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ISSN: 2664-3030 (Print)
2664-3022 (Online)

JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENT AND
POLITICS IN AFRICA

AYIKA: JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENT AND POLITICS IN AFRICA

Vol 7, No 1
2025 Edition

Editorial Note

In the evolving discourse on environmental governance and political interactions in Africa, AYIKA: Journal of Environment and Politics in Africa stands out as a critical scientific platform that promotes in-depth engagement and dialogue among a diverse array of stakeholders, including researchers, policy analysts, and civil society. The complex interconnection between environmental challenges and political frameworks necessitates a nuanced exploration of these relationships, as evidenced by the growing consensus among scientific and political communities regarding the fundamental causes of environmental degradation. Creating a conducive environment for comprehensive exploration, AYIKA seeks to elucidate the nuances of environmental governance and its far-reaching implications for sustainable development across the African continent.

 Among the significant research themes featured in this journal is the insightful study on the impact assessment of Nigeria- Benin Republic border management policies. This inquiry emphasizes the critical need for effective policy frameworks that address transnational environmental challenges while also considering the socio-economic and political landscapes of the involved nations. Merging empirical findings with theoretical insights, this research strives to enhance our understanding of border management and its consequences for both countries' environmental sustainability and political stability, thereby emphasising the imperative for collaborative governance strategies.

Similarly, the investigation of harnessing emerging technologies to transform education and human capital development in Zimbabwe advocates for a progressive approach to human capital investment in relation to environmental sustainability. This examination highlights the intersection of technological advancements, educational reform, and developmental strategies, illustrating the potential of innovative solutions to boost socio-economic resilience amid the complexities of the Anthropocene.

In addition, the analysis of the OJUDE- OBA Cultural Festival as an instrument for sustainable community development in Nigeria emphasises the profound connections between cultural practices and sustainable development. This comprehensive perspective reveals that cultural festivals can serve not only as celebratory events but also as strategic catalysts for nurturing community engagement, fostering environmental stewardship, and advancing socio-economic development. Through these diverse research topics, AYIKA champions a holistic understanding of the critical nexus between environment and politics in Africa, thereby laying the groundwork for future scholarly contributions in this vital area of study.

As editors, we extend our heartfelt appreciation for the invaluable and insightful contributions that enrich the discourse presented in AYIKA. These contributions are vital in navigating the complexities of the relationship between environment and politics in Africa and beyond. In the same spirit, we invite a global audience to actively engage with this discourse, as collaborative dialogue and diverse perspectives are essential for fostering innovative solutions and advancing sustainable development efforts. Together, let us continue to deepen our understanding and take meaningful action toward addressing the pressing environmental and political challenges that affect not only Africa but the world at large.

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TRANSFORMING EDUCATION AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN ZIMBABWE: A LEADERSHIP-DRIVEN APPROACH LEVERAGING EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Zimbabwe experiences serious challenges in education and human capital development, which hinder its economic and social advancement. This paper explores the transformative potential of a leadership-driven approach, integrated with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and online platforms, to enhance educational outcomes within Zimbabwean Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Employing a quantitative case study design, quantitative data were collected through a structured survey administered to a representative sample of 200 educational leaders, assessing their perceptions of leadership and technology's impact on education. The quantitative analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics via SPSS, version 20. Underpinned by a multi-faceted theoretical framework, including Human Capital Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, and the Technology Adoption Model (TAM), the findings reveal the crucial role of leadership and technological innovation in fostering educational transformation and enhancing graduate employability. The paper acknowledges limitations and explores theoretical and practical implications, proposing a leadership paradigm that emphasises innovation, inclusivity, and adaptability. Recommendations for educators and policymakers centered on leveraging transformative leadership and emerging technologies to promote sustainable human capital development in Zimbabwe and beyond.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Human Capital Development, Technology Adoption Model, Emerging Technologies, Higher Education Institutions, Zimbabwe

Introduction

The need for a highly educated and agile pool of talent is critical in an age of dramatic technological change and growing global interdependence (Melnyk et al., 2021). Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a pivotal role in the development of such a workforce by instilling in graduates' skills like critical thinking, adaptability, and digital literacy (Kalyani, 2024). *The implication is that (HEIs) should adopt and effectively implement the new technologies including artificial intelligence (AI) and other educational mobile technologies to advance the goals of Education 5.0 model advocating for acceleration of digitalisation of their operations and curricula as articulated by Nherera and Mukora (2024).* Yet, a number of HEIs, notably in developing nations, like Zimbabwe, undergo significant challenges limiting their capacity to responsibly address these demands. The scholars found that HEIs in Zimbabwe *had adopted externally developed digitalisation frameworks without effectively adapting them to local contexts.* The challenges range from a lack of updated curricula to limited resources and insufficient technological integration across the university curriculum (Nherera & Mukora, 2024).This is contrary the requirements of Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5 which call for quality education and inclusivity coupled with gender parity particularly achieved through the application of emerging technologies that encompass artificial intelligence(AI), big data analytics, virtual reality(VR), internet of things(IoT) and others.Other international studies recommended that educational institutions should use emerging technologies to school humans as a form of capital in order to promote socio-economic development (Moghtader, 2021).

These emerging technologies (ET) are evolving electronic and digital tools which are expected to

substantially alter the educational systems, businesses and social contexts including higher educational institutions (HEIs) such as universities. This scenario suggests that a human capital development model with synergistic collaboration efforts on emerging technology has the potential to resolve these issues, which would subsequently contribute positively to the change process of education and human capital formation in HEIs within Zimbabwe. Human Capital Development (HCD) entails the enhancement of individuals' skills, knowledge, competencies, and attributes to enable their effective participation in the economy and contribution to national development (Lee & Han, 2021; World Bank, 2021). This encompasses investment in education, aligning educational policy to practice (Salimi, 2025) adhering to the World Bank's approach to EdTech in Sub-Saharan Africa although different studies show that diffusion of new technologies remains challenging and its success depends on the leadership perspectives of educational leaders (Kalyani, Bloom, Carvalho, Hassan, Lerner, & Tahoun, 2024).

Based on this understanding, this study explores the impact of transformational leadership practices on technology adoption and its subsequent effects on human capital development. There is need to understand key issues and concepts concerning transformative education and human capital development, training, and other forms of human capacity building. This research focuses on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and online platforms, including their applications in education for data mining, personalised learning, enhanced communication, and increased accessibility (Baker, 2010; Russell, & Norvig, 2016). through the lens of technology leadership perspectives such as transformational leadership. (Guan, Mou, & Jiang, 2020).

Transformational leadership (TL) style is characterised by inspiring and intellectually stimulating followers, fostering innovation, and promoting positive change (Bass, 1985) to improve the standards of learning across the curriculum. In HEIs, this involves creating a culture of innovation and encouraging faculty to embrace new technologies and pedagogies enabling the development of the 21st century skills and human capital.

However, Zimbabwe's higher education institutions are having a crisis of relevance as they struggle to generate graduates with the competencies and abilities that the workforce of the twenty-first century requires (Chirisa, 2024; Nherera & Mukora, 2024). Low completion rates, out-of-date curricula, and inadequate technological integration are examples of this. Zimbabwe's social advancement and economic growth are being hampered by the inadequate development of human capital. In order to promote graduate employability and human capital development, the main issue this study attempts to solve is the lack of a clear knowledge of how leadership can propel the successful integration of emerging technologies in Zimbabwean HEIs.

Research Gap

Although the literature currently in publication recognizes the difficulties Zimbabwean HEIs face and the potential of technology to revolutionize education, there is still a great deal to learn about the precise role that leadership plays in promoting technology adoption and its subsequent effects on the development of human capital in this setting. Prior research has frequently concentrated on the possible advantages of particular technologies (Mafa &Chigwedere, 2025) or the obstacles to technology integration (Maringe & Sing, 2014; Nwogbo, 2017). To further explain this issues, Maringe & Sing (2014) argued that teaching large classes in an increasingly internationalising higher education environment requires careful consideration of pedagogical, quality and equity issues as specified under the SDGs 4 and 5. However, there is a dearth of research that thoroughly examines how leadership styles, technology uptake, and human capital outcomes interact in Zimbabwean higher education institutions.

This study aims to close a critical gap in the literature by studying how leadership practices can create a supportive environment for technology integration, thereby enhancing graduate employability. In order to achieve this goal, the study addresses the following key question: *How can leadership facilitate the effective integration of emerging technologies in Zimbabwean HEIs to enhance human capital development?* It also explores the potential of a leadership-driven approach, in conjunction with emerging technologies, to transform education and human capital development within Zimbabwean Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) guided by the following three specific research objectives.

1. To determine the impact of transformational leadership practices on faculty perceptions regarding the usefulness of emerging technologies in education.
2. To assess how the perceived ease of use of emerging technologies influences the relationship between transformational leadership and faculty perceptions of technology's usefulness.
3. To evaluate the contributions of current educational practices that leverage technology to human capital development in Zimbabwean HEIs, with the goal of developing a technology-leadership-centric model for transformative education.

In order to give policymakers, educational leaders, and faculty useful insights, this research attempts to achieve these goals and offer a thorough understanding of how leadership and technology interact to alter education and human capital development in Zimbabwe.

Contextual Background

Reaching Sustainable Development Goal 4 and 5(SDG 4&5)—Quality Education and Gender Equity—remains a major obstacle throughout Africa, especially in HEIs (UNESCO, 2021). SDG 4 and 5 seeks to guarantee inclusive, equitable, high-quality education and encourage opportunities for lifelong learning for everyone without any gender discrimination and/or biases. Low primary and secondary school completion rates and restricted access to higher education are two urgent issues that Zimbabwe must deal with in order to move closer to reaching SDG 4 and 5 targets (GN et al., 2024). Less than one-third of young people in Sub-Saharan Africa complete upper secondary school, making it the region with the lowest primary completion rates in the world, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, & United Nations Children's Fund (2022). This low level of education results in a shortage of human capital, which impedes the continent's economic progress.

According to a World Bank brief on Zimbabwe, a child born in Zimbabwe will only be 47% as productive as they could be if they had access to full health care and quality education accessed to all without any form of discrimination (World Bank,2021). Despite having a strong history, Zimbabwe's higher education system has been underfunded and has endured years of economic difficulty (Maringe & Sing, 2014). These issues are made worse by inadequate infrastructure and finance, which make it harder for institutions to incorporate the required technologies (Nwogbo, 2017). Learning results at HEIs are still low, despite Zimbabwe having achieved gender parity in elementary education. This calls for a transformative approach to education (Schneegans, 2021).

Additionally, in the context of Zimbabwe, GN et al. (2024) draw attention to obstacles to inclusion, success, equity, and access in higher education. These difficulties highlight how urgently creative solutions that make use of available resources and advance sustainable development are needed (Sandoval-Hernández, Isac, Carrasco, & Miranda, 2021; UNICEF. 2021; World Bank,2021).

The necessity of a transformative strategy
It is essential to investigate creative, situation-specific solutions that make use of technology and leadership in light of the difficulties Zimbabwean HEIs face.

According to research, new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and online platforms have the potential to help students get ready for the workforce of the twenty-first century (Kayyali, 2024; Li et al., 2024). For example, internet platforms can improve educational accessibility and facilitate collaboration, while AI systems can personalize learning experiences (Baker, 2010; Russell & Norvig, 2009).

It has been demonstrated that incorporating AI into educational settings improves student engagement through customized feedback (Madhumithaa et al., 2025) and individualized learning pathways (Ekuma, 2024). These developments highlight the need for strong leadership in HEIs to promote an innovative and adaptable culture. With digital technologies that facilitate collaboration and streamline administrative procedures, technology's role in improving educational leadership is also growing in significance (Indoria et al., 2024). Additionally, a crucial ability for educators to successfully use AI is rapid engineering, a method for optimizing AI outputs (Cain, 2024). However, in order to overcome opposition to change and guarantee fair access for all students, the successful integration of new technologies necessitates a supportive institutional culture and strong leadership.

Therefore, this study addresses a critical gap in the literature by examining the interplay between leadership, technology adoption, and human capital development in Zimbabwean HEIs. By providing empirical evidence and actionable insights, it contributes to the transformation of higher education in Zimbabwe and equips graduates with the skills needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

The Integrated Theoretical Framework: Guiding Transformative Education in Zimbabwe
This research examined how transformational leadership styles influence faculty perceptions of technology usefulness and ease of use, as well as their willingness to integrate technology into their teaching practices. The research also investigated how leadership styles correlate with perceived quality education and graduate employability (Camps & Rodríguez, 2011). Its strength lies in its adoption of an integrated theoretical framework, combining Transformational Leadership Theory, Human Capital Development Theory, and the Technology Adoption Model (TAM).
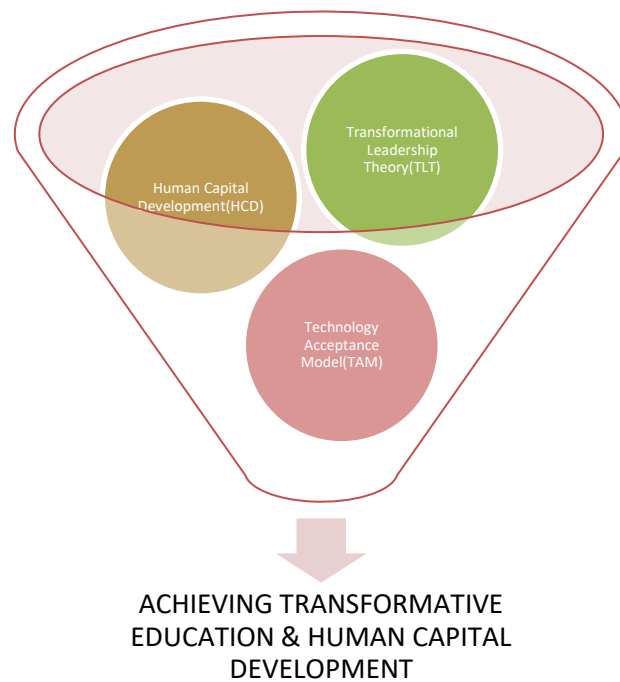
Source: Field Data

1. Transformational Leadership Theory This multifaceted approach was applied to provide a robust lens through which to examine the complex dynamics of leadership, technology, and educational transformation within Zimbabwean Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The integration theoretical framework to guide educational initiatives is also recommended by Samodien, Du Plessis, & Van Vuuren, (2024) specifically for enhancing higher education performance through employing merits from ttransformational, transactional, agile leadership and other models depending on the context.

Transformational Leadership Theory posits that effective leaders inspire and intellectually stimulate their followers, fostering innovation and positive change (Bas & Avolio,1994; Bass, 1985). It emphasizes the importance of vision, inspiration, and intellectual stimulation, which are vital for driving organizational change. It highlights the leader's role in empowering followers and fostering a shared sense of purpose. Richard & Simankane (2020) and Abbas, Hisham-Ul-Hassan, & Raza, (2024) concur that transformational leadership is effective in inspiring and developing staff to their full capacity resulting in achieving organisational change and development.

Kgari-Masondo, Chingwanangwana, Umejei, et al., (2024)'s findings that effective leadership can significantly improve educational outcomes by motivating educators to adopt innovative practices (Ghasabeh, Soosay, & Reaiche, 2015) are in line with transformational leadership's emerging role in driving organizational change; in Zimbabwean HEIs, where resource constraints and resistance to change may be prevalent, transformational leaders can play a pivotal role in fostering a philosophy of adaptability and continuous improvement.

However, the paper acknowledges the limitations of this theory. It can be criticized for being overly focused on the leader's charisma and may overlook the importance of structural and contextual factors. It may also be difficult to measure and implement consistently. Such demerits can be augmented by other theories such as the human capital development and the technology acceptance model.

2. Human Capital Development Theory Capital Development Theory (Schultz, 1963)

The study investigated how integrating technology into HEI courses affects graduate employability and gets students ready for the workforce. It also looked at how effective leadership practices promote the development of human capital by creating an atmosphere that is conducive to the adoption of new technologies. UNICEF (2022), Goldin (2024), and Muzari (2023) all affirm the significance of human capital development for the advancement of a country suggesting the Integration Public Private Partnership Strategy (PPPS) for Ssustainable Students Skills Development (SSSD) in Technical and Vocational Education and TrainingTVET in Zimbabwe (Muzari,2023). This idea emphasizes the value of spending money on education and training to improve knowledge and skills, which are essential for both national development and economic prosperity. This theory offers a framework for understanding how HEIs may support the development of human capital through technology integration in

Zimbabwe, where there is a need to close the skills gap and improve the employability of graduates.

The theory is difficult to use for measuring the direct impact of education on economic growth and it can be criticized for its focus on economic outcomes and may ignore the social and cultural dimensions of education. It also highlights the long-term benefits of investing in education and the connection between human capital and economic productivity (Mpofu, & Sebele-Mpofu, 2024). The comparative review of the incorporation of AI Technology in Accounting Education showed several merits associated with AI integration in the teaching and learning of accounting and related disciplines.

3. Technology Adoption Model (TAM)
An overview of the concepts, contribution, limitation, and adoption of the Technology Acceptance Model in education is provided by Zaineldeen et al (2020). The Technology Adoption Model suggests that perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEU) significantly influence technology adoption (Davis, 1989; Davis et al., 1989).

Research by Zhang and Chen (2024) indicates that leadership practices significantly influence the adoption of digital tools in educational settings, further supporting the relevance of TAM in this study. This was confirmed in Taherdoost (2018)'s review of technology acceptance and adoption models and theories particularly for instructional purposes.

Literature Review
Challenges in Zimbabwean Higher Education
According to Maringe and Sing (2014), Zimbabwean HEIs have a number of difficulties, such as a lack of infrastructure, insufficient finance, and a misalignment between business demands and curriculum. According to Nherera and Mukora (2024), socioeconomic considerations exacerbate these difficulties and impede attempts to incorporate new technologies.

Due to budgetary limitations and scarce resources, the socioeconomic environment makes integrating new technology even more difficult (UNESCO, 2020). Additionally, Mufanechiya & Dube (2024) investigate the difficulties instructors in Zimbabwean higher education institutions encounter.

The Role of Leadership in Educational Transformation
International research shows that transformational leadership can create a change-friendly atmosphere. Good leaders can encourage teachers to use new teaching strategies and meaningfully use technology (Kgari-Masondo & Chingwanangwana, 2024). Support from leaders increases faculty motivation and student engagement, both of which are critical for successful technology adoption.

Chirisa (2024) also emphasizes the need for adaptive leadership in the changing higher education landscape in Zimbabwe. A study published in the Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration (2014) emphasizes the significance of leadership in integrating educational technology in higher education.

The Impact of Emerging Technologies
New technologies like artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and big data have the power to completely transform teaching methods in Zimbabwean higher education institutions. While VR produces immersive environments that increase engagement, AI enables personalized learning experiences (Stafford, 2016; Chigwedere et al., 2023). By detecting learning gaps, big data analytics can enhance student support services and guide instructional methods (Adeofe & Adedoyin, 2022). A supportive institutional culture and competent leadership are essential for successful integration.

The significance of incorporating technology into human resource management is emphasized by research by Alaghbari et al. (2024), which also suggests that similar ideas might be used in education to improve workforce development. This emphasizes the necessity of a comprehensive strategy that combines technology, human capital development, and leadership.

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Methodology
In order to comprehensively examine leadership practices, technology adoption, and human capital development among Zimbabwean Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), this study adopts a quantitative method. 200 educational leaders chosen by stratified random sampling—which guarantees representativeness across a range of jobs such faculty deans, department heads, and coordinators—were given a self-designed structured questionnaire. of order to accommodate a large number of participants from various departments of a chosen HEI in Zimbabwe, the structured survey that was conducted online served as the main instrument for gathering data. The survey had multiple important areas and used a 5-point Likert scale (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree).
- *Demographics:* Compiling fundamental data including faculty affiliation, age, gender, and institutional role.
Assessing opinions on the attributes of leaders (e.g., "Leaders at my HEI inspire me to fulfill my full potential") is a component of transformational leadership.
- *Perceived Utility of Emerging Technologies*: Evaluating opinions of how Online Learning Tools and other technologies can enhance educational results

(e.g., "The use of Virtual Reality can significantly increase student learning outcomes").
• *Perceived Ease of Use of Emerging Technologies*: "I am confident in my capacity to understand and use AI technology in my teaching" is an example of a measure of confidence in utilizing emerging technologies. Assessing how technology is incorporated into curricula (e.g., "Integrating technology into the curriculum prepares students for the labor market") is part of human capital development.

Data Analysis
Quantitative Analysis: IBM SPSS Statistics was used to analyze the survey data. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether there were significant differences between variables, descriptive statistics (such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations) summarized the responses, and inferential statistics (correlation) investigated the relationships between transformational leadership and perceptions of emerging technologies (Mustafy & Rahman, 2024; Field, 2024).

Validity and Reliability
The intention was to improve the validity of quantitative data. The instrument was standardized in pilot research with 30 participants. Cronbach's Alpha was computed to evaluate reliability, and the result was a high value of 0.967, indicating strong internal consistency (ADENIRAN, 2025; Robinson, 2024). Data collection was preceded by ethical approval from the appropriate institutional review boards. Informed consent was obtained from participants when they were made aware of the goal of the study. All data had personal identifiers eliminated in order to ensure confidentiality throughout the study. Participants received assurances that they would not be subject to any consequences if they choose to leave the study at any point (Torrance, Mormina, Sayeed, Kessel, Yoon, & Cislaghi, 2025).

In contrast to qualitative research, the study's use of a quantitative approach allows for the generalization of findings from a wider sample and attempts to offer a comprehensive understanding of how leadership practices might create a supportive climate for technology integration in Zimbabwean HEIs. The results offered insightful information to faculty, educational leaders, and legislators, which helped to improve educational outcomes and graduate employability in a world economy that is changing quickly (Vivek, & Krupskyi, 2024). For Zimbabwe to establish a technology-leadership-centric model for transformative education and human capital development, this research is essential for filling in gaps in the literature.

Results
Demographic Profiles

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants.
Table 1: Demographic Profiles of Participants

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age	Below 40 years	33	16.5
	40-50 years	70	35.0
	51-60 years	95	47.5
	Above 60 years	2	1.0
Gender	Male	122	61.0
	Female	78	39.0
Highest Qualification	First Degree	4	2.0
	Master's Degree	134	67.0
	PhD	55	27.5
	Other	7	3.5
Experience with Technology	Less than 5 years	13	6.5
	5-10 years	67	33.5
	11-15 years	95	47.5
	Above 15 years	25	12.5
Role	Faculty Dean	21	10.5
	Department Chairperson	58	29.0
	Coordinator	121	60.5
Faculty	Education	42	21.0
	Law	35	17.5
	Social Sciences	50	25.0

	Business Sciences	42	21.0
	Maths, Science & Technology	31	15.5
Total		200	100.0

The age distribution of the participants shows a mixed representation of seasoned professionals, with the majority of them lying between the 40 and 60 age range. According to the gender breakdown, there are more men (61%) than women (39%) among the participants. The sample is highly educated, as evidenced by the fact that most individuals have either a Master's degree (67%) or a PhD (27.5%). Coordinators make up the majority of participation (60.5%), followed by department chairpersons (29%) and faculty deans (10.5%), suggesting that HEI leadership positions are represented in a variety of ways. Although participants' levels of technological experience vary, a sizable portion (47.5%) have between 11 and 15 years of experience.

Descriptive Statistics: Perceptions on Emerging Technologies

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for participants' perceptions on emerging technologies.
Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Perceptions on Emerging Technologies

Constructs	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Std. Error
Emerging technologies would significantly improve student engagement.	1	5	3.84	0.712	-1.192	0.172
Integrating technology can make learning content more interactive.	1	5	3.91	0.684	-0.923	0.172
Technology can provide wider access to a variety of learning resources	1	5	3.89	0.675	-1.255	0.172
My HEI offers programmes to equip staff with digital literacy skills.	1	5	3.90	0.675	-0.958	0.172
Emerging technologies can significantly enhance the quality of education.	1	5	3.87	0.672	-0.952	0.172
Valid N (listwise)						

On a scale of 1 to 5, participants' mean scores range from 3.84 to 3.91, indicating that they generally have a positive perception of emerging technology. This suggests a positive attitude about the possible effects of technology on interactive learning materials, increased access to resources, student involvement, and educational quality. Interestingly, all of the items have a slight negative skewness, according to the skewness values, which suggests that most participants tend to rate the items higher on the scale. The mean score of 3.90 for the item measuring this characteristic indicates that most participants appreciate institutional support for staff training in digital literacy.

Relationships between Demographic Data and Other Variables

Numerous noteworthy connections between demographic information and other variables were found via correlation analysis:
Age: Experience using technology and age have a weakly positive link (r = 0.191, p < 0.01).
Gender: Female participants often had lesser qualifications, as evidenced by a substantial negative association between gender and the highest qualification (r = -0.221, p < 0.01).
Highest Qualification: Participants with higher qualifications are less likely to have lower-level roles, according to a strong negative correlation found between the highest qualification and role (r = -0.649, p < 0.01).
Role: There is a positive correlation between role and technology use experience (r = -0.180, p < 0.05), suggesting that those in higher roles have greater technological experience.
Technology usage Experience: Age and technology usage experience have a favorable correlation (r = 0.191, p

Correlation Analysis: Leadership Styles and Emerging Technologies

Table 3 presents the correlation coefficients between leadership styles, emerging technologies, and related constructs.
Table 3: Correlation Coefficients between Leadership Styles and Emerging Technologies

Variables	Leadership Style Quality Education	Leveraging Leadership Innovation	Merit	Challenges
Leadership Style Quality Education	1	0.715**	0.586**	-0.192**
Leveraging Leadership Innovation	0.715**	1	0.549**	-0.280**
Merit	0.586**	0.549**	1	-0.045
Challenges	-0.192**	-0.280**	-0.045	1

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

Leveraging Leadership Innovation and Leadership Style Quality Education have a substantial positive association ($r = 0.715$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that a high level of leveraging leadership innovation likely to be associated with a perceived high quality of leadership style. Furthermore, there is a somewhat significant association between Leadership Style Quality Education and Merit ($r = 0.586$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that leadership styles that are thought to support quality education are also linked to merit. obstacles and Leadership Style Quality Education have a weakly negative connection ($r = -0.192$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that less perceived obstacles are linked to greater perceived leadership quality.

A higher level of leveraging leadership innovation is linked to perceived leadership quality and merit, as evidenced by the substantial positive correlations found between it and Leadership Style Quality Education ($r = 0.715$, $p < 0.01$) and Merit ($r = 0.549$, $p < 0.01$). Higher levels of leveraging leadership innovation are linked to less perceived obstacles, according to a slight negative correlation found between the two variables ($r = -0.280$, $p < 0.01$).

ANOVA Results: Leadership and Graduate Employability
Table 4 presents the ANOVA results for leadership and graduate employability.
Table 4: ANOVA Results for Leadership and Graduate Employability

Variables	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1. Our HEI leadership achieve expected graduate attainment & employability.					
Between Groups	155.413	17	9.142	2495.755	.000
Within Groups	0.667	182	0.004		
Total	156.080	199			
36. My HEI contributes to graduate employability					
Between Groups	39.866	17	2.345	8.613	.000
Within Groups	49.554	182	0.272		
Total	89.420	199			

Participants' perceptions of leadership and the expected graduate attainment and employability in HEIs are strongly correlated, as indicated by the significant F-value (2495.755), which implies that participants believe leadership styles have a significant impact on the attainment of expected graduate outcomes and employability.

Discussion of Key Findings

Although leaders recognized the potential of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and big data analytics, their widespread adoption was hampered by a lack of technical expertise and limited resources, according to the quantitative data analysis, which also found a positive correlation between transformational leadership styles and perceptions of improved education quality and human capital development (Sahoo et al., 2024; Singh, 2024).

Perceptions of Emerging Technologies

The findings of descriptive statistical analysis support the need for leaders to adopt a new paradigm of leadership that emphasizes creativity, inclusivity, and flexibility. Their answers demonstrated how crucial it is for HEIs, the government, and business to work together to create curricula that meet the demands of the labor market today and in the future (Kibona, 2024; Njifen, 2024).

On a scale of 1 to 5, participants' mean scores range from 3.84 to 3.91, indicating that they generally have a

positive perception of emerging technology. This suggests a positive attitude about the possible effects of technology on interactive learning materials, increased access to resources, student involvement, and

educational quality. This is consistent with studies by Ahn & Shin (2018), who discovered that technology use and classroom atmosphere can have a good impact on self-directed learning.

Institutional Support for Digital Literacy

The mean score of 3.90 for the item measuring this aspect indicates that most participants acknowledge institutional support for providing staff with digital

literacy skills, indicating that HEIs in Zimbabwe are working to equip staff with the skills they need to successfully incorporate technology into their teaching practices (GN et al, 2024)

Leadership Styles and Quality Education

A leadership-driven model was proposed for technological and educational transformation in the studied context based on the findings of Day, Sammons, and Gorgen (2020), who emphasize the importance of successful school leadership in driving educational

improvement. The strong positive correlation (0.715) between leadership styles and quality education suggests that leaders who leverage effective styles are perceived as promoting better educational outcomes (Vivek, & Krupskyi, 2024).

A Proposed Leadership-Driven Model for Technological Transformation in Zimbabwean HEIs

The study's compelling model, shown in Figure 2, combines technology adoption, leadership, and human

capital development (HCD) to revolutionize Zimbabwean HEIs. Through a thorough analysis of quantitative data from 200 educational leaders, the research identifies a crucial interaction between these factors, providing a clear path for HEIs to prosper in the global environment of the twenty-first century.
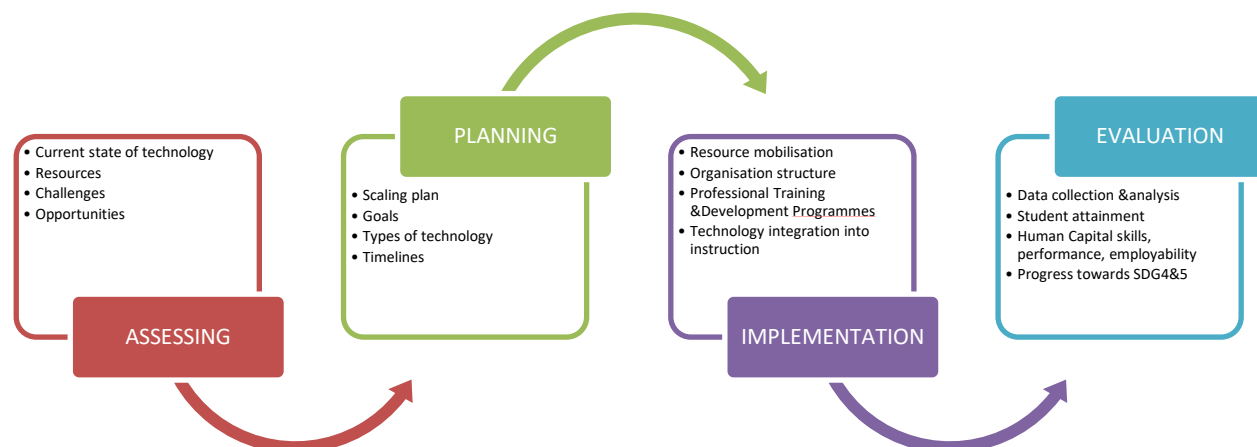
Source: Field Data.

A Proposed Leadership-Driven Model for Technological Transformation in Zimbabwean HEIs

The Model's Core Components:

The suggested framework as shown in Figure, is based on a leadership-driven strategy for integrating

technology. It asserts that successful technology adoption and, eventually, strong human capital development are fueled by effective leadership, especially transformational leadership. This approach aims to improve educational outcomes and graduate employability by strategically utilizing technology, not just introducing it.

Important Component of the Model:

The Engine of Transformational Leadership:

The study emphasizes how important it is for leaders to encourage, inspire, and enable their staff to welcome change. This entails developing an innovative culture, modeling the use of cutting-edge technologies, and

developing a compelling vision for technological integration.
This clearly indicates that HEI leaders are visionaries who actively participate in training programs, promote

digital literacy, and foster conditions that allow professors to try out new tools.

Strategic Technology Adoption: The model acknowledges the positive perceptions of emerging technologies (including AI, VR, and online platforms) and lays a significant emphasis on strategic adoption that is tailored to the particular needs of Zimbabwean HEIs. This means investing in a robust infrastructure (hardware, software, and a reliable internet), providing ongoing training in digital literacy, and establishing laws that promote technology use that is efficient and responsible.

Interactive virtual reality simulations, online learning platforms that provide access to worldwide resources, and AI-powered technologies that customize learning experiences are all examples of how educational leaders envision their lecture halls changing. To realize these potentials, this paradigm requires a purposeful and well-funded strategy.

Human Capital Development as the Outcome:
The model's ultimate goal is to enhance HCD, equipping graduates with the skills and competencies needed to thrive in a competitive global workforce. This entails incorporating technology into the curriculum, encouraging cooperation with business partners to match education to industry demands, and producing graduates who are not only informed but also flexible and creative (World Bank, 2021).

This model demonstrates how the effectiveness of leadership and the efficient use of technology are closely related to the results of graduates who leave HEIs with excellent digital literacy, critical thinking skills, and the ability to innovate and solve real-world challenges.

Limitations
When evaluating the results, it is important to take into account the limitations of this study. The sample size was restricted to 200 individuals from Zimbabwean HEIs, which would have constrained how far the results can be applied. Furthermore, the study used self-report data, which could be biased toward social desirability.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how emerging technology and a leadership-driven approach might revolutionize HEIs in Zimbabwe. Through data analysis, important insights can be obtained about how technology adoption and leadership styles can improve the development of human capital, ultimately giving graduates the tools they need to succeed in a cutthroat global environment. The positive perceptions of educational leaders towards technology and the strong relationship between leadership and graduate employability underscore the potential for technology to drive educational transformation in Zimbabwe.

Recommendations
Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:
- *Invest in infrastructure and resources:* Policymakers and educators should prioritise investing in infrastructure and resources for technology use in education. This includes providing access to reliable internet connectivity, hardware, and software.
- Provide training programmes: HEIs should provide comprehensive training programmes to equip staff with digital literacy skills. These programmes should be ongoing and tailored to the specific needs of educators.
- *Encourage leadership approaches:* HEIs should encourage leadership approaches that foster innovation and adaptability in technology-driven education. This includes promoting transformational leadership styles that inspire and empower educators to embrace new technologies.
- *Promote collaboration*: Collaboration among HEIs, industry partners, and government agencies is essential for driving sustainable human capital development. Educational leaders should actively seek partnerships that leverage resources and expertise to address common challenges and achieve shared goals.
- *Develop supportive policies:* Governments should develop supportive policies that promote technology integration in education. This includes providing funding for technology initiatives, creating incentives for innovation, and establishing regulatory frameworks that ensure data security and ethical considerations.

Implications and Future Directions

The findings highlight the importance of leadership in driving educational transformation and human capital development. Integrating emerging technologies can

enhance teaching, learning, and research within HEIs, contributing to improved educational outcomes. Future research should focus on:

- Developing models for the long-term application of technology in education.

- Examining the effect of technology on students' learning outcomes in contexts with limited resources.

- Exploring the ethical implications of ICT integration into education.
- Investigating the role of policy in

By addressing these issues, policymakers and educators can work together to create a more equitable and effective education system that prepares graduates for success in the 21st-century workforce.

Conflict of Interest
We declare no conflict of interest.

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THE CLICHÉ OF SUSTAINABILITY: GOVERNING INDIGENEITY AND THE ANTHROPOCENE ENTANGLEMENT

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Abstract

This paper explores indigenous more-than human hybrid onto-epistemology within the ambit of sustainability paradigm that better capture the Anthropocene epoch. Indigenous more-than human hybrid onto-epistemology profoundly shapes how the indigenous people understand and relate to their environment. Their more-than human hybrid onto-epistemology includes among other things beliefs, knowledge, and Ancestral practices that reflect a relational approach to life and the cosmos. The analysis presented here is based on an understanding of the concept of Anthropocene as rejecting modernist assumptions and framings about a split between human and nature. It discusses respectively, the ways in which the dominant forms of decolonial critique and plurality of environmental imaginaries problematize the Eurocentric framing and the epistemic foundations that separate humans from nature in the Anthropocene as a universalizing concept. In fine, it is argued that the modernist assumptions of separation marginalize sustainability in a multiplicity of ways in the Anthropocene. It is further argued that indigenous more-than human hybrid onto-epistemology is a necessity if humanity is to survive many worlds on one planet and cope with the unprecedented catastrophic ecological destruction largely driven by modernist, anthropocentric, and capitalist land relations.

Keywords: Anthropocene; Frafra; Sustainable development; Decoloniality; Indigeneity; Plurality

Introduction

Anthropocene epoch in the highly uncertain world provoked by the great acceleration of human intervention represents a profound contemporary ecological crisis like never before (Chiato & Chandler, 2022; United Nations, 2021). Increased global ecological crisis hinder sustainable development and poses a major challenge for humanity in the new Anthropocene age (Chiato and Chandler, 2022; Chandler & Pugh, 2021). The paper critically examines sustainable development policy frameworks in the Anthropogenic present (Chiato & Chandler, 2022). The Anthropocene problematic has become an important component within sustainable development policy frameworks concerned with addressing the global ecological crisis (United Nations, 2021; Fu 2020; Chiato & Chandler 2022; Chandler 2021; Fu et al. 2021). Disciplines as diverse as climatology, geology, philosophy, and visual arts have adopted the Anthropocene as a new framework for understanding sustainability paradigm and planetary change (Chiato and Chandler 2022; Chandler and Pugh 2021; Harrington 2016). The imbrication of the Anthropocene and sustainable development have generated much debate among scholars and practitioners alike (Badie et al. 2022; Chandler 2022; Chandler & Pugh, 2021; United Nations, 2015).

The Anthropocene serves as a contrapose to a failed or failing Western modernist tropes of universalism of security (Badie et al., 2022; Chandler, 2022). The rationalities of sustainable development and how it appropriates the Anthropocene entanglement on account of its claims to secure life of the biosphere has been widely discussed and debated (Chandler & Pugh, 2021; United Nations, 2015). However, indigenous peoples more-than-human hybrid onto-epistemology, and what this could mean for sustainable development in the Anthropocene epoch remains strangely under-explored. The paper posits that a more environmentally sustainable way to govern the world today is indigenous more-than human hybrid onto-epistemology. Indigenous people relational framework and cosmologies involving humans, nature, spirits, the living-dead (Ancestors) and the primary source of vital force, reflects a worldview deeply rooted in interdependence and reciprocity (Millar, 2006).

The arguments of this paper are placed in context throughout with reference to the Frafra ethnic group more-than-human world to problematize the dominant Western modernist thought that undergirds notions of sustainable development in the Anthropocene epoch. The paper poses the following central questions: to what extent does the Frafra more-than human hybrid onto-epistemology help us to think about how to live in the Anthropocene in the face of ecological crisis? How do sustainability rationalities help us understand the politics of Anthropocene? And what is the relationship between sustainable development rationalities and Anthropocene entanglement? This paper offers to make sense of these pertinent and burning questions through an alternative African environmental thought within the Anthropocene entanglement: that of decolonial and pluriverse thought.

The paper potentially contributes to how indigenous more-than-human onto-epistemology shapes contemporary environmental political thought. Engaging with indigenous people diverse traditions of ecological thought opens other possibilities for

alternative futural imaginaries (Chiato & Chandler, 2022; Haraway, 2016). The paper also contributes to offering new critical agenda for indigenous studies and decolonial studies. In this way, the paper will be of interest to policy makers, scholars, and critical theorists working in the environmental humanities or those engaged in studying and responding to the ongoing challenges so problematic in the Anthropocene moment.

Decolonial critique of the Anthropocene

The core concepts to be utilized in the paper are: decoloniality and plurality and relationality of environmental imaginaries. In so doing, the paper brings plurality and relationality in conversation with dominant forms of decolonial critique to challenge the universalizing and Eurocentric narratives of the Anthropocene (Chiato & Chandler 2022; Haraway 2016). The Anthropocene problematic has become an important component within environmental discourse (Garba & Sara-Maria, 2020; Chandler, 2022). However, from dominant forms of decolonial perspective, Anthropocene tends to suggest a universal responsibility for global ecological crisis (Randazzo & Richter, 2021). Dominant forms of decoloniality over the last decade has received much attention within the Anthropocene epoch and beyond (Escobar 2018; Garba & Sara-Maria, 2020; Tucker, 2018). The dominant forms of decolonial critique of the Anthropocene seeks to subvert modernist colonial logic of the Anthropocene, particularly its framing of human-nature relationships and responsibility for a more sustainable future (Chiato & Chandler, 2022; Haraway, 2016). Contemporary theorizations of the Anthropocene privilege anthropocentric perspectives (McEwan, 2021). In this way, dominant forms of decolonial critique seeks to challenge the liberal modernist assumptions underpinning global ecological crisis that marks the Anthropocene.

Decolonial scholars argue that the global environmental crisis cannot be understood without recognizing how indigenous people and marginalized communities' alternative ways of knowing and living have historically been dismissed and disregarded by coloniality (de Sousa Santos, 2014; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Escobar, 2016; Shilliam, 2021). The point of the foregoing is that global environmental crisis cannot be understood without recognizing the role of Eurocentrism and white suprematism. Decolonial thinkers argue that Anthropocene is a Eurocentric concept which overlooks knowledges of non-Western, indigenous peoples and how they have historically related to the environment/Earth. Western modernist assumptions and categories of the Anthropocene prioritize top-down, command and control governance that is deeply rooted in the ecological crises we face today. From a decolonial perspective, the Anthropocene is cohered around insularity of Western modernist thought in driving global catastrophic environmental crisis that continue to shape the Anthropocene epoch (De La Cadena, 2010; Blaser, 2009). The legacies of coloniality perpetuates epistemic violence with its destruction and sheer disrespect for indigenous knowledge systems, spirituality and the replacement of indigenous forms of governance and sustainable environmental practices. Decolonial thinkers argue that the dominant narrative of the Anthropocene marginalizes indigenous knowledge systems and other non-Western multiple ways of knowing and being. A decolonial critique to the Anthropocene argues that indigenous and colonized peoples have historically practiced sustainable ways of living that are rooted in reciprocal relationships with the land, which disavow and discredit the Western modernist thought with its exploitative logics.

Non-Western, indigenous, and colonized peoples' reciprocal relationships with their Earth have often been supressed by Western modernist thought by colonization, and yet perhaps paradoxically their knowledge and practices are often romanticized and exorcized in the Anthropocene thinking. Many indigenous societies have historically sustained their own existence in ways that promote ecological stewardship and sustainability. The decolonial critique of the Anthropocene also focuses on plurality and relationality (Raymond et al. 2018; Unks et al., 2021; Gould et al., 2019). Decolonial and indigenous scholars in response to the modernist, colonial logic of the Anthropocene have called for alternative frame of Anthropocene epoch that capture plurality and relationality of environmental imaginaries (Rothe, 2020; Erasmus, 2020; Tynan, 2021). Plurality and relationality broadly conceived relates to the understanding of environmental imaginaries that significantly influenced multiplicity of ways different cultures relate to the land (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015; Balvanera et al., 2022; Tynan, 2021). Plurality and relationality of environmental imaginaries to the Anthropocene emphasizes the need for multiplicity.

Multiplicity of ways different cultures relates to the environment allow for sustainability in a multiplicity of ways. In this sense, plurality and relationality of environmental imaginaries presents us with multiple ''worlds'' that coexist in complex relations of life and non-life forms (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018; Wynter & McKittrick, 2015; Latour, 2017). Multiple ways of being human enlarge our understanding of diversity of cultural frameworks that see human existence as deeply intertwined with land, plants, animals, spirits, and Ancestors. Foregrounding plurality and relationality as alternative frameworks enable us to capture human/non-human worlds in addressing the Anthropocene problematic and the crisis of modernity (Chiato & Chandler, 2022; Chandler, 2021). Also, plurality and relationality as alternative frameworks

challenge the dominance of Western epistemologies (Odysseos 2017; Holbraad & Pedersen, 2017; Law, 2015). They promote futural possibilities to think about the environment that are rooted in diverse cultural and ecological philosophies and perspectives historically marginalized and supressed by liberal modernity (Balvanera et al., 2022; Tynan, 2021).

Indigenous ecological philosophies and perspectives emphasize the notion of more-than human hybrid onto-epistemology (Calí Tzay et al., 2023; Buitendijk et al., 2024). In other words, indigenous more-than-human hybrid onto-epistemology resonates with plurality and relationality. Rather than Western universalism and top-down narrative of the Anthropocene, the decolonial critique of the Anthropocene draws attention to indigenous more-than-human hybrid onto-epistemology that offer futural alternative of ecological stewardship, such as those found in indigenous communities (Buitendijk, 2024). Indigenous people more-than human onto-epistemology recognizes relationality, reciprocity and interconnectedness and interdependence across animals, spirits, plants, rivers, Ancestors and other nonhuman entities. These relational perspectives by indigenous peoples reject and renounce human/nature binary and offer non-linear ways of thinking about contemporary environmental crisis. Put somewhat differently, indigenous perspectives problematize and deconstruct modern binary imaginary such as human/ nature divide in the Anthropocene (Chiato & Chandler, 2022; Chandler, 2021). Indigenous people more-than-human hybrid onto-epistemology re-imagines life in the Anthropocene, allowing for productive ways of developing non-Western futures beyond modernity (Rothe, 2020; Erasmus, 2020).

For indigenous people, humans are part and parcel of a larger ecological society, with an abiding cosmic responsibility to respect and protect nonhuman world. Within this framework, indigenous more-than-human hybrid onto-epistemology calls for a rethinking of the dominant modernist understandings that impose knowledge production upon others subjugating them or viewing them as illogical (Odysseos, 2017). One example of how this plays out is that of a sustained environmental degradation and climate change practices and thought of the Frafra people of Ghana. The Frafra people of Ghana sustain their own existence through the enactment of other possible worlds rendering visible the onto-epistemology conflicts at play in modernist colonial logic. The Frafra conceived of a world in which many worlds could coexist in relations of life and non-life forms.

Sustainable development in the Anthropocene

Anthropocene epoch is conceived for the sustainability of life. How are we to understand the relation between the rationalities of sustainable development and the problematic of the Anthropocene? The rationalities of sustainable development are a response to the Anthropocene. Phrased otherwise, sustainable development is increasingly refracted through conceptualizations of the problematic of the Anthropocene. Anthropocene discourses appropriate sustainable development rationalities to secure life of the biosphere. This section particularly seeks to unpack the cliché of sustainability within the context of the problematic of the Anthropocene entanglement. The discursive framings of sustainable development especially in relation to vulnerable and marginalized population is beginning to be sketched out. The point here is that the Anthropocene problematic is crucial to the anthropogenic global climate change and biodiversity loss, etc. on the contemporary sustainable imaginaries.

The new geological era and its things, natures and non-human forces threaten the very survival of humanity and the natural environment (Harrington, 2016; Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000). Anthropocene epoch is defined by the human impact on the physical landscapes, biodiversity, planet's ecosystems etc (Castree, 2014; Zalasiewic et al., 2010). The Anthropocene urges humanity face a future of destruction to live in harm, risk, and loss midst increasing danger (Harrington 2016). The Anthropocene epoch is increasingly characterized by powerlessness and apathy instead of a call for a radical transformation in how we live and relate to nature (Tsing, 2015; Cohen et al., 2016; Chandler, 2018; Karera, 2019). Imaginaries are important component of Anthropocene entanglement with its reordering of ecosystems, landscapes and the potential for human survival. Deep entanglement between humans, non-humans, things, and natures evolves through co-relations. This necessitates alternative ways of being and multiple ways of knowing particularly those grounded in indigenous, non-Western, and marginalized cultural perspectives that challenge the modernist notion of linear causation (Haraway, 2016; Castree, 2014; Zalasiewic et al., 2010). The Anthropocene and sustainable development doctrine aim to protect and preserve of all ecosystems. Indeed, theorists and a wide range of research institutions, universities, environmental NGOs, and government agencies have deployed ecological reason to address the well-being of the life of the biosphere as a vexed expression of the Anthropocene epoch.

Sustainable development doctrine provides a comprehensive framework for addressing environmental concerns such as climate change adaptation, insecurity, conflict and terrorism in international policymaking (Abhilash, 2022; Kopnina, 2020). Sustainable development discourses emphasize tackling the climate crisis and working to preserve the environment (UNEP, 2004; Death, 2010). The sustainable development discourse gained global prominence through the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) report. The

World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) also known as the Brundtland Report after its chairwoman Gro Harlem Brundtland) was published in 1987 (United Nations, 2004; Death, 2010). The report, titled ''Our Common Future,'' is widely regarded as a cornerstone in the preservation of the Earth's ecosystems that are productive and life sustaining (United Nations, 2004; Death, 2010).

The 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) also known as the Rio+10 Summit, was a crucial moment in the global effort that emphasizes sustainable management of natural resources without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Firmly committed to securing the life of the biosphere and societies are to ensure that humans use natural resources wisely for the well-being of future generations (World Commission for Environment and Development (WCED 1987). Critical to the ambitions of ''Our Common Future'' and related publications underlie the causes of environmental destruction (Death 2010). Proponents maintain that sustainable development discourses shift the scope of concern from a narrow focus on human life to a broader consideration of the entire biosphere (UNEP, 2004). In this sense, the turn to sustainable development, we are told, provides the rationalities to increase the long-term sustainability for all living systems but also for protecting human populations.

Sustainable development is a useful concept precisely because it understands and addresses global challenges in the context of ecological crisis in relation to vulnerable groups and marginalized population. Increasing the sustainability among the poor and the vulnerable groups has unsurprisingly become a common discourse in indigenous studies because it is precisely the poor who are unaware of environmental issues or sustainable practices (UNEP, 2004, 5). Thus, the overreaching concern of the United Nations Environment Program has become increasing the sustainability of the poor and the vulnerable groups (UNEP) (UNEP 2004, 5). Managing threats to the ecosystem services of the poor is entails improving the sustainability of the poor in addressing environmental challenges. At issue with the WCIP is how the most vulnerable and marginalized groups are able to cope and adapt to dangers, and to live well. This is the underlying strategy by which the Anthropocene thinking has served to legitimate and naturalize the critique of sustainable development.

The Anthropocene as philosophical framework for understanding humanity's impact on the Earth is deeply intertwined with sustainable development. The Anthropocene and sustainable development are critical frameworks for understanding the global challenges of the 21st century like climate change, species extinction, and ecological degradation. The Anthropocene provides insight into more-than-human hybrid onto-epistemology (Chandler, 2021; Grove, 2019; Rothe, 2019). Contemporary Anthropocene as a new temporal framing underscores how humanity now take on the role of planetary stewards (Chiato & Chandler, 2022; Chandler, 2021). In the Anthropocene, sustainable development must acknowledge humanity as a geological force, whose actions affect the global climate, ecosystems, and geological processes. Sustainable development in the context of Anthropocene epoch tasks us to respect the natural environmental to prevent ecological collapse. What is vital to understand is that the categories of modernist thought infuse sustainable development rationalities. However, the Anthropocene entanglement opens up new imaginaries for radically rethinking the complex, more-than-human hybrid onto-epistemology of indigenous people (Grove, 2019; Rothe, 2019).

Indeed, rethinking sustainable development rationalities within the Anthropocene entanglement highlights a constitutive process within complex assemblages of human, non-human and more-than-human understandings (Chiato & Chandler, 2022; Chandler, 2021). The dominant critique of the Anthropocene and its attendant modernist thought call for a serious reflection over new forms of "planet politics" that take account of "entangled humanism (Burke et al., 2016; Connolly, 2017). This account of entangled humanism forces us to direct analytical attention to the importance of more complex assemblages and entanglement that can shape the contours of onto-epistemology that have emerged in the discipline of IR (Blaney & Tickner, 2017). It is suggested that the neglect of critical indigenous plurality of environmental imaginaries in the Anthropocene thought forces us to confront the ecological costs of modernity in other to move toward a more sustainable toward a more sustainable and interconnected world.

The Anthropocene requires us to think of other non-human forms. Thus, the Anthropocene presents humanity with a new set of ethics that recognize that humans are not alone on Earth. Consequently, human life is deeply interwoven with the life of other non-human elements of the Earth. The humans mutual respect and entanglement with nonhuman elements of the Earth conjures different imaginaries in which humans have to preserve and sustain themselves (Ignatov, 2017). This mutual respect and entanglement which comprises other humans, beings, things, and processes provides an essential lens for approaching sustainability in the Anthropocene. It might be time to engage with new narratives which posit a different approach outside of modernist thought and imaginary in our ideas and practices environmental sustainability: that of pluralizing environmental imaginaries and dominant forms of decolonial critique. Plurality and relationality that acknowledges multiple ways of knowing and decolonial approaches are a replacement for the Anthropocene epoch understood as a product of modernity. Thus, the Anthropocene entanglement is reframed through onto-epistemology of pluralism

(Chiato & Chandler, 2022). Hence the need for different decolonial and possibilities of multiple ways of

Sustainability in the Anthropocene: The Frafra case

Materials for the critical contextualization of the Anthropocene and sustainable development from the perspectives of non-western cultures and polities will be retrieved by way of a collective and transdisciplinary study in Ghana. I will focus on the indigenous Frafra people that live in the Northern parts of Ghana. The Frafra people can be found across Burkina Faso (Anabila, 2020; Awedoba, 2010). They are a minority group that have diverse set of subsistence practices for their livelihood. Their daily activities such as small-scale farming, animal raring, natural resources harvesting, hunting, and fishing reflect their deep connection to the land, natural resources, and ecosystems (Ba-an et al., 2022). They are found mostly in Northern Ghana in the Upper East region (Anabila, 2020; Awedoba, 2010).

Their linguistic, political, and economic rights have been historically marginalized, silenced and denied any substantial participation in the economy. But why the Frafra then? The Frafra people plurality and relationality of environmental imaginaries in shaping the current ecological crisis serves as a jumping-off point for a broader decolonial critique of the politics of the Anthropocene. The Frafra case is promising site for further theorization of indigenous more-than-human hybrid onto-epistemology that unsettle Western modernist logics of environmental catastrophe for sustainable ways of life. Finally, the Frafra case illuminates the hybridity, complexity, or contradictions inherent in the concept of the Anthropocene. The Frafra more-than-human hybrid onto-epistemology would be part of pluralization of knowledge system that advances sustainable environmental practices. The Frafra people relational worldview of environmental imaginaries in terms of their interrelationships of animals, plants, rivers, mountains, nature, spirits, Ancestors and other vital forces frame their relationship with the environment (Ba-an et al., 2022). Their livelihood, culture, belief systems, and their ancestral traditions are still deeply intertwined and intensely related to nature and framed in terms of sustainable ways of life.

The Frafra onto-epistemology: Pluralizing possibilities and multiplicities

The Frafra onto-epistemology emphasizes relationality, coexistence, interdependence, reciprocity and cooperation with the nonhuman world, and this influences how the Frafra make decisions about land use, conservation, and resource management (Ba-an et al., 2022). The Frafra people environmental stewardship involves recognizing the environment as a sentient being, which is part and parcel of a complex cosmological dynamic that encompasses interconnectedness between human beings and nonhuman world (Ignatov, 2023). The essence of relational entangled existence of the Frafra people is precisely how nature, animals, tress, deities, rivers, spirits, Ancestors, human beings intimately depend on each other. This framework provides futural alternative for ecological stewardship that challenges the prevailing models of conservation and more equitable and sustainable ways of living in the Anthropocene epoch. The Frafra ecological stewardship is a cosmic and spiritual duty toward the land, deities, the spirits, and the Ancestors (Ignatov, 2023). Their pluralization of knowledge systems speak of spiritual entities, animals, veneration of the Ancestors, spirits, other beings and forces intimately linked with the natural environment. The Frafra people see themselves as one among many of the entities of the natural environment and other ecosystems. The Frafra view of being among many of the entities of the natural environment and other ecosystems entities of the natural environment and other ecosystems eschew anthropocentric ways of thinking about human-nature relationships. Anthropocentric worldview focuses on excessive valuing of humans to the detriment of the environment (Wiredu, 1994; Ignatov, 2023). Their ecological knowledge and sustainable practices that recognize the significance of diversity of natural environment and other ecosystems (Millar, 2006) are unforeseen by Western modernist thought.

The Frafra more-than-human onto-epistemology involves a connection with Ancestors believed to govern the forces of nature. The veneration of the Ancestors among the Frafra people provides valuable insights for deeply interconnected and interrelationship with their environment (Awumbila et al., 2017). The Frafra people understand the environment as inhabited by ancestral spirits in specific places such as sacred groves, rivers, tress and mountains, and this shapes their relationship with these areas. Polluting or overusing water, farming in sacred groves, hunting, or cutting down trees could invite the anger or the wrath of the Ancestors (Ignatov, 2017; Millar, 2006), reinforcing the intimate relationship between the land and the Ancestors. This deeply interconnected relationship between the environment and the Ancestors reflects a worldview that undercuts the binary between the spiritual and human entities. Ancestor centrism within the Frafra way of life is rooted in their spirituality, oral traditions, customs, ancestral wisdom and ecological practices that understand the environment as alive and sacred (Amenga-Etego, 2016; Ignatov, 2023). The strict moral code attached to Ancestorhood among the Frafra people fosters a more equitable and sustainable relationship with the Earth (Ignatov, 2023).

Within the Frafra ontology, the Ancestors are at the apex of the hierarchy (Amenga-Etego 2016). Ancestors in fact, form an essential inter-and intra-connectedness

knowing and being to promote ecological sustainability in our Anthropocene moment.

with the *Winɛ* (God) (Millar, 2006). Frafra cosmology views the spiritual and the physical as deeply interwoven, shaping their everyday lives (Amenga-Etego, 2016). As such, in the Frafra cosmology, society and the natural environment are seen as a living partner, and this informs their ways of life (Amenga-Etego, 2012), which is geared towards preventing environmental destruction. The Frafra non-dualistic conception of nature and society or between natural environment and ways of life is that the western modernist imaginary fails to see this in times of crisis.

In Frafra worldview, trees hold special spiritual significance and are intricately interconnected with those of humans (Amenga-Etego, 2016). In this regard, trees and plants are venerated and revered. The ancestral-plants spiritual-relationship among the Frafra society illustrates how the Frafra ancestral spirits may inhabit a plant (tree) or how some plants serve as ancestral spirits abodes (Amenga-Etego 2012; Ignatov, 2023). The veneration and reverence of trees and plants depends largely on whether or not they are female or male ancestral spirit. The names of Frafra ancestral spirits reflect both genders, with a female ancestral spirit bearing the name *ma'yaba* (Ancestress), and male ancestral spirit referred to as *cho-yaba* (Ancestor) (Amenga-Etego, 2012; Awedoba, 2010). Fig trees and the baobab trees are typical examples of this phenomenon (Ignatov 2017). Within the Frafra thought, fig trees and the baobab trees are believed to be *ma'yaba* (female ancestral spirits). To the Frafra people, the natural environment feels pain and complains. Their tall trees feel pain and cry when burned and logged. The Frafra the mutual existence amongst trees goes beyond the anthropocentric worldview focused on human exceptionalism. Historically, when the forest land was young, their ancestral spirits and deities changed into animals, rivers, mountains, tress and other beings (Metz, 2019). In this way, animals, rivers, tress must be protected from human activities, enabling a broader concern for the environment in itself. The Frafra approach to the ecological wellbeing and interests of the nonhuman world hold out much promise for models of conservation of environmental imaginaries that reject linear, command and control conservation approaches.

The Frafra view the environment itself as a living and sacred entity that must be respected and engaged with in reciprocal and respectful ways. For the Frafra, the land, animals, stars, moon, sun, cloud, plants, rivers, trees, soil, humans, and spirits constitute a living system that sustains and guides the Frafra life (Ignatov, 2017). Their spirituality and ecological practices are embedded in a strong environmentally sustainable outlook that constructs and maintain their natural world. This understanding emphasizes the need for the well-being and sanctity of the society and the environment (Ignatov, 2023). The deep interconnection and interconnectedness with both the natural environment and human life is informed by adherence to ancestral

prescriptions such as taboos, religio-cultural beliefs and myths by paying attention to issues of environmental sustainability (Ignatov, 2017; Eze, 2017). The Frafra relational framework about the natural world through a connection with supranatural world shapes their relationship with the land, cosmic/ecological order, harmony and balance with human in time of planetary crisis. For them, the natural environment is alive with spiritual forces which influences the manner with which they interact with the natural environment (Eze, 2017). The Frafra connection with supranatural world visualizes every aspect of nature, including trees, rivers, mountains, and animals inhabiting the land. These entities deserved to be respected, protected and preserve by humanity not only for the sake of its own survival but a spiritual responsibility to the Ancestors and the spirits of the earth (Ignatov, 2020). The spiritual elements in them expect environmental carefulness and sustainable use of these natural resources (Amenga-Etego, 2012). Their belief in spirits or supernatural beings forces them to develop more effective sustainable practices to control the well-being of the land as opposed to linear, top-down, and Eurocentric bias which generalize a culturally specific vision of sustainable development in the Anthropocene. The Frafra belief in spiritual ecology provides futural alternatives, one which consign modernist imaginaries to the past. Frafra cosmology that views the spiritual and physical realms as inseparable presents a sustainable and interconnected ways of life that challenge modernist paradigms in the Anthropocene in constitution of new ones. Western modernist assumptions do not value seeing from a connection with supranatural world. Western modernist thought about seeing from a connection with supranatural world occurs from the first-person perspective. The Frafra ways of knowing is diametrically different from Eurocentric way of knowing which is largely based on the separation of the observer and the observed world. Eurocentric way of knowing better fit social thought in the new age of the Anthropocene entanglement. Persons who can access this type of knowledge are persons with special qualities and positions in the Frafra society.

Frafra notions of *Winɛ* (God), *neri-sala* (human beings) and *tingazuo/tingongo* (earth/environment) allow for a nuanced perspective of how the Frafra ecological knowledge could be and has been appropriated for the perpetuation and sustenance of the environment in the Anthropocene era (Ignatov, 2017). Within the Frafra schema and hierarchy is *Winɛ* who is the creator of the world (God the Supreme Being). The Frafra people place *Winɛ* at the centre of all existence. Their belief that environment and everything in it was created by *Winɛ* (God the Supreme Being), establishes a profound sense of interconnectedness among all beings (2010 Awedoba). Beneath *Winɛ* (God the Supreme Being) are *yan'duma* (Ancestors) and the *baga* (divinities) which comprise spiritual entities like ghosts, dwarfs and witchcraft spirits (Ignatov, 2017; Awedoba, 2010). The

yan'duma (Ancestors) are believed to be the moral custodians of the group/clan or the family. The rest of nature and human beings are connected to *Winɛ* (God) the creator of the universe for whom they rely for their sustenance (Amenga-Etego, 2011). The Frafra worldview within the complex web of interdependence and interconnectedness ensure the continuous stay of *Winɛ* (God) with the created universe (Awedoba 2010). In the Frafra thought, spiritual entities in nature are believed to relate to their places of abode. The stewardship of the land and custodian of sacred traditions, the *tindana* connect the Frafra people to their ancestors. The *tindana* ensures that there are mechanisms for resource utilization by performing annual rituals to appease the Ancestors for the reckless use of ecological resources by the community (Awedoba 2010). Rituals are performed by the *tindana* to assuage the displeasure of the earth spirit, reflecting a reciprocal relationship with nature (Anabila, 2020; Awedoba 2010). This notion of ancestral ownership of land within the Frafra traditions of thought motivates ecological stewardship, and thus excludes individualistic conceptions of private property championed by predatory market capitalism (Ignatov 2020).

The Frafra notion of the *baga* (divinities) is one of other entities bound up in the Frafra hierarchy of relations (Anabila, 2020). To secure ecological well-being and promote sustainable ways of living, the Frafra society makes sure that plant *baga* (divinities) are not eaten even though they are edible. The Frafra ecological knowledge and intimate connectedness with their environment relates to the healing and food taboos or injunction in terms of divinities (Anabila, 2020). The Frafra people belief systems indicate interdependence and interconnectedness with *baga*. The Frafra people have the responsibility in nurturing plants, forest or water divinity because they are as integral part of interconnected ecosystem (Ignatov, 2023). The Frafra notion of the *baga* enables them to have sustainable use of the ecology is grounded in their choice of harvesting a tree, fuel wood, where to fetch water, or where to dump specific types of household waste (Ignatov, 2020; Anabila, 2020). This belief either at the individual level or community is governed by the necessity for sustainable management of resources and the judicial balance of what nature supplies with human demand. In this context, the Frafra belief in interdependence and interconnectedness with divinities is a counter discourse to the animist concepts of land in the dominant modernist forms of thought. The Frafra struggle to keep the forest lands is to reduce carbon emissions, deforestation and to conserve biodiversity. Their struggle to keep the forest lands is desire to ensure sustainable living in the Anthropocene. For this reason, the forest land in the Frafra world transcends its existence as a mere living entity.

The Frafra lands preserve their forest cover and biodiversity to avoid deforestation outside their boundaries (Liu, 2017; Song et al., 2020). The Frafra protect their forest land to honor ancestral spirits, and in so doing contribute to ecological resilience and to uphold sacred traditions (Anabila, 2020). In Frafra cosmology, thunder, winds, rain, storms, day and night, the sun, moon and stars are essentially interconnected guardians of life that sustain the resources required for survival. The forces of cosmological order are vitally important in offsetting carbon emissions and enhance carbon sink. The forest land for the Frafra people provides the sanctuary for humans, land, water, animals, plants, spirits, and other beings to coexist and interact. The *baga* divinities are seen as guardians and nurturers of the forest, which bestow life and vitality to all beings. The whole concept of lands/territories in the Frafra thought subverts the absurdly reductionist modernist framings and assumptions in the Anthropocene (Awumbila et al., 2017). Their struggle to keep the forest lands to live their lives in the Anthropocene epoch destabilizes and deconstructs dominant Western understandings of reducing carbon emissions. Their non-dualistic conceptions contained in their reality and relational onto-epistemology provide futural alternatives so problematic in the Anthropocene (Manzini, 2019).

Supernatural spirits control and care for rivers, forests and animals who are believed to hold independent soul and interact with people (Anabila, 2020). Fishing, hunting, planting, farming, and harvesting which are their daily activities are directly controlled by supernatural spirits which goes beyond the grasp of modernist imaginary. The Frafra interact with supernatural spirits through learning from ancestral wisdom and stories (Millar, 2006). The Frafra people get their names from animals and rivers because they believe that animals and rivers have spirits. They relate to the more-than-human world in a way that disrupts binary distinctions prevalent in western modernist framings (Anabila, 2020). In this sense, nature/society dichotomous distinctions and hierarchies makes sense to the Frafra people.

The Frafra people treatment and interaction with animals, trees, rivers and other entities as humans is very much in consonance with the notion of the contemporary Anthropocene. In fact, animals and other entities for Frafra people are considered other kinds of "folks" and live in their societies just like human entities. through objective knowledge, the Frafra people are to observe and master the nonhuman world. By recognizing other entities as ''folks', the Frafra more-than-human world allows non-modernist understandings to exist. The building of flood walls by the Frafra people pushes for sustainable ways of living in the Anthropocene epoch. The building of flood in the Anthropocene epoch enhances the resilience of natural and social dimensions respectively to catastrophic circumstances. The building of flood walls for sustainable development is completely at variance with modernist representation of reality. By integrating

different dimensions of sustainability through prioritizing anthropogenic interventions, the Frafra more-than-human world addresses biodiversity loss and ecological degradation (Liu, 2017). Sustainable human-nature dimension of indigenous people like the Frafra address real-world sustainability issues in the Anthropocene (Song et al., 2020).

They understand the natural environment and the intricacies of the spiritual world based on the principle of reciprocity and relationality anchored on nonanthropocentric philosophy of the Frafra people (Liu, 2017). The Frafra people care, respect, and gratitude for the land constitutes our multiple worlds, different multiplicity ways of being and knowing in the Anthropocene. Their multiplicity of ways in the sustainability destabilizes the Western modernist thought, and promote a range of alternative futural possibilities. Rejecting and refusing the modernist imaginary binary of nature/culture and human/nonhuman world, the Frafra onto-epistemology offers a novel understanding of human existence in terms of interconnectedness and relatedness (Liu, 2017). To them, human beings/natural beings are inherently and intrinsically connected to each other, and underlies the values that bind the Frafra people together (Manzini, 2019). The Frafra recognition that human beings exist in an intricately web of interconnectedness with and various natural beings and forces is an articulation of relatedness that disavows and directly contraposes the universalism and linear causality of modernity, and underscore the need for ecological diversity in the Anthropocene (Escobar, 2016; Inoue & Moreira, 2016). The Frafra mutual interrelationship and interconnectedness between nonhumans, various natural beings and the environment affirm and extend the Frafra people humanity (Ignatov 2014). Cooperation, trust, mutual respect, conviviality for the environment within which human existence unfolds give us insights into the broader indigenous environmental imaginary that exemplifies an expression of decolonization, and living otherwise (Behrens, 2017; Ignatov, 2017).

Practicing sustainable farming methods, care for the land, and pollution control measures are deeply embodied and lived in the interest of sustainability and to honor the Frafra Ancestors. The Frafra worldview, cosmology and traditional practices still exist despite the hostility of modernity and globalization with its impact on their relationship with the environment and their Ancestors (Awumbila et al., 2019). Surprising as it may sound, the Frafra oral traditions, spiritual insights, and more-than-human world in many respects have survived despite attack through various forms of colonization, modernization and globalization (Anabila, 2020). The recognition of indigenous more-than-human world is the way to go if humanity is to survive many worlds on one planet and cope with the

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increasingly catastrophic ecological changes wrought by Western modernist thought in the Anthropogenic present. The intention of this paper is to make a call for engagement rather than generalizing and essentializing the Frafra more-than-human hybrid onto-epistemology. The argument of the paper however moves away from mere sweeping generalizations about Frafra, as Frafra people are all not equally invested in ecological stewardship, mutuality, and cosmologies. What is more, the argument here avoids the risk to romanticize or idealize the Frafra relational more-than-human world. Instead, the paper is interested in some of the tensions, delicate constant flux, and contradictions of traditions present in contemporary Frafra society. The Frafra people are much more diverse in their beliefs, lifestyles, professional practices, traditional values, cultural practices, and access to wealth and opportunity. Grappling with onto-epistemology could be useful for meta-level critique of the narrow and technocratic conceptions of the Anthropocene. The point here is that pluralism (heterogeneity and complexities) is what the Frafra people have to share with the rest of the world in contemporary Anthropocene.

Concluding remarks

The paper has shown how the Frafra relational onto-epistemology challenges the prevailing models of conservation and environmental imaginaries in the Anthropocene. The paper has highlighted how the Frafra people natural world and perspectives make ways of knowing and being from which we can face the present, past and the future collectively. The Frafra more-than-human modes of existence represents a deeply reflexive attempt at decolonial thought and relational onto-epistemology. Decolonial critiques argue that the Frafra focus on relationships of interdependence and reciprocity make for real possibility of surpassing planetary limits from which we could embrace the world in the Anthropocene. By emphasizing spiritual balance, ecological knowledge, and communal responsibility, the Frafra offer a decolonial critique of the Anthropocene that calls for a radical rethinking of how we understand the relationship between humans and the environment. Frafra sustainable practices and thought reject Western modernist imaginary about a split between human and nature in the present context of global ecological crisis. Their worldview acknowledges that humans, animals, plants, spirits, and ancestors, non-human entities and spiritual dimensions need to be accepted as the starting point for sustainable ecology in the Anthropocene. The paper contends that to enhance sustainable development within the Anthropocene epoch, it is necessary that policy makers and theorists acknowledge the existence of local forms of ecological knowledge, practices and worldviews in order to find meaning in the Anthropocene.

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HARNESSING THE OJUDE-OBA CULTURAL FESTIVAL AS A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA

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Abstract
Ojude-Oba festivals are periods when the Ijebus and other people from the south west part of Nigeria converge as a group to renew their familial relationships, fortify their solidarity, cohesion and contribute to communal development through culture, music, food, art, fashion and merriment. In fact, they are sacred times when the people are free from social divisions and class segregation to unite as a community and show support by partaking in cultural activities that facilitates tourism, socio-economic development and communal development. In the light of this, the objective of this paper seeks to examine how the Ojude-Oba festival can be a tool for enhancing sustainable community development in South West, Nigeria. Qualitative method based on document investigation was adopted and the findings from this paper revealed that the Ojude-Oba has brought about tremendous community development that has led to urbanization and globalization in terms of trade, technology, entrepreneurship, industrialization and patriotism not just in Ijebu-Ode but in the entire South-West Nigeria. However, for this communal development to be sustainable, it concludes and recommends that the local and state government in collaboration with social and traditional institutions should enact policies that support the promotion and preservation of the Ojude-Oba culture from annihilation as they not only reflect the cultural identity and heritage of the South-West people, but play a huge role in enhancing sustainable community development.

Keywords: Cultural Cohesion, Globalization, Industrialization, Ojude-Oba Festival, Sustainable Community Development

Introduction

Nigeria since its independence has been going through a myriad of problems ranging from sectarian youth restiveness, ethnic variance, religious conflicts, terrorism, banditry and genocide. These violent attacks are most often debilitating to human capital development and antithetical to community development. Thus, a unifying activity in the form of cultural festivals is needed and so cultural festivals are special occasions which are generally marked by feasting, cultural socialization and communality. Its observance brings about social and ethical control as well as indigenous entrepreneurship and religious unity. Therefore, cultural festivals create a potent platform that guarantees peace and this is so because peace is the only condition where any form of development can take place (Hart,2014).

Basically, cultural festivals have for years influenced and determined the spate of development in communities. In fact, cultural festivals in any community is an indispensable factor for the attainment of community development goals. Fundamentally, cultural festivals are not only a catalyst for peace, it encourages indigenous administration, communality and grassroot participatory governance that will steadily create a conducive and peaceful environment which will enhance the system with opportunities that will propel community development This suggests that cultural festivals are transformational forces that facilitate industrialization, modernization and globalization (Olojede,2020).It is on this premise that the Ojude-Oba reflects the multifarious cultural heritage ,political and administrative sophistication prevalent among the people of the South-West, Nigeria and these socio-cultural communality is displayed during the Ojude-Oba festival on an annual basis. These festivals are most popular and peculiar to the Ijebu speaking community, a sub-group of the Yoruba ethnic group and this festival is always a celebration of the synergy of the Yoruba customs, fashion, politics, music, ethnic unity as well as the social and administrative welfarism. Thus, the Ojude-Oba is a significant medium of local governance, cultural education, administrative cohesion, familial bonding, communal consciousness, grass root leadership and intergenerational communication that transmits knowledge and experiences to future generations (Oladunni and Adeogun,2022) including the platform that unites all social, political, religious and interest groups using culture, leisure, glitz and glamour, arts, entertainment, revelry, commerce , industry and tourism to facilitate ethno cultural unity ,increased business opportunities, income generation, public enlightenment and by extension infrastructural and community development (Agbabiaka,Omoike,Abiodun and Omisore,2017).

Therefore, the Ojude-Oba is a remarkable socio-cultural tradition held every third day after Eid-El Kabir (Oresegun,2016) which has not only metamorphosed into a tourist event, but has attracted corporate branding that has resulted in the generation of funds for the community. Proceeds from the festival are reported to be used for the provision of boreholes, electricity transformers, hospitals and for the repair of public schools, community roads, street lights and drainages. Hence, the precedence of the Ojude-Oba festival has revealed that the Ojude-oba carnival has given room and created an atmosphere and lessons on the power of communitarianism as a tool for sustainable community development in the south-west, Nigeria.(Kukoyi,Aremu and Ololajulo,2020).Again, it has been observed that Because of the entrepreneurship and intense commercialization that goes on during the annual ojude-Oba festival, the cultural carnival creates an opportunity for reduction in poverty and unemployment. For example, it has been noted that during the festival, industrialization and urbanization is increased thus transporters make a lot of money because all the means of transportation such as transportation by air road, railways and sea records an increase by virtue of different families, clans, interests groups, well-wishers, politicians, business owners and tourists coming to participate in the ojude-Oba festival. Similarly, there is always a speedy increase in industrialization particularly in the food, hospitality, banking, hotel, fashion, makeup jewelry, beads, realtor, clothing, arts, entertainment and photography industry because there is always the inevitable need for these services which ultimately accelerates cosmopolitanism, entrepreneurship and socio-economic communal development and eventually spirals down to the entire South-West Nigeria. In the light of this, this paper seeks to examine how the Ojude-Oba festival can be a tool for enhancing sustainable community development in South West, Nigeria.

Research Objectives
The general objective of this study is to examine how the Ojude-Oba festival can be a tool for enhancing sustainable community development in South West, Nigeria while the specific objectives are to:
1. Identify the prospects of the Ojude-Oba cultural festival in achieving sustainable community development
2. The findings of this study will offer the relevant ministries, local governments, traditional institutions and community leaders pragmatic data that will serve as a roadmap for partnership with the grassroot people and provide policy solutions on how the Ojude-Oba cultural festival can remain sustainable for community development

Concept of Sustainable Community Development

Community development originates from the endeavors or ability of an individual, inborn, attained or expanded to exploit the resources of nature using his creativity and capital not only for his existing sustenance but also for the continuous advancement of his community. Thus, sustainable community development implies the procedures and outcomes of improving the well-being of the people, not of a group or some classes of people but all persons within the community and by extension, the totality of the citizens. In the light of this, sustainable community development is grassroot development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own communal needs. Hence, sustainable community development seeks to retain indigenous economic advancement and progress while guarding the long-term value of the community. Therefore, in order to achieve sustained community development, enhanced investments from the grassroots are imperative (Fapohunda, 2019). Similarly sustainable community development is concerned with consistent welfarism. It implies regular development at the grassroot level and so sustainable community development is the continuous communal transformation which involves an advancement in indigenous appearance, nature, condition or character (Onah and Oguonu,2010).

Thus, sustainable community development is a process which the members of a community capacity is enhanced to create and consume wealth on a lasting basis. It requires a socio-economic, political and cultural environment which enables the indigenous people to engage in and sustain the development process particularly at the grassroot level .Therefore, sustainable community development is the continuous communal development that results into a long and healthy communal life, knowledge and unlimited access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living as well as being able to participate in the life of the community without putting the future generations at the risk of squalor. Essentially, sustainable community development incorporates all aspects of the community's well-being, from their health status to their economic and political freedom without jeopardizing on the future. This implies that sustainable community development is the consistent increase in the community's political, economic, agricultural, educational and technological progress that takes care of posterity (Olojede, 2020)

The Seventeen Sustainable Community Development Goals

Goal 1: Eradicate poverty in all communities globally
Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture in all communities
Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages in all communities

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning in all communities

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls in all communities

Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all communities

Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all communities

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all communities

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation in all communities

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within communities and among countries

Goal 11: Make cities, communities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns in all communities

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact in all communities

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the ocean, seas and marine resources for sustainable development in all communities

Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss in all communities

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels and in all communities

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development in all communities.

Source: Aransi (2017)

Theoretical Framework
Growth Pole Theory of Development

The growth pole theory was propounded by Perroux in the 1950s and this theory focuses on the promotion of regional development which will serve as a focal point and incentive for further development in communities. Such a regional concentration helps to reap the benefits of cultural and technological advantage and makes the growth centre attractive to investors, entrepreneurs and activities that will facilitate communal development thus initiating sustainable community development (Opaluwa and Akanni,2014).Hence, the ideology of the growth pole theory is that the idea of community development is not uniformed across an entire region but instead takes place around a particular pole and so this pole is often characterized by regular cultural festivals that facilitates the development of industries at the grassroots that leads to the expansion of indigenous entrepreneurship, expansion in employment and other related investments that also contributes to technological improvements. This is because the scale and agglomeration at the pole propels a network of community development across the regions. In the light of this, this theory is relevant to this study because it reveals how cultural festivals can open doors to industrialization at the grassroots that transforms into globalization for community development, encourage indigenous governance, collaboration and dialogue.

Methodology

Documentary method was adopted for this study. Hence, data was sourced from local, national and international academic publications. These consisted of relevant text books and academic journals. The data gathered from the aforementioned method was analyzed using qualitative descriptive technique.

Brief Historical Background of the Ojude-Oba Festival

According to Fahm (2015) he explained that the Ojude-Oba means the king's fore-court or frontage. Thus, the Ojude-Oba is considered as one of the important festivals that brings all clans, kinsmen, families, religion and socio-economic groups from Ogun state together. The native age group (regberegbe), indigenes, friends and associates from far and near throng the palace of the Awujale of Ijebu land for the carnival and this festival is usually celebrated on the third day after Id-El-Kabir. In addition to that, this socio-cultural festival is one of the most glamorous indigenous, political, socio-economic and administrative festivals in Ijebu land and in Ogun state in general that has been celebrated for more than 100 years and has its origin in the entrance of Islam into the town (Oladunni,2022). This lends credence to the fact that the festival began when Balogun kuku, one of the indigenous pioneers in the community became a Muslim and decided to gather his friends, families and well-wishers to pay homage to the king for giving them the opportunity and atmosphere to practice their religion peacefully. In another account, the festival was said to have started when Imam Tunwatoba led his friends and family members to pay homage to his friends who was also the Awujale of Ijebu land, Oba Fidipote during the Eid el adha festival. Imam Tunwatoba was grateful to the king for being instrumental to the liberty enjoyed by the Muslims of the community to practice their religion. Since then, the cultural festival has been monumental in facilitating the continued religious, social, communal, political and administrative development, unity and

tranquility in Ijebu land and by extension Ogun state. (Kukoyi,Aremu and Ololajulo,2020).

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Cultural festivals are commemorative celebrations that strengthen the identity of people in communities (Duke and Osim,2020) and bring together all social classes of people as it provides an avenue or outlet for building social cohesion and building ties (Hart,2014).Therefore, cultural festivals are an important source of community development because cultural festivals provide the opportunity for international public relations, globalization, international public administration and to see how the local communities use their culture to facilitate community development. Hence, cultural festivals are the subsets of grass root development concerned with engendering socio-economic development at the indigenous level. For example, cultural festivals provide higher returns on invested capitals, increases agricultural production, foreign exchange revenue and communal welfare. Thus, cultural festivals create a niche for small and medium enterprises and the opportunity to establish civic communal consciousness all of which contribute to the achievement of sustainable community development goals. Therefore, cultural festivals usually impact on the socio-economic and infrastructural development of host communities by attracting tourists from outside a place who are going to spend time and money in their host communities. Thus, these revenues generated from tourists activities will in turn provide new employment opportunities and taxes from these revenues can be used in paying for some economic and infrastructural development projects (Jimada,2018).

Furthermore, it is a significant weapon for attracting and sustaining foreign investors and reducing the negative international image considering the fact that Nigeria faces the risk of being treated as a pariah nation because of its notoriety for fraud, large scale corruption, human rights abuse, insecurity and drug trafficking. For instance, the continued daily execution of Nigerian youths guilty of involvement in illicit narcotic trades and other violent crimes in some strict Asian and Muslim countries of the world has made an international slur and joke of the rebranding project of Nigeria and other diplomatic/international relations efforts in the country. This has further contributed to an erosion of Nigeria's corporate image and resulted in brain drain. However, the sustenance of cultural festivals can serve as an instrument in salvaging Nigeria's international image in ways that attract foreign investors that lead to community development (Olojede,2020). Hence, it is an asset for economic and

social empowerment (Diminiyi,Oba,Abutu,Eta and Anselem,2022).

Again, Nigeria has been faced with multi-dimensional issues challenging its communal development and these challenges do not come without its attendant consequences particularly for grass root development. Thus, many of these challenges to community development can be traced to matters such as religion, political, ethnic or regional quagmires. At times these challenges also include the prolonged menace of the multi ethnic, multi-cultural and multi lingual crises that has resulted in the sabotage of the efforts to attain lasting peace and development within communities which has also been further exacerbated by political and economic corruption, poverty ,unemployment, militancy, uncompleted developmental projects, regional control for power, environmental degradation, ineffective poverty alleviation projects and social injustice within communities and regions and as such, since the people and culture are inseparable despite all of these challenges, then it is expedient that exploiting the cultural festivals as an agency for sustainable community development can be harnessed since it is a channel for stemming ethnic tension and propelling communality, industrialization, revitalization of the local economy, urbanization, reduction in poverty, unemployment and by extension sustainable community development (Ezebuilo and Ndukwe,2023). Fundamentally, cultural festivals are important in stimulating the growth and development of the grass root. This is because cultural festivals provides the market place for indigenous administrative skills, grass root governance and a wide range of goods and services as well as entrepreneurial opportunities (Abba and Abubakar,2019)

Conclusion and Recommendation

Since culture is a way of life particularly for most Nigerians and especially for people living in the South-West, the cultural and informal sectors can be a productive branch of the economy which should be contributing to the development of the communities. In the light of this, there is the need for policy makers to exploit the cultural lifestyle of people as an agency to facilitate community development in ways that are sustainable by funding festivals that encourage communal collectivity. Therefore, based on the findings of this study, the following policy recommendations are proposed.

1. Policy frameworks should be made wherein the ministry of information, culture and tourism in collaboration with local governments, community leaders, regional leaders, agnatic head of families, community youth leaders, traditional leaders and women associations supports the Ojude-Oba cultural festivals technically, logistically and financially in ways that provide the planning and implementation

of initiatives that enhance social capital, entrepreneurship, social inclusion, participatory governance and a reduction in brain drain, crime and poverty in grassroot areas and underdeveloped communities

2. The federal ministry of information and national orientation in collaboration with journalists, broadcasters and Information Communication Technology experts need to aggressively promote international sensitization of the Ojude-Oba cultural festivals to showcase the cultural heritage of Nigerians using cultural festivals as a means to propel globalization and international public administration through mainstream and social media outlets to attract foreign investors, entrepreneurs, tourists, researchers, educators and entertainers in order to enhance broader economic and social advantages, international collaboration as well as opportunities for speedy community development in sustainable ways.

3. Autonomous departments, institutes, agencies in institutions of learning and websites should be created wherein cultural education is dispersed in ways that prevent the annihilation of the Nigerian culture, reduce identity crisis and help the youths manage or solve conflicts at the infancy stage in grassroot areas. This will encourage patriotism, reduce ethnic tension, strife and divisions within communities and consequently produce social justice and peace that creates an environment for sustainable community development.

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