part of the new civilization and technology, but they also pose new challenges and risks for communal harmony. As Table 1 shows, a huge number of people uses different types of social media platforms in their everyday life. In this context, the hypothesis Huntington's (1993) hypothesis of the clash of civilizations is relevant, which suggests that the core of the new world's conflict will not be about economic issues, but about cultural issues (Huntington, 1993).

This paper contends that India is facing such cultural conflicts or communal violence among different religious groups, and that social media platforms are playing a catalytic role in this process. The dissemination of false information, the creation of manipulated and provocative imagery, and the unthinking propagation of hate speech via popular social media platforms such as Meta, Instagram, and WhatsApp has become increasingly effortless in contemporary times. The newspaper can also be regarded as an alternative form of social media, although one that is quite antiquated. The readership of newspapers is experiencing a gradual decline, with a majority of newspaper readers being individuals with higher levels of education. It is important to note that traditional media outlets such as newspapers, radio and television employ a team of individuals that actively monitor and strive to deliver news that is somewhat more reliable compared to the content found on various social media platforms. The reason for this is that individuals are provided

with an opportunity to provide an explanation. The observation of such behaviour is not evident in the context of emerging social media platforms. Various factors contribute to the emergence of disputes within societies, including instances of community violence. This work effectively explores the concept of shifting conflict patterns and the factors that contribute to these dynamics.

This paper identifies two main ways in which social media platforms contribute to communal violence: by spreading misinformation and by promoting hate speech. The paper defines misinformation as false or misleading information that is intentionally or unintentionally disseminated through social media platforms, such as fake news, fabricated sensitive images or rumours. The paper defines hate speech as any form of expression that incites hatred, violence, or discrimination against a person or a group based on their religion, ethnicity, race, gender or other identity markers. The paper illustrates how misinformation and hate speech on social media platforms can trigger or escalate communal violence by manipulating people's emotions, perceptions, and actions.

The existing literature and discourse on the present issue also reflect some of these factors highlighted in this paper. For example, Mirchandani (2018) examined the impact of majoritarian hate speech on social media in India and found that religion and religio-cultural practices related to food and dress were the most explicit basis for hate speech online. Mirchandani (2018) also argued that social media platforms provide both tacit and overt sanction for rising incidents of majoritarian violence as identity-based, populist politics dominate the country's landscape. However, Mirchandani (2018) focused more on the political and ideological dimensions of hate speech, while this paper also considers the psychological and emotional effects of misinformation and hate speech on individuals and groups. Yaraghi (2019) discussed how social media platforms should combat misinformation and hate speech in general and proposed two approaches: blocking such content outright or providing counter-speech to challenge it. Yaraghi (2019) also suggested that social media platforms should focus on a limited number of topics that are deemed important with significant consequences, such as the anti-vaccination movement or the Flat Earth theory. However, Yaraghi (2019) did not address the specific challenges and opportunities of dealing with misinformation and hate speech in a diverse and complex context like India, where multiple factors such as history, culture, religion, politics, and media literacy influence people's susceptibility to such content.

This study proposes media literacy as a potential solution to the problem of misinformation and hate speech on social media platforms. It defines media literacy as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create and communicate information using various forms of media. The study emphasizes the importance of media literacy for preventing or reducing communal violence, as it can help people to filter or cross-check the information they receive or share on social media platforms, especially on sensitive issues. It also suggests that media literacy can also foster critical thinking, tolerance, and dialogue among different religious groups. The paper contributes to the literature on communal violence in India by adopting a different lens to understand its causes and consequences. The paper highlights the role of misinformation and hate speech on social media platforms as a new dimension of communal violence that has not been adequately addressed before. The paper also offers some practical recommendations for enhancing media literacy as a way of preventing or resolving communal violence.

9. Conclusion

Indian civilization is quite old, with more than a thousand unique cultures originating from various faiths, castes, tribes and ethnic groupings. However, during the colonial period, the divide and rule tactics of the colonizers seeded a culture of hatred between the major religious communities. The bitter history set the context of communal conflict in this country. Gradually, extremist ideologies and organizations become mainstream and openly spread the extremist ideology among the people. The spread of these ideologies ultimately set the attitude of rivalry between the members of different community and reduced the scope of tolerance. The feelings of hatred and "Us vs Them" propaganda are further utilized by some vested interest

political actors to gain power. The combination of vote politics, populism, instilling fake fear, distorted historical facts and politicization of religion promotes communalism. Again, the lack of media literacy intensifies the situation and allows the spread of misinformation and hate speech on different social media platforms.

After the introduction of social media and availability of smart phone, different studies show that the number as well as the intensity of the communal conflict in India. It is because the flow of (mis)information has fewer barriers, and people can get news through social media platform within a very short time. The problem is, as there is a lack of media literacy, some people cannot differ between authentic and inauthentic news. Misleading contents, manipulated contents, false connection/context and hate speech thus spread easily containing elements of hatred. People find information via these contents which they do not find in the mainstream media. Eventually, these contents manipulate the viewers to engage in communal violence.

Social media has been used as a primary tool for mobilizing people in the context of recent cases of communal violence in India. People use the different platforms of social media to broadcast the violence, to post a call to action, to post controversial statements and to post controversial hashtags. The impact of this kind of use of social media can be severe and it might push society to its breaking point. To reverse the situation, media literacy is the most important option because it will create awareness of dangerous side of social media. Again, frequent inter-faith dialogue may help the people to re-evaluate the similarity among different religion instead of differences. In that way, dialogue may increase mutual respect and tolerance. Most importantly, political culture should not promote communalism and visible political will is needed to reduce communal conflict.

Fieldwork including a diverse array of activities has the potential to elucidate the genuine encounters associated with communal violence, which can be traced back to the dissemination of misinformation or false news through social media platforms. One of the primary constraints of the study is the aforementioned limitation. Case studies are insufficient to determine the extent of the misuse of social media and its role in inciting communal conflict. Insufficient financial resources and limited time availability were additional noteworthy challenges encountered over the course of this study. Maintaining objectivity in scholarly writing can be challenging, particularly when attempting to mitigate the influence of religious biases. Managing prejudice was a significant difficulty as well. The utilization of the data presented in this work will enable future researchers to depict effectively the adverse consequences experienced by individuals as a result of the inappropriate utilization of social media platforms. This article aims to explore the correlation between the misuse of social media and the incitement of communal violence. Additionally, it has examined the primary platforms utilized for the dissemination of communal hatred. This paper focuses on the topic of social media literacy, which has gained significant relevance in contemporary society due to the widespread use of social media platforms. Given the ubiquity of social media usage in modern times, there is a compelling need for further academic exploration and research in this area.

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Psycho-Social Variables as Indicators of Sexual Abuse among In-School Adolescents in Lagos Metropolis

Aaron Akinloye, PhD, University of Lagos. Email: aakinloye@unilag.edu.ng

Abstract

This study examined psycho-social variables as indicators of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government of Lagos state. The objectives of this study are to assess the influence of poverty, male dominance, rapid social change, collective and interpersonal violence and child labour as indicators of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos State. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. A simple random technique was used to select a sample size of 700 students from ten secondary schools in the research site. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive analyses were done with frequencies and percentages. Inferential analyses were done with the use of Chi-square tests. The results revealed among others that poverty has a significant influence as a predictor of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government of Lagos state ($\chi^2 = 221.83$, $p < 0.05$). Also, the results show that male dominance has a significant influence as an indicator of sexual abuse among the sample ($\chi^2 = 127.41$, $p < 0.05$). Conclusively, there are significant influences of poverty, male dominance, rapid social change, collective and interpersonal violence and child labour as indicators of sexual abuse. It was recommended that government should ensure provision of adequate policy in protecting children and adolescents who have gone through sexual abuse and violence and also ensure implementation of policies that prevent child labor in society while also providing alternatives such as enrolment in school and vocational activities for adolescents with no other source of livelihood.

Keywords: *adolescents; child labour; collective violence; poverty; rapid social change*

1. Introduction

Sexual abuse of adolescents occurs throughout the world and happens in different circumstances and settings. An estimated 150 million girls and 73 million boys under the age of 18 years have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence involving physical contact (Pinheiro, 2016). In a recent global meta-analysis, the estimated prevalence of childhood sexual abuse in self-reported studies was 18% among female and 7.6% among male participants. It is a problem of considerable proportion in Africa, where up to one-third of adolescent girls report their first sexual experience as being forced (Jewkes *et al.*, 2011). There have been several studies relating to sexual and other abuses in Lagos Metropolitan city. However, there is a lack of such studies among the category of the population investigated in the city of Lagos State, Nigeria. Sexual abuse is unwanted sexual activity, with perpetrators using force, making threats or taking advantage of victims not able to give consent. Most victims and perpetrators know each other. Immediate reactions to sexual abuse include shock, fear or disbelief. Long-term symptoms include anxiety, fear or post-traumatic stress disorder (Aylott, 2019).

Embarrassment, shame or fear of being blamed and a desire to keep the abuse secret makes disclosure of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) uncommon. Nondisclosure or delayed disclosure of abuse can prevent appropriate intervention (Bruck, Ceci & Principe, 2016). This may increase vulnerability to further attacks and risks of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including Human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) (Lewis, 2012). CSA cuts across all socio-economic, educational, racial and ethnic groups (Senn, Carey & Vanable, 2018). The impact of childhood sexual abuse resonates in all areas of health: physical and psychological, including negative sexual outcomes (Brown *et al.*, 2009; Senn *et al.*, 2018).

According to Crosson-Tower (2012), although sexual abuse and trauma can bring about negative impacts, the victims have the capacity to handle the situation later in life. Nevertheless, there are victims who showed affective symptoms such as depression and anxiety, behaviour problems and interpersonal difficulties. Traumatic events suffered by the victims may result in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD). The symptoms shown include insomnia, nightmare, substance abuse, anxiety, anger, depression and fear. PTSD is commonly suffered by victims right after the sexual assault but the trauma and might still be present over time (Crosson-Tower, 2012).

CSA among adolescents has been found to be influenced by a decline in socioeconomic status, and the disruption of intimate relationships. Adolescent CSA was more common in those from disturbed and disrupted families and in those who also reported physical and emotional abuse. Sexual abuse among adolescents may take many forms and vary in terms of frequency, duration, invasiveness of the acts involved, and the use of force or coercion (Moore *et al.*, 2017). This study was aimed at investigating the psycho-social variables as indicators of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.

2. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in Kosofe local government district of Lagos State using a random sampling technique. The simple random technique was used to select 700 respondents (adolescents) from ten secondary schools in the population. The instrument used for data collection was a standardized questionnaire. The informed consent form was developed to protect the information provided by the respondents as it relates to the administration of the research instrument. The research instrument was self-developed and validated by the experts from the departments of Educational Psychology and Community Health of the University of Lagos.

At the initial stage, thirty-five question items were generated and attended to by the respondents who were in-school adolescents in Lagos State. After the research instrument was pilot studied on the respondents, all the ambiguities and redundancy in the variables were deleted. In order to reduce the items to a meaningful and manageable structure, a principal component factor analysis with varimax correlation, extraction and rotation were conducted for predictive and convergent validation of the instrument. The items were further subjected to exploratory factor analysis, setting the retention criterion at 0.6. At the second stage of validation of the instrument, the final version of the variables comprised twenty question items representing Poverty, Dominance, Rapid social change, Collective and interpersonal violence and Child labour, using a 4-point Likert type scale. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages for demographic attributes for the respondents while inferential statistics of Chi-square was used to test all stated hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

Analysis of the respondents' demographic profile shows that 40.3% of the total respondents were male while 59.7% were female. 11.8% of the respondents were of the age group 10-11 years, 32.4% were age group 12-13 years, 49.3% were age group 14-16 years and 6.9% of the respondents were of the age group 17-19 years. 11.5% of the respondents were in junior secondary school (Jss) 1, 13.4% were in Jss2, 14.3% were in Jss3, 18.7% were in Ss1, 25.2% were in Ss2 while 16.9% were in Ss3. 10.6% of the respondents were from Muslim Junior College, 10.6% were from Muslim Senior College, 10.6% were from Ojota Junior Secondary School, 8.5% were from Ojota Senior Secondary School, 9.5% were from Marigold College, 10.6% were from Estaport Secondary School, 9.2% were from Alapere Junior High School, 10.3% were from Gulf Flower Junior Secondary school, 10.6% were from Gulf Flower Senior Secondary school while 9.5% were from Ayedere Anibaba Junior High School.

Figure 1: Bar chart showing respondents' distribution on Gender; source: original research

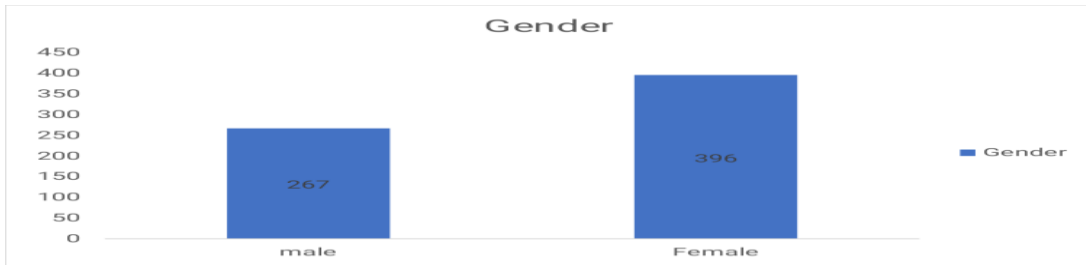


Figure 2: Bar chart showing respondents' distribution on Age; source: original research

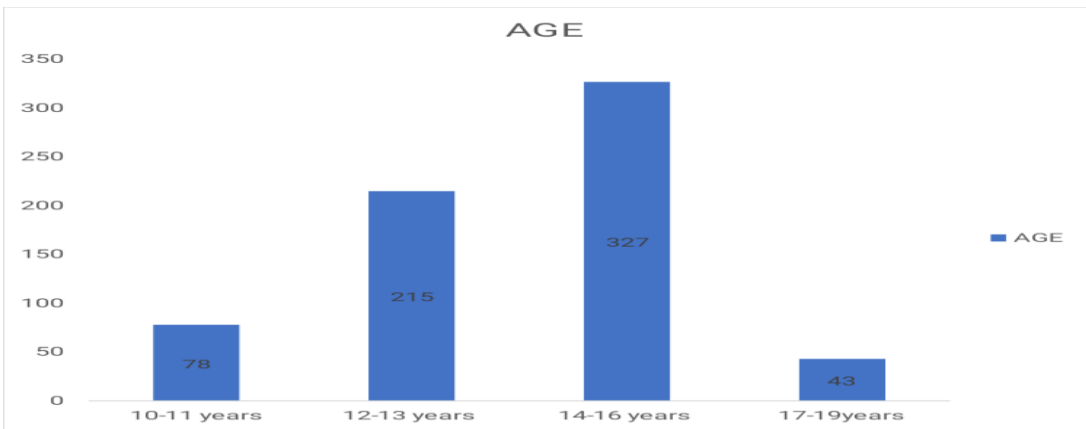


Figure 3: Bar chart showing respondents' distribution on Class; source: original research

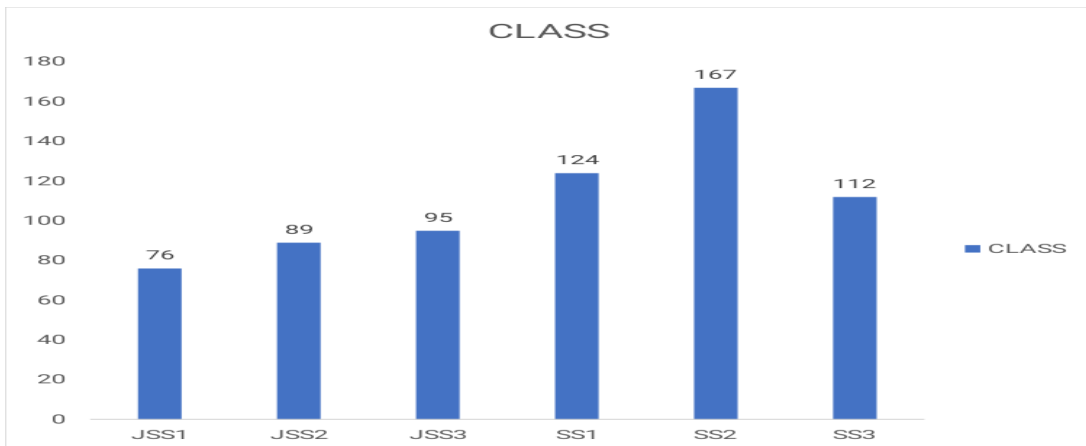
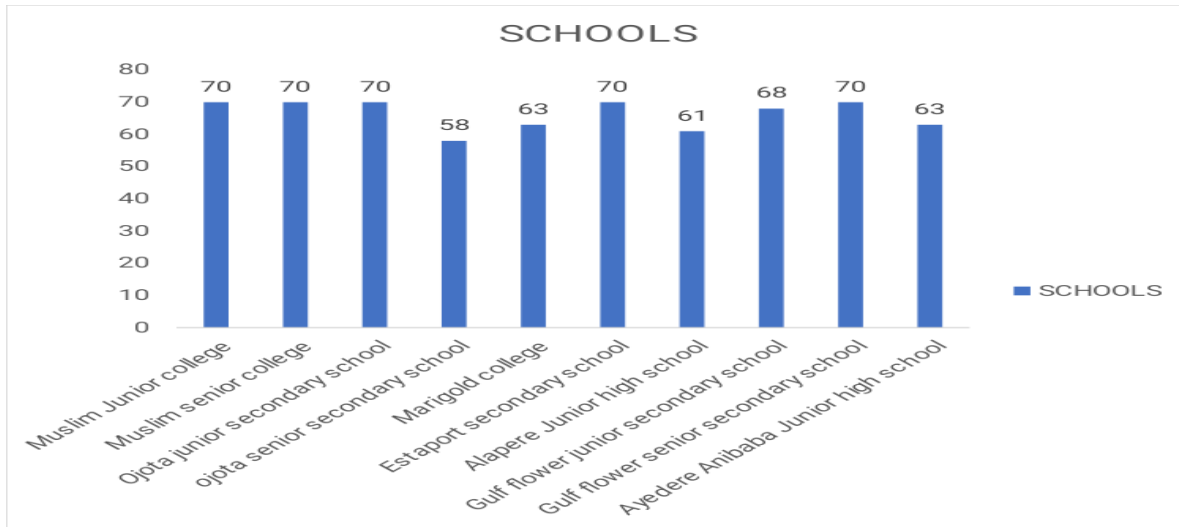


Figure 4: Bar chart showing respondents' distribution on School; source: original research



3. Results

3.1. Hypothesis Testing

Chi-square (χ^2) testing was used to evaluate all stated hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 1: This states that poverty will have no significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government of Lagos state.

Table 1: Chi-Square (χ^2) Analysis on Poverty Influence as Indicator of Sexual Abuse among Adolescents; source: original research

Variable	Mean	SD	N	Df	Calc χ^2	Tab χ^2	Remark
Poverty	3.64	0.71	663	12	221.83	21.03	Significant

$P < 0.05$

The table above shows that the calculated χ^2 value (221.83) was greater than the critical χ^2 value (21.03) at 0.05 significant level; hence the stated null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that poverty has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.

Hypothesis 2: This states that male dominance will have no significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.

Table 2: Chi-Square (χ^2) Analysis on Male Dominance Influence as Indicator of Sexual Abuse among Adolescents; source: original research

Variable	Mean	SD	N	Df	Calc χ^2	Tab χ^2	Remark
Male Dominance	3.28	1.15	663	12	127.41	21.03	Significant

$P < 0.05$

The table above shows that the calculated X^2 value (127.41) was greater than the critical X^2 value (21.03) at 0.05 significant level; hence the stated null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that male dominance has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.

Hypothesis 3: This states that rapid social change will have no significant influence as indicators of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government of Lagos state.

Table 3: Chi-Square (X^2) Analysis on Rapid Social Change Influence as Indicator of Sexual Abuse among Adolescents; source: original research

Variable	Mean	SD	N	df	Calc X^2	Tab X^2	Remark
Rapid Social Change	2.80	0.82	663	12	83.91	21.03	Significant

$P < 0.05$

The table above shows that the calculated X^2 value (83.91) was greater than the critical X^2 value (21.03) at 0.05 significant level; hence the stated null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that rapid social change has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.

Hypothesis 4: This states that collective and interpersonal violence will have no significant influence as predictor of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government of Lagos state.

Table 4: Chi-Square (X^2) Analysis on Collective and Interpersonal Violence Influence as Indicator of Sexual Abuse among Adolescents; source: original research

Variable	Mean	SD	N	Df	Calc X^2	Tab X^2	Remark
Collective & Interpersonal Violence	3.21	1.17	663	12	166.04	21.03	Significant

$P < 0.05$

The table above shows that the calculated X^2 value (166.04) was greater than the critical X^2 value (21.03) at 0.05 significant level; hence the stated null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that collective and interpersonal violence has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.

Hypothesis 5: This states that child labour will have no significant influence as indicators of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.

Table 5: Chi-Square (X^2) Analysis on Child Labour Influence as Indicator of Sexual Abuse Among Adolescents; source: original research

Variable	Mean	SD	N	Df	Calc X^2	Tab X^2	Remark
Child Labour	3.53	1.17	663	12	242.38	21.03	Significant

$P < 0.05$

The table above shows that the calculated X^2 value (242.38) was greater than the critical X^2 value (21.03) at 0.05 significant level; hence the stated null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that child labour has a

significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.

4. Discussion of Findings

The results of this analysis correlate with UNDP (2009), which noted that more than 51% of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa live below the international poverty threshold of US\$1.25 per day. High levels of poverty have contributed to the high prevalence of child labour, with parents also encouraging children to work in order to improve the living standard of the household. In a study involving 24 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, sexual exploitation was noted to be on the rise and was linked to labour, child prostitution, sex tourism, and the production of pornography. Sexual exploitation is the most commonly identified form of human trafficking globally (79%) (UNODC, 2009). Prevailing poverty renders children vulnerable to trafficking and is associated with exploitative, often hazardous and frequently violent child labour, including domestic work and prostitution.

The result of this finding correlates with Lalor (2008), who observed that childhood and adolescent sexual abuse is linked to the idea of the male dominated nature of society. Nature has given men a physical advantage over women and some use it to force women to do what they want. This also involves the role of physical force in sexual relations. The patriarchal structure and ideas of the society have continued to restrict women's opportunities and favoured men to maintain the position of power in society (Crittenden & Wright, 2013). The direction of much of this violence towards women and girls might be explained by sex inequalities, a culture of male sexual entitlement, and the climate of relative impunity for rape (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2012). Women and girls in Africa are vulnerable to and experience gender-based violence on a large scale (Borwankar, Diallo & Sommerfelt, 2018). The level of acceptance of this practice is high in Nigeria (Callands *et al.*, 2013; Uthman *et al.*, 2011). Socio-economic hardships limit women's power within relationships and in some instances lead to reduced ability to engage in safe sexual practices (Kennedy *et al.*, 2012) and to an increased acceptance of violence. It is also within this context that CSA leads to situations where it is effectively normalised and seen as what can be expected by some. Although there are laws which aim to protect women's rights, they have little effect on the practical lives of most women as it remains true that the social construction of masculinity and femininity in Nigeria generally prescribes low status for women and high status for men. Different factors influence the status of men and women in a society and thus influence these processes. Among other potential factors is the widespread belief and cultural acceptance of the urgency of male sexual relief and a certain tolerance or expectancy of the use of physical coercion in sexual relations (Lalor, 2014). This may suggest that CSA could be more common in these societies.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the increase in child abuse has been attributed to rapid and radical social change (Jinadu, 2009; Loening, 2011). Such changes have been linked with an increase in child maltreatment and as such been attributed to a breakdown of traditional values and practices (Korbin, 2011). Apparently, higher occurrence of CSA has also focused on social fragmentation (Lalor, 2014). Such views have attributed CSA to the increasing isolation of individuals and families from a sense of community; the result of increased mobility and the disintegration of neighbourhoods, communities, and kin networks (Lalor, 2014). With isolation, people are deprived of socially sanctioned forms of support and intimacy, and consequently they turn instead to incestuous behaviours, therefore facilitating CSA.

The result of this research correlates with Van Niekerk (2014), who observed that Nigeria has been subject to conflict and extreme violence over the past few decades. Such violence can take place within families, in the communities in which children live, or in areas of armed conflict. Available research suggests that women's susceptibility to sexual violence is greatest in homes where domestic violence is perpetrated (Van Niekerk, 2014). Living in a context of violence increases children's vulnerability to the full range of abuse, including sexual abuse. Being displaced from home as a consequence of violence further increases

vulnerability. This vulnerability arises from the disruption and dismantling of the formal and informal protection mechanisms of families, communities and the state that subject women and children to risks that contribute to violence against women, especially sexual violence. Girls in particular are often the primary targets of abductions, often resulting in them being forced to participate directly in hostilities as fighters, or in “support” roles as spies, messengers, servants and sexual and domestic slaves (African Development Forum, 2018).

The result of this research correlate with Silberschmidt (2011) who observed that child labour exposes children and adolescents to sexual abuse across the world. He noted that the scale of the problem is difficult to ascertain, with children working on the streets being vulnerable to sexual abuse from many individuals, including from passers-by and in some cases from those who offer them shelter (Mandalazi, Banda & Umar, 2013). Some of the sexual behaviours evident in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa are not the results of traditional “permissiveness” but from the breakdown of traditional norms and regulations surrounding sexual behaviour, aggravated by widespread of poverty (Silberschmidt, 2011).

5. Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn from the study:

1. Poverty has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.
2. Male dominance has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.
3. Rapid social change has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.
4. Collective and interpersonal violence has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government district of Lagos state.
5. Child labour has a significant influence as indicator of sexual abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Kosofe local government of Lagos state.

5.1. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The following limitations were encountered in the course of this study: the school authorities were reluctant at the beginning of the administration of the research instrument. Efforts were made by the researcher and his assistants to encourage them to participate; teachers in some of the schools refused to permit their students to participate at the initial stage of the exercise. The researcher enlightened them on the important of the research and that the information given by the respondents would be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Subsequent research building on the work reported on in this paper include psychosocial indices of early sexual debut among primary school pupils and effects of single parenting as correlates of behavioural issues among young adults.

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Arts and Humanities

Portrayal of Hybridity in Selected Novels of Azouz Begag

Sehed Bamidele Suraju, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Nigeria. Email:
suraju.sehed@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng

Abstract

Hybridity and identity have been recurring features of postcolonial literature, including the works of Azouz Begag. Existing studies on Begag's novels have focused mainly on racism, the experiences of migrants and generational gaps, with little attention paid to the representation of hybridity and identity crisis. This study is, therefore, designed to examine the depiction of hybridity and identity crisis in selected novels of Azouz Begag, with a view to determining the categories of hybridity and manifestations of identity crisis. This paper has adopted the French Explication de texte, which allows a close and thorough analysis of the selected novels used in this study. The postcolonial theory concept of hybridity is used as the theoretical framework. The portrayal of hybridity in the selected novels of the author is carried out as categorised by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998:118) in order to highlight its effect on the formation of identity of the characters in the novels.

Keywords: Azouz Begag, hybridity, identity, postcolonialism

1. Introduction

In a world that has become more nomadic than it used to be, the movement of people as well as cultures has become the order of the day. With globalisation, regionalisation and the reduction of the world into small communities, many cultures have been mixed together and this has led to the questioning of the identity of persons in a global world. This paper looks into the hybridity of these cultures in selected novels of Azouz Begag and how the offspring of migrants struggle to ascertain who they are. The selected novels are *Le Gone de Chaâba* (translated as *Shantytown Kid*) (1986), *Zenzela* (1997b) and *Dis Oualla* (1997a).

This paper adopts the postcolonial theory concept of hybridity and how it affects the identity of Arab/Muslim migrants and their offspring as they manoeuvre between their host culture and that of their home community. Hybridity can be traced far back to the era of the Roman Empire, even though it was not termed thus. Acheraïou (2011:87) attests to it when he opines that both hybridity and métissage (miscegenation) are not new inventions. It has been a key feature of civilisations since time immemorial. He added that hybridity was common among Romans, Greeks and other early civilisations.

Most civilisations, from the Sumerians through to the Egyptians and Greeks, developed and thrived through the incorporation of foreign ideas, philosophies and technologies. In a sense, these ancient societies widely practised hybridity and produced, to varying degrees, hybridised cultures. However, they were obviously not as self-consciously aware of this process of hybridization as we are today.

The Romans, upon conquering a new territory, would introduce their culture to the conquered people. In turn, some of the cultures of the new territory which they found to be unique and desirable were imbibed by them. Moreover, at the end of such conquests, women were taken by some of the soldiers as booty. In this process, some became pregnant and gave birth to children. In his article titled *Race mixture in the Roman Empire*, Tenney (1916:689-690) acknowledges that a majority of Rome's senators and knights were children of slaves and the pure Romans comprised of a "Surprisingly small proportion ... Ninety-percent had Oriental blood in their veins." To further buttress his point, he quoted Seneca as a proof of the immigration of people from around the globe into Rome.

“Of this crowd the greater parts have no country; from their own free towns and colonies in a word, from the whole globe, they are congregated. Some are brought by ambition, some by the call of public duty or by reason of some mission, others by luxury which seeks a harbor rich and commodious for vices, others by the eager pursuit of liberal studies, others by show etc. (693-694).”

McWilliams, in her article “Hybridity in Herodotus” published in *Political Research Quarterly*, considers Herodotus as one of the great ancient theorists of hybridity. She posits that hybridity is the dominant theme in Herodotus’ book *The History*. According to her, Herodotus describes “... a globe that is overwhelmed by motion- the motion of people and cultures as they overlap and intersect through time (McWilliams 2013:745).” She adds that Herodotus showed his Greek audience the fact that this “interconnectedness” will destabilise every existing conventional notion of culture and politics. He therefore enjoined them “... to embrace the hybrid.”

Laplantine and Nouss (1997:8) in their essay titled “Le métissage: un exposé pour comprendre, un essai pour réfléchir” take racial mixing back to the history of the Mediterranean. According to them, the history is made from thousands of years of migration in the form of invasions, massacres and exchange which has led to the transformation of the people.

Ashcroft *et al.* (1998:183) describe hybridity as the “... creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization They posit that hybridity occurs during the conscious moments of colonialism and later when migration of people from one part of the world to another became the order of the modern world. Ashcroft *et al.* (1998:118) asserts that hybridisation occurs in many forms and it varies on linguistic, cultural, political, racial and other grounds. Though there are many definitions of the concept of hybridity by many scholars, it still remains a disputed concept in postcolonialism.

Hybridity, in the context of colonialism, refers to the blending and mixing of different cultural, social and political elements as a result of interactions between colonisers and the colonised. While it may be viewed as a form of cultural exchange, some argue that it can also serve as a means of suppression by colonial powers.

Colonialists often employed strategies to assert dominance and one such strategy was the promotion of hybridity. This involved encouraging the merging of elements from the colonisers with those of the colonised, creating a hybrid culture. On the surface, this may seem like a harmonious exchange, but it can mask a deeper power dynamic. The imposition of hybridity could be a way for colonial powers to maintain control by shaping the narrative and controlling the cultural landscape. It allows them to influence and redefine aspects of the colonised culture to align more closely with their own interests. This manipulation of cultural hybridity can serve as a tool for suppressing the authentic expressions of the colonised people.

Furthermore, the emphasis on hybridity might overshadow the colonial violence and exploitation that underlie such interactions. It can divert attention from the systemic inequalities and power imbalances inherent in the colonial relationship. In this way, hybridity can act as a form of cultural imperialism, obscuring the oppressive structures that sustain colonial rule. It is essential to examine critically instances of hybridity within the colonial text, recognizing that what may appear as a harmonious blending of cultures can also be a subtle form of erasure and domination. The nuanced exploration of these dynamics is crucial for understanding the complexities of colonial history and its lasting impact on societies.

2. A Biography of Azouz Begag

Azouz Begag is a French writer and politician of Algerian descent. Born on August 5th, 1957, in Lyon, France, Begag has had a diverse and notable career. He earned a doctorate in economics and became a professor at the University of Lyon. His academic background and research focused on issues related to

immigration, ethnicity and discrimination. He is renowned for his literary contributions, with works that often explore themes of identity, immigration and the challenges faced by minorities in French society. One such notable book is *Le Gone du Chaâba* an autobiographical novel published in 1986. Begag's political career and advocacy have played a significant role in highlighting the importance of diversity and inclusion in French society. While he may not be as widely known on the global stage, his contributions have left a lasting impact on discussions surrounding immigration, diversity and social justice in France.

3. Portrayal of Hybridity in Selected Novels of Azouz Begag

The postcolonial perspective in considering hybridity emphasizes the agency and creativity of formerly colonised people in adapting and reconfiguring their cultural heritage. It challenges the notion of a fixed, pure identity, instead of highlighting the fluid and dynamic nature of cultural identities. From this viewpoint, hybridity is seen as a source of strength and resilience, a way for the colonised individuals and communities to assert their agency and resist dominant structures. Ashcroft *et al.* (1998:118), meanwhile, assert that hybridisation occurs in many forms and it involves a number of different dimensions. This categorization is what this paper uses to look at hybridity in the novels selected. In the paper, all translations are by the author.

3.1. Racial Hybridity

In *Le gone du Chaâba*, the protagonist Azouz decides to make an impression in a class which he thinks is a French affair. The teacher was giving a class in morals and it was only French students who were partaking. This was as a result of the fact that these students live in a society where morals are being taught from home while the Arab Students in the class cannot participate as a result of living in Shanty towns with people lacking education. He decides to move from the Arab he is, into being French.

J'ai honte de mon ignorance. Depuis quelques mois, j'ai décidé de changer de peau. Je n'aime pas être avec les pauvres, les faibles de la classe. Je veux être dans les premières places du classement comme les Français. (1986:58)

I am ashamed of my ignorance. After some few months, I have decided to change my skin. I do not like being with the poor, the weak students of the class. I want to be ranked amongst the best in class, like the French.

His participation and good performance in school attracts great resentment from his Arab compatriots such as Hacène, Moussaoui, Nasser and two other Algerians in his class. He is told by Moussaoui that he has lost his Arabness because he wines and dines with Jean-Marc, a French classmate. This situation further degenerates into an accusation of the teacher being a racist. In order to prove that he is an Arab, Azouz is encouraged not to work hard in class, so as to be ranked amongst the poor students of the class like his Arab brothers.

The protagonist's ambition for academic excellence and the reaction of his Arab cousins in the class creates an inner conflict within him. He pauses and reflects on the accusation and later decides to consider himself an Arab: "Je suis un Arabe et je peux le prouver: j'ai le bout coupé comme eux, depuis trois mois maintenant. C'est déjà pas facile de devenir arabe ... (1986:103):" "I am an Arab and I can prove it: I am circumcised like them, since three months now. It is not easy to become an Arab." His inner reflection leads us to a flashback into the day of his circumcision, a day he describes as "Le jour le plus long." "The longest day."

Unlike the reaction racial hybridity raises in *Le gone de Chaâba* among the friends of Azouz, it is celebrated and applauded in *Dis Oualla*. Luis is one of the friends of the protagonist and is described as a character

born in different places. He is a combination of almost all the races in the world. Begag describes him aptly through a metaphor in the following lines:

Luis était né avec un pied en Espagne, un autre en Italie, un autre en Yougoslavie, un autre en Istanbul. Le plus gentil garçon du monde, mais qui de venait féroce si on touchait à quelque partie sensible de son cœur, comme sa mère par exemple (1997a:7)

Luis was born with a foot in Spain, another one in Italy, another one in Yugoslavia, another one in Istanbul. The kindest boy in the world, but who will become ferocious if you touch some sensitive part of his heart, like his mother for example.

Dis Oualla encourages racial hybridity and this is shown how the protagonist's friends respect his judgement. Whenever they are having an argument, he is always called upon to decide whose opinion is superior.

3.2. Linguistic Hybridity

Begag, as a result of his Maghrebian origin, finds himself torn between two languages; the Arabic which is his mother tongue and French which is the language of his host community. Like any other migrant, there is bound to be interference of one language in the other. Amosu (1995:130) avers that:

L'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère entraîne l'apparition, chez l'apprenant, d'éléments et d'habitudes de sa langue maternelle. Cela conditionne sa façon de refléter les particularités linguistiques dans la pratique de la nouvelle langue. L'interférence, puisqu'il s'agit bien. De cela, se manifeste à plusieurs niveaux et, le plus souvent, à l'insu du sujet parlant. (130)

The learning of a foreign language drags along the appearance, on the learner, elements and habits of his/her maternal language. This conditions his/her ways of reflecting linguistic particularities in the practicing of the new language. Interference, since that's what it is, manifests in many levels and mostly, without the knowledge of the speaker.

Begag presents interference through the protagonist Azouz in *Le gone du Chaâba*. Azouz is a victim of the Arabisation policy which was introduced in the 1960s in Morocco and Algeria. This policy was implemented to encourage the use of Arabic and the suppression of French as a medium of instruction. This policy was handicapped by the fact that Arabic vocabulary had not been thoroughly developed as many Arabic words would be needed to translate a word from French. Moreover, Algeria has a complex linguistic situation. The official languages are Modern Standard Arabic and Tamazight as stipulated by the constitution of 1963 and 2015 respectively. Modern Standard Arabic is the standardised Arabic used in writing, while Tamazight is an indigenous dialect in North Africa. In 2002, Berber was recognised as a national language. The protagonist in a class where the topic is hygiene spontaneously speaks about hygiene in Arabic forgetting that he is in a school where French is the language of instruction. This interference of Arabic into French is as a result of the protagonist's weakness in French. In order to revolt against the French system of education, he introduces Arabic words such as *Une kaissa* which means *Un gant de toilette* in French, *un chritte* – *un gant de crin* and so forth.

Through the characters of the protagonist's parents, Bouzid (the father) and Messaouda (the mother), Begag represents the first generation of migrants who were illiterate but wanted a better future for their offspring. Bouzid displays a total hatred for the French system and, with a constant reminder of this at the back of his mind, he plans a great return home. Begag uses French words with his native Sétif accent, which is a total revolt against the imposition of French language in Algeria. Such words include: Abboué: Papa (father), djnoun, the plural of Djen): demons or evil spirits, Emma: mother, mektoub: destiny, mrabta: a female

herbalist, salam oua rlikoum: greetings, la boulica: the Police, la tilifiziou: the television, le sabone d'Marseille: le savon de Marseille, la bart'mâ: (l'appartement, lizbour: le Sport, l'alcoufe: l'alcôve, le filou: le vélo, Au koussaria au commissariat, l'bomba: la pompe, d'litriziti: l'électricité. Messaouda has always displayed her hatred for the French language and has always been comfortable in her native Arabic:

Aujourd'hui, le laitier ne vient plus au chaâba. Il n'a plus de clients. Ma mère a oublié son français et, d'ailleurs, elle n'aime pas parler français, ni avec la Louise ni avec personne (1986:141).

Today, the milk supplier is no longer coming to the chaâba. There are no customers. My mother has forgotten her French, and moreover she hates speaking French with Louise or any other person.

Zenzela means earthquake in Arabic and Azouz Begag uses it as the title of second novel. In *Zenzela*, Begag presents Farid the protagonist who is a complete hybrid and Yemma who is the mother of the protagonist. Yemma like Messaouda in *Le gone du Chaâba* share the same characteristics. She wants to speak French the way she understands it and does not want anybody correcting her. The incident in a bus whereby she was asking for a seat leads to serious confrontation between her and her son, Farid.

Une place, z'il veau pli. Le chauffeur a tiqué ...-Une quoi? a grimacé le chauffeur. -Une place, j'ai corrigé par derrière. Yemma s'est tournée vers moi, furieuse, les lèvres pincées, prêtes à mordre. Elle s'est mise à me parler en arabe. Combien de fois dois-je te dire que je ne veux pas que tu traduisés pour moi. Je suis adulte, non (1997b:64)?

A seat, please. The driver winced ...-A what? grimaced the driver. -A seat, I corrected from behind. Yemma turned towards me, furious, lips pinched, ready to bite. She started talking to me in Arabic. How many times have I told you not to translate for me. Am I not an adult?

Begag also introduces the character of M. Vincenti, another immigrant. From his name, he is definitely an Italian who migrated to France. M. Vincenti's Italian is reflected in his French. M. Vincenti shares emotion with Farid, another immigrant like himself as a result of the earthquake which had hit Algeria. This fraternal emotion is peculiar with immigrants who find themselves in a foreign community. He expresses his hatred for members of the host community who dare to meddle in the affairs of immigrants, for example the case of Patrick and Jesus when he was talking to Farid in the elevator. M. Vincenti had this urge to strike Patrick with his walking stick.

Begag presents *Zenzela* as an interaction between Algeria and France. This relationship is shown in the setting of the novel, which revolves around Lyon, Setif and El-Asnam. As a result of this, the language of the novel portrays linguistic hybridity; that is a combination of Arabic words while speaking French. Words like Inch'Allah, Astarfighullah, Alhamdoulillah, Khobz ed'dar, Bism'illah Il rahman Il Rahim! Bism'illah Il rahman Il Rahim, djellaba and others abound all through the novel.

Dis Oualla presents a group of young people and their different views of life and dreams of the future. As is peculiar to Begag's novel, the title is a word used in Arabic. It is one used when a person wants to attest to the authenticity of the information s/he is providing. It is like swearing by the name of Allah. The novel also has words like Oualla', 'Oualla, "sur la mecque" and 'mektoub' from the Arabic word maktub or mektub meaning what is written or predestined, which expresses fatalism.

3.3. Literary Hybridity

African literature has always been influenced by European literature. The west, during colonialism, brought the language and their literary genres which they insisted were the best. Before this period, the literature of Africa was oral literature which was passed from generation to generation by the griots (itinerant story-

tellers) in the form of myths, proverbs, songs and short stories. Modern African literature was born in the educational systems of colonialism with European models rather than the existing African traditions. Sanusi (2016:29) posits that African oral literature crystallised as a result of European conquest to take the forms of prose, theatre and poetry. The three selected novels of Azouz Begag are no exception to the European genres and forms. Further, he writes in a European language except for his introduction of Arabic words and phrases to re-emphasise his roots.

3.4. Cultural Hybridity

Migration has led to a mixture of cultures. Migrants who find themselves in a new community are forced to adapt to their new environment. At this point of adaptation, traditional values are fused with that of the host community, thereby creating an all-new culture.

In *Le gone du Chaâba*, cultural hybridity is highlighted through the character of Zidouma (Saïd's wife). Zidouma represents the modern Maghrebian woman, who will stand up against the men and fight for her rights. Unlike in a traditional African setting, she insults Bouzid and even wants to get into a fight with him. This is seen in the dialogue between the two characters and it is a total violation of Arabic as well as African traditions.

Rentre chez toi, femme! Ces histoires ne te regardent pas! -Non, je ne rentre pas chez moi, je suis libre. -Rentre dans ton trou, t'ai-je dit, ou bien je vais te faire rentrer!-J'ai dit non. Frappe-moi! Allez! Frappe-moi! Sur ces mots, mon père se jeta sur elle sans retenue, l'agrippa par les cheveux pour la trainer dans sa hutte. Les voisins sortirent, affolés par les cris, les pleurs des enfants. Trois hommes ceinturèrent mon père. - Elle veut devenir un homme, maintenant cette sale. Ecoutez-la, elle m'insulte. Lâchez-moi, je vais l'égorger, je vais boire son sang. Zidouma, possédée par le diable, jurait de plus belle, maudissait, nous brûlait vifs sur un bucher (1986:126).

Go to your house, woman! This issue does not concern you! - No, I am not going to my house I am free. - Go into your hole, I have told you, or else I will make you! - I said no. Beat me! Go on! Beat me! With these words, my father fell on her without restraint, held her by the hair to pull into her hut. The neighbours came out, panicked by the shouts, the cries of children. Three men encircled my father. - She wants to become a man now, this dirt. Listen to her, she is insulting me. Leave me and I will cut her throat, I will drink her blood. Zidouma, possessed by the devil, insulted him more, cursed, she was burning us alive on a woodshed.

Furthermore, Begag portrays Zidouma as having imbibed the French mode of dressing. Juxtaposing her with Mme Bouchaoui "... dans son binouar qu'elle n'a pas voulu troquer contre une jupe indigene (134)" "... in her Algerian robe which she has refused to replace with an indigenous skirt (author's translation)" and Messaouda (Azouz's mother), Begag presents an all new Zidouma who anyone would mistake for an autochthonous person if not for her Arabic roundness. The character of Zidouma presents an emancipated Maghrebian woman.

Ma mère n'a pas réalisé que nous ne sommes plus chez nous, au chaâba. Elle se tient là, à l'aise dans son binouar au beau milieu de la rue. Zidouma, elle, arbore une jupe plissée dernier cri, des talons aiguilles. Si sa rondeur n'avait pas été si prononcée, on aurait pu la confondre avec une autochtone... (1986:170)

My mother had not realized that we were no longer at the shanties. She stood there, comfortably in her gown in the middle of the street. Zidouma, it was she, wore the latest-style pleated skirt, with high-heeled shoes. If her curves were not too pronounced, one would mistake her for an autochthonous person.

In addition, Azouz the hybrid is ashamed of his Algerian mode of dressing. Being an offspring of an Algerian immigrant and having spent most of his time with French classmates, he is ashamed of the dressing of his mother in her usual binouar "... tombant jusqu'aux chevilles, les cheveux cachés dans un foulard vert" "... falling down to the ankle, her hair hidden in a green scarf."

Je t'ai fait honte, hein? J'ai dit: -Ça va pas, non! Mais qu'est-ce que tu racontes. - Je n'aime pas quand tu cries comme ça. Regarde, tout le monde nous regarde. -Pourquoi tu dis que j'ai honte de toi? - Parce que je ne ressemble pas à une française, et puis mon binouar (1986:185).

I have embarrassed you, have I? What is the matter! What are you saying? – I don't like it when you shout like this. See, everyone is looking at us. - Why are you saying I am ashamed of you? - Because I don't look like a French, and then my gown.

Azouz despises his cultural background and even tells his classmates that he is a Jew. This causes those friends to wonder how he could be a Jew and bear the name of an Arab. Zenzela presents Farid the protagonist who is lost in his native culture, As has been the case of many first-generation migrants, his father brings his children back home in order to show them their roots. It is culturally accepted to kiss the hand of a person as a sign of respect. This cultural value is despised by Farid who feels uncomfortable doing so in public. The passage below shows his disdain of his local culture.

Sid Ahmed a marché avec nous jusqu'à l'arrêt du 37. Sous l'Abribus, il s'est penché pour une accolade et il a offert sa main à Yemma, elle l'a saisie et elle l'a baissé respectueusement. Je n'ai pas aimé du tout. Lorsque je serais à mon tour marabout premier échelon, je mettrais fin à cette pratique humiliante. Surtout à l'arrêt des bus, en terre gauloise. De quoi avions-nous l'air, avec nos us féodaux (1997b:62-63)!

Sid Ahmed walked with us to bus stop 37. Under the bus shade, he bent for an accolade and offered his hand to Yemma, she held it and kissed it respectfully. I did not like it at all. When I become a marabout [Muslim chaplain] of the first grade, I will put an end to such humiliating practice. Especially at the bus stop, on French soil. What do we look like, with our feudal customs.

By not kissing the hand of Sid Ahmed, Farid portrays himself as a hybrid who identifies with the French cultural values rather than the values of his native Algeria. Furthermore, Begag highlights cultural hybridity in El Asnam, a town in Algeria. Unlike in the previous case whereby hybridity is displayed by an Algerian based in France, this case is presented by Algerians at home. Cultural hybridity is shown through the music.

At a wedding ceremony in El Asnam, the music of Elton John is being played by local musicians. It would have been more apt and imaginable to view an oriental wedding ceremony with all the Maghrebian pomp and fair.

Il y avait fête au village, un mariage. Au milieu d'une petite place, monté sur une estrade, un groupe de musiciens jouait un air d'Elton John que je connaissais, Good Bye Yellow Brick Road. Les graves de la guitare basse martelaient la nuit à des kilomètres à la ronde. J'avais été agréablement surpris d'entendre si loin de l'Europe Elton John et je me disais qu'entre Lyon et Sétif, finalement, la portée n'était grande et l'écart culturel pas si rédhibitoire entre Anna et moi (1997b:65-66).

There was a celebration in the village, a marriage. In the middle of a small place, on a platform, a group of musicians were playing a song by Elton John which I knew, Good Bye Yellow Brick Road. The bass guitar could be heard kilometres away. I was pleasantly surprised to hear Elton John so far away from Europe and I told myself that the gap between Lyon and Sétif was not that wide and the cultural space between me and Anna was not that insurmountable.

The protagonist is taken aback to hear Elton John's music at home. This rekindles his hope of marrying Anna (his French heartthrob). Since the cultural gap between Europe and Algeria is no longer too wide, it would not be an issue with his parents accepting Anna as a daughter-in-law.

3.5. Religious Hybridity

Religious hybridity deals with the interaction of different belief systems with the traditional or local religion of a particular group of people. *Zenzela* is the only novel in the selected novels to discuss religious hybridity. Begag commences the novel with a visit to a Marabata or "... version feminine du marabout (10)" (a feminine herbalist). She foresees the kidnapping of Farid's junior brother, Nabil and informs the family. This eventually leads to his rescue by Farid.

La magicienne a levé les yeux sur moi, des yeux rouge vif, luisants sous l'effet de la fatigue ou de la moiteur de l'atmosphère. Et aussitôt, elle a baissé la tête. Elle avait enregistré mes traits dans sa boule de cristal. Cela lui suffisait pour annoncer ses quatre vérités sur mon destin (1997b:10-11).

The magician raised his eyes to me, two red bright eyes, shining under the effects of tiredness or the moisture in the atmosphere. And suddenly, she lowered her head. She had recorded my features in her crystal ball. This was enough to announce the four truths of my destiny.

The visit to the herbalist shows the interrelationship that exists between Islam in Algeria and traditional religion in Sétif.

4. Conclusion

Azouz Begag's selected novels offer a profound exploration of hybridity and identity. Through his storytelling, he invites readers to reflect on the complexities of cultural fusion, the fluidity of identity and the ongoing challenges faced by postcolonial societies. His narratives speak to the ongoing struggles faced by the descendants of colonised communities, highlighting the inequalities and racism that is still prevalent in contemporary French society and other parts of the world. One of such cases is that of Azouz Begag, who was maltreated in the United States despite the fact that he was carrying a French diplomatic passport.

Begag's works serve as a significant contribution to the literary landscape and act as a call for social justice in the struggle to dismantle the power structures that perpetuate postcolonial hierarchies.

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Occultic Practices in Appolinaire Zodékon-Eleceis' Novel *Mariage Impossible*

Leo Iyanda Balogun, University of Lagos, Nigeria. Email: lbalogun@unilag.edu.ng

Adisa Akinkorede Somana, Babcock University, Nigeria. Email: adisaa@babcock.edu.ng

Abstract

*In African tradition, occultic practice is a recurring phenomenon in our different societies. Being conscious of different types of occultic powers in African tradition, the invocation of these spiritual forces by the author of *Mariage Impossible* could be exploited for different purposes. This paper aims to understand the reasons Africans most often engage in occultic practices and also seeks to analyse the different manifestations and consequences of these practices in Zodékon-Eleceis' *Mariage Impossible*. To achieve this, we have been inspired by the literary theory of occulticism. Occultism is the belief in the existence of suprasensory realities that could be perceptible through methods of occult sciences; it is the set of occult sciences and practices associated with them. However, the analysis of Zodékon-Eleceis' novel enables the reader to distinguish the merit and demerit of the practices of occultic powers and make a choice as per the perpetuation of these practices in different contemporary African societies.*

Keywords: *African tradition; divination; occultic power; occultic practices; supernatural forces*

1. Introduction

In African tradition, Africans often believe in the existence of a superior Being to whom honour and adoration are given. The identification of this Higher Being largely depends on the provenance of worshippers or religious practitioners. Given the greatness and magnanimity accorded this Higher Being, Africans believe that the superior Being can only be approached through other, subordinate gods. Thus, through supplications and adorations to other spiritual forces subordinate to the first, Africans manage to obtain what they need (being it good or bad) (Ellis & Ter Haar, 1998). Beyond this interaction with the Supreme Being, African tradition allows the use of practices (the so-called occultism) by way of involving certain supernatural forces that can help the worshippers or religious practitioners in their need to achieve a particular goal. The Encyclopedia Britannica (2002) defines occultism as follows:

“Occultism is the various theories and practices involving a belief in and knowledge or the use of supernatural forces or beings. Such beliefs and practices principally magical or divinatory have occurred in all human societies through recorded history with considerable variations both in their nature and in the attitude of societies towards them.”

This practice of occultic power continues today in our various African societies. Although the practice dated back to distant times, the Christian and Islamic religions seemed to slow down its evolution (Mbembe, 1993). Today, the return to the source of African traditions is part of a revival in our different societies and occultic practices to which various people are committed and entrust their believes into mystical practices are demonstrated in Zodékon-Eleceis' (2014) *Marriage Impossible*. In the analysis of this novel, we will examine the various manifestations of occultic practices and their consequences in contemporary human life.

2. Summary of the Novel

The practice of occult power is a recurrent phenomenon in different African societies. Appolinaire Zondékon-Eleceis explores the various occult practices in which the main characters of the novel, *The Impossible Marriage (Le mariage impossible)*, indulged. This novel served as an awakening consciousness

for the emancipation of women in traditional African society. To this end, a fierce struggle is revealed between the young people of Sogo village and the elders. Young people influenced by western education have risen up against the occult practices and the perceptions of life of the elders who want to maintain tradition at all costs. Kolm, the youth leader of the village, paid dearly for standing against the elders. In this regard, he was paralyzed by the sorcerers who were believed to be guided by the same elders. Thus, he becomes ineffective and inefficient in his attempt to live his life.

The novel opens with a curse that has befallen Sogo village: "A shortage of girl births in the village." Magical sacrifices were needed to bring the situation back: "Place a kaolin on the belly of a pregnant woman and implore the manes of the ancestors to give birth to a girl child." The sacrifices were successful for Houévi and her pregnancy resulted in the birth of a girl. The girl was later named Devi and her suitor, Ayi. Devi will soon grow up into a well-educated, beautiful young girl. But as a result of the Western education she received, she unswervingly demanded her emancipation from the man who was to be her husband at the end of her studies. Ayi thus noticed that Devi was no longer interested in him. With the help of his henchmen, he organized the kidnapping of Devi and Kolm, a friend of his fiancé. The two were held in their custody in an undisclosed location for days before they were released. Devi was traumatized. She was no longer able to concentrate in school due to occult practices enacted against her by Ayi, the future husband. The truth has later emerged following consultations with a "bokonon," a charlatan engaged by Houévi, Devi's mother. A "bokonon" is a name given to charlatans, diviners in "Fon," one of the languages spoken in Benin Republic in West Africa. He reveals to Houévi the source of her daughter's misfortune. For the charlatan, as long as Ayi lives, misfortune will never cease to hunt Devi. He promised Devi and her mother to end up with Ayi once and for all. They will, of course, use occult practice to concretise their wishes. A few days later, we learn of Ayi's sudden death, together with all of his friends who collaborated with him in creating Devi's misfortune. At last, Devi freed herself for life away from the yoke of Ayi and started a peaceful life as she deemed fit.

3. Occultism as a Literary Theory

Occultism is the set of theories, practices and ways to realizations derived from occultic science. It is contrasted with science, as it is conceived, which is currently used to study mostly physical phenomena and perceptible, visible parts of Nature and Man. Occultic science, thanks to its preferred method (analogy), strives, starting from the physical facts to rise up to the study of the invisible, occultic parts of Nature and Man. Etymologically, the word occultism comes from the Latin *occultus* (hidden, secret); it refers to 'the knowledge of what is hidden.' Occultism refers to disciplines associated with supernatural, secret notions, considered by rationalist and materialistic science as constructed from a reasoning bias and also qualifies as pseudo-sciences (a falsely scientific approach or belief that does not respect the methods or goals of science) (Bouchet, 2000).

Occultism is a word invented in the 19th century and used for the first time by Eusebe Braconnière de Salverte. The followers of occultism include Stanislas de Guaita, Papus Jesephine Péladan and others. In occultism, there are two important movements: the occultic sciences (speculative) and the occultic arts (practical). Occultism becomes speculative when it is theoretical in nature. It aims to gather a range of knowledge to understand the world around us or the hidden one (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2002).

Within the occultic arts, we find alchemy, which is the art of transmutation. Talismania is the art of making a talisman and amulets (protective objects). Magic is formed from ritual techniques to act through invisible forces. Divination includes various techniques to understand and know the past, present and future elements. Astrology, meanwhile, is the science of the interpretation of the motion of the stars.

4. Occultic Power Practices in *Marriage Impossible*

Occultic practices focus first on the alleged skills of the practitioner in manipulating natural laws personally, for personal interest or for the interest of clients. This practice can only be considered bad when it contradicts social morality. Yet some religious practices can be linked to occultism. There are almost the same types of occultism in all human societies: divination, magic, witchcraft and fetishism, for example. We will try in this work to elucidate the different types of occultic practices, their manifestations and consequences in our societies today and, specifically, the novel that is the object of examination (Leistner, 2014).

4.1. Divination

Divination is an occultic practice determining the cause or meaning of events and their future through natural psychological and other techniques. This is a practice that can be found in different societies around the world. In *Marriage Impossible* by Zodékon-Eleceis, which is the subject of this study, we find practices of divination through a fetishist who was consulted and who then disclosed to Dévi the causes of her misfortune and the solutions that should be undertaken. The fetishist begins with preliminary formalities:

Il déposa, de sa main tremblante, le demi-franc sur le dos du canari, y ajouta trois cauris et se mit à promener le tout sur le dos du récipient de terre glaise. Dévi fut médusée. Elle regarda sa mère puis le vieillard concentré sur le canari. Tous deux avaient la bouche fermée. Et bien fermée! elle reporta son regard sur le canari: il était trop petit pour qu'un homme pût s'y cacher. D'où venait donc cette voix lointaine qui l'appelait et même par son nom Dévi? Ou bien, serait-ce un arrangement préalable avec sa mère? (p.261)

With his trembling hand, he placed the half-franc on the canary's back, added three cauris to it, and began to walk the whole thing on the back of the clay container. She looked at her mother and then at the old man concentrating on the canary. Both of them had their mouths closed. And well closed! she looked at the canary: it was too small for a man to hide there. Where did this distant voice that called her and even her name Devi come from? Or could it be a prior arrangement with her mother? (authors' translation)

Then, the fetishist moves on to serious matters; that of divination. The soothsayer begins his revelation:

Je vois un homme gros, court sur pied, de teint noir ... attends, il s'appelle Ayi! Il jubile en ce moment avec ses acolytes qui lui promettent de te ramener à lui ... attends, je vois deux hommes ... ah, je comprends! Tu devais épouser cet Ayi, mais les deux jeunes hommes ont fait échouer son projet. Il se venge. [--] Tant qu'il vivra, tu n'auras jamais la paix; [--] Les sorciers auxquels il t'a confiée viennent de te travailler à l'instant même avec la musaraigne! Connais-tu l'odeur nauséabonde de ce petit rongeur? Dans quelques jours, cette odeur va t'imprégner et ensuite émaner de ton corps pour faire fuir cet essaim de soupirants qui te court après. (p.262)

I see a big man, short on his feet, black complexion ... wait, his name is Ayi! He is gloating right now with his acolytes who promise to take you back to him... wait, I see two men ... ah, I understand! You were to marry this Ayi, but the two young men failed his project. He takes revenge. [--] As long as he lives, you will never have peace; [--] The sorcerers to whom he has entrusted you to, have just worked you out with the shrew! Do you know what that little rodent smells like? In a few days, this smell will pervade you and then emanate from your body to scare away this swarm of suitors who run after you. (authors' translation)

The soothsayer understood Ayi's malicious intentions against Dévi. Ayi wanted to give Dévi a hard blow for abandoning him. Fortunately, the diviner was able to reveal his bad intentions, so that Dévi could prepare against all eventualities.

4.2. Magic Practices

Magic is a practice based on the belief in the existence of occultic and supernatural beings, powers and forces, allowing the magician to act on the material world through specific rituals. However, each tradition or culture has its own definitions of magical categories. Black magic has negative effects. It is through magical practices that the victim is most often affected. The invocation of supernatural powers, incantations, the appeal to certain deities and the mixing of certain material products are some of the ingredients that magicians use for their own purpose are all elements of magic that can be manipulated by the magician (Thorndike, 1984). Consider one of the cases of magic practices that abound in the novel, *Marriage impossible* by Zodékon-Elceis. As there was a shortage of girl-birth in Sogo village, the villagers, with the help of a soothsayer proceeded to magical practices. Indeed, it was a question of placing a kaolin (piece of clay) on the belly of a pregnant woman and imploring the forefathers' mast (spiritual ancestor) to give birth to a girl child.

Dans le village Sogo, on aurait cru à une malédiction soudaine. Le beau sexe ne naissait plus qu'à compte-gouttes. [---] La question était devenue obsessionnelle, à telle enseigne que l'idée de «poser de kaolin» sur le ventre d'une femme en état de grossesse germa dans certains esprits. Aussi, le prétendant priait-il ses ancêtres, faisant offrandes sur offrandes pour qu'à la naissance, l'on n'entendit que les vagissements d'une fillette, sa future femme ou celle de son fils. (pp.7-8)

In the village of Sogo, one would have thought it was a sudden curse. The fair sex was only born in dribs and drabs. [---] The question had become obsessive, so much so that the idea of putting kaolin on the belly of a pregnant woman germinated in some minds. Thus, the suppliant prayed to the ancestors, making offerings on offerings so that at birth, only the likeness of a young girl, a future wife or that of a future son could be seen. (authors' translation)

4.3. Witchcraft Practices

Witchcraft is a magical practice carried out with a view to exerting an action, generally harmful, on a human being (ill-fortune, bewitchment, possession) or on animals or plants (livestock diseases, crop failure). Its practices are more or less synonymous with magic. Witchcraft is a belief that prevails in certain societies or social groups to which certain categories of misfortune can be attributed to the malicious and invisible action of certain people or supernatural creatures. Thus, people can turn into animals or birds in order to carry out at will their evil and malicious work towards their enemy. This was the case with Kolm when an owl came to him wanting to hypnotize him. Kolm surely knew that the owl would be nothing more than a metamorphosed man: a form of witchcraft widespread in West Africa and elsewhere.

Un gros hibou fixait sur le jeune homme un regard à la fois effroyable et hypnotisant. L'oiseau clignait à peine des yeux. Que veux-tu? demanda Kolm, persuadé qu'il ne pouvait s'agir là que d'un être humain métamorphosé. [...] Kolm loin de prendre peur, se dirigea vers son lit, tira d'en dessous un colis de toile blanche et en sortit une gousse de poivres. Il extirpa quelques grains ... Il cracha vers l'oiseau. Le hibou recula d'abord ... et prit verticalement son vol. (p.179)

A large owl stared at the young man with a frightening and hypnotising look. The bird barely blinked. "What do you want?" asked Kolm, convinced that this could only be a metamorphosed

human being. [...] Kolm, far from becoming frightened, walked to his bed, pulled a parcel of white canvas from underneath and pulled out a pod of peppers. He chewed a few grains ... He spit towards the bird. The owl retreated first ... and flew away vertically. (authors' translation)

To demonstrate that it is still a matter of witchcraft, Kolm notes the following:

Il ne fut pas complètement remis de sa surprise qu'une forme squelettique humaine se dessina devant lui. De sa main osseuse, la forme épouvantable le saisit au cou. Kolm fit des efforts surhumains pour se libérer de la strangulation. Ses yeux étaient, on eût dit hors leurs orbites et sa langue tirée de sa bouche. Ce fut alors qu'il entendit une voix lointaine:

J'ai toujours refusé de participer à vos festins; le sang de mon fils ne sera pas pour votre banquet. Laissez-le immédiatement ou je vous déclare la guerre. (pp.179-180).

He was not completely recovered from his surprise that a human skeletal form appeared before him. With his bony hand, the dreadful form seized him in the neck. Kolm made superhuman efforts to free himself from strangulation. His eyes were, one would have said, out of their sockets and his tongue was drawn from his mouth. It was then that he heard a distant voice:

I have always refused to attend your feasts; my son's blood will not be for your banquet. Leave him immediately or I will declare war on you. (authors' translation)

As soon as he came back to himself, the skeletal form disappeared. He jumped out of his bed and woke up. It was midnight. The spirit of his parents surely saved his life. This was one of the manifestations of witchcraft in traditional African society. However, recognising this, Kolm was able to free himself from the yoke of those sorcerers who wanted to destroy him at all costs.

Fetishism and witchcraft often go from father to son. The case of the practice of witchcraft demonstrated in the novel is one that is inflicted on Kolm after having serious confrontations with the elders of the village of Sogo based on the allocation of a girl right away from her birth to a man for marriage. Also annoying was the dowry payment that Kolm and his college friends vehemently opposed. As leader of the opposition between the elders and the youth, Kolm received a hard blow through spiritual attacks by Ayi that rendered him paralytic.

Une nuit, un hibou était venu se poser sur le toit de mon dortoir. Il a émis un hululement effroyable. Le lendemain, je n'ai pas pu me lever. Mon corps s'était mis à enfler; j'avais la fièvre; peu après, secoué par des spasmes, j'ai perdu connaissance. On m'a emmené à l'hôpital puis ramené à la maison. [--] Trois jours après, j'ai pu ouvrir les yeux. [--] Mon père, m'a montré unealebasse contenant des dards de scorpion, des aiguilles rouillées, des tessons de bouteille ... Tous ces objets ont été retirés de mon corps par mon père et le guérisseur Bariba. Les sorciers ne m'ont pas pardonné. Par leur fusil occulte, ils m'ont criblé de ces objets hétéroclites espérant m'ôter la vie. C'est ainsi que je ne vais plus retrouver l'usage de mes jambes. (pp.220-221)

One night, an owl came to the roof of my dormitory and gave a terrible hoot. The next day, I couldn't get up. My body began to swell; I had a fever; soon after, shaken by spasms, I lost consciousness. I was taken to the hospital and brought home. [--] Three days later, I was able to open my eyes. [--] My father showed me a calabash containing scorpion darts, rusty needles, bottle shards... All these objects were removed from my body by my father and the Bariba

[person from a region of Benin] *healer. The sorcerers did not forgive me. By their occultic attacks, they have riddled me with these motley objects hoping to take my life. This is how I will no longer find the use of my legs. (authors' translation)*

This is how Kolm ended up in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. He was punished by occultic means for daring to tell the truth in front of the Sogo village elders.

5. Occultic Power and Its Importance in African Tradition

In traditional Africa, the use of occultic power remains a practice that most Africans cannot do without. Despite the obscurantist side attached to this practice, we find many adherents who are proudly involved in it in order to defend themselves or take refuge against any eventuality of life. Occultic power of any kind can be used to harm someone other than yourself. All these practices abound nowadays in our different societies. As the author informed us in his novel, *Marriage Impossible*, we find references made to the effectiveness of the occultic practices in order to defend Ayi against anyone who would want to take away his fiancée Devi. Equally important was the anger of the Sogo village elders over Kolm when the latter was struck down by a hard blow against him. The result was Kolm's paralysis for the rest of his life.

Despite this negative side of the practices of occultic power, there is still a positive side of the use of these powers. In African tradition, when an individual is attacked by spiritual forces or supposedly by witchcraft, we often witness the imploration of supernatural forces from the occultic power to get rid of the harmful effect inflicted on that individual. This is the case of Dévi who at some points in her life and with the help of her mother begins to look for the main cause of her misadventures. Through the manipulations of occultic powers, Dévi knew that her ex-fiancé, Ayi is at the root of her misfortune. There, we can find the positive side of the occultic power because it is through this power that she finally realises the source of her problem. From this moment, Devi, accompanied by her mother Houévi, have both embarked on the search for a fair solution through some occultic power.

Bon voilà: derrière ma case, il y a une plante à feuilles dentées. Cueilles une seule feuille et appelle aussitôt le nom d'Ayi sur la sève coulant et de la feuille et de la plante. Une fois arrivée chez toi, achètes une petite cola blanche et un coq tout noir. Un jeudi, à l'aube, sans adresser la parole à quelqu'un, poses la feuille sur le dos du coq, mâches la cola et déversez-y le contenu en fortes aspersion en appelant sept fois le nom d'Ayi. Enterres le tout lorsque le coq sera mort. (p.264).

Well, there we go: behind my hut, there are the toothed leaves of a plant. Pick a single leaf and immediately call the name Ayi on the sap and the leaf and the plant. Once you get home, buy a little white cola [nut] and a black rooster. On a Thursday, at dawn, without speaking to anyone, lay the leaf on the back of the cock, chew the cola and pour out the contents while making strong aspersion calling the name of Ayi seven times. Bury everything when the rooster is dead. (authors' translation)

The fetishist informs Dévi that she should twist the cock's neck and that as many twists of the cock's neck correspond to as many weeks of pain diffused in Ayi's body, starting from the heart, followed by delirium during which the victim confesses any sins or crimes. The victim will suffer as many weeks as there were twists of the neck before he dies. Occultic power can, however, be used for positive purposes and also to save life.

6. The Consequences of Occultic Power

Speaking of occultic power in African tradition, its consequences are enormous. Our analysis will be limited only to the level of events discussed in the novel, *Marriage impossible*. For most parts of African tradition, the invocation of supernatural power is often done to harm or at least to disrupt the life of one's neighbour. It is then obvious that the consequences of these practices of occultic power are today unbounded in our different societies. So, to get rid of the self imposed ex-fiancé permanently, Dévi opts for Ayi's bewitchment by means of the fetishist through occult practices. Immediately it was orchestrated, Ayi felt the blow set against him from hundreds of kilometres through the mystical powers of the fetishist.

Le soir de ce jour, à deux cent kilomètres de Dévi, Ayi perçut une violente crampe dans le haut du dos au-dessous de son cou. Il s'assit. [...] La douleur revint, vive, fulgurante, se propagea du bas ventre jusqu'aux membres inférieurs, suivie d'une douloureuse contraction du cœur. [...] On fit venir son bôconon; le médium consulta l'oracle et fit entendre que l'esprit de son patient était pris dans un piège. (pp.265-266)

On the evening of that day, two hundred kilometres from Dévi, Ayi felt a violent cramp in his upper back below his neck. He sat down. The pain came back alive and burning, spreading from the lower abdomen to the lower limbs, followed by a painful contraction of the heart. [...] His bokonon was brought; the medium consulted the oracle and made it known that his patient's mind was caught in a trap. (authors' translation)

Among other consequences of occultic practices retained in the analysis of this novel are those of the public denunciation of a bad fate previously cast against a victim. There are occultic practices in African tradition in such a way that once they are uttered against a person, that person is obliged to confess all the evils committed in the past against someone before death strikes. This is the case of Ayi, who, by the time he wanted to die, he has to confess publicly through the mystical power uttered against him all the evils he has done against his relatives as well as Dévi, his former fiancée.

... Je devais donner un de mes pieds mais je l'ai remplacé par le cœur de l'enfant de la cousine Yéwa. J'ai tué mon neveu Lotéi pour avoir une récolte abondante et augmenter ma fortune. Ha.... C'est sur mon ordre que Loukoudjême a tué Lako. J'ai tenté de tuer un jeune collégien Komalan; je n'ai pas réussi mais j'ai pu le rendre paralytique ... (pp.266-267)

... I had to give one of my feet but I replaced it with the heart of cousin Yewa's child. I killed my nephew Lotéi to have an abundant harvest and increase my fortune. Ha.... It was on my order that Loukoudjême killed Lako. I tried to kill a young Komalan schoolboy; I did not succeed but I was able to make him paralytic ... (authors' translation)

We note in the above quotation the confessions of Ayi before his death. He confesses all the evils he did against Dévi and all other people allied to him. This is the root of the positivity of occultic practices. When a person does something that is hidden and believes nobody can see the commission of the crime, there is often some occultic powers in African tradition when proffered against the person, that person will surely be obliged to confess all the evils committed that were hidden.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of Zodékon-Eleceis' *Marriage impossible* has allowed us to examine the various manifestations of occultic power and their consequences in traditional African society. This practice, which we believe to be forgotten, continues to be rampant, even resurrected today in our various African societies. It is a kind of return to the source for most Africans who seem to forget their origins. So there will be no

question of leaving traditional African beliefs in jeopardy. It is obvious that in most of our African societies, imported religions such as Islam and Christianity have taken over in our daily practices. To this effect, we urge Africans to work more in the practice of occultic powers so as not to allow our cultural and heritage to be exterminated. Since the practice of occultic power has its merits and demerits in our societies, it is high time that every African appropriated these practices as an ancestral inheritance where the good is jealously guarded and the evil consecrated for a personal defense against enemies.

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In Defence of a ‘Problem-Centric’ Research Agenda for African Philosophy

Oghenekaro Ogbinaka, University of Lagos, Nigeria. Email: oogbinaka@unilag.edu.ng

Elizabeth Oluwafumilayo Kehinde, University of Lagos, Nigeria. Email: ekehinde@unilag.edu.ng

Abstract

Over the years, African philosophy has contentiously centred on the philosophical history of its existence, its possibility and effort by its protagonists to show a body of literature that can be representative models of a corpus of discourses that can be called African philosophy. There is little problem in this. However, not much has been offered as a body of philosophical inquiry that interfaces the existential problems and challenges of the African society of today. Today’s African is blighted with a plethora of problems in search of solution for her development and progress. It is in dire need of a problem-solving philosophy, one that this paper has called a “problem-centric philosophy.” The paper has relied on the articulations of Karl Popper that the philosopher should be a student of problems and not a student of subject matters. Consequently, it argues for a problem-centric approach and agenda for African philosophy; one that is hoisted on as well as goes beyond the existing African philosophy, one that we have called an “archaeological excavation” of philosophical elements from the intellectual chests of the African past. The new problem-centric philosophy we proposed is a refinement of existing African philosophy. This philosophy will be one that is built upon the contemporary social foundation and milieu of Africa such as suggested by the African Union. The conclusion is thus reached that an interdisciplinary approach with the social sciences and other fields of inquiries will be needed for doing a problem-centric African philosophy.

Keywords: African experience; African philosophy; problem-centric philosophy; research agenda; social foundation/milieu

1. Introduction

The questions if there exists a body of knowledge that could be genuinely qualified as philosophy in Africa; if there can be genuine African philosophy; and what constitutes African philosophy have preoccupied existing literature on African philosophy. No doubt, brilliant answers have been put forward by experts that have settled many sceptics. Hence, for Kanu (2014:86), “The question of the nature of African philosophy has engaged the minds of African philosophers for decades.” This has been the preoccupation of Tempels (1995), Jahn (1958), Mbiti (1969), Gyekye (1987), Edeh (1985), Oruka (1991), Iroegbu (1995), Masolo (1995), Hountondji (1995) and others. Gyekye (1987) has argued that “... the issue of the nature of African philosophy became recurrent in the reflections of contemporary African philosophers.” Today, unless philosophers in African studies go beyond these themes, African philosophers will be largely ‘archaeological excavators’ of elements of philosophy embedded in the ‘intellectual shelves’ of the African past. How to glean it from, or tease it out of, or analyse philosophical contents from African proverbs, folklore, and socio-cultural practices is thus the preoccupation and modus operandi of African philosophers (Uduigwomen, 1995). Notions such as umbutu, omoluabi, erhi and otha are daily being dug out and analysed into becoming authentic categories of African ontological experience in the past. Consequently, most of what is called African philosophy is more or less African narratives made meaningful against the backdrop of purely Western or Eastern philosophies. For example, in order to explain reincarnation in African ontological experience, scholars would refer to Descartes’ theory of body and mind, Hume’s personal identity, Indian philosophy’s theory of moksha, samsara, nirvana, and so on. Thus, it can be safely argued that if the foreign contents (categories) are expunged from the literature of African philosophy, most of its scholarship (on what is called African philosophy) may be meagre; and a looming question will be if it is possible to do an African philosophy without resorting to or devoid of non-African (philosophy) literature. Consequently, it can be established that the many ‘useful’ weeds in the garden of African

philosophy surpass its intended harvestable crops. Paradoxically, it can be argued that this nature of African philosophy has given it its global character and understanding. This point is however outside the scope of this paper.

African philosophy, like African music, literature, sculpture and art of old, was never written down. It was not credited to any individual philosopher or sage. It had no written tradition. It was rather oral (Uduigwomen 1995;36-43; Oluwole, 1999). Nevertheless, African philosophy is the philosophical conception of 'Africans' on man in the cosmic order of things, as man relates to fellow man, supra-natural beings such as the 'ancestors,' God and the gods, and the universe. Ancient African - which was highly ethical, religious and expressed in the mythologies and proverbs, religions and the way of life of Africans - has been qualified in various ways. Anyanwu (1988:43), for example, describes it as the 'philosophy of vitality.' An important characteristic of African philosophy is that it did not emerge out of scepticism or doubt about the existence of the world, God, the universe, knowledge and so on. In Africa, human experience and cognition are not doubted. Rather, African philosophy attempts to rationalize human experience and the world of man.

African philosophy attempts to rationalize what is experienced by man, in order to place man, who remains the predominant actor of African philosophy, in a better perspective and stead in the scheme of things among fellow men, the gods, and other metaphysical and ontological entities. Anyanwu (1988), therefore, argues that:

“It would be rash to say that the African people, whether individually or collectively, have no philosophical thinking. In fact, colonial experience, the breakdown of the religious answers to certain questions of existence, and the transformation of the accustomed social institutions on the meaning of life gave rise to philosophical thinking. Man cannot live without the attempt to interpret the meaning of existence, and the African man has his own idea on this question.”

This view tallies with the position of O'Connor (1957:23-24) who sees reason as “... the capacity to solve problems of whatever kind the problems may be, or the ability to answer questions appropriately.” He states further that:

“... There is no doubt that human beings do have such a problem-solving capacity as part of their makeup. Some of us may have it to a greater degree than others or have an especially good or especially poor capacity for solving some sort of problems (for example, those of mathematics or administration). But all human beings who are not very low-grade mental defects have this capacity to some degree, sufficient perhaps to justify us being described by the traditional epithet 'rational animals.’”

On this basis, there are philosophical studies that deal with African philosophical problems as they may concern ontological entities such as witchcraft, ancestral relation, reincarnation, socio-political philosophy of African, ethics and epistemology. Invariably, what is called African philosophy is not a contiguous body of a unified argued corpus of epistemologies. It is largely a collection of 'topical issues' discussed by scholars. The worry here is they are not 'problem-focused,' 'problem-directed,' or simply, 'problem-centric' on contemporary human existential matters relating to the African experience.

In Ogunmodede's (2004:83) account, philosophy as an intellectual enterprise is not new to Africans. He points out that the Egyptians had philosophical schools called Egyptian mystery systems. Ancient Egyptian philosophy was taught at centres or temples of religious worship at: (i) Memphis, (ii) Hermopolis, (iii) Heliopolis, (iv) Thebes, (v) Tel el Amarna, and (vi) Avaris. The Egyptian schools of philosophy were not called after any individual philosophers as was in ancient Greek. Quoting Masante, Ogunmodede (2004:82) states further that:

“The word used by the ancient Egyptians for philosophy was ‘Seboyet’ which means ‘wisdom’ of ‘instructions’, or ‘teachings.’ Thus, we had ‘the teachings of Ptah-Hotep’ which is the oldest and complete political treatise that has survived the vicissitudes of antiquity and is available to us.”

For the ancients Kemites, Egyptians, ‘Seboyet’ has a double meaning and sense, ‘theoretical wisdom’ and ‘practical wisdom.’ ‘Theoretical wisdom’ namely means knowledge and truth, while ‘practical wisdom’ means justice, rectitude and perfection.

2. The Source and Nature of African Philosophy

How do we derive a body of knowledge to be called African philosophy? We may catalogue the sources of African philosophy as including the individual philosopher, African sages, African cultural heritage, oral tradition of Africans, philosophical implications of analysing African languages and so forth. It is obvious that African philosophy is not fashioned-out ex nihilo. As Gyekye (2004) rightly points out, it is the intellectual that is equipped to speculate critically on and carry out an analysis and scrutiny on the African experience. He says, “philosophers, who not only make inquiries into fundamental principles underlying human experience but also undertake analytic interpretation of that experience will have something relevant and important to say about the experience that can influence or guide individual action, public policy and the development of human culture.” Hence Gyekye (2004) concludes thus:

“Philosophy is a conceptual response to the problems posed in any given epoch for a given society or culture. It would therefore be appropriate, even imperative, for contemporary African philosophers to grapple at the conceptual level –as has indeed done by philosophers of other cultures – with the issues and problems of their times.”

To achieve this, it becomes the task of the philosopher to dig into the rich traditional culture of the African society, investigate the African experience, and so on in order to analyse, critique and make philosophical postulations, syntheses and conclusions thereof. This can be qualified as the documentary dimension of African philosophy. It deals with the history of African philosophy of the past or present. It is strictly not a problem-centric philosophy. Nevertheless, it provides a plank for an authentic African problem-centric philosophy.

This conforms to our position that the philosopher – professional philosopher – who is the main source of African philosophy, should leverage through their ‘conceptual response to the problems posed in any given epoch for a given society or culture’ to enable them to fashion a problem-centric African philosophy that has contemporary relevance. This is because the body of knowledge that is called philosophy is ultimately nothing but the “... the reflective responses by the educated or thoughtful class to the environment and social challenges of [the environment in which the thinkers live] (Osei 2004).”

Following the above closely is the fact that in every society and culture there exist a few who are usually the custodians of the people’s wisdom and body of knowledge. These are the sages. Sages serve both the leadership and general populace of such a community. In Africa, a sage is not necessarily, even though may usually be, an elderly person. This status is bestowed on those who are knowledgeable in the wisdom of their society. They are consulted in times of conflict. They are the repertoire of their people’s history, culture and tradition. They are the ones consulted not only by researchers into African philosophy and studies, but also by researchers into other aspects of African thought systems such as history, anthropology, religion and art. The early Arabic scholar-traders and visitors as well as European explorers and Christian missionaries found great use in these sages as sources with which they dug deeply into the African intellectual and cultural heritage. Indeed, the sages as sources of African philosophy are indispensable given the fact that what is largely known of the African past today is mostly transmitted through the oral, not written, medium. Odera Oruka has found this to be the best approach to carrying out African philosophy (Falaiye, 2006).

That African cultural heritage (mode of worship, burial, justice system, marriage, festivals and so on) as a major source of African philosophy is a point that is obvious and easily inferred from our analysis of African philosophy so far. This has been emphasized by most scholars who are experts in this field. (Gyekye is an epitome of this approach). The same can be said of the fact that the oral tradition is a major source of African philosophy. Folklore, proverbs and indeed music are imbued with wise sayings and ontological conclusions that ought to be indicators of philosophical statements. Sophie Oluwole (Gbadebo 2021:136-160) adopted this approach in order to bring out the philosophy of the Ifa corpus of the Yoruba.

The knowledge of any group of people is usually expressed in the form of symbols or signs. Common to all cultures is the use of language. The meanings of the concepts and categories with which African explains the subjective and objective experiences cannot be devoid of philosophical imputations. Wiredu adopted this approach of doing African philosophy in his investigations on the Akan thought system.

Placide Tempels (1995) gives some words of caution for those who disparage African philosophy,

“Is our (western) philosophy based upon scientific experiment? Does it depend upon chemical analysis, on mechanics, or on anatomy? Natural sciences cannot refute a system of philosophy than they can create one. Our elders used to possess a systematised philosophy which the most advanced modern sciences have not broken down. Moreover, our ancestors came by their knowledge of being at a time when their experimental scientific knowledge was poor and defective, if not totally erroneous. The tool of experimental science is the sense experience of visible realities, while philosophy goes off into the intellectual contemplation of general realities concerning the invisible nature of beings. But no instrument exists for measuring the soul, though this fact does not exclude possibility that experiences may occur in order to furnish intelligence with reasonable proof of the existence of the spiritual principle in life. It is the intellect that creates science. Indeed, the experiments of the natural sciences, as also the generalisation of the philosopher ought to be made methodically and with discernment and analysed in accordance with sound logical reasoning...”

Our analysis so far has established that African Philosophy exists as an authentic corpus of knowledge and field of enquiry. Nevertheless, it is difficult to glean out from existing literature what legitimately constitutes this field of knowledge since there is a thin line between the narrow field of African philosophy and the broader area of African studies. Yet, this relation suggests the need for a cross-disciplinary study for a fruitful problem-centric African philosophy to be erected upon. Let us consider the nature of African philosophy offered by Kwame Gyekye, Raymond Osei and Kwasi Wiredu to buttress our point.

Kwame Gyekye (2004:26) stipulates that African philosophy is a [conceptual] ‘response by the philosopher to the various problems of their society’ and goes on to state that: “It nevertheless does not necessarily follow that the worth and significance of philosophical ideas or doctrines, propositions and conclusions is to be tethered to their cultural, historical contexts. They [philosophical ideas or doctrines, propositions and conclusions] can considerably gain plausibility and currency beyond the confines of their cultural or historical origin.” Gyekye thus advises that: “It is most appropriate for African philosophers to respond conceptually to the various problems of their society.”

Raymond Osei (2004:42-44) says African philosophy, being a “... coherent articulation of the ideas and experiences of a [the African] people,” is borne out by the fact that the people, “... in order to understand the political, social, legal and religious institutions of society ... needs to examine the ideas upon which the structures have been constructed.” It is thus, “... the critical examination of the ideas informing the structures of society that constitute the philosophy of the people.” Accordingly, Osei (2004) says, “... philosophers have a duty to inquire into this legacy with a view to understanding and fleshing out the reason underlying their assumptions.” African philosophy is ‘that body of knowledge [that is] a product of second

order reflections on the African authentic ways of doing and being;’ an intellectual activity [that is] likely to open vistas for enriching and advancing African culture and the material well-being of its people.

Kwasi Wiredu (1993:34-35) believes that African philosophy should exhibit an interface between that which is authentically African and that which blends with contemporary intellectual facilities. “African philosophy must include the critical and reconstructive treatment of the oral tradition and the exploitation of the literary and scientific resources of the modern world in pursuit of synthesis.”

It follows from the above conceptions of African philosophy that inquiry into African culture and belief systems – African experience – are prerequisites to understanding or carrying out African philosophy. This justifies why Raymond Osei (2004:35) avers on this point. The African living space and time offer situations that are similar to those of the West and Asia. Colonialism, ancient Egyptian civilization, ancient/contemporary religions and political institutions, the question of ‘the black Athena’ and so on are situations that offer fruitful ground for issues of African philosophising. African societies have accumulated a body of knowledge, beliefs, values that define their ways of life. African philosophers cannot afford to be ignorant of these stores of knowledge that defines the history of their people. By deploying the tools of philosophical analysis to the data of African cultural legacy, the African philosopher will not only be educated about a personal legacy but might also be inspired to think about how this heritage might be deepened and advanced.

Examples of African indigenous conceptual schemes outlined by Osei (2004:35-40) include:

1. The high level of political organizations in Africa that amazed Arab visitors and scholars. There was a stable polity devoid of crisis.
2. The above was due to ‘the people’s conception of the universe.’ The African universe was a uniform entity occupied and run in strict order by a hierarchy of beings. In the hierarchy, the being occupying the top was animated with power greater than the one immediately below it. The world is ordered like a vast equation: human animation (activity) corresponds to the animation of the cosmos, and each human movement stretches back to its cosmic precedence.
3. This implies that obeying the order by all is crucial to the common good and health of the society. Clearly any attempt to subvert, from within, such an order is tantamount to an act of suicide, one might even say, genocide, because the effect of successful subversion would be disastrous to both the whole community and to the culprit.
4. The kings and other leaders were checked by this cosmic arrangement. The king was the representative of the departed ancestors so they could do nothing that was tantamount to the tradition they were, in the first place, entrusted to preserve.
5. The African conceptual scheme did not uphold a Cartesian dualism, but ‘was at once material realm and spiritual realm.’
6. The same metaphysical order that ensured social cohesion and political stability also predetermined norms of moral behaviour; infraction would therefore attract the god’s wrath and the opprobrium of the people.

The import of this line of thought is that African scholars need to go back to their cultural roots; otherwise African indigenous thought systems stand the risk of denial and obfuscation. This (as espoused by Osei above) has been a predominant approach in scholarship in African philosophy, and as we have earlier stated

in this paper, it can be described as it as an “archaeological excavation” of philosophical elements from the intellectual chests of the African past.

Our analysis aims to show that African philosophy should not necessarily be either equated with African culture and belief systems, or gleaned thereof and no more. Invariably, it should not be akin to African anthropology, sociology, literature, art or music. Almost all extant literature points towards scholars in this area attempting to do this task of: ‘we had a philosophy in the past and I can show it.’ Today, this ‘history of philosophy’ approach would be a wrong route to follow solely. We thus suggest the inclusion of a problem-centric agenda for African philosophy’s scholarship. Experts in the area of African philosophy are unanimous on the fact that the prevailing approach would only constitute a starting point in the ‘doing’ of a new problem-centric African philosophy.

Here the distinction is made between traditional philosophy and the tradition of philosophy. Wiredu (1980), perhaps seeing the danger of such entrapments, warns that “... if African philosophy means traditional African philosophy... then we can forget any pretence of modern philosophising.” What is regarded as African philosophy today ‘also’ includes the corpus of critical reflection and analysis carried out on what may be termed African ‘traditional philosophy,’ a body of already existing knowledge that guided and communicated the African situation in the past, and that is still available – as raw material for philosophising – to the ‘Africanist’ scholar today. It follows that Africans, like other cultures, had their indigenous tradition of philosophy. Hence Gyekye (2004) notes a task for the “African philosophers to conceptually respond to the various problems of their society.” Stating further that: “It nevertheless does not necessarily follow that the worth and significance of philosophical ideas or doctrines, propositions and conclusions is to be tethered to their cultural, historical contexts. They can considerably gain plausibility and currency beyond the confines of their cultural or historical origin.”

Ideally, philosophy is a critical analysis and a rational reflection on human experience and the ideas we live by. This is consistent with the view that:

“...part of the main business of philosophy is to inquire and critically examine societies’ views about the origin and nature of the universe, the place of gods and values that govern human society... it inquires and critically examines people’s reflections on the universe and the place of mankind in the universe ... [in order to] reach a better understanding of society and the universe by the application of rational tools of analysis (Gyekye, 2004).”

This insight of a problem-centric African philosophy is built upon a thesis Gyekye has failed to escalate. This is the thesis that it is ‘most appropriate for African philosophers to “conceptually respond to the various problems of their society.” It leads to the suggestion of a type of philosophy that scholars in African philosophy must pursue after many years of narratives – most topical, methodological, value systems and epistemological – on African philosophy.

3. African Philosophy and Its Problem-Centric Root

Philosophy is not done in a vacuum. It is not an idle business. It is not ‘a tale full of sound and fury but signifying nothing.’ Philosophy is founded on problems. The problems a genuine philosopher sets out to address must arise from within man and the nature of man, as well as problems that arise from the world confronting man. In philosophy, it is not identifying the problems alone that matters. Explicitly stating the nature of the problems, and raising the right kind of questions are as important, if not more important, than the answers provided. The answers, as is often the case, may even lead to new questions and further problems. “The field of philosophy,” Kant (1781) says, “can be enclosed in the questions: (1) what can I know; (2) what must I do; (3) what can I hope for; (4) what is man?” Consequently, all forms of philosophy must address prevailing problems.

Long ago, Karl Popper (1952:124-127) flagged this nature of philosophy in his incisive paper, “The nature of philosophical problems and their roots in science,” when he stated that:

“For I believe that the function of a scientist or of a philosopher is to solve scientific or philosophical problems, rather than to talk about what he or other philosophers are doing or might do. Even an unsuccessful attempt to solve a scientific or philosophical problem, if it is an honest and devoted attempt, appears to me more significant than any discussion of a question such as “What is science”? Or “What is philosophy”?”

Popper (1952) further states that: “We are not students of subject-matter but students of problems and problems may cut right across the borders of any subject-matter or discipline. Popper appeals further that:

“I wish to reaffirm my conviction that a philosopher should philosophise, that is try to solve philosophic problems, rather than talk about philosophy. (Otherwise) nobody can philosophise. If this were my opinion, I would give up philosophy. But it so happens that I am not only deeply interested in certain philosophical problems (I do not much care whether they are rightly called ‘philosophical problems’) but possessed by the belief that I may even contribute - if only a little, and only by hard work - to their solution. And my only excuse for talking here about philosophy - instead of philosophising - is in the last resort, my hope that, in carrying out my programme for this address an opportunity will offer itself of doing a little philosophising after all.”

4. Conclusion

This Popperian canon provides the theoretical guide for the argument of this paper. We have quoted Popper *in extenso* in order to indicate the most important invitation of philosophy: The African philosopher must churn out thoughts that can proffer solutions to today’s African situation! They must ‘wonder’ on the problems facing the African experience in the areas of economics, socio-polity, science and technology, developmental theories, conflict management, environment, corruption and so on.

Are the African philosophers’ theories adequately solving the problems of the African experience that they are proffered to solve? Why and how? What are the better and more viable alternatives? To do philosophy that is problem-centric in nature, basing it on the African experience and prevailing social condition is what we have argued for in this paper. For example, contemporary African philosophers have been quiet on issues such as the African Union’s “AGENDA 2063” which, according to the African Union (AU), “... is Africa’s blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future.” Chukwudum Okolo (1987:5) says “African philosophy emerges out of the [African] culture; as the African philosopher critically reflects on the language, religion, history, works of art, folklore, idiom, collective beliefs, etc. of the African people.” The AU (2023) states further that:

“It is the continent’s strategic framework that aims to deliver on its goal for inclusive and sustainable development and is a concrete manifestation of the pan-African drive for unity, self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity pursued under Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance The genesis of Agenda 2063 was the realisation by African leaders that there was a need to refocus and reprioritise Africa’s agenda from the struggle against apartheid and the attainment of political independence for the continent which had been the focus of The Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the precursor of the African Union; and instead to prioritise inclusive social and economic development, continental and regional integration, democratic governance and peace and security amongst other issues aimed at repositioning Africa to becoming a dominant player in the global arena.”

A 'problem-centric' African philosophy is therefore a call for a philosophy of relevance for Africa and the world; one that has its roots in the social foundation of the African people. Kwasi Wiredu (2000:186) sums up our position in the succinct way thus: "Philosophy is in the picture because, as already noted, reflection on our most basic ideas about society is needed for the understanding of our problem in the first place, not to talk of what is required to solve it. But the social sciences, history, economics, anthropology, political science, etc. are all in the picture not only because insights arising from these areas of inquiry are directly relevant and, in anything else, if you push any discipline hard, philosophy will be there to find."

The agenda for a fruitful African philosophy that we here advocate also suggest the essentiality of an interdisciplinary approach to societal problem-solving, one imbued with an intellectual spirit of complementarity among various fields of inquiries. To dig into African culture and experience of the past requires, as it suggests, the collaborative research programmes of experts' scholarship in history, archaeology and sociology. The collaborative research efforts of the social scientist are necessary in the sphere of African socio-political experience. Hence the research reports in sociology, economics and political science, among others, are of dire importance to researchers that are inspired to do problem-centric philosophy that is relevant to contemporary African society. Philosophers must first be educated about their own legacy in order to be inspired to 'think' on how the African heritage can be 'deepened and advanced.' Consequently, no refinement of the African past can be done if the philosopher lacks knowledge – provided by other disciplines in science, social science and the humanities – of the African past and present is lacking.

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Literary Adaptation in Nigerian Modern Drama: Concept, Theory and Significance

Folorunso Adebayo, University of Lagos, Nigeria. Email: fadebayo@unilag.edu.ng

Leo Iyanda Balogun, University of Lagos, Nigeria. Email: lbalogun@unilag.edu.ng

Abstract

Literary adaptation as a concept is giving a new interpretation to an already existing text in a new medium and culture. It engenders transformation and creativity with or without a departure from the original version. Literary and cultural interplay between two texts of different cultural backgrounds often results in duality and conflict when a text is adapted to another culture or genre with or without a departure from the original text. As such, researchers, university scholars, students as well as teachers of literary and cultural studies often seek clarifications between the interplay and the duality in two cultural settings. In contemporary times, playwrights culturally adapt novels to dramas with or without a departure from the original text. This discovery of novels as a source of materials for drama in the 1960s triggered the interest in adaptation of Western texts to African and Nigerian contexts. Although there are previous studies in literary adaptations of Western texts and Nigerian modern drama in the literature, it was observed that the significance of adaptations of Western texts to Nigerian modern drama and the cultural similarities between the adapted text and the source text caused scholars to yearn for more investigation. Consequently, this paper discusses the concept of adaptation as a literary genre in Nigerian modern drama, intertextuality and the drama mode of presentation. It highlights the aesthetics and significance of adaptation as a genre of Nigerian modern drama. The paper employs qualitative research method using Kristeva's Intertextuality and Iser's Reader-Response theories as frameworks. Findings reveal that literary adaptation of Western texts plays a significant role in the development of Nigerian modern drama. The study recommends further studies in adaptations of French and English literatures, its socio-cultural influence and interplay with Nigeria sociocultural milieu.

Keywords: *adaptation, comparative literature, cultural interplay, modern drama, western text*

1. Introduction

Literature in all of its forms such as prose, drama and poetry reflect the history, culture, civilization and socio-political realities of a given society. It draws from myths, rituals, culture, politics and traditions. Literature often travels across boundaries and could be interpreted into a new culture and genre. This interpretation is known as literary adaptation where cultures interplay with and influence each other regardless of space and time. Literary adaptation among intellectuals of diverse cultural and linguistic divides cuts across the globe and engenders influence in literary and cultural productions. It reflects in the works of Francophone as well as Anglophone writers, where already existing texts, experiences, cultural and sociopolitical realities are adapted to novels and plays in different milieux and contexts. This has made the subjects of Intertextuality and reader-response to be recurrent in modern literary discourse around the world.

2. Literary Adaptation across Nigeria and Francophone Space

In Francophone Cameroun, Jacqueline Leloup in 1986 adapted Sophocles' *Oedipus Myth* (1984) to Cameroonian myth with the title *Guéido*. The Senegalese Abdou Anta Kâ's three adaptations: *La fille des Dieux* (1957) from Sidiki Dembele's *Le chant de Madhi*; *Les Amazoulou* (1968) from Thomas Mafolo's *Chaka* and *Gouverneur de la Rosée* (1972) from Jacques Roumain's *Gouverneur de la Rosée* are all cross-

cultural adaptations into African literary spaces. The works of other Francophone writers such as Mongo Beti's *Ville cruelle*, Sembene Ousmane's *Les bouts de bois de Dieu*, Camara Laye's *Le Maitre de la parole* and Ferdinand Oyono's *Une vie de boy* are adaptations of the sociopolitical and economic realities of their respective societies in contact with the French people. Among the works of Anglophone Africa writers are Efua Sutherland's *Edufa* (1967), a Ghanaian adaptation of Euripides' *Alcestis* (438BC) while Welcome Msoni's *Umabatha* (1970) is a Zulu cultural version of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Interestingly, works of Nigerian French literary critics such as Olaoye Abioye's *Le Preux chasseur dans la forêt infestée de Démons* (1989) and Soyinka's *The Forest of a Thousand Demons* (1968) are both French and English adaptations of G.O. Fagunwa's *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmole* (1938).

Literary adaptation of Western texts to Nigerian contexts, drama in particular, gave rise to modern dramatists and playwrights such as Ola Rotimi, Wole Soyinka, Zulu Sofola, Femi Osofisan, Ahmed Yerima and Bode Sowande. These authors engaged with the aesthetics of adaptations of Western texts to promote Nigerian literature in general and drama in particular.

3. Adaptation, Intertextuality and Reader-Response

The concept of adaptation consists of a representation of an existing work, culture, movement or ideology in a new milieu. It is a response from the reading of an existing text that shows the relationship between the previous and the new texts. Adaptation is simply a creative re-appropriation of an existing work of art to a particular new milieu and which is a form of a response to the reading of a source text. Intertextuality is a literary theory that establishes the presence of a source text in a target text. It is a literary tool for identifying the differences and the concordances between an original text and the adapted version. The term was first associated with French semiotician and critics, Julia Kristeva, in her essay *The Bounded Text* (1986) when she made reference to Bakhtin in her work *The Word, Dialogue and Novel*. She was influenced by Saussurean and Bakhtinian models. Texts according to this theory are constructed of already existing discourse and do not present clear and stable meanings but are connected to on-going cultural processes. She describes a word (text) as an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings (Kristeva, 1986:36). She postulates that authors do not create their texts from their own mind, but rather compile them from pre-existing texts. Thus, the text becomes a permutation of other texts.

The theory draws strength from the post-modernist theorists' view of the self-insufficiency of a text and its dependency on another text. To these theorists such as Julia Kristeva, Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes and Michael Riffaterre, the presence of a text in another text in its various forms only explains the dynamics of text and its continuity in an on-going socio-cultural process. Intertextuality, therefore, attempts to unravel this cross-media presence and interaction of texts across the global space. The theory also emphasizes the birth of a new text in place of its author, which helps the researcher to dwell more on the textual analysis. Intertextuality in the present research is the study of relationship between the novel and the drama genres in term of similarities and divergences when a text is adapted to another medium.

This theory has been applied to different categories of texts by scholars regardless of the author's status or the popularity of the text in question. Adeoti (2010) applied it to the works of Soyinka, Osofisan and Yerima while Afolayan (2012) compared Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* to Hope Eghagha's *Death Not a Redeemer*. The application of this theory helps to identify areas of influence, differences, similarities and elements of cultural interplay among the selected texts. The study adopts this theory because there are different texts and genres to be compared using textual analytical tools and knowledge offered by intertextuality theory. Also, the reading of original texts revealed some thematic and contextual affinities of the adapted texts. It provided a background needed for a meaningful exploration and analysis of the selected texts from the point of view of cultural interplay, structure, settings, style, thematic thrust, characterization

and plot arrangement. Intertextuality theory also emphasizes the relationship between texts which is the hallmark of this present comparative study.

4. Wolfgang Iser's Reader Response Theory

Reader response theory was developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the United States of America and Germany. Prominent among the forerunners of this theory are Louise Rosenblatt, Wolfgang Iser, Stanley Fish, Norman Holland, David Bleich, Hans-Robert Jauss and Roland Barthes. It is a literary theory that emphasizes the role of a reader and the outcome of the reading experience with a particular text. This theory underlines the fact that there is no authoritative meaning to a particular work of art but how an individual reader interprets it in a unique way based on experience (cultural, intellectual and emotional) while he transacts with the text. It equally stresses on the sharp contrast between the author's meaning and the reader's perception. The reader is no longer a receiver of whatever meaning the author proposes in his work but a central agent in the meaning processes.

Long before the emergence of this theory, the author and the text have occupied the central stage of literary criticism and textual analysis among critics. Textual analysis thereafter shifted its focus from the author and the text to what the individual reader perceives and transacts with the reading of the text. Their opinions, reactions and interpretations become more important in the re-reading of a text. By this theory, a reader becomes a *force majeure* in what becomes of a text before its public. Fayolle (1978:6) attests to the relevance of this theory as he argues that, a text does not exist beyond two dimensions: the force that pushed the author to write and the one that motivated the reader and their response to the text which they reinvented for their own usage.

Theorists such as Iser, Fish, Holland and Bleich have a consensus on the role of a reader in a textual analysis, interpretation and literary communication in general. Iser (1978) and Tyson (1999) agree that there is no final or fixed reading and interpretation to a text. There are a thousand and one meanings that could be derived from a text. Tyson (1999:154) submits that:

“... the role of the reader cannot be omitted from our understanding of literature and that readers do not passively consume the meaning presented to them by an objective literary text; rather they actively make meaning they find in literature.”

The new text is a creation of reading, understanding and interpretation of the old text. This interpretation relies on the degree of reader's dynamic, linguistic, cultural and intellectual capacity which he bears on the new text. Mohammed (2013:84) argues that, a literary text is incomplete and attains its completeness only when it is read. Textual interpretation according to Iser is based on a tripod which are the reading, the many interpretations and the statements of the text.

(i). A text must be read: Iser (1978:24) opines that “... the text can only come to life when it is read and if it is to be examined; it must therefore be seen through the eyes of the reader.” The reading of a text precedes any response by a reader. It is a process of literary exploration leading to other text projections as a result of text dynamics. Reader-Response theory therefore affords us an approach to understanding the cultural transactions between two texts and the French texts that are their projections.

(ii). Many possible interpretative projections of a text: linguistic and cultural codes in the existing text are decoded resulting in a new hermeneutic whole. The Greek *Oedipus Rex* that was read and adapted to the Nigerian and the Cameroonian stages by Ola Rotimi and Jacqueline Leloup with the titles *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and *Guéido* respectively is an example of the Reader-Response principle that underlines the indeterminate interpretations of a text. Iser (1978:30) summarizes this indeterminate nature of a text as follows:

“Indeterminacy can also be counterbalanced at any given time in terms of the individual experience of the reader. He can reduce a text to the level of his own standards on to the text in order to grasp its specific meaning [...] The act of reading is, therefore, a process of seeking to pin down the oscillating structure of the text to some specific meaning.”

Iser (1978:1) argues again that a literary text can only produce a response when it is read. The reading process therefore becomes a transaction between the text and the reader. This transaction is not complete until responses are produced.

(iii). Response is based on the statements of the read text: the statements of the text enable the reader to create or project other meanings in the new text. This text is brought to life by various interpretations of the readers to fill cultural, linguistic, historical and psychological gaps applicable to the readers’ cultural milieu. These gaps are inexhaustible and indeterminate. Okwuchukwu (2014:39) refers to these literary gaps as “... those interpretations that are brought to bear on certain parts of the text which are not explicitly stated or which have varying meanings, but which the reader inputs in order to make meaning of the part of the literary text.”

Iser (1978:13) reemphasizes that no literary text exists outside the reader in the reaffirmation that “... neither the text nor the reader should be studied in isolation rather the text produces certain ‘blanks’ or ‘gaps’ that the reader must attempt to complete.”

This process of literary interpretation from novel to drama as espoused by Iser (1978) provides a platform for a dramatist creatively to fill observable cultural and linguistic gaps in such a way that the themes, plots and characters retain their literary purposes. Iser (1978:24) emphasizes the need to name and analyze the cause of a response to a literary text. The application of this theory focuses on plot structure, setting, themes, language, style and characterization.

5. Literary Adaptation, Translation and Nigerian Modern Drama

Literature is a direct adaptation of human experiences in a given society at a given time and period. These include stories of success, defeats, myth, culture and legends relating person to person and civilization to civilization. African literature is not an exception to this practice. Jeyifo (1985:42) posits that “... literature is the mirror of any given society.” The literature of a society reveals its virtues and vices. Its objectives are to correct the vices, uphold the virtues and propagate good morals and cultures for the overall development of that society. This is where the creative function of a writer comes into play. This is found in literary texts and drama in particular. Traditional rites, festivals and ceremonies form the major source of drama in Africa of which Nigeria is a major geographical component. This African theatre results from performances of ritual activities from antiquity. These include festivals, religious rituals, weddings and funerals. However, African theatre and Nigerian drama in particular had over decades been influenced by Western literary tradition.

Drama and theatre are sometimes interchangeably used in modern literature. However, drama is distinct because it is a written text waiting to be transformed to theatre before an audience while theatre is the performance of a dramatic work (Oni, 2017:290). Since writers do not write in vacuum, Soyinka apart from promoting African myths, legends and the Yoruba socio-cultural patrimony, advocates the enlightenment of the common people in terms of the cases of corruption, nepotism and dishonesty perpetrated by the ruling class as against the well-being of the masses through the dramatic creation of adaptation and cultural translation.

6. Literary Adaptation and Intertextuality

The practice of adaptation and interpretation from one form of art to another across the globe emphasizes the notion of text projections and dynamics in which a text is considered an open system as other texts emerge from it as responses to the extra-text environment. Martinez (1996:269) opines that "... we can find theories of Intertextuality wherever there has been discourse about texts, from the classics, such as Plato, Aristotle, Horace and Longinus, to Bakhtin, Kristeva and other twentieth-century theorists such as Genette, Barthes, Derrida and Riffaterre ...". Mohammad (2013:4) posits that writers are creative, putting together strings of words and ideas to a specific end, and intertextuality is merely a tool of which writers avail themselves to approach a tale.

Balogun (2013:157) explains the relevance of this theory to textual analysis when he identifies its four principles: Reading a literary text allows an incursion in history; it brings out a resurgent phenomenon that makes culture a place of sudden appearance of forgotten traditions and demonstrates the structural disposition of a novel to integrate units of variants in a polyphonic manner; it implies a method with which a reader of a novel perceives a link between the one they are reading and the ones that preceded or succeeded it; it is a concept that an author of a novel draws their experience from "already read" in other works. These tenets capture the need for Intertextuality in a bid to understand the relationship between texts, just as Barthes (1977:205) opines that cultural codes deployed by any single story will emigrate to other texts and can also be complemented by ancillary art forms; there is no lack of hosts.

A text in this context is in different media and means different things to various categories of people and locations. This suggests that analysis of the relationship among texts as expressed in one cultural code and the interpreted version requires the knowledge of Intertextual theory for better understanding. Okwuchukwu (2014:42) argues that texts are professionally defined and medium specific. Whereas to a literary artist, a novel, play or poem is a text, to an architect, an architectural piece is a text. Allen (2000:1) posits that "... texts whether they be literary or non-literary are viewed by modern theorists as lacking in any kind of independent meaning. They are what theorists now call Intertextual." When meanings of texts are being discussed, intertextuality is important to understanding textual relationship when a text transforms from one medium (novel) to another (theatre).

Bakhtin (1984:201) in agreement, maintains that "... the life of the word is contained in its transfer from one mouth to another, from one context to another context, from one social collective to another." To this end, what writers call texts are mere adaptations of oral traditions into readable graphics (prints). This further establishes that texts are reproductions of existing meaningful experiences, transformed into different mediums of communication. It borrows, translates or adapts to another art medium. Since there is no final knowledge, as the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament is of great importance to a clergy, so is Intertextuality to any meaningful literary critic. Rohou (1996:20) sees intertextuality as the presence of an historical culture in a written work. It is a concept in which a narrator cites fragments of other works as they work on "dépà lu."

Literary adaptation according to Martinez (1996:269) is as old as human culture itself. In principle and in practice, it falls within the scope of global practices. It is the art of deliberate re-rendering of an already existing work of art in a new form or genre. This imitation involves the transposition of the work of another creative artist into a different medium within a specific socio-historical and cultural context (Adeoti, 2010:8). This literary practice has necessitated the study of similarities and differences between the new and the old literary cultures which gave birth to what Kristeva called Intertextuality. Hutcheon (2006:8-9), describes it as a process of reception, through which "... we experience adaptations as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition and variation" or, in other words, the ways in which we associate the entity or product as both similar to and a departure from the original.

Adaptation and translation both contribute to the studies in comparative literature and the global dialogue of culture. Adaptation is not subjected to text fidelity as in translation. While cultural modification or relocation is permitted in adaptation, literary translation celebrates linguistic and thematic fidelity. Owoyeye (2008:186) submits that "... the existing and the new meet in an artistic marriage to give birth to a literary child imbued with the attributes of both," while Johnson (1984:48) describes adaptation as a simple translation of the precursor texts which could be intersemiotic. Baker (2000:7) concurs with Adeoti (2010:13) above on the universal nature of literary adaptation. This adaptation of existing text is what Hutcheon (2006:4) calls "... a repetition with variations." Timothy-Asobele (2003:xiv) sees it as a global dialogue of culture while Conteh-Morgan and Olaniyan (2004:53) recapture it as "... an intercultural negotiation between the new and the old text."

Dasylyva (1997:70), in *Dramatic Literature: A Critical Source Book*, distinguishes adaptation from translation. He writes that "... translation is a rendering of the original [...] as accurate as possible in the translator's choice of language without losing its dramatic quality." It could be intersemiotic, interlingual and intertextual. A literary adapter transforms an existing text or experience into a new text of its own hermetic value usually from one art medium to another. Nigerian playwrights adapted existing Western classical texts to achieve their literary targets. The contact between Nigerians and the Western texts, which continues to shape the imagination and creativity of Nigerian writers in literature, drama in particular, flourished from this origin.

African literature is generally influenced by Western texts. This is evident in the works of African writers who adapted Western texts to the African-Yoruba milieu for cultural purposes. Interestingly, through these adaptations, the substance of the Yoruba cultural heritage was given a visibility among world literature. According to Oni (2017:269), this cultural heritage can only gain currency when compared with western epistemological thought in line with Soyinka's literary engagements. He again opines that what animates the modern Nigerian dramatic presentations are western texts (2017:285). Timothy-Asobele (2016a:48) argues that, instead of looking for original and authentic texts which do not exist, people should be content with the duality of ideas, thoughts and beliefs, for every person creates their own vision. This intercultural dialogue has been the preoccupation of human races from the creation either by translation or adaptation. Timothy-Asobele (2016b:196) opines this dialogue of cultures by the way of literary translation will lead to a panhuman culture.

7. Significance of Literary Adaptations in Nigerian Modern Drama and Literature

The literary adaptation of Western classical texts to Nigerian cultural milieu particularly to the drama sub-genre is very significant. The turning point in modern Nigerian drama is traceable to the work of Ola Rotimi in 1968 when he adapted Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* of 430 BCE to a Nigerian drama with the title, *The Gods Are Not to Blame* which became a success in Nigerian literature and across national boundaries. The Esan Oladapo's *Teleda L'ase* in 2004 was adapted from the same *Oedipus Rex*. The celebrated Duro Ladipo's *Aare Akogun* in 1970 was an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello* (1603). On these findings, literary adaptation is found to be significant to the growth and development of the Nigerian literature, modern drama in particular.

The works of playwrights such as Soyinka's *The Bacchae* (1973), adapted from *Le Bacchae* of Euripides of 410 BCE, Osofisan's *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* (1978) adapted from Nicola Gogol's *The Government Inspector* of 1836, Zulu Sofola's *The Wizard of Law* (1975) adapted from the *Farce* of Pierre Panthelin in the fourteenth century, Ahmed Yerima's *An Inspector Calls* (2002) was a rereading of Priestly's *An Inspector Calls* of 1945 and Bode Sowande's *Arede Owo* (1990), a Yoruba adaptation of Moliere's *l'Avare* of 1668 all continue to play a significant role in the growth and development of modern drama in which Nigerian cultural diversities are animated and are over the years listed among the annals of world literature.

Included in the list are Ola Rotimi in 1968 adapted Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* of 430 BCE and Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* to Nigerian cultural milieu with the title; *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. Esan Oladapo adapted the same work with the title *Teleda L'ase* in 2004. Duro Ladipo's *Aare Akogun* in 1970 and Wale Ogunyemi's *Aare Akogun* in 1969 were respectively adapted from Shakespeare's *Othello* of 1603 and *Macbeth* of 1623. These adaptations place the Nigerian cultural values on the global scene. They are re-readings of literary works from other climes in the light of Yoruba socio-cultural belief which further project their heritage and patrimony

Significantly, it must be mentioned here that prominent among Nigerian dramatists who engaged and are still engaging with the adaptationist approach in his literary works is Wole Soyinka. He traded the tool of adaptation in many of his works in promoting African culture and aesthetics among the world literature by adapting Western texts to the Nigerian context. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature on October 17th, 1986, the first African and Nigerian to be so awarded. This is a major contribution to the global value of Nigerian literature, drama and the Yoruba cultural patrimony in particular in the international literary discourse.

8. Conclusion

In this study, the aesthetics and the influence of literary adaptation as well as its significance to Nigerian modern drama were examined. The paper also revealed that adaptation of Western texts to the Nigerian cultural milieu has played a significant role in the evolution and the development of theatre and modern drama in Nigeria. The study concludes that literary adaptation is a product of intellectual creativity in a cross-cultural dialogue among nations of many cultural diversities. It argues that literary adaptation does not equal inferiority but is a creative process of cultural interrogation and dialogue with a national colouration which has contributed immensely to the growth of French literature and comparative cultural studies in Nigeria. The paper further established literary adaptations of Western canons is the basis upon which the Nigerian modern drama attained its global essence. Although this discussion literarily focuses on concept, theory and significance of literary adaptation in modern Nigerian drama. However, there is a need for further studies to identify the differences between the two concepts that seem conflictual: Modern Nigerian Drama and Nigerian Modern Drama.

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Book Reviews

Down to Earth - Politics in the New Climate Regime

Bruno Latour

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107 pp.

Translated by Catherine Porter



Before going into the full text, I would like to say that the key to entering Latour's *Down to Earth - Politics in the New Climate Regime*, is to clarify the two concepts of "nature" and "modernity." The idea of nature that we hold will determine what kind of climate regime we build. The thought we have of "modernity" will determine how deeply we think about climate. This review will also follow this step, through Latour's most central concept in the book - *terrestrial*, in turn, nature and modernity will be briefly discussed.

Now climate is a hot issue in contemporary politics, closely linked to anti-globalization, rising populism, the disintegration of the welfare state, rising inequality and migration issues. Is there an outlook to save the planet from the current crisis, when Donald Trump announced his withdrawal from the Paris Agreement in 2017; when the UK, faced with thousands of refugees, decided to withdraw from the game of globalisation; and when migratory flows swept across the globe with even greater ferocity, forcing countless people to lose their homes? Latour has the answer: *Terrestrial*.

Consider Latour's (pp. 74-82) description of *Terrestrial*:

- (i) *Terrestrial* is not yet an institution, but it is already an actor whose role is markedly different from the role that moderns assign to "nature".
- (ii) Saying "we are earthbound, we are terrestrials amid terrestrials," does not lead to the same politics as saying "we are humans in nature."
- (iii) *Terrestrials* have to understand how much other existence is needed to sustain them.

(iv) In a subsistence system, all actors raise concerns about their ancestors and descendants, which is clearly different from moderns, for whom one has to choose between the old and the new.

(v) The production system is concerned only with human beings and resources. In the generative system, actors, activists and activities have their own paths and interests.

(vi) *Terrestrials* inherit materiality, heterogeneity, thickness, dust, humus, successive strata, surprising complexity, the need for close monitoring, the need for careful attention.

As we can see, Latour sees people who are closely connected to the earth as terrestrials. As the fourth mysterious attractor, terrestrial complements and surpasses the three main attractors of Local - Globalization - Out-of-This-World, which promote the process of modernity (p. 34). Under the modern progressive rational narrative, backward and conservative localization and rapidly expanding globalization make moderns homeless - localization often means national and country-oriented narratives, cultural heritage, historicism, nostalgia and anti-globalization, while globalization focuses on commodity circulation, economic growth, exploration and reproduction. Nature is thus alienated: for localists, there is a nature that was pre-determined harmonious, pure and mysterious, but now scarred; For globalization, nature is equated with resources, national borders and economic development zones, which are reduced as object. In this regard, Latour proposed that the terrestrial should include all activities and all organic matter between the earth and human beings, which is a completely organic world, different from “nature” or “human society.” Also, the notion of *Terrestrial* is a continuation of Latour’s ANT (Actor Network Theory), which aims to break down dualism and activate the “middle” kingdoms made up of countless excluded hybrids and life entity. According to ANT, anything that changes the state of things by making a difference can be called an “actor,” which includes not only human beings, but also non-human beings such as ideas, technologies, and creatures. Secondly, ANT sees actors as dynamic, constructing society as an interconnected network, rather than some rigid description of essentialism or functionalism.

Thus, Latour created a new concept of “nature,” which broke the inherent modernity dualities of nature-human/society, location-globalization, etc. Humans do not rule the earth, yes, that is not new, the key is how do we get along with non-humans? Build a strong network of terrestrials. In short, for Latour, terrestrial still constitutes a profound critique of modernity. According to his book *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993), in our existing view of modernity, modern people can flip back and forth between the two poles of the natural-social order dualism, but cleverly offset the two poles, so as not to constitute a critical short circuit: Nature can be either transcendent (we cannot violate the laws of nature, disasters are real and meaningless) or internal (we have infinite possibilities; science is the product of laboratories + scientists + politics + society; we have entered the Anthropocene); Society can be either transcendental (society has its own laws; the economic foundation determines the superstructure; historic reincarnation) or internal (we are completely free; labor and practice). The existence of God is also reversible: it is precisely with God as an external guarantee that subject thinking in a safe, closed, windless environment is possible. In other words, Latour claims that moderns have never been modern because we thought we had distanced ourselves from the pre-modern human, from the pre-enlightenment world of undivided nature-society chaos, but in fact we have never left the undivided world. It is hidden under the dualistic horizon of nature and society as a network (a huge middle kingdom composed of hybrids such as quasi-object and quasi-subject).

Those terrestrials, on the contrary, are attached to the land. Each person on the ground, in his own way, determines what needs to be used, what needs to be protected, what is the boundary between globalization and localization, what is the boundary between nature and society. Just try to consider the Fukushima nuclear contaminated water discharge in Japan in August 2023, when the scientists presented the top paper

proudly proved that the discharge would be no problem, and the mass panic was based on the lack of scientific knowledge - it is precisely this nature-social, rational-emotional dualism that blinded us. We must pay attention to the split between the news media reporting on the economic devastation of fishermen off the coast of Japan and laboratory scientists telling us that the emissions are safe; One side is global anxiety and condemnation, the other side is Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida personally sampled seafood from nearby Fukushima Prefecture. If we follow Latour's warning, the absurdity is clear: human beings divide nature into laboratory nature, geographical survival resources, or mythic continents of nostalgia, but do not integrate themselves into a whole network of interconnected lands, oceans, wetlands, deserts, plants and animals, microbes, hybrid compounds, and even geographical proletariat, thereby preserving privileges.

At the end of the review, I would like to discuss Donna J. Haraway's and Slavoj Žižek's view of nature in an additional way to illustrate that Latour is not alone:

"The earth of the ongoing Chthulucene is sympoietic, not autopoietic. Mortal Worlds (Terra, Earth, Gaia, Chthulu, the myriad names and powers that are not Greek, Latin, or Indo-European at all) do not make themselves, no matter how complex and multileveled the systems, no matter how much order out of disorder might be produced in generative autopoietic system breakdowns and relaunchings at higher levels of order. Autopoietic systems are hugely interesting—witness the history of cybernetics and information sciences; but they are not good models for living and dying worlds and their critters. Autopoietic systems are not closed, spherical, deterministic, or teleological; but they are not quite good enough models for the mortal SF world (Haraway, 2016:33)."

"We are all lichens; therefore, we can be scraped off the rocks by the Nemesis, who still erupts to avenge the crimes committed against the Earth. Or, we can join the metabolism between rocks and critters, allowing ourselves to live and die well (Haraway, 2016:56)."

"From AIDS to ecological catastrophe to the Holocaust, the key to resisting meaning is when we are confronted with potential or existing catastrophes: these catastrophes reject deeper meaning (Žižek, 1991:32)."

Both Haraway and Žižek have distilled the horrors of nature; for the former it is a biological "Chaos Faction" of the Chthulucene Age; for the latter, the response of nature belongs to the realm of the Real in the sense of Lacanian psychoanalysis, and we must endure its meaninglessness. Further, according to Haraway's artistic, peculiar, and baroque-style description, human was reduced to the basic components of earth in the Age of Chthulucene, coexisting in mix with a wide variety of creatures. In reality, the "monsters" are merely eliminated by anthropocentric tales and relegated to a peripheral role. For instance, the terrible tentacles of octopus, the slick lichen of moss, and the scary twin eyes of insect that are always glaring at us from the shadows. It can be said that this coincides with Latour's thought, they are not especially to reduce the autonomy of human status, but to promote some kind of human and non-human equality. Second, the companion relationship between humans and non-humans is emphasized, and the fact that non-human beings also shape our behaviour.

Echoing this, Žižek sees natural disasters as horrors that cannot be symbolised, and that we must acknowledge the rootlessness of the Big Other, just as we acknowledge that "nature" does not exist. Therefore, contemporary mainstream ecological thought is worthy of criticism in Žižek's view, because they often presuppose a nature-in-itself, independent of human values, so returning to that harmonious nature is the ultimate goal. However, as Žižek (2008:444) says, it is always assumed the reality-in-itself underpins our lives as an ordered whole of meaning: the balance of mainstream ecological thought is

naturally long gone, and it can only alleviate our inner fears and traumas. In other words, that balanced nature-in-itself, also known as the purified *nature as universe* by Latour (p.65), is only a retrospective projection of meaning by human beings using discourse symbols, and what we really have is a second nature. Seeing the same, Žižek and Latour no longer cling to the symbolized first nature, bravely cut the foundation of nature, and turned to face the new world. However, Žižek's new world is a radical envision, a world of horrific in-human subjects and artificial life synthesized by technology. Human beings must face the self-denial of ecological crisis and step into the abyss of freedom. However, Latour's new world is gentler, full of the primordial hope of growth, where nature still has the potential to provide spiritual solace rather than merely an echo of the dark winds of the Real.

At last, Latour concludes by saying that this time we should not expect belated help from the United States. When the American political elite desperately escapes the earth, denying the reality of climate change and seeing themselves as the absolute exception, does it ironically suggest that the primary condition of rootlessness is exactly the very essence of our existentialism? Latour, however, appealed with greater verve for a new landing. This time, human society and nature are no longer dualistic opposites, subject and object that must be separated from each other both ontologically and epistemologically. On the contrary, human beings, society and nature are truly integrated organically, moving from binary opposition to binary tension - we are all actors, along with things that don't belong to us.

Chengyuan He, Krirk University

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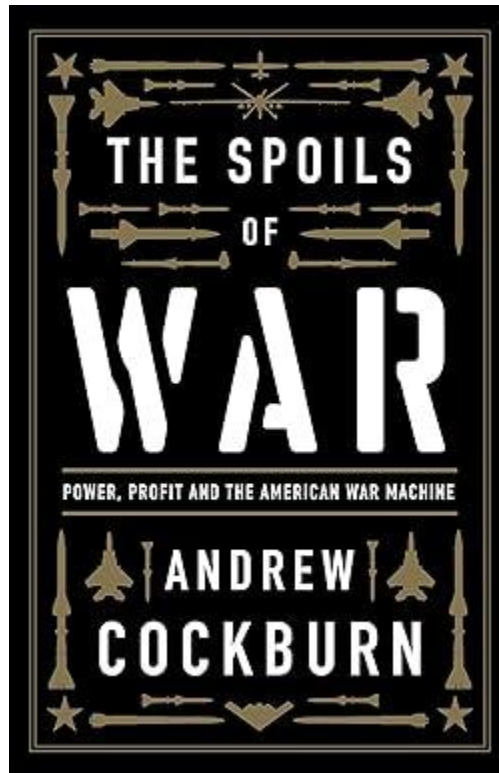
The Spoils of War: Power, Profit and the American War Machine

Andrew Cockburn

London and New York, NY: Verso, 2023

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XVI + 284 pp.



Neil Postman (1993:2) wrote that technology is both a friend and an enemy: it is a friend not just because it makes life easier but because of its lengthy, intimate and inevitable relationship with culture, "... technology does not invite a close examination of its own consequences; it is an enemy because "It undermines certain mental processes and social relations that make human life worth living." This tension or contradiction is at the heart of Andrew Cockburn's collection of reportage, *The Spoils of War*. His focus is the US military-industrial complex and the way in which it constantly pursues new forms of technologically advanced weapons and logistics systems which invariably fail to materialize on time and on budget (see also NASA), with the result that insufficient numbers of new systems are put into operation and so older or obsolete items must be kept in use to make up the shortfall. As he puts it:

"The Air Force's fighter strength, for example, declined by almost two thirds between 1999 and 2022. Furthermore, since new models never arrive in sufficient numbers, the service must keep older models in service for longer than originally projected, which of course require progressively more intensive maintenance, driving costs still higher (p.270)."

Not only is this clearly sub-optimal in itself but the desire of commercial companies and the senior military brass who work with them (and often, subsequently, for them) to incorporate the very latest technological advances actively acts to undermine the social relations of good military practice, as Postman foretold.

Cockburn has made much of this in another book, *Kill Chain* (2016), which described the rise of drones and drone technology in contemporary warfare and made the connection that it was reliance on technology rather than human interventions that has led to the perpetration of civilian massacres in America's battlefields in the Middle East. In this book, he writes of a similar problem affecting the Air Force (which is the most prone to this kind of mistake because, at least in part, of historical wrangles over its existence and funding).

Here, the contrast is drawn between the A-10 Warthog (other models are, I believe, in service) and the much newer B1 bomber. The former was specifically designed for close ground support, which means it is able to approach military operations at close range while being protected by extensive armour plating. The armour does not improve the plane's agility but it does accentuate its role of flying close above the action while the pilot and crew can take careful note of what is going on and who is involved. Military leaders who were genuinely concerned to minimize civilian casualties would use the A-10 and its human intelligence to make sure they knew what was happening. However, the A-10 was considered outdated and its functions could be assumed by a new generation of aeroplane, in the form of the B1. Unfortunately, so as to be bedecked with the very latest baubles and gadgets, the cost of each B1 had spiralled to US\$300 million so, unarmoured as it was to enhance performance, it had to be kept well out of the way of enemy fire. Consequently, B1 crews relied on technology and the reports of remote observers to identify targets which they would then seek to destroy from afar. In the event of uncertainty, perverse incentives came into play – releasing weapons defined an event as a military confrontation and that appeared on an individual's record, leading to better opportunities for promotion and transfers to more desirable theatres of operation. Besides which, should anything go wrong, those involved could realistically depend on government spokespeople and obedient media mouthpieces to claim that anyone killed was a 'militant' or enemy combatant of some sort and that, by virtue of being in the vicinity of a designated target, is sufficient to merit a death sentence.

Cockburn collects a variety of pieces in this book (he also credits his editor for doing this), most of which first appeared in *Harper's Magazine* and each which a brief paragraph bringing the story up to date. As a journalist, he relies upon the personal interview and has clearly obtained access to individuals at very high levels. That he has been able to do this lends credibility to his exposition of the facts and this is buttressed by the occasional use of triangulation in the form of secondary literature. This is good enough for journalism and the people willing to provide a positive blurb for the back cover suggests that many readers will be convinced by the way the story is told. However, the narrative is generally written in a way that consistently follows a pattern and there will be those who imagine real life is somewhat less predictable and that a fuller explanation of who was spoken to, when and under what circumstances might yield some alternative interpretations. There is also the issue of omission: in every chapter, an impressive range of sources is deployed from across the years to buttress the main argument but what did they say that we are not being told? Journalists protect their sources, of course and academics too will insist on confidentiality for their respondents. Even so, there remains a sense that other stories could have been told.

Although most of the pieces in the book cohere around the central narrative, there are a couple towards the end which stray into the areas of finance and banking. Insofar as these pieces contribute to the general understanding of American governance generally being at least as corrupt as anywhere else, they too contribute to the thrust of the book. However, these chapters do tend to dilute the overall flow.

The military debacle does not seem to be getting any better: the new fighter plane being introduced to allies around the world is the F35, assiduously hawked at all weapons shows, despite the fact that it is out of operation for nearly half the time, no one dares to fly it near to a thunderstorm and the pilots have to wear helmets so unwieldy that they can scarcely move their heads. These machines also require an inordinate

amount of maintenance and support, that can seemingly be provided only by American mechanics and engineers. Can the F35 really overcome these problems and prove to be decisive on the battlefield? Cockburn concludes that this is not the point of the military-industrial complex. Drawing on the thought of Pentagon analyst Frankin ‘Chuck’ Spinney, he claims that “... the imperative of the US military-industrial complex is not to prepare for war, but to perpetuate and amplify the flow of money in its direction, principally by means of promoting ever more expensive and complex systems of dubious utility (p.269).”

It is certainly true that claims made by military leadership around the world of the benefits of the technology they are able to deploy has been found to be overblown. The progress of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the strike by Hamas fighters (who are terrorists) against Israel both suggest that relying on technology to perform in the way claimed for it would be a mistake.

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John Walsh, Krirk University

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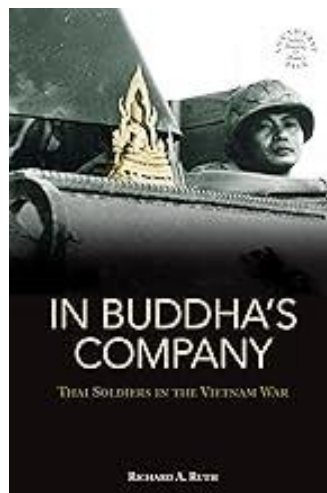
In Buddha’s Company: Thai Soldiers in the Vietnam War

Richard A. Ruth

Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2012

ISBN: 9786162150340

X + 275 pp.



Richard Ruth concludes his admirably well-researched study of Thai soldiers in the Second Indochinese (a.k.a. Vietnam) War with the observation that Thai people, insofar as they are aware of their country’s involvement at all, look at the event in the opposite way to most of the rest of the world. Without either regret or doubt, as he puts it, Thais celebrate their performance as part of a successful venture. As he observes elsewhere in the text, this is a part of the general Thai tendency to view their own culture as being

unequivocally good; it is, therefore, their role as devout Buddhists – the most devout, in fact – to lead their neighbours to higher levels of spiritual awareness. As Theravadin Buddhists, this is to be done through deeds rather than words.

This is part of a series of factors that made Thais very welcome allies to the US forces and, as a result, their government was willing to pay a great deal in both money and political capital to bring several thousand of them to the field. Outside of Bangkok, the country was still largely rural in nature and lacking in well-remunerated opportunities and so the chance to earn some good money as part an army glamorously fighting overseas was very attractive to many. That the endeavour was bless both by the royal family and the Sangha only added to the attractiveness. Of course, there were some who did not really need the money but believed in the anti-Communist causes, such as Narong Kittikachorn, of whom Ruth writes:

“It is difficult ... to conjure up the image of Narong Kittikachorn, the son of Thailand’s premier Thanon Kittikachorn, shooting university students from the open door of a hovering helicopter in October 1973 without wondering where he learned such ghastly skills (p.12).”

Fortunately, most of the respondents (although not all) interviewed for this book appear to be less repellent. Indeed, they mostly comes across as likeable men more interested in what they can get from the PX (a store with imported goods only available to the serving military of the US and its allies) that can be sold or sent back home, flirting with Vietnamese women in the almost total absence of Vietnamese men and working out how to survive in a Buddhist-animist landscape in which some spirits might be hostile to outsiders. This last point hints at one of the reasons the Thais were present on the battlefield and a paradox about how they viewed that situation themselves. They were assets to the Americans because they were familiar with the landscape, since most of them had been brought up in similar environments themselves. As a result, they were quickly able to orient themselves in the field and could more easily detect booby traps and minefields. The negative aspect was what they could see which the Americans generally could not, which were the ghosts and spirits which play such an important role in the Thai psyche. There is an entertaining section which describes the biggest and most terrible menace that the Thais feared, which is not tigers, mosquitoes, snakes or diseases but the apparently mild-mannered deer. Over a period of time, the soldiers developed the belief that the muntjac deer that occasionally encountered possessed potent spiritual strength and that to kill one or even to eat part of its flesh would almost immediately bring about their own deaths (a belief supported by case study evidence). However, the potency of other spiritual and religious items and institutions had been weakened by their enemy’s adherence to Godless Communism. Consequently, the Thais find it convenient to camp out in Vietnamese graveyards, where the various tombstones and monuments provide useful shelter should enemies approach. This would otherwise have been unimaginable, given the Thai belief in the magical potency of corpses. However, that potency had been drained by the Vietcong’s neglect of their temples and monks (Vietnamese people were in any case Mahayana Buddhists who had less use for monks than did Theravadin believers).

The whole book is full of fascinating illustrations of life as a soldier in Vietnam. It is, apart from anything else, a rich example of the superior ability of qualitative rather than quantitative research to understand and explain complex human situations. Ruth systematically tells the story of the volunteers from the process by which they signed up through to training, deployment and then diverse aspects of life in the field. It would have been helpful to have had some consideration also of the impact of their service on their family relationships and their subsequent process but the narrative Ruth does provide is weighty enough already. By allowing the men (no women were permitted to serve) to tell their own stories in extended conversations, we are able to learn what was important to them – besides which, reporting of how many men were involved, in which units and with what equipment and so forth has already taken place. This includes a comprehensive treatment of the use and importance of amulets in protecting against danger and their use in

establishing relationships with the GIs is included. There are also vivid accounts of the PX and what were its most valuable offerings, while the sale of narcotics to make extra money to visit the store again is also part of the story. The book is well-written and although it comes with 50 pages of footnotes, these are tucked away at the end of the book and so do not interrupt the reading experience. This is a book which adds to our understanding of warfare and of work and labour under hazardous conditions. It also adds to our understanding of Thai culture in a number of ways. Indeed, it is hard to imagine any other society from which a book like this might spring, certainly not in the context of the war which caused its existence.

John Walsh, Krirk University

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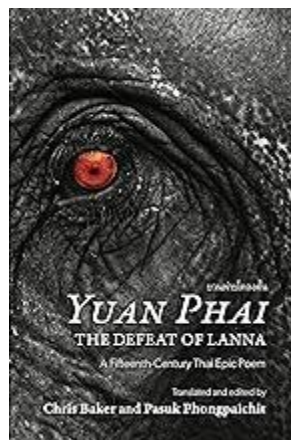
Yuan Phai: The Defeat of Lanna – A Fifteenth-Century Thai Epic Poem

Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, editors and translators

Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2017

ISBN: 9-786162-151255

V + 111 pp.



Chris Baker and Pasuk Phonpaichi, long working together as a team, have systematically compiled a notable body of work contributing to the contemporary understanding of Thai history. In recent years, they have supplemented their excellent *A History of Thailand* (2014) with translations of some of the landmarks of Thai literature, such as *The Tale of Khun Chang Khun Phaen* (2010). In this book, *Yuan Phai*, they have turned their attention to the defeat of Lanna, the northern state centred on Chiang Mai and its absorption into the Ayutthaya state. As a martial epic, it is the first of its kind in Thai literature. It does not, as the translators observe, present any sense of valour among those who did the actual fighting but does represent an instalment in the development of the royal panegyric which has continued into the modern age. Nevertheless, warfare is glamourized to some extent as an activity and this, it is suggested, might indicate that the poem had an audience outside of the royal palaces where literate people might be gathered. It is a tempting thought that there once existed a kind of troubadour class of people moving from village to village or at least polity to polity retelling the tale of the battle. However, as far as I am aware, there is no evidence of this.

It is not known who the author of the poem is or even if there was a single author. A well-known passage within the narrative bemoans the inarticulacy of the poet to describe the scene as would be desired but this

might well have been introduced by one or more of a number of playful authors, as the overall work evolved and changed over time. In any case, very little is known of the provenance. Further, the text is clearly incomplete and it is of course also not known how much more of it there might once have been and what content it had. It is possible to speculate but little more than guesswork is possible.

Baker and Phongpaichit's work is formidably difficult not just because of problems with the text but also because of changes in the Thai language over time and in the complex nature of Thai verse of the past. Currently, Thai has five tones but previously only three and the transition from one state to the next seems to have brought forth radical changes in pronunciation. Since the same string of letters with different tones can have very different meanings, this indicates there is a great deal of uncertainty with respect to possible translations. The authors have done what they can to publish what they consider, with their extensive experience, to be the most likely rendition but they point out ambiguity in the accompanying notes. The comparison in English would be not Shakespeare or even Chaucer but with Anglo-Saxon verse, which is quite impenetrable to native English speakers who have not studied it.

As for the verse itself, it is explained in the following way:

“The meter used in most of the original is *khlóng si dan bat kunchon*, an ‘elephant-foot’ *khlóng*, which has three rules: (1) lines of five syllables with a two-to-four-syllable tailpiece, (2) rhymes linking one of the two final syllables in the line to the fourth or fifth syllable in the second line down, and (3) mandatory tones at certain positions (p.101).”

Understandably, this would be impossible to translate in verse into a language like English which does not have a tonal system and, rather than try and fail, the authors have adopted a blank verse approach instead. Even so, understanding and appreciating the text requires knowledge not just of the history of events described but of Buddhist cosmography and the courtly rituals of the time. For example, in the opening panegyric, this stanza is presented:

“Nine realms of living creatures He knows well;
nine kamma forms, in total, nine conceits,
nine supermundane ways, both good and bad,
nine things compounded – all He explicates (p.25).”

It is obvious, especially within the context, that the king (Trailokanat of Ayutthaya) is being praised but quite a lot of additional knowledge is required to realise the extent and nature of that praise (and that knowledge is itself contested by different scholars). It is not surprising that the poem is considered to be ‘notoriously difficult’ even for experts in Thai history and language, as a back-cover blurb from the noted religious scholar Professor Justin McDaniel observes.

As for the content of the poem, after the establishment of the virtue of the king, we move on to the actual historical events of the work. These focus on the struggle between Ayutthaya and the ruler of Lanna, Tolok, ‘the Lao,’ who receives the opposite treatment from Trailokanat: he is thoroughly demonized, being shown to have killed both his father and one of his sons and possibly having become insane in the process. He is demonstrably disloyal in a work that stresses the importance of loyalty to family and liege. He is also, of course, doomed to failure on the battlefield but only after a fierce and protracted struggle. The war takes a number of years to reach a conclusion – it was presumably not fought on an all-out basis as the monsoon season would have made moving an army all but impossible and the various forms of support required would have been composed of corvée labour who would have been needed to harvest enough food to feed the lord's community or else risk having it dissolve, loyalty notwithstanding. One city, Chaliang (though to

be the modern Chiang Chalian) changes hands several times during the course of the narrative. However, eventually the final battle does arrive, which historically occurred in 1474 or 5 and the virtuous prevail:

“The Golden Helmets, slashing, sally forth,
For them a fight is just a finger’s snap.
Ten men against a thousand hefty Lao,
they lop off heads, lugged back to give the king.

With spear and shield they charge ahead in streams.
Now man-to-man they slay the fear-filled Lao.
The peacock-tails flag on the Golden Spears.
In hordes the Yuan flee to find safe camp (p.77).”

Defeat in battle s, of course, disastrous as the victorious army would be expected to take away all useful resources (e.g. women and skilled workers) as slaves and leave nothing behind. It is certainly the case that Lanna was one of several previously independent states which have been incorporated into what became known as Siam and, now, Thailand, with only a few residual laments about what had once been remaining, although dialects and accents remain distinctive. In the case of the South of Thailand alone has there been any real interest in recreating the previously existing state.

This book, slim as it appears to be, represents a significant contribution to understanding the processes by which a unified Siam emerged and some of the individuals who helped bring this to pass. The translated verse is presented clearly and well and the accompanying notes are helpful without overwhelming the general reader. There is obviously space for more detailed scholarly work on various aspects of the poem and explorations from, for example, feminist and class-based perspectives will be very helpful. However, the book is essential for anyone interested in Thai history.

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