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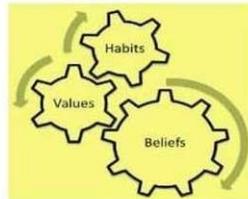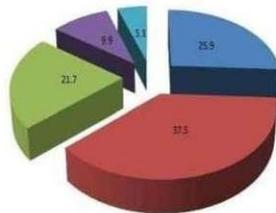Multidisciplinary Tracks & emails to you references made to your paper

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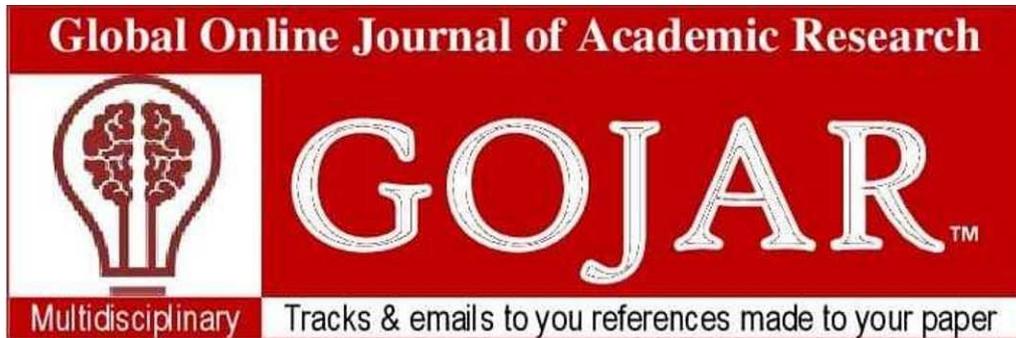
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Utilizing Beliefs, Values and Habits as Tools for Determining Personal Outcomes

By

Duve Nakolisa

Abstract

This paper identifies beliefs, values, and habits as the critical forces that dictate the outcome of an individual's endeavours and their capacity to realize set goals. The paper presents and illustrates the view that the fundamental causes of success and failure lie in the beliefs, values and habits of the individual. It introduces new concepts and analytical tools invented not only to clarify the expository thrusts of the paper but to empower the individual to evaluate the direction of their beliefs, values and habits. Some of these new tools include the belief-values-habit (BVH) formulations and tables devised to enhance the individual's ability to analyze and understand their own and other people's behaviour and motives. The paper's theoretical and practical insights are framed within the author's BVH model and are presented as processes by which an individual can utilize beliefs, values and habits to determine the outcome of their undertaking.

Keyword: belief, values, habit, BVH model, BVH tables, BVH codes, BVH sets, JBUT chart, success, personal outcomes

Every individual's beliefs, values and habits constitute the foundation of their success or failure in personal, occupational and social endeavours. Upon the fundamental tripod of beliefs, values and habits may be placed other factors which can boost or hinder an individual's success. Some of these are vision, desire, focus, persistence, hard work, foresight, knowledge, creativity, and finance. But then, even these are products of an

individual's beliefs, values and habits. The puzzle is that there are people who fail to achieve appreciable success in spite of exhibiting all or most of the above qualities of successful people; there are, on the other hand, those who appear not to have some of these attributes but, regardless of that, end up attaining great success in their chosen careers. What could be the explanation for this incongruity or apparent disharmony between an individual's apparent success attributes and the outcome of his or her endeavours? Concerning this, many perspectives and explanations abound. However, it is the position of this paper that there is an underlying relationship between an individual's beliefs, values and habits and that person's capacity to realize set goals. Some vital aspects of this relationship are explored in this paper.

Beliefs, Values and Habits as Critical Outcome Fundamentals

We need to define the terms "belief", "values" and "habit" as a guide to our understanding of their fundamental roles in determining the outcome of an individual's occupational/vocational endeavour or their capacity to realize set goals. Generally, a belief is anything an individual holds to be true and upon which they place some confidence. A belief is what someone recognizes, approves and accepts to be true with or without empirical evidence. Our beliefs differ because our personalities, upbringing, education, social exposure, culture, experience, and responses to all of these and other factors, differ. That is why someone may have the belief that they would succeed in achieving what they set out to do while another firmly believes that they would fail to realize their goal no matter how hard they try. To belief is to unleash a value chain, for it inevitably links one to values that make what one believes and its attainment possible or impossible. The above is a wide-ranging definition of belief; we shall adopt a functional or operative definition of the term, suitable for its measurable application, later in this paper.

What are values? Values are the important ideas about key aspects of life an individual has formed over time, and usually from the standpoint of his or her beliefs. According to Schwartz (1992), values are "desirable states, objects, goals, or behaviours, transcending specific situations and applied as normative standards to judge and to choose among alternative modes of behaviour". Elaborating on this point, Kaushal and Janjhua (2011) explain that

> values refer to the way in which people evaluate activities or outcomes and guide to a person's intentions and actions… Values signify desired

goals scaled according to importance, which guide a person's life, behaviour that is directed towards goals, and criteria for choosing those goals.

Values are the standards by which an individual or a group of persons is guided to choose what to attain in life and by which they go through the process of attaining their goals. Some people confuse beliefs with values but they are two distinct terms. Pediaa (2016) distinguishes them as follows:

> Although values and beliefs are interrelated since they collectively affect our attitudes, perceptions, personality, character and behaviour, there is a distinctive difference between them. The main difference between values and beliefs is that values are principles, ideals or standards of behaviour while beliefs are convictions that we generally accept to be true. It is these ingrained beliefs that influence our values, attitudes, and behaviour.

Habits are the routine value-driven things an individual or a group of persons does to become who or what they are or to attain goals they set for themselves. Habits are the external expression of the internal beliefs and values of an individual or group of persons. Habits are someone's regular behaviour; they are the acts they exhibit or undertake as they are propelled by their inward beliefs and values. There are good and bad habits. Good habits are the productive acts people regularly engage in that bring them good results. Bad habits are the unproductive acts they frequently engage in that bring them bad results. Generally, whether a habit is deemed good or bad is dependent upon what one believes and the values one holds dear. In visionary terms, a habit is considered good if it enhances one's vision or goal and considered bad if it hinders it.

An individual's beliefs, values and habits can lead them to realize or fall short of realizing their set goals – depending on the type or nature of those beliefs, values and habits. So, while one belief-values-habit set can lead one person to success, another belief-values-habit set can lead another to failure. We will illustrate in a subsequent segment of this paper the critical need for people to choose or reinforce those beliefs, values and habits that steer them towards success rather than towards failure. We will also illustrate how beliefs, values and habits can be broadly classified and their impact practically determined as part of this papers purpose of exemplifying in what way or manner beliefs, values and habits can be utilized as tools for engineering success or the

realization of set goals.

Relationship between Workers' Values and Workplace Performance

It has been noted that there is a relationship between workers' beliefs and values and how well they do (the habits they exhibit) in the work place. Most jobs make practical demands on workers – they demand their skill, their capacity to do something, to communicate and to deliver results. Kaushal and Janjhua (2011) are of the view that there is a relationship between personal values and performance in the workplace:

> Most of the early attempts in studying values have observed that values play a very important role in determining individual behaviour, decision making and managerial success… Moreover the similarity in value orientations…plays an important role in eliminating value conflicts and have significant implications for the organizations which need to integrate for high performance work systems in the organisations… The research on work values also conceived that work values are derived from people's basic value systems that help them navigate through the multiple spheres of their lives…

Dorkenoo et al (2015) also share the view that the work ethic or values of a worker has a direct bearing on their productivity since the worker's attitude and performance of assigned tasks reflect their ingrained principles:

> Values can strongly influence employee conduct in the workplace. If an employee values honesty, hard work, and discipline, for example, he will likely make an effort to exhibit those traits in the workplace. This person may therefore be a more efficient employee and a more positive role model to others than an employee with opposite values. Values determine what individuals find important in their daily life and help to shape their behaviour in each situation they encounter. Since values often strongly influence both attitude and behaviour, they serve as a kind of personal compass for employee conduct in the workplace. Values help determine whether an employee is passionate about work and the workplace….

Beliefs, values, habits: these three are equally important. To believe the right things without valuing the right things can give one the conviction to go in the right direction but deny them the wisdom to make the right choices. To have the right values without cultivating the right habits can enable one to make the right choices but deprive them the capacity to take the right steps. Beliefs,

values, and habits are inter-connected and this connection can be utilized by every individual to transform, intensify and speed up their capacity to become successful in whatever they choose to do. There is enormous power in the cumulative effect of these three forces, if one knows how to apply them methodically to break those barriers blocking them from realizing their goal or attaining self-fulfillment.

Classifying Beliefs, Values and Habits

Beliefs, values and habits can be broadly grouped into two classes: pro-success or positive beliefs, values and habits and anti-success or negative beliefs, values and habits. Positive and negative categorization is, incidentally, among some of the vital dualisms of life – in some ways as basic as good and evil, life and death, up and down, light and darkness. When beliefs, values and habits are positive, they vivify and instigate critical success factors such as purpose, vision, goal, passion, skill, diligence and integrity. When negative, they propel their failure-inclined captives towards laxity, purposelessness, aimlessness, apathy, laziness, shortsightedness, incompetence, feebleness, and dishonesty. It is the nature of the individual's beliefs, values and habits that dictates the course of his or her life. It is what determines how people invest time, talent and other resources; how much they earn, retain and invest; and what determines the direction, quality and level of their overall personal and business development.

More than A Matter of "Good" or "Bad"

The average person can tell apart two extremely opposite beliefs, values or habits. On a moral scale, the bad attribute or act, because of its crudity, would weigh down the scale, lifting up the good attribute or act. Broadly speaking, and in spite of differences in culture or nurture, there is a natural capacity in every human being to distinguish what is obviously right from what is obviously wrong. So, the average individual can draw a table such as this (*Table 1*) without putting any data in the wrong column:

Table 1

	Good	Bad
Beliefs	Everyone's life is valuable.	Husbands have the right to kill their wives.
Values	Honesty and Diligence	Dishonesty and Laziness

| Habits | Daily punctuality at work | Daily lateness at work |

It should be noted, however, that in terms of their capacity to enhance or hinder success, all beliefs, values and habits do not weigh the same but the differences here are not necessarily distinguished by "good" or "bad" tags. In the terrain of success considerations, a seemingly "good" attribute, such as patience, can be rated low if, for instance, it has the tendency to detain a man on the same spot and make him to be doing the same thing and producing the same negative result year in, year out. And what about outspokenness? On its own, this is good, especially for an activist who needs it to articulate and communicate his or her cause. But this "good" habit will be "bad" if routinely exhibited by someone whose job demands or requires tact and sensitivity in addressing issues. This is why, for purposes of success evaluation, it is important to avoid the term "good" or "bad" in classifying beliefs, values and habits. Instead, they should be evaluated in terms of the positive (+) or negative (–) contribution they make towards the realization of a given vision or goal.

Evaluating Beliefs as Drivers of Values and Habits

Beliefs, in terms of the behaviours they spawn, can be broadly classified and labelled according to their tendency to enhance or hinder the capacity of those who believe them to accomplish their set goal. Hence, for the purpose of this discussion, we shall classify beliefs or statements of belief into two types: pro-success and anti-success beliefs. Pro-success beliefs or statements of belief are phrased in such a way that they express faith in the capacity or likelihood of those who believe or utter them to achieve success or cause a positive change in their lives. Anti-success beliefs or statements of belief do the opposite; they engender doubt, fear, complacency and failure.

Table 2, using statements people commonly say or believe, exemplifies these two kinds of beliefs. The examples cited in this table are far from being exhaustive. Indeed, one could cite dozens of such everyday utterances if we had ample space for that. The ones we have listed here are meant to serve as a guide. The table should also make everyone more sensitive to the underlying meanings of regular statements people make. It should be realized that by those statements people, consciously or unconsciously, call up spiritual and physical forces that enhance the fulfillment of the tenor of their utterances, be it positive or negative. People should check themselves everyday to ensure that what they

say is not an unconscious contradiction of what they want.

Table 2: Pro-Success and Anti-Success Statements of Belief

	Pro-Success Beliefs	**Anti-Success Beliefs**
1	I am going to succeed in life.	Life is a matter of fate.
2	If someone can do it, I can do it.	All fingers are not equal.
3	If I can think it, I can do it.	If wishes were horses beggars will ride them.
4	A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.	Never begin what you cannot finish.
5	Nothing ventured, nothing gained.	A bird in hand is worth two in the bush.
6	I can do more and achieve more.	Be contented with what you have.
7	It is never too late to make a U-turn.	You shouldn't learn to be left-handed at an old age.
8	Success can be achieved in every environment.	If I were living abroad I would have made it.
9	I am the architect of my own fortune.	I have no one to help me.
10	I will keep trying until I win.	I am a failure.
11	My future is in my hands.	No one knows tomorrow.
12	My life is a reflection of my daily choices.	Life is full of ups and downs.

One may ask, why is one set of the above statements tagged "pro-success" while the other set is tagged "anti-success"? The difference is in the inclination of the speaker and believer of each statement to act according to the leaning of his or her statement. Speakers of the pro-success statements are usually more

inclined towards taking steps to get positive outcomes than speakers of the anti-success statements who typically tilt towards resignation, apathy, and procrastination. This indicates that speakers of the pro-success statements are more likely to expect or take steps to get positive results than speakers of the anti-success statements. The latter are usually negative-minded and liable to doing little or nothing to change their situation.

Pro-Success and Anti-Success Beliefs as True Beliefs
Given the aforesaid fundamental difference between pro-success and anti-success statements of belief, can we then say that pro-success statements are true beliefs while anti-success statements are false beliefs? We need to derive or adopt a functional definition of belief before we would be able to answer this question. From a pragmatic point of view, a belief is defined by the predisposition of the one who believes to act according to what he or she believes. That belief is false if the believer acts or is disposed to act contrary to what he or she supposedly believes. A true statement of belief is that which inspires the one who believes it to act in accordance with its dictates. So, a statement is said to be a true belief if the one who utters or believes it is inclined to do or act in accordance with what it says; a statement is amounts to a false belief if the one who utters or purports to believe it is disinclined to do or act in accordance with what that statement says. In other words, a belief – in terms of what it means to an individual – is not in and of itself true or false but is either true or false strictly on the basis of what the one who claims to believe it is inclined or disinclined to do. It is the doing part that tells us whether someone truly believes something or not. Every individual tends to act in line with what they believe; so, we can gain a good insight into what someone believes by how they act.

Alexander Bain was probably the first modern philosopher to recognize this connection between belief and action, a significant nexus as far as our discussion of the subject of belief, in this book, is concerned. Bain, in 1859, defined belief as "that upon which a man is prepared to act". Max Fisch in Engel (2019) logically expressed it thus:

"X believes p" means "X is prepared to act on p"

Bain clarifies the relationship between belief and action thus:

It will be readily admitted that the state of mind called belief is, in many cases, a concomittant of our activity. But I mean to go farther than this, and to affirm that belief has no meaning except in reference to our actions; the essence, or import of it is such as to place it under the region of the will.

Bain in Misak (2016) went further to note the role of feeling as a binding force between belief and action: "The difference between mere conceiving or imagining, with or without strong feeling, and belief, is acting, or being prepared to act, when the occasion arises."

In line with this functional definition of belief, can we say, referring to the question earlier posed, that the pro-success statements listed in Table 2.1 are true beliefs while the anti-success statements are false beliefs? Although the speakers of the pro-success statements are more likely to get positive results than the speakers of the anti-success statements, both categories of speakers are prepared or inclined to act in accordance with their utterances. So, both sets of statements are true beliefs: the pro-success believers are prepared or inclined to act positively; the anti-success believers are prepared or inclined to act negatively. In as much as the speakers of these two sets of statements have the disposition to act in accordance with the tenor of their statements, their utterances equally constitute true belief. The major difference is that one set of true beliefs is pro-success while the other set of true beliefs is anti-success. But pro-success beliefs and anti-success beliefs, being true beliefs, have the potential to influence the mind to make each believer act in accordance with what they believe.

BVH Evaluation and Classification

What we can call Belief-Values-Habit Evaluation, or simply BVH Evaluation, is a method devised by this author for assessing how success-oriented one's beliefs, values and habits are. It is a result-oriented technique which, when mastered, can be readily applied.

Early in life, most people were influenced to acquire certain beliefs, values and habits they now consider counter-productive. Such negative beliefs, values and habits should be done away with. It is the responsibility of the goal-setter or success-seeker to enforce necessary mental and behavioural changes to enhance the smooth realization of set goals. The BVH Evaluation is a soul-

searching assessment of beliefs, values and habits based on their actual, potential or perceived relevance or irrelevance to the realization of one's vision or goal. A belief or set of beliefs, values or habits is pro-success if it enhances or moves your vision or goal forward; it is anti-success if it hinders your goal or turns you partially or completely away from it.

If someone's belief, values or habit is evaluated as being pro-success, it is classified and noted as positive (+) belief, values or habit; if evaluated as being anti-success, it is classified and noted as a negative (–) belief, values or habit. This categorical assessment makes no room for neutral (0) or unsigned beliefs, values and habits. (See *Table 3*)

Table 3: BVH Evaluation and Classification

	Beliefs		Values		Habits	
	Goal-Oriented	Non-Goal Oriented	Goal-Oriented	Non-Goal Oriented	Goal-Oriented	Non-Goal Oriented
Evalua-tion	pro-success	anti-success	pro-success	anti-success	pro-success	anti-success
Classifi-cation	positive	negative	positive	negative	positive	negative
Sign	+	–	+	–	+	–

The goal of the BVH Evaluation is to help every individual identify and categorize every issue of immediate or remote implication for their success journey. This evaluation will help them identify the success or failure orientation of their beliefs, values and habits through sorting them into two distinct categories: those which would enhance success vs. those which would hinder success. Many people should be able to do this, although how well it is done would significantly vary from person to person.

Outcomes are Not Accidental Results

To restate our position, everyone's ability or lack thereof to realize set goals springs primarily from the tenor of their beliefs and values and the actions they propel him to take. These are what determine the outcome the individual obtains from any endeavour to which they channel their time, energy and money. Personal outcomes are usually reflections of what the individual inputted into their life in the areas of beliefs, values and habits. Outcomes are

not accidental results. They are chains of interconnected forces that are difficult to deal with except one is conscious of and ready to make necessary adjustments regarding the leanings of their beliefs, values and habits.

Figure 1: Pairs of Opposite Values and Outcomes
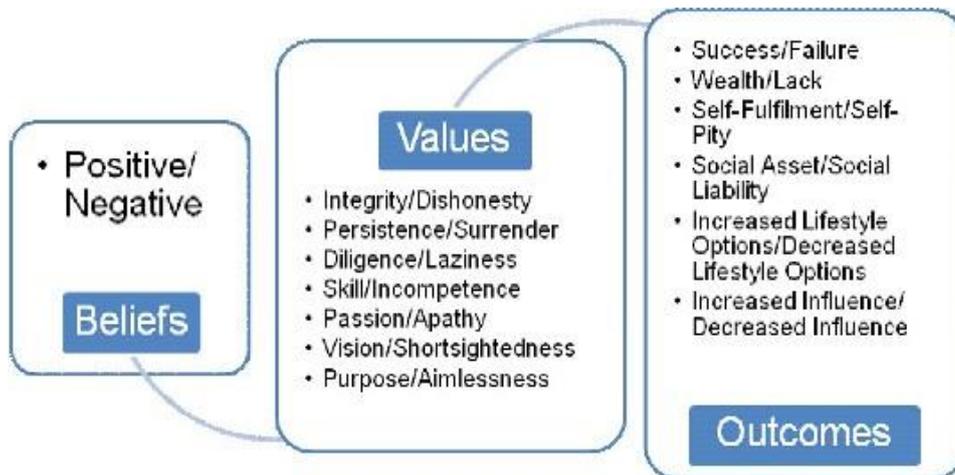
Every individual's success or goal-chasing journey is in stages and there are not one but many outcomes. Every outcome expected at the end of every stage of the journey should be clearly and recognizably identified. This is the only way one can know whether they are making progress or not and whether one should reassess their beliefs, values and habits. Such reassessments should be used to make one better at attaining a set goal, not better at derailing it. A set goal or vision is the nucleus around which every idea or experience should revolve.

Success is all about outcomes and outcomes are rarely accidental results. Outcomes spring from the soil of the individual's positive/negative beliefs, germinate as their positive/negative values, branch out through their positive/negative habits to become their positive/negative results. See Figure 1 for an illustration of this vital relationship with particular emphasis on the connection between values and outcomes.

In Figure 1, two sets of beliefs – positive and negative – are involved. Although these beliefs are not stated, you can use the ones listed in Table 2 as examples of positive and negative beliefs. In Fig. 1, a set of positive beliefs produced a set of positive values, namely, integrity, persistence, diligence, skill, passion, vision, and purpose. This set of positive values produced

desirable outcomes, such as success, wealth, self-fulfillment, social assets, increased options, and increased influence. The negative beliefs gave rise to the following negative values: dishonesty, feebleness, laziness, incompetence, apathy, shortsightedness and aimlessness. These values, as illustrated, led to unpleasant outcomes: failure, lack, self-pity, social liability, decreased lifestyle options, and decreased influence. All of these are the opposite of the positive outcomes listed above. No right-thinking person would like these negative outcomes but, like them or not, they inevitably result when one's beliefs, values and habits are continually anti-success. It seems reasonable to state that life usually delivers what we somehow allowed our beliefs, values, and habits to attract.

BVH Interactions

In this section of the paper, we will explore aspects of beliefs, values and habits in order to gain greater insight into their interactions and their involvement in shaping human behaviour. So far, we have seen the interaction between these three forces as a rather one-way chain, with beliefs leading to values, and values leading to habits, and habits leading to success or failure. While this sequential framework is not all there is to beliefs, values and habits, it rightly highlights the causative order of their interactions in ideal situations. However, when manifesting in the life of the individual, beliefs, values and habits can act in diverse ways.

Personal-growth Gear

Let us use the concept of what this paper calls personal-growth gear to describe the manner in which an individual's beliefs, values and habits work together to enhance their personal growth and development. An individual's personal-growth gear refers to the way their beliefs, values and habits move each other to generate capacity, efficiency, and productivity or incapacity, inefficiency, and non-productivity. Ineffective deployment of the personal-growth gear reduces the level of output, competence, and income an individual can produce. Incompetent engagement of the personal-growth gear is one of the fundamental reasons some individuals have failed repeatedly at whatever they tried to do. How effectively the personal-growth gear is put to use determines an individual's success power. Each time someone thinks, each time they take action, they are engaging their beliefs-values-habits gear, projecting it to move in a certain direction and at a certain speed. (Note that by habits we include habits of gathering, sifting and analyzing information as well as habits of

acting on the information.)

Figure 2: Personal-growth gear
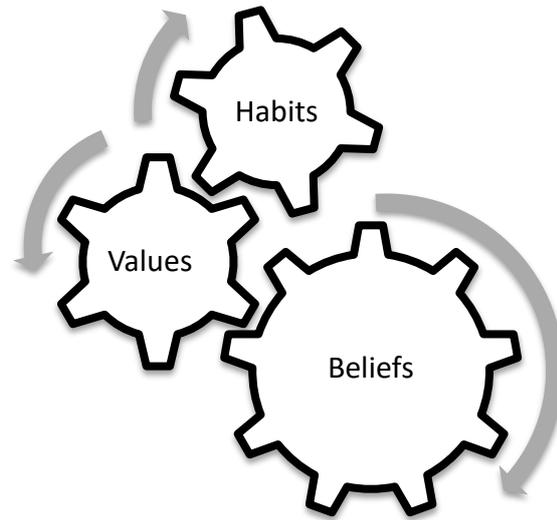
Every act is not a linear expression that necessarily springs from beliefs to values and, then, to habits. While, in formative terms, beliefs, values and habits unfold in a sequential way, they do not necessarily manifest that way; many times, they act simultaneously, like the parts a gear, to change the pace or direction of someone's beliefs, values or habits. (See Figure 2)

What this means is that the success-seeker must continually be sensitive to the inter-relationship between these three critical forces (beliefs, values and habits) in order to ensure that none of them is out of alignment with set goals, since they produce best results when they are in alignment with each other. To believe one thing and do another is a clear indication that one's personal-growth gear is not properly aligned. To return to the authentic path of growth and development, a realignment of BVH forces in a manner that powers one towards the desired direction would be necessary.

When someone's beliefs, values and habits are in agreement with each other, they can all be efficiently expressed in a single act through their gear-like interaction. The personal-growth gear, in enabling us to see in one instance of behaviour an individual's essence, plays a synthetic and generative role. For example, someone casting his vote during an election is displaying belief in

democracy while at the same time expressing an aspect of his democratic values and demonstrating a habitual inclination to participate in choosing his leaders.

BVH Unit

A BVH unit is made up of three components – belief(s), values and habit(s) – that form an identifiable meaning in a sequential or non-sequential manner. A meaning is sequentially obtained from a BVH unit when it is derived through a logical sequence of belief(s), values and habit(s). A BVH unit that forms a sequential meaning is called a BVH set. A meaning is non-sequentially obtained from a BVH unit when it does not emanate from a logical sequence of belief(s), values and habit(s). A BVH unit that forms a non-sequential meaning is called a BVH mix. The term "BVH mix", as used in this paper, takes a singular or plural verb, depending on whether it is referring to a single BVH mix or two or more BVH mix.

A BVH unit (be it a BVH set or a BVH mix) is susceptible to personal, social and environmental influences, among other factors capable of causing shifts in personal beliefs, values and habits over a short or long period of time. Those who withstand unsavoury influences to maintain behavioural stability achieved the feat by largely conducting their lives in line with the dictates of veritable BVH sets.

Classification of BVH Units

As we earlier stated, there are positive (pro-success) beliefs, values and habits and negative (anti-success) beliefs, values and habits. Units of beliefs, values and habits (BVH units) are also classified. There are three types of BVH units:

- o Positive BVH units
- o Negative BVH units
- o Positive and Negative BVH units.

The first two types apply to BVH sets while the last applies to BVH mix.

BVH units are usually distinguished in terms of the following features:

- their **Type**
- their **Tenor**, and
- their **Sequence**.

By type, we refer to the three BVH types (positive BVH units, negative BVH units, and positive and negative BVH units) listed above. The term, "tenor" is the general meaning or perspective a BVH unit is conveying or tends to be conveying. It is a feature of all BVH units. "Sequence" refers to the way the tenor or meaning of a BVH unit is derived: does it flow logically and conformably from beliefs, through values to habits or is it derived as a result of a contradiction in one or more BVH components?

BVH Set

A BVH set is a BVH unit whose meaning is derived through a logical sequence of belief(s), values and habit(s) that are in line with each other. What this means is that it is the conformability of the components of a BVH unit that determines whether it is a BVH set or a BVH mix. Because the components of a BVH set correspond to each other, the elements in the components being mutually consistent, they lead to a predictable pattern of behaviour. The contradictory components of a BVH mix, on the other hand, lead to unpredictable pattern of behaviour.

A BVH set is either positive or negative in type. To determine what type a BVH set is, we ask the question: Are the beliefs, values and habits of this BVH set positive (pro-success) or negative (anti-success)?

It is vital to note that the word, "success", as used in the above brackets, is defined as the realization of a worthy goal or desire. If the goal of a given BVH set is evil, socially or morally harmful, the BVH set is deemed to be negative in spite of the "success" of its outcome. In this matter, the end does not justify the means. In any authentic success story, the value or glory of the outcome should be gauged by the integrity of the process.

One of the defining features of a BVH set is that its belief(s), values and habit(s) point toward the same meaning or idea, thereby laying the foundation for its logical sequence. Thus, in a BVH set, the beliefs are in agreement with the values which, in turn, lead to agreeable habits that externalize the tenor of the set. (See Fig. 3)

Figure 3: Logical sequence of BVH Set
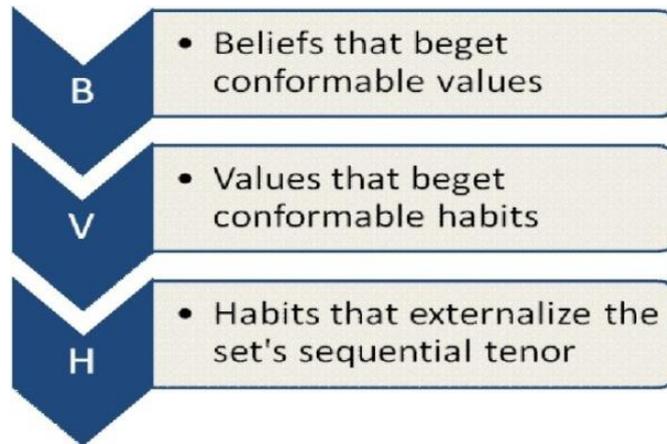
BVH Table

A BVH table is a columnar presentation of BVH units that displays in the respective columns the belief(s), values and habit(s) of each row (or BVH unit) of the table. When a row of a BVH table displays belief(s), values, and habit(s) that agreeably link to each other, that row is called a BVH set. A row whose belief(s), values, and habit(s) are not altogether consistent is called a BVH mix.

The BVH table below contains three BVH sets. Notice that each set's beliefs, values and habits point toward the same meaning. Since conformable values and habits can correspond to conformable beliefs in various ways, BVH tables, such as the one below, may not contain exhaustive list of sets of possible beliefs, values and habits. To illustrate the topic, only three BVH sets are listed.

Table 4: BVH Table

	Beliefs	Values	Habits
1	Slow and steady wins the race.	patience, consistency, orderly progress	follows due process, stays in the same job for long, secures success in due course
2	Time waits for no one.	time-consciousness, decisiveness, speed, smartness	on the lookout for new opportunities, easily tries new things, engages in side ventures that bring in extra income
3	It's all fair and OK as long as you don't get	cleverness, theft, bribery, forgery,	runs a prostitution and armed robbery

caught.	impatience, hustle	ring, engages in cross-border trafficking of girls

The above BVH sets are logically sequenced. Logical sequence is unique to BVH sets and refers to the order in which BVH beliefs generate conformable values which, in turn, give rise to conformable habits. We see this principle at work in the above BVH table where the values and habits of each BVH set flow from and build upon the conformable elements of the set's belief component.

BVH Codes

BVH codes are ways of using letters and numbers to make convenient, simplified and orderly references to the BVH sets and BVH mix in a given table. BVH codes are derived from BVH tables for the purpose of uniquely identifying and analyzing BVH sets and BVH mix.

Table 4 (above) is made up of three BVH sets which can be identified, as follows, in terms of their positions as rows of that table:

<div align="center">

1st BVH Set (Table 4, row 1)
2nd BVH Set (Table 4, row 2)
3rd BVH Set (Table 4, row 3)

</div>

Instead of referring to these BVH sets using the above lengthy forms, BVH codes can be used to sort and systematize such references as follows:

Detailed Reference	BVH Code
1st BVH Set (Table 4, row 1)	BVH-S1
2nd BVH Set (Table 4, row 2)	BVH-S2
3rd BVH Set (Table 4, row 3)	BVH-S3

Note that the letter "S", attached to the number identifying the row where the BVH set is located in the table, stands for "set"; it is used to distinguish a BVH-Set code from a BVH-Mix code. BVH codes can function as primary keys in BVH-Set and BVH-Mix tables as well as in database records.

BVH-Set Tables

A BVH-Set table provides quick tabular insight into the type, tenor and sequence of coded BVH sets. It is different from a BVH table whose columns merely indicate the beliefs, values and habits of a BVH unit (be that unit a BVH set or mix).

BVH-Set table and BVH-Mix table have four columns each, namely, BVH Code, BVH Type (Type), BVH Tenor (Tenor) and BVH Sequence (Sequence). A right arrow (→) is used to show the logical sequence of a BVH-Set.

The BVH-Set table below (*Table 5*) is drawn using BVH data provided in Table 4 above and the BVH codes derived from it.

Table 5: BVH-Set Table

BVH Code	Type	Tenor	Sequence
BVH-S1	+	patience, consistency, orderly progress	continuity→consistency→success
BVH-S2	+	time-consciousness, decisiveness, speed, smartness	new things→new opportunities→quick benefits
BVH-S3	−	cleverness, theft, bribery, forgery, impatience, hustle	crime→cleverly committed→OK

Note that BVH-Set table and BVH-Mix tables are not meant to serve as alternatives to BVH tables without which none of their columns will make referential sense. BVH codes symbolize BVH sets while BVH-Set and BVH-Mix tables provide useful information that makes more meaningful BVH tables.

BVH Mix

A BVH mix is a unit of beliefs, values, and habits that are not sequentially linked. A BVH mix, unlike a BVH set, is positive and negative in type, does

not form a logical sequence from beliefs, through values, to habits, and so derives its tenor from inconsistent BVH components.

The tenor of a BVH mix has two contradictory aspects: positive (pro-success) and negative (anti-success). Recognizing this two-part tenor is vital as it enables us to make useful distinctions while sorting out the sequence of a BVH mix.

Under the "Sequence" column, a BVH mix's tenor is prefixed with "pro-" or "anti-". These prefixes are attached to a word or phrase that captures an element of BVH mix's contradictory tenor. If that element supports life, for example, we may refer to it as "pro-life"; and if it is against the use of vaccines, we may tag it "anti-vaccines" in the BVH mix "Sequence" column. The use of these two prefixes reflects the inconsistent pattern we see in a BVH mix and the illogical nature of its sequence. A forward slash is used to demarcate the elements of a BVH mix tenor. Example: pro-life / anti-vaccines.

The BVH table below contains only BVH mix.

Table 6: BVH Table (2)

	Beliefs	Values	Habits
1	There is life after death: the righteous will go to heaven and sinners will go to hell.	church-attendance, get-rich-quick schemes	profiteer, smuggler, loan shark, buyer of stolen goods, church goer
2	Smokers are liable to die young.	regular exercise, medical checkups	chain smoking, campaigns against public nonsmoking areas
3	It is an abomination for a woman to commit adultery.	women's sexual faithfulness, men's sexual freedom	womanizing, cheats on wife

You will observe that each mix of beliefs, values and habits cannot be said to be logical or sequential as there is no mutually consistent meaning, as we see in a BVH set. This is why a BVH mix is not simply positive (+) or negative (−) but both positive and negative (±).

In spite of its sequential discrepancy, a BVH mix is very valuable. It communicates information that reflects human foibles and the ironic nature of reality. There is so much inconsistency in real-life behaviour, so much disconnect between what people believe or claim to believe and what they actually do: this is what the BVH mix captures and expresses. Very few people lead lives that only BVH sets can truly reflect; in this sense, BVH mix may serve as a truer mirror of the average person's behaviour.

BVH Mix Codes

Earlier, two distinct BVH codes – BVH set code and BVH mix code – were identified. While their functions are the same, BVH mix codes are distinguished from BVH set codes by the letter "M" (stands for "mix") that precedes the number denoting the row where the BVH mix is located in a table.

We can use BVH codes to represent each of the three BVH mix of Table 6 as follows:

Table 7: BVH Mix Codes

Detailed Reference	BVH Code
1st BVH Mix (Table 6, row 1)	BVH-M1
2nd BVH Mix (Table 6, row 2)	BVH-M2
3rd BVH Mix (Table 6, row 3)	BVH-M3

BVH-Mix Tables

A BVH-Mix table provides quick tabular insight into the types, tenor and sequence of coded BVH mix. In spite of the fact that there is no sequentially-derived tenor and no logical sequence in a BVH-Mix table, it has four columns, the same number of columns we see in a BVH-Set table. This columnar uniformity enables us to combine both tables in a BVH-Set/Mix Table.

The BVH-Mix table below is drawn using BVH data provided in Tables 6 and 7. Notice that the tenor of each BVH-mix is both positive and negative.

Table 8: BVH-Mix Table

BVH Code	Type	Tenor	Sequence
BVH-M1	±	church-attendance, get-rich-quick schemes	pro-church attendance/anti-honest business
BVH-M2	±	regular exercise, medical checkups	pro-warning against smoking / pro-exercise / anti-public nonsmoking areas
BVH-M3	±	women's sexual faithfulness, men's sexual freedom	anti-female adultery / pro-male extra-marital affairs

BVH-Set/Mix Table

As earlier noted, a BVH-Set table can be combined with a BVH-Mix table to form a single table known as BVH-Set/Mix Table. Though a BVH-Set/Mix table is often a combination of BVH-Set and BVH-Mix tables, it can be a direct result of a single BVH table that contains rows of BVH sets as well as those of BVH mix. The BVH-Set/Mix table below (Table 9) is a combination of tables 5 (BVH-Set) and 8 (BVH-Mix).

Table 9: BVH-Set/Mix Table

BVH Code	Type	Tenor	Sequence
BVH-S1	+	patience, consistency, orderly progress	continuity→consistency→success
BVH-S2	+	time-consciousness, decisiveness, speed, smartness	new things→new opportunities→quick benefits
BVH-S3	−	cleverness, theft, bribery, forgery, impatience, hustle	crime→cleverly committed→OK
BVH-M1	±	church-attendance, get-rich-quick schemes	pro-church attendance/anti-honest business
BVH-M2	±	regular exercise, medical checkups	pro-warning against smoking / pro-exercise / anti-public nonsmoking areas
BVH-M3	±	women's sexual faithfulness, men's sexual freedom	anti-female adultery / pro-male extra-marital affairs

Assuming the data used in drawing the conclusions represented in this table were obtained from two or more BVH-Set and BVH-Mix tables, using a single BVH-Set/Mix table to represent it would give a more unified and comparative picture. The accommodation of such all-inclusive data is one of the benefits of a BVH-Set/Mix table.

More on BVH Tables

In this segment, we would show further ways in which BVH tables as well as BVH-Set and BVH-Mix tables can be presented. So far in this paper, we have drawn mostly separate BVH sets and BVH mix tables, and have combined them merely for illustrative purposes. However, a single table can contain, in interchanging pattern, units of BVH sets and those of BVH mix. In Table 10, we have alternated BVH set with BVH mix by joining two of the tables earlier discussed (Tables 4 and 6) to show how such a single table might look.

Table 10

	Beliefs	Values	Habits
1	Slow and steady wins the race.	patience, consistency, orderly progress	follows due process, stays in the same job for long, secures success in due course
2	There is life after death: the righteous will go to heaven and sinners will go to hell.	church-attendance, get-rich-quick schemes	profiteer, smuggler, loan shark, buyer of stolen goods, church goer
3	Time waits for no one.	time-consciousness, decisiveness, speed, smartness	always on the lookout for new opportunities to exploit, easily tries new things, engaged in side ventures that bring in extra income
4	Smokers are liable to die young.	regular exercise, medical checkup	chain smoking, campaigns against public nonsmoking areas
5	It's all fair and OK as long as you don't get caught.	cleverness, theft, bribery, forgery, impatience, hustle	runs a prostitution and armed robbery ring, engaged in cross-border trafficking of girls
6	It is an abomination for a woman to commit adultery.	women's sexual faithfulness, men's sexual freedom	womanizing, cheats on wife

Table 10 does not present ready information on the type and nature of the six BVH units contained in the table. Additional information can be added by inserting BVH Codes and BVH Types to the table to give us what we can term

a Joint BVH Units Table (JBUT).

We can add BVH codes and types to Table 10 to turn it into a JBUT chart (Table 11):

Table 11: Joint BVH Units Table (JBUT)

BVH Code	Beliefs	Values	Habits	BVH Type
BVH-S1	Slow and steady wins the race.	patience, consistency, orderly progress	follows due process, stays in the same job for long, secures success in due course	+
BVH-M1	There is life after death: the righteous will go to heaven and sinners will go to hell.	church-attendance, get-rich-quick schemes	profiteer, smuggler, loan shark, buyer of stolen goods, church goer	±
BVH-S2	Time waits for no one.	time-consciousness, decisiveness, speed, smartness	on the lookout for new opportunities, tries new things, engages in side ventures that bring in extra income	+
BVH-M2	Smokers are liable to die young.	regular exercise, medical checkups	chain smoking, campaigns against public nonsmoking areas	±
BVH-S3	It's all fair and OK as long as you don't get caught.	cleverness, theft, bribery, forgery, impatience, hustle	runs a prostitution and armed robbery ring, engages in cross-border trafficking of girls	−
BVH-M3	It is an abomination for a woman to commit adultery.	women's sexual faithfulness, men's sexual freedom	womanizing, cheats on wife	±

A JBUT chart contains five columns. The first is the BVH Code. The next are Beliefs, Values and Habits columns respectively. The fifth column indicates the BVH Type of each BVH unit. This is indicated with the plus (+), minus (−), or plus-minus (±) sign.

A JBUT chart offers unique advantages. It gives all the information ordinarily

obtained from BVH tables in addition to all the information, apart from the ones in the Sequence column, provided in BVH-Set, BVH-Mix, or BVH-Set/Mix tables. A JBUT chart results when BVH-code and BVH-type columns are added to a BVH table.

On a final note, in describing the associated habits of a BVH set or a BVH mix, one should endeavour to state only the bare facts without qualifying them with judgmental adjectives or adverbs. Avoid labels that appear subjective and raise unnecessary questions: instead of writing, for instance, "silly drunkard", simply write "drunkard" as there is no room in a typical table for you to tell us how silly the drunkard you have in mind is. In any case, tables of this nature may not typify only one individual; it may represent other drunkards all of whom may not be silly.

BVH Relationships

BVH Relationships refer to the way Belief-Values-Habit units or their components connect to produce patterns of behaviour. Given the awesome power of beliefs, values and habits as decisive factors in everyone's personal growth and development, success or failure, we need to gain a little understanding of certain ways in which BVH units, their components or elements, can interact to yield positive or negative results. Such interactions between BVH units generate peculiar BVH relationships that, when understood, can enable the individual to strategize for success as well as enhance his or her understanding of the motives behind certain behaviours.

Ordinarily, beliefs, values and habits of the same orientation work together. This is the ideal picture. So, when we see a person who believes that honesty is the best policy, who values integrity, we may conclude that he cannot take bribe to facilitate an illegal outcome. Conversely, when we see someone railing and fighting in public, particularly when he is beating a weaker person, it is easy to presume that he is a very rude fellow who has no control over his emotions and who, perhaps, believes that might is right. We usually expect someone's beliefs to be in alignment with their values and habits. In reality, this is not always the case.

Although more BVH relationships can be identified, we will discuss only three common ones, utilizing data from the JBUT chart below. The chart contains seven rows of BVH sets. The BVH sets are varied enough to represent some regular models of behaviour.

Table 12: JBUT chart of some regular BVH sets

BVH Code	Beliefs	Values	Habits	BVH Type
BVH-S1	God is the Creator of everything and He will judge everyone after their death.	fear of God	religious worship and acts of high moral probity	+
BVH-S2	If you can't do all you can for someone you love, you don't deserve his or her love.	sacrificial love	doing whatever is demanded to please lover, keeping lover company and buying lover gifts	+
BVH-S3	Parents and elders deserve to be greatly honoured.	respect for parents and elders	gesture of submission (e.g., genuflecting or prostrating) while greeting parents and elders	+
BVH-S4	Retaliation is not evil; it is personal justice.	revenge as show of manliness	quick acts of retaliation	−
BVH-S5	Everything and everyone are products of the environment and all should harmoniously co-exist.	social harmony and respect for the environment	acts responsibly in social and environmental matters	+
BVH-S6	The end justifies the means.	do-or-die approach to getting things done	uses legal and illegal means to get anything desired	−
BVH-S7	It is all about the money.	money or nothing	undertakes business schemes that exploit and harm others	−

We can use the above chart and the two narrations below to identify and classify the following Belief-Values-Habit relationships:

- Relationship of correspondence
- Relationship of inducement
- Relationship of concealment.

Understanding these BVH relationships will be of practical benefit to us in our

personal and business involvements. Below, we explore the above three Belief-Values-Habit relationships one by one.

a. BVH Relationship of Correspondence

You might have noticed that in each row of Table 12 every stated belief corresponds to the related values and habit. Of course, these are not the only values or habits these given beliefs could match. The important thing to note here is that the stated belief (denoted by the letter "b") corresponds to the stated values (denoted by the letter "v") which correspond to the stated habit (denoted by the letter "h"). This is why this kind of BVH relationship is called BVH relationship of correspondence.

Because "b" is equal by definition to "v" (the kind of values denoted by "v" are correlatively equal to the kind of beliefs represented by "b") and "v" is equal by definition to "h", we can, using mathematical shorthand, represent this relationship of correspondence as:

$$b \triangleq v \text{ and } v \triangleq h.$$

A relationship of correspondence is the prototype of the sequentially patterned behaviour. The regularity and predictability of this BVH relationship model is unmatched by any other BVH unit.

b. BVH Relationship of Inducement

BVH relationship of inducement results when an individual finds objectionable one of the constituent elements of a BVH set but is compelled to act in conformity with it due to the influence of an agreeable element extracted from another BVH set. This is not an uncommon relationship in human interactions as the following narration will show.

1st Narration:

Glen was a young man from Europe who visited an African country for the first time. He lived for one month in one of the country's major cities. During his short stay, he met and fell in love with a beautiful girl called Kemi.

The two lovers were in some ways compatible but their cultural backgrounds were different. Glen's cultural values were very liberal. He called his father by his first name, greeted him and other elders in his

community without any special gesture of respect. Kemi's ethnic setting demanded demonstrative respect for elders. Because they were obsessed with each other, Glen and Kemi never bothered to discuss cultural or personal differences.

Before Glen travelled back to Europe, they had agreed to get married. When he got to his country, Glen discussed the matter with his parents and was delighted when they gave him their consent. What remained was for him to meet Kemi's parents who were staying in the village, far from the city where he had met and interacted with their daughter..

Shortly after receiving his parents' blessings, Glen flew back to Kemi's country to meet her parents. On the day he went, for the first time, to see his potential father-in-law and mother-in-law, he was accompanied by his fiancée and a few city folks, mainly young men and women from Kemi's ethnic group. No one had prepared his mind about what to expect in his fiancée's village home.

On meeting Kemi's parents, Glen's gorgeously dressed entourage prostrated on the somewhat dusty floor. Although it was the first time the young foreigner was seeing such a behavioural display, he quickly recovered from his culture shock and also prostrated on the ground, almost synchronizing with everyone else. He waited till the last male member of the entourage stood up from the ground before he, too, did so. Kemi's parents were impressed and Glen and their daughter were formally engaged.

This foreign son-in-law kept up this habit of prostrating before his wife's parents even after he had gotten married to their daughter.

There is a BVH relationship of inducement in this narration and we shall use the above JBUT chart (Table 12) to illustrate it. Thenceforth, it is to this JBUT chart that all references to BVH codes or sets would be directed.

Glen and Kemi share everything outlined in BVH-S2. Both of them in principle agree with BVH-S3, even though, because they never discussed it, Glen had no prior knowledge of the specific habit (a common cultural practice in Kemi's ethnic background) outlined in BVH-S3, column 3.

Both believe in honouring parents and treating them with respect is part of their shared values; but they had no mutual understanding that this should be done as outlined in BVH-S3, column 3. This matter was never discussed before Glen found himself prostrating, for the first time in his life, before two strangers.

What made him to do it? He believed in honouring elders, he valued respecting them but the related culture-specific habit of prostrating before them was very strange to him. So, what made him to prostrate? An interventional element from another BVH set – Glen's habitual inclination to do "whatever is demanded to please (his) lover" (BVH-S2, column 3) – induced him to prostrate on the somewhat dusty floor as dictated by the objectionable element in BVH-S3, column 3.

To make this concept clearer, let's represent what happened with symbols. Two BVH sets are involved in this interaction. Set A consists of the following: BVH-S2's Belief component (b2), Values component (v2) and Habit component (h2). Set B consists of the following: BVH-S3's Belief component (b3), Values component (v3) and Habit component (h3). (*Please revisit the table to see the comma-separated elements in these components.*) These two BVH sets can be represented thus:

$$A = \{b2, v2, h2\}$$

$$B = \{b3, v3, h3\}$$

Glen, we have earlier said, was in agreement with all the components of set A and all but one component (h3) of set B. Suddenly faced with the challenge of acting in accordance with this somewhat objectionable component (h3), Glen responded quickly by extracting an element ("Doing whatever is demanded to please lover") from set A's habit component (h2). This element induced him to comply with the objectionable demands of set B's habit component (h3), thus creating, symbolically speaking, a new set which we may represent as follows:

$$C = \{b3, v3, h3, h2\}$$

To continue with our set imagery, we can say that this was how Glen's initial misgivings were overwhelmed: compelled by the emergent set C's

combination of elements, especially by the powerful effect of h2, the influential element extracted from set A, Glen came to grips with the reality of the situation and quickly prostrated on the floor.

When mastered and deliberately applied, BVH relationship of inducement can be a very useful self-improvement strategy.

Now, you may ask, can the BVH relationship of inducement be used to account for Glen's habit of prostrating before Kemi's parents years after being married to their daughter? No. On that first visit, Glen prostrated on the bare ground in fulfillment of a perceived need to please his lover, not her parents. Subsequent prostrations (which, by the way, had become a low bow with only his right fingers touching the ground) occurred as a result of acculturation and in demonstration of his sincere respect for two amiable elders who loved him and took him as their own son.

c. BVH Relationship of Concealment

BVH relationship of concealment occurs when all the components of a genuine BVH set are concealed by the components of another BVH set appropriated to deceive, confuse or oblige others. The appropriated BVH set can be said to be counterfeit because it is not the genuine BVH set of the appropriator. We shall use the following narration to illustrate BVH relationship of concealment.

2nd Narration:

Georgio, convicted of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment, waited impatiently to be set free so that he could exact revenge on the man who was a key witness during his trial. He joined one of the religious fellowships in the prison and put up an outward show of piety. Because of his apparent good behaviour, he was released on parole. After his release, he reported regularly to the authorities in fulfillment of the conditions attached to his parole.

Judging from his speech and social habits, the paroled prisoner appeared to be a man who had acquired some constructive values. People acknowledged his new religious belief, and the accompanying positive

changes in his character. Georgio, from all appearances, seemed reasonably reformed and everyone considered him a changed man.

They were wrong! The paroled prisoner's genuine beliefs, values, and habits had not changed! He was only a good actor patiently waiting for an opportunity to strike. Barely two months after his conditional release, Georgio murdered the man who had witnessed against him during his trial and disappeared from town.

The BVH relationship of concealment occurs when there is a masking of a set of authentic BVH components (let's call it set A) by a set of inauthentic, often opposite, BVH components (set B).

We can use the JBUT chart (Table 12) to explain the two key sets of behaviour in the 2nd Narration. In that narration, a counterfeit set (set B) of beliefs (b1), values (v1) and habits (h1) (see BVH-S1) were deployed by Georgio to conceal his genuine set (set A) of negative beliefs (b4), values (v4) and habits (h4) (see BVH-S4). The genuine, though negative, BVH set can be represented thus:

$$A = \{b4, v4, h4\}$$

while the counterfeit, though positive, BVH set can be represented as

$$B = \{b1, v1, h1\}$$

Note that no element of set A belongs to set B as both sets share nothing in common. Because the two BVH sets are disjoint, we can express their relationship thus:

$$A \cap B = \phi$$

In BVH relationship of concealment, two disjointed BVH sets, one of which is authentic, are involved. To achieve manipulative or deceptive purposes, the authentic BVH set is concealed while the inauthentic BVH set is fronted by the manipulator.

In the above narration, Georgio, the manipulative actor, concealed his authentic BVH set (set A) by covering it with his inauthentic BVH set (set B), thereby

deceiving people and securing his parole. After that, he reverted to his authentic BVH set (set A) and executed his murderous retaliation against the man who had witnessed against him.

The BVH relationship of concealment comes into play when someone feels the need to camouflage his or her true motives or values. It is commonly employed by the trust-breaching criminal who uses it to create a false image, win the undeserved confidence of others, and make his or her target victims less suspicious or vigilant.

Those who may not necessarily be ill-motivated also employ this stratagem. For relationship reasons, and usually under the undue influence of peers, many people have employed this scheme to conceal their true beliefs or values when they perceive these to be contrary to the pervasive ethic of their social circle.

What we get from this is that human beings can display patterns of behaviour that appear to affirm a given belief while, in reality, that belief may or may not conform to their genuine belief-values-habit set. Someone's behaviour can indicate traits that do not, in any way, correspond to his or her genuine BVH set. All these make inter-personal relationships complex, with uneasy implications for personal development and visionary pursuit.

One of the first steps some people need to take to discover and live their authentic lives is to identify and tear off the layers of BVH concealment which for years had complicated their development and hindered their success. We all need to remove all pretences and be true to that genuine voice and impulse in each of us directing us to our individual path of purpose and self-fulfillment. We need to be authentic to maximize our true worth, for authenticity is at the root of every durable success.

Conclusion

We have explored, in this paper, the pivotal role of beliefs, values and habits in determining the outcome of personal endeavours. And we have stressed that the inability of some people to achieve hilltop success basically springs from their failure to evaluate themselves, jettison negative mindsets and behaviours,

and adopt and stick to only those beliefs, values and habits that steer them towards their desired goal.

A lot of people are struggling with their careers, businesses and life goals – they are failing to be motivated by really great motivational stuff because they are yet to acknowledge and activate the success power that could be generated from their conscious refinement and deployment of their beliefs, values and habits. The ultimate point of this paper is that having control over the circumstances of life is significantly dependent upon how individuals evaluate, realign and utilize their beliefs, values and habits.

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Perceived Organisational Support: A Panacea for Work Commitment among Employees in Private Universities in South-East Nigeria

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Abstract

Organisational support is one of the cardinal factors that influences employees' work commitment within cooperate organisations. When employees perceive that their organisation cares and provides them all the support they require, they are more likely to commit to the achievement of their organisation's goals, which would also translate to organisational efficiency and productivity. However, the relationship between perceived organisational support and work commitment has not been significantly investigated particularly within the context of employees in private Universities within the Southeast. This study therefore aimed at investigating the influence of perceived organisational support on employees work commitment in selected private Universities in the Southeast Nigeria. The study employed the descriptive cross-sectional survey research design. The sample size for the study was 250 employees who voluntarily participated in the study through the Google Form web-based questionnaire administration. Data collected from the survey were processed using the SPSS software package. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics and the simple linear regression model in order to determine the influence of perceived organisational support on work commitment of employees. Findings of the study revealed that the respondents expressed negative perceptions regarding organisational support in the private Universities. It was equally found that majority of employees in the private Universities were not committed to their jobs and this was found to be statistically associated with their perception about organisational support. The study recommended the need for the management of private Universities in the Southeast Nigeria to incorporate democratic principles that could encourage employees' engagement and openness in expressing their concerns and difficulties.

Keywords: employees, commitment, organisational, support, perceived

Introduction

O rganisational support is one of the cardinal factors that influences employees' work commitment within cooperate organisations. In fact, many scholars have noted that organisational support offers a lot of morale to the employees, which ultimately enhances job commitment and overall productivity of the employees (Krishnan & Mary, 2012). Perceived Organisational Support (POS) reflects the degree of employees' perception that their work organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, 1986, as cited in Pan, Shen, Liu, Yang & Wang, 2015). It relates to the degree to which employees perceive that their work organisation values their contributions and cares about them (Allen et al., 2008).

When employees perceive that their organisation cares and provides them all the support they require, they are more likely to commit to the achievement of their organisation's goals, which would also translate to organisational efficiency and productivity. The concept of organisational support has been studies variously in relation with various dependent variables and within various organisational contexts (Li, Zhang, Yan, Wen & Zhang, 2020; Liu, 2009; Tuzun & Kalemci, 2012; Sharif, Bolt, Ahadzadeh, Turner & Nia, 2021). However, the concept of POS in relation to the work commitment has not gained popularity especially within local empirical researches.

Work commitment has been defined as the feeling of responsibility that a person has towards the mission and goals of an organization (Gigli, n.d), or put differently, the level of enthusiasm which an employee has towards his/her tasks assigned at a workplace. It is the overall feeling of responsibility that a person expresses towards the goals, mission, and vision of his or her organization. Job commitment has also been conceptualised in three dimensions including affective commitment – which refers to how a person feels about their organisation, continuance commitment – which refers to extent to which a person perceives it would be desirable or undesirable to leave the organisation, and normative commitment – which refers to a person's moral orientation to the organisation and the sense of responsibility or obligation to the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

It is believed that when an individual has work commitment, he or she is more likely to perform tasks and responsibilities that will help an organization achieve a goal. Contrariwise, when employees are not committed to their work, they tend to use their time at work to perform unproductive activities such as internet surfing for pleasure, playing games, gossiping, sleeping and other anti-productive work behaviours. However, job commitment cannot be analysed in a vacuum. In other words, certain independent variables have been used as covariates of job commitment (Adekeye, 2011; Lee & Chen, 2013; Rathi & Saeed, 2022). However, there seems to be a dearth of empirical research on the relationship between perceived organisational support and job commitment particularly within the context of private tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This is therefore a research gap which this present study intends to fill.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine employees' perception of their organisational support in the selected private Universities.
2. To determine the level of employees' commitment to work in the selected private tertiary institutions.
3. To investigate the relationship between perceived organisational support and employees work commitment in the selected private tertiary institutions.

Hypothesis

Employees' perceived organisational support significantly influences their work commitment in the selected private tertiary institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Perceived Organisational Support

Perceived Organisational Support (POS) reflects the degree of employees' perception that their work organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, 1986, as cited in Pan, Shen, Liu, Yang & Wang, 2015). POS is significant to increasing the employees` affective attachment to the organisation and their expectations that greater efforts towards meeting organisational goals will be rewarded. As an important

concept in organisational theory, POS has been acknowledged to be positively related to job satisfaction, job performance, organisational justice, affective commitment and job satisfaction (Guan, Sun, Hou, Zhao, Lau & Fan, 2014). Perceived organisational support connotes the degree to which the organisation values employees' contributions and cares about them (Allen et al., 2008).

Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) also added that POS is considered as an assurance that the organisation will provide financial and emotional support to employees when needed to face the challenges presented by their job. In this view, the authors argued that employees associate their favourable or unfavourable treatment by supervisors (the representatives of the organisation), as an indication that the organisation either favours or disfavours them. Hence, POS is one of the dimensions of organisational work behaviour which is hypothesised in this study to have a significant influence on University employees' work commitment.

Theoretical Framework
Organisational Support Theory (OST)
This theory was propounded by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson and Sowa (1986). The theory assumes that in order to meet socio-emotional needs and to assess the benefits of increased work effort, employees form a general perception concerning the extent to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Such Perceived Organisational Support (POS) would increase employees' felt obligation to help the organisation reach its objectives, their affective commitment to the organisation, and their expectation that improved performance would be rewarded (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986). Behavioural outcomes of POS would include increases in in-role and extra-role performance and decreases in stress and withdrawal behaviours such as absenteeism and turnover.

According to organisational support theory, employees tend to assign human-like characteristics to organisation and thus encourage the development of POS (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Agents acting on behalf of the organisations are

often perceived as acting on organisation's intentions rather than their personal motives (Levinson, 1965). This personification of the organisation is enhanced by the organisation's legal, moral, and financial responsibility for the actions of its agents; by organisational policies, norms, and culture that provide continuity and prescribe role behaviours; and by the power the organisation's agents exert over individual employees. Equally, due to this personification of organisations, employees base their judgments of their perceived value to the organisation on how favourably the organisation treats them.

When the organisation gives resources to employees in a voluntary manner rather than under circumstances beyond their control, employees will view such aid as being genuinely valued and respected by the organisation (Cotterell, Eisenberger, & Speicher, 1992). Based on this principle, POS will be more effectively enhanced if employees view organisational rewards and favourable job conditions such as pay, promotions, job enrichment, and influence over organisational policies as voluntary behaviours of organisations (Eisenberger et al., 1986). A summary of the tenet of this theory is that, in return for a high level of organisational support, employees show commitment to help their organisation reach its goals (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003), because organisational support has a significant effect on organisational commitment (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Riggle, Edmondson & Hansen, 2009).

In view of the assumptions of this theory, it was hypothesised in this study that employees' perception of the support given to them by their University management, would determine the level commitment they would likely exhibit in their work places. In other words, perceived organisational support may have a significant influence on the work commitment of employees in the selected private Universities in Southeast Nigeria.

METHODS

This study was conducted among employees of selected private Universities in the Southeast Nigeria. This study adopted the descriptive cross-sectional survey research design. According to Ihudiebube-Splendor and Chikeme

(2020), descriptive cross-sectional survey research design is that which provides data for describing the status or characteristics of a phenomena or relationship among phenomena, at a specific point in time. This research design was also considered appropriate for this study due its flexibility in helping gather data at a specific point in time for a defined population. Based on statistical determination of appropriate sample using the Yamane (1967) formula, a sample of 250 respondents was determined for the study. The respondents were selected through an online-survey approach. Considering the fact that data collection was online-based, participation was voluntary. Besides the growing popularity of on-line based researches in the contemporary social research, the online survey approach was considered more flexible, convenient, cost-effective, easy in reaching a large number of respondents within a target time frame. The online automated generation of data that saves time and energy that could have been used in manual data coding, was another important benefit considered for using online survey approach, notwithstanding its deficiencies. The online-survey approach involved the use of Google Form survey administration software package in designing questionnaire measuring "employees' perception of organisational support and work commitment".

Through the help of insiders within the selected private Universities, the web-based questionnaire link was forwarded to different social network groups for the employees through Whatsapp and Telegram. The administrators of the social network groups helped to instil confidence to the respondents about the authenticity of the questionnaire link and equally explained the reason for the research to the respondents. Prior to the period of questionnaire administration, a timeline of three weeks was set for link sharing and collation of data. This implies that the respondents were given a window of three weeks to respond to the questionnaire, after which, any other data entry was discarded. At the end of the set timeline, more than 250 entries were obtained, which is higher than the initial sample size determine for the study. Consequently, only the first 250 data entries obtained within the open window period were used for data analysis. The data obtained originally through excel spreadsheet were transformed into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software

package version 26, which was used in processing all the relevant statistical data. Analysis of data involved both descriptive and inferential analysis. While the descriptive aspect involved frequency count and percentage, the inferential aspect involved regression analysis to test the influence of perceived organisational support on employees' work commitment.

FINDINGS

Table 1. *Distribution of Respondents' Socio-Demographic Variables*

Description of Variables	Frequency	Percent
Sex		
Male	96	38.2
Female	155	61.8
Total	250	100.0
Age Categories		
27 - 36 Years	33	13.2
37 - 46 Years	50	20.1
47 - 56 Years	91	36.5
57 - 66 Years	61	24.4
67 Yrs & Above	15	5.8
Total	250	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	69	27.6
Married	146	58.4
Widowed	26	10.3
Separated/Divorced	9	3.7
Total	100	100.0
Job Category		
Academic Staff	68	27.2
Non-Academic Staff	156	62.4
Casual Staff	26	10.4
Total	250	100.0
Official Rank		
Junior Staff	62	24.9
Intermediate	109	43.4
Senior	79	31.7
Total	250	100.0

Table 1 contains information on the analysis conducted in relation to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The table showed that more than half (61.8%) of the respondents were female employees compared to relatively lower proportion (38.8%) male employees within the selected private tertiary institutions. For the age distribution of the respondents, the largest proportion (36.5%) of the respondents aged between 47 – 56 years old, while the least proportion (5.8%) were those who aged above 67 years old. These findings imply that the majority of employees within the selected private tertiary institutions were mid-adult individuals. This equally justifies why majority (58.3%) of them were married compare to about a quarter proportion (27.6%) of them who were single. In terms of the analysis on the job categories of the respondents, it was found that more than half (62.4%) of them were non-academic staff category compared to 27.2% of them who were in the academic staff category, while the least proportion (10.4%) of them were under the casual staff category. With regards to the official rank of the employees, data analysis showed that majority (43.4%) of them was at the intermediate level. This was followed by the senior staff who comprised of 31.7% of the respondents, while 24.9% of them were the junior employees.

Employees' Perceived Organisational Support

Table 2. *Analysis of Respondents' Perception of Organisational Support*

S/N	Description of Items	Never	Low Extent	Undecided	Fair Extent	To a Large extent	Total
i	Your supervisors strongly support your work activities	68	91	54	24	13	250
		27.2%	36.4%	21.6%	9.6%	5.2%	100.0%
ii	The university management cares so much about the welfare of employees	70	99	45	21	15	250
		28.0%	39.6%	18.0%	8.4%	6.0%	100.0%
iii	Your work department cares about your values before decisions are taken with regards to your job	72	96	45	19	18	250
		28.8%	38.4%	18.0%	7.6%	7.2%	100.0%
iv	The university management provides you with every technical support that you need, when you need them	52	97	68	24	9	250
		20.8%	38.8%	27.2%	9.6%	3.6%	100.0%
v	The management of your organisation motivates the employees to put in their best for the growth of the organisation	72	83	52	24	19	250
		28.8%	33.2%	20.8%	9.6%	7.6%	100.0%
vi	Your university management encourages you for self-growth and professional development	54	97	61	36	2	250
		21.6%	38.8%	24.4%	14.4%	0.8%	100.0%

As observed from the item by item analysis presented in table 2, the largest proportion (36.4%) of the respondents went for the option 'low extent' in the first items – implying that they perceive their supervisors' support to their work activities as less optimal. In the second item, it was equally observed that the largest proportion (39.6%) of the respondents rated their 'to a low extent', in relation to the view that their University management cares so much about their welfare. Similar patterns of responses were observed in relation to items iii to vi, which suggests that the respondents perceived organisational support in their Universities as less optimal. These data were summed together in order to present a general analysis of respondents' perception of organisational support within the selected Universities. Result of the analysis was presented in figure 1.
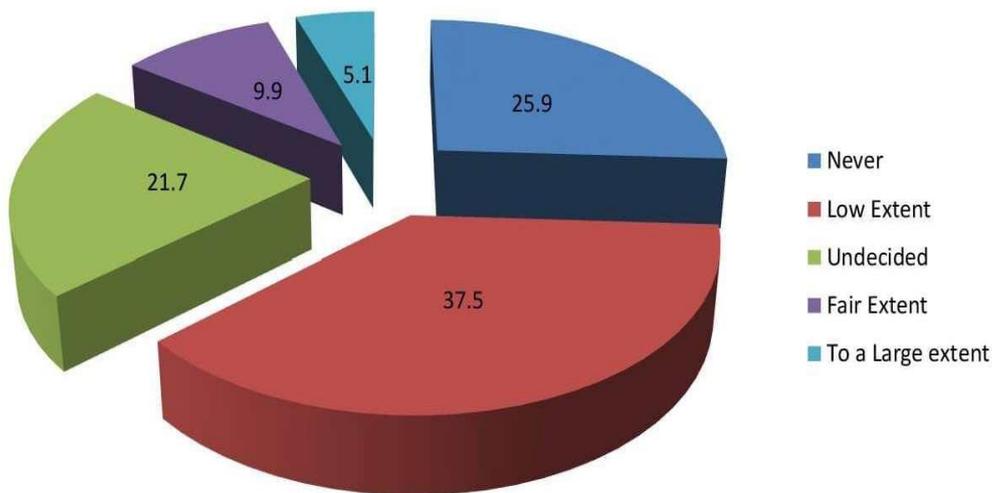
Figure 1. Summary of Employees' Perception of Organisational Support

Data contained in figure 1 confirmed that the largest proportion (37.5%) of the respondents perceived their organisational support as been only at a low extent. This was followed by 25.9% of them who chose the option 'never' – implying that they perceived that their organisations do not support them at all. While 21.7% of them were neutral in this regard, only a very lower proportion (9.9%) of them gave a fair rating about their organisational support.

Employees' Work Commitment

Table 3. *Respondents' Ratings on their Work Commitment*

S/N	Description of Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
i	I am determined to put my best for the growth of the organisation against all odds	49	94	57	35	15	250
		19.6%	37.6%	22.8%	14.0%	6.0%	100.0%
Ii	I am willing to take risks for the organisational growth	75	112	48	5	10	250
		30.0%	44.8%	19.2%	2.0%	4.0%	100.0%
iii	It would be hard for me to leave this university	95	107	35	6	7	250
		38.0%	42.8%	14.0%	2.4%	2.8%	100.0%
iv	I take this university as my personal business	97	85	47	13	8	250
		38.8%	34.0%	18.8%	5.2%	3.2%	100.0%
v	I would be happy to spend the rest of my career days in this university	63	90	55	25	17	250
		25.2%	36.0%	22.0%	10.0%	6.8%	100.0%
vi	I feel a strong sense of attachment with this university	75	72	57	28	18	250
		30.0%	28.8%	22.8%	11.2%	7.2%	100.0%
vii	I feel like my life would be disrupted if anything should make me leave this university	60	96	65	17	12	250
		24.0%	38.4%	26.0%	6.8%	4.8%	100.0%
viii	I am strongly committed to help this university achieve her goals	62	99	55	22	12	250
		24.8%	39.6%	22.0%	8.8%	4.8%	100.0%

From the item by item analysis as presented in table 3, it could be seen that the modal frequencies occurred between the responses options 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree', compared to the other response options. In other to have a clearer picture on the responses, the data were summed together, analysed and presented in figure 2.
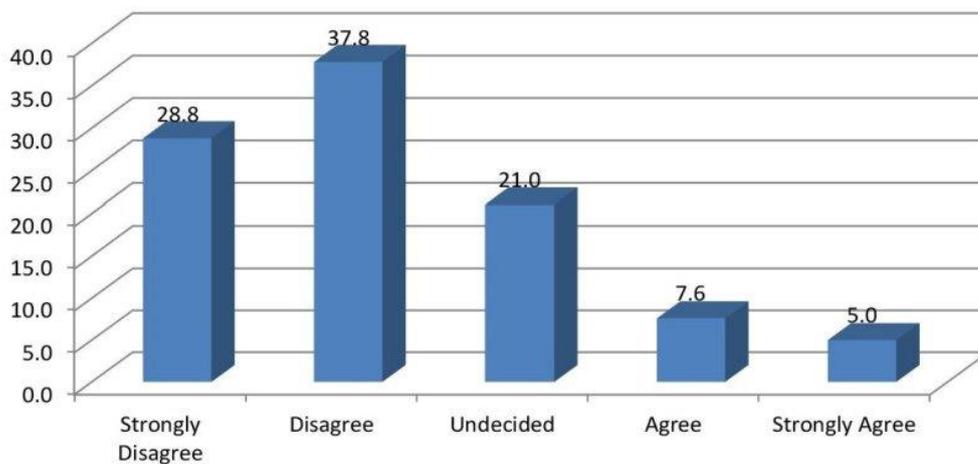

Figure 2. Summary of Respondents' Work Commitment

As shown in figure 2, majority (37.8%) of the respondents disagreed with the items in the questionnaire which measured their work commitment in the selected private Universities. This was equally followed by about a quarter proportions (28.8%) of them who went for the option 'strongly agree'. These suggest that there was a seemingly lack of employees' commitment to their works in the selected private Universities. This study was equally interested in determining whether or not employees' work commitment was associated with their perception of organisational support in their various Universities. To ascertain this, items measuring perceived organisational support and work commitment were summed up to form discrete variables required for parametric test. Thus, the outcome variable (work commitment) was regressed unto the independent variable (perceived organisational support) as presented in table 4.

Table 4. *Summary of Linear Regression Model Showing the Relationship Between POS and Work Commitment*

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.139[a]	.019	.015	1.26144

a. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Organisational Support

ANOVA[a]					
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7.774	1	7.774	4.886	.028[b]
	Residual	394.626	248	1.591		
	Total	402.400	249			

a. Dependent Variable: Work Commitment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Organisational Support

Consistent with the initially stated alternate hypothesis, result of the regression analysis showed an evidence to accept the hypothesis, $R^2 = .019$, $F(1, 249) = 4.886$, $p = .028$. This implies that work commitment of employees in the selected private Universities could be statistically predicted using perceived organisational support. This implies that employees would more likely be committed to their works when they perceived that their organisations support them. This equally reiterates the importance of organisational support to the

workability and commitment of employees to the achievement of organisational productivity.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Commitment of employees to their work is a major factor that influences organisational productivity in cooperate organisations. However, employees' work commitment is dependent on major factors of which perceived organisational support is one of the most important factors. Having analysed all the relevant data in this study, it is concluded that the research questions raised in this study has been answered in such a manner that majority of employees in the private Universities within the Southeast Nigeria have negative perceptions regarding the organisational support in their various work places. It could also be concluded that the employees of private universities in the Southeast Nigeria are less committed to their works, and this was found to be associated with their perceptions about their organisational support systems. These have serious implications to the growth, productivity and quality of educational outputs in the private Universities in the Southeast Nigeria. Consequently, the following are recommended for way forward:

1. The management of private Universities in the Southeast Nigeria should incorporate democratic principles that could encourage employees' engagement and openness in expressing their concerns and difficulties.

2. There is equally the need for private Universities in the Southeast Nigeria to initiate employee support programs that could promptly address employees' challenges and equally encourage them to work better.

3. The management of private Universities should equally develop clear communication and feedback systems that could help employees perform their works in relaxed atmosphere rather than in tight time limits.

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Parameters for Determining Core Cultural Symbols: A Philosophical Analysis

By
Innocent Ngangah

ABSTRACT

There is need to work towards the identification of common parameters for determining core cultural symbols in philosophy of ethnic studies and other forms of cultural research. This has become cogent since scholars are increasingly utilizing the concept of symbolic transformation in various studies of cultural groups and identities. In such studies, symbols are treated as mental representations of cultural ideas, objects or realities. Within this context, core symbols are those symbols which represent the central cultural beliefs of a cultural group, be it racial, ethnic or any other group. This paper would attempt to identify parameters which would guide the cultural researcher through the intricacies of identifying a cultural group's core symbols. This is important because a given cultural group's core values and cultural systems can only be discerned and grasped through the recognition of its core symbolic logic.

Keywords: signs, symbolic transformation, traditional African society, cultural philosophy

1. Introduction

While the study of the culture of ethnic groups by foreign anthropologists, ethnologists and philosophers has waned, academic research on the culture of ethnic groups by scholars from those groups is believed to have risen globally. The "Humanities Indicator", an index of the American Academy of Arts and Science, for

instance, shows that in 2014, "traditionally underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities received 17.0% of all bachelor's degrees in philosophy (Indicator II-50a)", an increase of "eight percentage points from 1995 (the first year for which data of this kind are available)". At the Masters level, these minorities "earned 10.2% of philosophy degrees awarded in 2014, up from 6.5% in 1995 (Indicator II-50b)" while at the PhD level, they "reached a high of 7.9%, a level nearly three times as great as that observed in 1995 (Indicator II-50c)". Both philosophy and their cultural backgrounds must have mutually benefited from these students' researches.

And in Africa, where the primary research for this paper was conducted, there is hardly any philosophy department of any university that does not offer courses in African philosophy. At their basic level, cultural studies, including philosophical ones, are narrations about how culture and mind are related through symbols (Wagoner 2009). So, a clear understanding of what "culture" and "symbols" are, especially in the context of this study, is crucial to our appreciation of the necessity of setting parameters for determining core cultural symbols. We will explain what we mean by "culture" and "symbol" in subsequent sections of this paper which uses the culture and symbols of the Igbo people of south-eastern Nigeria to illustrate the heuristic role universal parameters can play in identifying any given group's core cultural symbols.

The paper is in six sections, namely, the introduction, which states the importance of the topic within a backdrop of growing interest in the philosophy of cultural groups; cultural essence, a section devoted to explaining the meaning of "culture" as used in this study; signs and symbols – what they mean and the differences between them; core symbols – their relevance in mapping the core areas of any group's culture; parameters for identifying core symbols – a set of theoretical rules and an illustration of how they can be applied; and conclusion.

2. Cultural Essence

What sets a social group apart in terms of its worldview, social organization, and ways of carrying out social functions or activities is what we call culture. Culture, therefore, accounts for a given group's philosophy of life, ideas about

existence, social relationships, work ethic, and ways of conducting transitional ceremonies (such as those associated with birth, marriage, and death) and religious rituals.

Culture, in determining and enforcing veritable values in a society, enables it to avert social chaos and disintegration. As reference.com puts it, "Society could not function without cultural norms that assist in governing behaviour and values, and culture could not exist without societal influences to create it."

Culture is the traditional beliefs and practices of a society or a group of people within a society. In this sense, culture is synonymous with tradition, customs, heritage, and mores. Extending the meaning of culture even further, Adian and Arivia (1974) say that:

> Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.

For us, here, culture consists of a cultural group's beliefs, values, norms, language, attitudes, activities, ceremonies, and objects and the unique way of life which these entail or reflect. Hence, culture provides the social platform and points of reference within which a given group organizes, interprets and makes sense of their internal and external environment. In short, culture is the traditional system around which a society is organized and by which its guiding perspectives and practices are carried on from one generation to another, and this often dates back to ancestral times. In many societies, culture is conveyed and sustained by oral tradition.

A distinct social group, such as an ethnic or racial group, owes its uniqueness to a shared cultural identity founded on shared cultural values. And cultural identities can be socially and psychologically stabilizing for groups and individuals. Absence of such identities can be very disorienting and is known to have been the root of deviant, counter-productive and socially divisive behaviour. Such behaviour is experienced usually in those societies where the authentic culture has been supplanted by counter-cultural forces that

violate a people's definition of who they are and how they customarily do things.

It is generally agreed that culture is not an inborn trait but something that individuals and groups can learn. In other words, cultural traits are not innate but rather learned acquisition of a socially-integrating set of thoughts and actions as they were received or changed by previous generations via oral tradition. Such changes are not formal amendments and rarely constitute a total break with the past. More often than not, they are little departures from past attitudes and practices or merely generational adjustments that delicately tinker with the meaning and manner of a people's cultural references and habits.

So, although culture is a continuum authenticated by roots in the distant past, it is at the same time intrinsically dynamic. In whatever form culture is manifested, symbols play a very key role in enabling it to generate meaning for members of a given cultural group.

3. **Signs and Symbols**

Having explained what we mean by "culture", we now turn to "symbol". Generally, a symbol is something that refers to a given reality, be it abstract or concrete. Charles Peirce, the philosopher who has conducted the most elaborate study of signs, sees a symbol as a type of sign, the latter being his basic semantic category. Peirce (1932) believes that all modes of thinking depend on the use of signs. For him, every act of reasoning is a function of the interpretation of signs. Thus, signs mediate between the external world of objects and the internal realm of ideas. According to Peirce, a symbol is a sign which refers to the object it denotes by virtue of a law. For him, a symbol is technically

> a sign which refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the symbol to be interpreted as referring to that object.

Symbols are, therefore, associative representations of objects or social realities. They are not mere representations of pictures or abstract ideas, as do normal signs, but are deemed to be symbolic signs because there is a

"semiosis" or "cooperation" between the given objects and their symbols. A symbol is different from a mere sign in the sense that it reveals a reality that is beyond what a sign would normally indicate. Dukor (2006) explains:

> Symbols are cultural realities imbued with cultural meaning and any suggestive symbol...is epistemic and thematic. It is an overt expression of the reality behind any direct act of perception and apprehension, which really possesses scientific connotation outside its normal, obvious or conventional meaning.

Above, Dukor refers to a symbol as "an overt expression of the reality behind any direct act of perception". This is noteworthy because reality is not independent of human consciousness but consists of symbols or objects and events as perceived by the human mind. Symbols enable humans to understand and communicate their awareness and interpretation of their physical, social, spiritual, and cultural environment.

A symbol makes sense within a given semiotic code. Explaining this post-Saussurean term, Chandler (2019) says that every symbol "as part of its social use within a code" makes sense within a historical and connotative context to "members of the sign-users' culture". This echoes Saussure's position that "language is always an inheritance from the past" (Duan 2012) users are compelled to accept, a view Lévi-Strauss (Chandler 2007, 27) also expresses when he maintains that "the sign is arbitrary *a priori* but ceases to be arbitrary *a posteriori* - after the sign has come into historical existence it cannot be arbitrarily changed".

This historically fixed nature of the symbolic sign is one of the elements that imbues it with cultural relevance and stability and enables certain symbols to emerge as core symbols.

4. Core Symbols

Core symbols offer the surest guide to the identification and understanding of a cultural group's essence, defining values, and characteristic behaviour. According to Poon (2018), symbols, as cultural materials, in being used to "to signify ideas, beliefs, actions, events or physical entities" are "instrumental for

human communication and commodification". Paraphrasing Hall (1996), he stresses that:

> The study of symbols seeks to understand symbolic forms of mediation and the mediated, and aims to critically demonstrate symbolic construction in its cultural role as meaning-makers in postmodern era.

One of the first major philosophers to appreciate the meaning-making role of symbols in terms of their power to organise both thought and action is Susanne Langer. In her indepth study, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Philosophy of Reason, Rite and Art* (1954), she says that "the human brain is constantly carrying on a process of symbolic transformation" of experience because "the main themes of our thought tend to be transposed" into symbols. Core symbols are those symbols which reflect and represent the main themes that energize the belief system and customary practices of a cultural group.

Though this paper is not about "the logic of meaning" in a general sense, Langer's thoughts and assumptions in this regard would illuminate our basic understanding of symbolic meaning, and it is necessary to let her explain this in her own words:

> Meaning has both a logical and a psychological aspect. Psychologically, any item that is to have meaning must be *employed* as a sign or a symbol; that is to say, it must be a sign or a symbol *to* someone. Logically, it must be *capable* of conveying a meaning, it must be the sort of item that can be thus employed… Both aspects, the logical and the psychological, are always present, and their interplay produces the great variety of meaning-relations over which philosophers have puzzled and fought… (Langer 1954, 42-43)

Langer goes on to assert that there is no quality of meaning because meaning is logically derived and logic does not deal with quality but with relations. Even then, meaning may not be said to be a relation as a relation is mostly viewed as "a two-termed affair". She prefers to see meaning as "a *function* of a term" because a function is "a *pattern* viewed with reference to one special term round which it centers", stressing that "this pattern emerges

when we look at the given term *in its total relation to the other terms about it*" (44). In functional terms, therefore, we can share this view by stating that a symbol is regarded as a core symbol in terms of its total relation to the other cultural elements that contextualize its symbolic pattern.

This means that there can be a shift in the core essence of a core symbol if the semantic values of the cultural elements that circumscribe its meaning change over a given period of time. This is why a core symbol's meaning is not instinctively or infinitely fixed. Its meaning can be modified, reviewed or even lost over time. Cowries, for instance, used to be the core symbols of wealth when they served monetary purposes across Africa. When they lost their value as means of exchange, with the emergence and dominance of bank notes and coins, they lost their long-term role as symbols of wealth.

In spite of their symbolic decline, as noted above, cowries proved more resilient than some other discarded traditional symbols, such as red mud, that became mostly irrelevant after such demotion. Cowries continue to function today as cultural symbols because the user communities reverted to using them for decorative, theatrical, and medicinal purposes (Ngangah 2013). When cowries ceased to serve as means of exchange, they became easily available to the common folk who now use them to decorate clothings, household items, and masks. Their theatrical uses are seen in custumes won by cultural troupes, masquerades, and dancers. Their use in traditional medicine is chiefly in divination and fortune-telling, which are key pre-clinical tools used by traditional healers across Africa to identify the spiritual cause of a serious disease.

The changing fortunes of cowrie, in terms of its symbolic roles, indicate that symbolic transformations are continual and epochal in nature and that major shifts in symbolic meaning are possible within someone's life time.

Symbols are not immutable. As people and societies that imbue them with meaning change in physical, spiritual and psychological terms, the symbols by which they define and explain their various shades of existence undergo alterations that moderate or alter the essence of their symbols. With the exception of few radical departures from the past, such changes are usually

gradual and cut across generations, and this make them barely discernible to most observers.

Thus, there would always be occasional, though infrequent, need to determine and re-determine what constitutes a given culture's core cultural symbols. As earlier noted, this is a sine qua non for assessing a cultural group's symbolic uniqueness, identity, and value. To avoid making the determination of the core cultural symbols of an ethic group an arbitrary, non-uniform, and unreliable exercise, a set of generally applicable parameters by which to gauge the cultural relevance of symbols needs to be put forward. This is what we would try to do and illustrate in the next section of this study.

5. **Parameters for Identifying Core Symbols**

The word, "parameter" is loosely used here as an identifiable and measurable characteristic or distinguishing feature by which a symbol can be classified as "core" or "peripheral" within a given cultural belief system and practices. The usefulness of a parameter, in most ordinary contexts, lies in its universal or non-specific applicability. For example, if an examination board sets the pass mark at 50%, it should apply to all courses and all students for it to be a predictable and reliable determinant of whether a student has passed or failed a course.

Just as in the above simple example, a parameter is usually derived from the elements or attributes of the system which it is meant to gauge or quantify. For instance, in our example, the number of marks (expressed as a percentage) earned by a student is used to determine whether he has passed or failed. If his personal relationship with the teacher, rather than his performance in an examination, is used in awarding marks to him, then that yardstick cannot be considered a parameter because it is extraneous to the usual system of testing and grading students.

Before we go into the parameters we have identified for the purposes of determining core cultural symbols, let us briefly explain what we mean by "core" and "peripheral" symbols. Every society has its cultural pillars or those elements of cultural beliefs and practices that define and sustain its key beliefs, values, institutions and essential practices. Symbols which are used to represent

these elements or their respective essence are core symbols while symbols which signify other cultural elements (such as a palm wine tapper, the death of the king) or cultural events (such as the pre-marital fattening of the bride among the Ibibio) are peripheral symbols because they have no direct relevance to the essential and central functions of the cultural group.

Having said this, we can now turn to the parameters for evaluating core cultural symbols. Although what may qualify as core cultural symbols can differ from one culture to another, the under-listed set of parameters derived by this researcher in the course of his years of conducting research in the area of cultural philosophy constitutes a theoretical framework which can be applied to identify and set apart a cultural group's core symbols from its peripheral ones.

There are six parameters this researcher has used and found helpful in this regard. The parameters are used only in determining if a cultural artefact is a core symbol. By artefacts we simply mean those modes of transmitting cultural beliefs and practices that are found among all cultural groups. According to Bauman et al (1972), three forms of artefacts are universally acknowledged; they include:

- Oral traditions (e.g. oral history, tale)
- Material culture (e.g. shrine, totem)
- Customary lore (e.g. ritual, masquerade act)

An artefact would be regarded as a core symbol if at least 50% of the parameters mentioned below are applicable to it. So, it is possible that if three artefacts are tested using these parameters, one may be rated 50%, another 70%, and another 100%. Because they all measured at least 50%, all would be regarded as core symbols although it is clear that their degree of cultural weight, acceptance or popularity obviously differs. This difference can be critical, as we would see later in this study, when gauging which cultural artefact should be adopted to serve a specific cultural or research purpose. All artefacts that score less than 50% when measured for degree of cultural relevance, using these parameters, should be regarded as peripheral cultural symbols.

Below, then, are the parameters for gauging the status of a cultural symbol, whether it is a core cultural symbol or a peripheral cultural symbol:

i.   A core cultural symbol should be an integral aspect of a cultural group's controlling belief system, not an extraneous appendage.

ii. It should be popularly shared across the social strata of a given cultural entity.

iii. It should reflect or symbolize a core philosophic concept or worldview of the cultural group in question.

iv. Its symbolic value should derive from or be in alignment with a given culture's core values, particularly its spiritual and cosmological frames of reference.

v.   It should be easily accessible to or popularly understood by members of a given cultural group.

vi. It should be an artefact around which the people gravitate – an artefact that generally attracts or entails popular participation in a limited or massive sense.

This researcher recently conducted a study among the Igbo of eastern Nigeria where he needed to determine which of the two key Igbo symbols, *ikenga* (a horned deity of the Igbo) and the Igbo masquerade, he should use as a core cultural symbol for the research. The fact that both were common core Igbo cultural symbols made it even more difficult to choose one over the other. For the purposes of the research, he needed to choose the most common core cultural symbol of the Igbo.

Having narrowed his choice to these two Igbo cultural symbols, the question was: which of them, *ikenga* or the Igbo masquerade, is more of a core cultural symbol than the other? To answer this critical pre-research question, the six parameters were applied in comparing *ikenga* and the Igbo masquerade and below is the result:

	Ikenga	Masque-rade
1st Parameter: A core cultural symbol should be an integral aspect of a cultural group's controlling belief system, not an extraneous appendage.	✓	✓
2nd Parameter: It should be popularly shared across the social strata of the cultural group.		✓
3rd Parameter: It should reflect or symbolize a key philosophic concept or worldview of the cultural group in question.	✓	✓
4th Parameter: Its symbolic value should derive from or be in alignment with a given culture's core values, particularly its spiritual and cosmological frames of reference.	✓	✓
5th Parameter: It should be popularly understood by and easily accessible to members of a given cultural group.		✓
6th Parameter: It should be an artefact around which the people gravitate – an artefact that generally attracts or entails popular participation in a limited or massive sense.		✓

As we can see, the Igbo masquerade doubly outscored *Ikenga*. The researcher, thus, adopted and regarded it as the most common core cultural symbol of the Igbo. Indeed, no largely non-verbal cultural expression in Igbo land is as popular and widespread as the Igbo masquerade act and certainly none offers as much drama, variety of music, colour, sport, and all-round fascination as much as the theatrical complements masquerades bring to enrich events and enhance audience participation.

6. Conclusion

Let us note, as we conclude this study, that parameters mean different things to different people, depending on their area of discipline. What a parameter means in linguistics is different from what it means in engineering,

mathematics or statistics. And no matter how it is expressed (as an equation, a function, or a simple set of rules, such as the above 6-point parameters), a parameter is not a variable value (Kilpatrick 1984).

A parameter is a fixed value. It does not change with circumstances and is not arbitrarily altered. None of the six parameters we have identified should be altered to suit a particular cultural or research need. It is either a cultural artefact wholly satisfies the specific demand of each of these parameters or it does not. This is the spirit behind this set of rules which, it is hoped, may be of some benefit to a cultural philosopher or scholar conducting a research that necessitates the identification of a cultural group's core cultural symbols.

If this study has made some contribution towards the design and application of general parameters for determining not only the core symbols of cultural groups but those core symbols' respective level of authenticity and relevance, then the main goal of this study would have been achieved. As Langer (43) has rightly noted, "the whole purpose of general concepts is to make the distinctions between special classes clear".

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Social Values and Symbolic Characterisation in Nigerian Folk Narratives

By

Bukar Usman

Abstract

Folk narrative characters make sense to the local audience of folktale narrators primarily because of the social and symbolic values attached to the characters by the indigenous communities whose culture and cosmology gave birth to the tales. Unlike a modern short story, where the events of the story mainly determine how the character is viewed, the folktale utilizes the label placed on each given character by the culture to develop the conflict and unfold the theme or themes of the tale. This researcher undertook a study of one thousand (1000) folktales of Nigeria with a view to classifying them based on how the characters are socially valued and symbolised by their local audiences. The research was necessitated by the fact that the classification classes adopted by the well-known AT and ATU systems were found to be functionally inadequate when applied to folktales emanating from non-Western traditions, including Nigerian folk narrative traditions. Although there are other ways of classifying Nigerian folktales, this study undertook a classification of Nigerian folktales based on their character types. The result is an 8-character type classification of 1000 tales of Nigeria published in the voluminous book, *People, Animals, Spirits and Objects: 1000 Folk Stories of Nigeria*. This academic paper, adapted from my introductory notes to the book, sheds light on the symbolic values of Nigerian folk characters and why they can inspire a taxonomic distribution of Nigerian folktales.

Keywords: characterisation, symbols, social values, Nigerian folk narratives

Introduction

This exposition will briefly discuss two complementary topics. The first is the social values associated with folkloric tales while the second is symbolic characterization, a literary device which, in the arena of fictional tales, is socially mediated.

One of the most enduring qualities of folktales is their social relevance. Folktales convey and stabilize social values such as respect for constituted authority, respect for spiritual ordinances, hard work, good neighbourliness, honesty, patience, courage, moderation, and love for one's family and kindred. The need to preserve stories that propagate these social values was one of the reasons the Dr Bukar Usman Foundation conducted the Pan-Nigerian tale-collection projects which generated the tales of the Treasury of Nigerian Tales series. *People, Animals, Spirits and Objects: 1000 Folk Stories of Nigeria* is one of the books published under the series. All the folktales I will be referring to in this paper are taken from this collection.

Social Values in Folktales

Folktales are vital aspects of any nation's folklore and this fact is clearly acknowledged by Emmanuel Obiechina, one of Nigeria's pioneer literary critics. In the informed view of Obiechina (27), folklore

> embodies the values and attitudes (of a people) in its proverbs and fossilised saying, its belief in myths and religion, and its consciousness of its historical life, collective outlook and ethics, in its legends, folktales and other forms of oral literature.

Concuring with Obiechina, the literary scholar, Saradashree Choudhury (3-11), says: "The folklore in traditional African societies has a highly educative value. It imparts knowledge on the groups' history, values of warfare, morals, wise sayings etc". In many areas of the world, the tale is the vehicle by which these communally-generated attributes are communicated and entrenched in the consciousness of the people. In Nigeria and other parts of Africa where, despite the fast-fading trend, it is still orally narrated to family groups, the

folktale reflects the social pulse of the common folk. Carroll-McQuillan (1993) elaborates on this pulse:

> The African oral tradition embodies this pulse in an especially inclusive and expressive way. Stories in Africa weave music, audience participation, chants and choruses, even dance, into their fabric. Storytelling in Africa is an integral part of the culture. It is a common and effective means of teaching, preserving values and historical events, entertaining and is also an essential aspect of most ceremonial rituals.

There is something about stories that make them appealing across all cultures, but folktales have a distinct rural flavour which makes them so fascinating. People love stories, especially stories that reflect their everyday realities; and sometimes the more removed the stories are from the common features of the immediate environment, the more charming they seem. This is one of the reasons many of us, rural- and city-dwellers, are initially attracted to folktales. Reading or listening to the stories gives us concrete benefits that urge us to explore further. Carroll-McQuillan (1993) explains:

> When we explore folk stories, we explore ourselves and our many facets as human beings. We see the reflection of humankind: its strength, flaws, fears, and hopes. The settings and characters may change but the heart and soul feelings are always there. They are timeless; they are ageless…in folk stories, we encounter a mirror in which we can see who we are and what we have been. It is a mirror charged with echoes of the past and hints of the future.

Characters as Social Mirrors

Writers and narrators mirror the realities of their environment through the various aspects of their story, namely theme, setting, plot and characters. But no matter how profound the theme of a narrative, how exotic its setting, and how excellent its language, it cannot succeed in delivering a competent story without a character or group of characters.

Characters energize stories; they awaken and sustain our interest in the plot. Indeed, a story's plot cannot unravel without characters. Those actions or

inactions which make reading fiction worth it all happen around the characters in the story. A story moves from one episode to another because of the activities of its characters. The way in which an oral narrator or a writer portrays his fictional characters, and this is very important, is known as characterisation. Bernardo clarifies:

> What does characterization do for a story? In a nutshell, it allows us to empathize with the protagonist and secondary characters, and thus feel that what is happening to these people in the story is vicariously happening to us; and it also gives us a sense of verisimilitude, or the semblance of living reality…In the best of stories, it is actually characterization that moves the story along, because a compelling character in a difficult situation creates his or her own plot.

A story's characters interest us because we see our society, if not ourselves or those we know, through them. Characters are social mirrors. No matter the theme or orientation of a narrative – be that narrative a modern story or a folktale – the characters play the role of reflectors through which we see the variegated experiences of life.

A character's success in achieving this role depends on a number of factors most of which we need not dwell on here. But suffice it to note that the type of characters deployed by the storyteller is very crucial. While a major character in a modern short story tends to be round and generally realistically portrayed, the typical character we encounter in folktales tends to be flat in the sense of having one kind of personality trait. It should be stated that this apparent lack of complexity is compensated for by the stimulating symbolic nature of many folktale characters.

Symbolic Relevance of Folktale Characters

Although they are not endowed with complex traits, many characters we meet in folktales are significant and entertaining because of their attributes as symbolic characters. A symbolic character is one who reflects or represents an idea or concrete reality. Narrowed to folktale characters, this symbolic

representation is invariably socially determined, thus ensuring that such characters personify culturally-fixed concepts, virtue or vice.

The symbolic nature of its characters is a major reason a folktale is set in a familiar world of people, animals, spirits or objects and why its characters are drawn from this easily recognizable terrain. For this reason, as well, folktales are characterized by formulaic plots and traditional motifs. All of these make the folktale a communally-delivered art form. Symbolic attribution enables the narrator's audience (or the reader of a written folktale) to get inside the head of a character and predict what the next move is likely to be. Depending on the narrator's manipulation of the plot, during a story-telling session, or introduction of some elements of surprise, such predictions may turn out to be true or false.

The symbolic attributes of the characters are outside the prerogative of the folktale narrator. They are socially determined over several generations and involve a "sociopsychological" process which is outside the manipulative powers of the narrator. In this process, according to J.L. Fischer,

> at least three semi-independent systems are involved: (1) the tale itself, considered as connected and rather tightly structured discourse; (2) the modal personality of the typical audience-narrator group for the tale; and (3) the social system relevant to the tale, including not only that segment of the society in which are found the active and passive participants in the tale (i.e., the "bearers" of the tale as an item of culture) but the pattern of the whole society.

In the tale-bearing environment, this connection is easily established since the concerns expressed in folktales are usually the concerns of the common folk whose worldview is shaped by the collective consciousness of the community. It is this communal consciousness that had, over time, attributed symbolic meanings to the folktale's typical characters. Thus, symbolic characters, in folktales, are cultural in origin and make customary sense because they spring from the age-old "memory" of a given ethnic or linguistic group. This description of cultural symbols by Carl Jung (93) is very definitive:

> The cultural symbols…are those that have been used to express eternal truths…They have gone through many transformations and even a long process of more or less conscious development, and have thus become collective images accepted by civilized societies. Such cultural symbols nevertheless retain much of their original numinosity or spell. One is aware that they can evoke a deep emotional response in some individuals…They are important constituents of our mental make-up and vital forces in the building up of human society….

Cultural symbols in the context of folktales function within a given social system which may be limited to a community or ethnic group or encompass many ethnic, linguistic or social groups. The relevance of these symbols, however, may be expanded, through migration and some other form of social integration, to wider social settings. Infact, due to cultural affinities among Nigerian ethnic groups and the prevalence of similar traditional motifs across folktales collected from different parts of the country, many stories of this collection have similar cultural symbols.

A good number of characters the reader would be encountering through the 1000 tales featured in this book are symbolic. It is, therefore, important to briefly examine the subject of cultural symbols as they relate to characters featured n Nigerian folktales.

Symbolic Characterisation in Nigerian Folktales

Symbolic characterisation is the use of characters as symbols. This is a device employed in all fictional narratives, oral or written. In the case of folktales, including Nigerian folktales, the symbolic value of the characters are culturally derived. In modern short stories, the symbolic relevance of a character usually rests on the character's engagements within the story. Unlike what obtains in the folktale, a character is not normally labeled outside the context of the contemporary short story. This is an important distinction worth exemplifying.

Two short stories from *Through Laughter and Tears: Modern Nigerian Short Stories* can be used to illustrate this point. In Helon Habila's "The Embrace of the Snake," Lamang, the heartless manipulator of peasants from

his own community, is the symbol of oppression whereas in Wale Okediran's "Just One Trip," Grace, the drug courier who swallowed a wrap of cocaine now tearing her health apart, is a symbol of foolhardiness. Both symbolic meanings are achieved purely by the actions of the characters within the stories, and not by any external cultural attribution.

In a folktale, on the other hand, a typical character's symbolic meaning is ascribed by the tale-bearing culture. This culturally determined label or symbolic value is so strong that presumptively the characters are portrayed in the tale in the manner dictated by the narrator-audience culture. For example, the hyena, in the stories where it featured in this book, symbolizes awkwardness, greed and foolhardiness. These are the qualities attributed to it by the story-bearing cultures of northern Nigeria and this informs the narrator's portrayal of the hyena in any tale. This stereotypical characterization of the hyena delights the audience who has been culturally raised to expect the display of these symbolic qualities from the hyena.

A few examples of stories (published in Usman's *People, Animals, Spirits and Objects: 1000 Folk Stories of Nigeria*) featuring the hyena include "The Rabbit, the Tortoise and the Hyena" (No. 241), where the rabbit and the tortoise kill the hyena; "The Hyena's Offsprings and the Rabbit" (No. 253), where the rabbit fool the hyena and malnourish its offsprings; and "The Hyena and the Ant" (No. 278), where the hyena is almost drowned by the ant's schemes; and "The Wasp and the Hyena" (No. 303), where the wasp trick the hyena to drink itself to death.

Some other instances are "The Hyena and the Spider" (No. 352), where the spider defeats the hyena in a wrestling match; "The Hyena's Desire to Fly" (No. 436), where the hyena, on a monkey's mischievous advice, tries to fly from a tree top but crashes down and dies; and "The Boy, His Pets and the Hyena" (No. 649), where the hyena steals food, is killed and eaten by other animals. In all of these scenarios, the hyena was discomfited or destroyed by physically inferior opponents.

The hyena's self-destructive miscalculations above delight the audience of each of these stories because this character's behaviour in each instance matched its symbolic mould. Should the hyena behave contrary to its cultural

tag, as in "The Hyena's Dawadawa" (No. 606) where the hyena displays uncharacteristic patience, the story would seem unreal and the symbol-guided audience would most likely find it uninteresting. Can any group of Nigerian youngsters believe or appreciate a folktale where the tortoise, the nationally-acclaimed trickster, is portrayed as honest, faithful, truthful, reliable, or selfless? Not likely. These qualities are simply not in the tortoise's symbolic character. Because the tortoise's crafty nature is culturally fixed, a narrator trying to make it behave otherwise may lose credibility with his audience.

The fact is that symbolic value is ascribed to the character by the culture and the folktale narrator and his audience is customarily led to respect this. However, the narrator is expected to freshen up these characters by engaging them in interesting episodes. The narrator may even borrow episodes from two or more stories and weld them into one story. This is permissible as long as the narrator remains faithful to each character's symbolic trait.

Good narrators can also introduce elements of surprise by manipulating the plot or the motifs instead of tampering with the symbolic tendencies of the characters. This is a major reason narrators have created thrilling versions of a specific tortoise story without compromising the personality of the tortoise. In fact, the tortoise has featured in far more stories than any other single character can lay claim to, and in each story it plays a major role.

And the tortoise plays out its symbolic role mostly through its shell. At least 12 different stories in *1000 Folk Stories of Nigeria* are weaved around the motif of the tortoise's patchy shell. They include the stories numbered 281, 332, 343, 366, 371, 372, 388, 396, 499, 502, 591 and 937. In all of these stories, the tortoise is characterized in accordance with its symbolic nature.

Symbolic values differ not only from one animal character to another but also from one narrator-audience environment to another. While the tortoise features prominently in the oral narrative of every region of Nigeria, some other interesting animal characters feature mainly in tales associated with a particular linguistic or regional group. A good example is Gizo, a popular character found in many folktales from northern Nigeria. Although the rabbit can play different symbolic roles in other areas of Nigeria, for the Fulani it

symbolises cleverness in a self-serving sense. All in all, there is more cultural unity than variations among Nigerian groups.

Symbolic characters in Nigerian folktales are not limited to animals. People, spirits, and even some objects are imbued with symbolic meaning. In many tales of this collection, the king is characterized as a symbol of authority and social order. In some stories, however, such as in "The King's New Robe" (No. 6), the king can diminish his dignified symbolic stature through ignoble or atrocious behaviour. Among the king's subjects, some categories of individuals are uniquely symbolically represented. They include the old woman (symbolized as a mysterious rescuer or avenger), the juju priest (the communal prophet), the hunter (usually associated with bravery and adventure), and the orphan (a symbol of the triumph of providence over adversity). The orphan's symbolic character accounts for the reason none of the many tales featuring the orphan in this collection portrays the orphan as a villain. The orphan is almost always a victim of circumstances who ends up triumphant through some fluke of good fortune, supernatural rescue or magical transformation.

Women are not so uniformly characterized. While they are represented as caring mothers in some tales, they are painted as vengeful mean antagonists in other tales. The latter picture is prevalent when narrators are characterizing the jealous co-wife. Generally, folktales simply reflect the roles the culture has traditionally assigned to women. The same cultural prerogative also dictates the way the menfolk are characterized in tales. Male and female characters, in general, play different roles – symbolic and otherwise.

Even trees are characterised symbolically in many of these folktales. The iroko and baobab trees symbolise mystery, strength, or fertility. "The Child from the Iroko Tree" (No. 878) and "Oluronbi" (No. 894) illustrate the latter symbol. But in spite of the strength of the baobab tree, the soldier ant (characterized in these tales as a symbol of wisdom, industry and resilience) successfully brings down the baobab tree in "The Cock, the Baobab Tree and the Soldier Ant" (No. 941) by attacking its roots.

It should be re-stated here that not only characters are of symbolic significance in folktales. Themes, plots and settings can also be used as symbolic tools. Indeed, the formulaic pattern of some plots may serve useful

symbolic purposes; and in certain stories involving supernatural elements, the setting of the folktale can be as symbolically important as the characters. But we have dwelt on symbolic characters in this essay because of the central place of the folktale's characters in initiating and resolving action. One can tell a story without a theme, plot or setting, although it is not likely to be interesting, but it is impossible to tell a story which does not feature at least one or two characters. A folktale is primarily about the characters. This is one of the reasons we opted to use characters in classifying the tales presented in this anthology.

Folktale Classification Systems

Of the best-known folktale classification systems, none can claim to be adequate enough to be applied universally. These systems are the Aarne/Thompson index (AT index), Aarne/Thompson/Uther index (ATU index), Stilth Thompson's Motif Index of Folk Literature and Vladimir Propp's Morphology of the Folktale. Indeed, none of these has captured in its system all the vital aspects of the folktale.

While the first three systems listed above concentrate on theme and motif, the third concerns itself with the morphology or structure of the tale. An examination, for instance, of the classification classes adopted by the AT and ATU systems would indicate their limitations and the inadequacy of applying them on a global level. We have tabulated the main AT and ATU classes below.

Main Thematic Classes of the AT and ATU Index

Aarne/Thompson	Aarne/Thompson/Uther
1. Animal tales	1. Animal tales
2. Regular folktales	2. Tales of Magic
3. Humorous tales	3. Religious tales
	4. Realistic tales
	5. Tales of the stupid ogre
	6. Anecdotes and jokes
	7. Formula tales

The ATU classification, in spite of its greater thematic space, is inadequate outside the Western world where it has gained some regard as an international taxonomical system. An attempt to fit the 18 classes of the collection, *A Selection of Nigeran Folktales: Themes and Settings* (edited by Usman) will display obvious inadequacies in certain areas. For instance, in which class would one place enfant-terrible tales? And what about those animal tales that make sense only within the interplay of human and animal characters, in which of the above tabulated classes will they be placed?

If the AT and ATU analytical systems were not positioned as global taxonomies, posing the above questions would have been unnecessary. Within the context of their originating Western tradition, these systems (especially the ATU model) are probably adequate for classifying most traditional tales from the Western and, to some extent, Asian worlds. Elsewhere, particularly in Nigeria where we have extensive research to rely on, the ATU index is inadequate, and this is not surprising since tales from Africa were not part of the data used in deriving its classes.

And recently, two Malaysian scholars (Harun and Jamaludin) attempted to develop a largely academic "conceptual model that envisions the connections of the three classification systems (Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk Literature, the ATU index and Propp's Morphology of the Folktale), which displays their cohesive nature to operate as one classification system." (*Brackets mine*) While the sort of micro classification proposed by them is not our objective here, it is important to observe that in their parameters these systems are not broad enough to cover tales from every country of the world.

Folktale Classification by Character-Types

In classifying the 1000 tales studied by this researcher, a character-type classification deemed culturally appropriate for these tales collected from Nigeria was deviced. Since Claude Bremond's 1966 three-type classification model, further efforts have been made to classify tales by character-type. One of such efforts is the home-grown four character-type model used by Sekoni to classify Yoruba folktales in 1983. Sekoni's four categories are heroic, non-heroic, anti-heroic and a-heroic character-types (Sesan).

A character-type classification was used in grouping the 1000 tales analysed by this researcher. One of the reasons for using this type of classification was the need to celebrate the elements that make folktales vibrate in our memories long after they were told – the characters in the stories!

The character-type classification system deplored by the study broadly classifies the 1000 tales into eight groups based on the kind of characters or combination of characters featured in them. The eight categories are as follows:

1. **Human tales**: these are tales featuring only human characters. By "human," we mean all human beings, including malformed ones.

2. **Animal tales**: these are tales featuring only animal characters. By "animal," we include all living things apart from human beings and plants.

3. **Human-animal tales**: these are tales featuring only human and animal characters.

4. **Human-spirit tales**: these are tales featuring only human beings and spirits as characters. By "spirits" we include ghosts, fairies, elves, mermaids, and other supernatural "beings." Living human beings are not included in this definition of "spirit."

5. **Human-object tales**: these are tales featuring only human beings and objects as characters. By "objects," we mean tangible non-living things (e.g, an isolated bone, a rock or the moon) personified to play such roles as speaking or moving from one point to another. "Objects" may also include non-human, non-animal living things (such as a tree) when they are personified to act like human beings.

6. **Animal-spirit tales**: these are tales featuring only animal and spirit characters.

7. **Animal-object tales**: these are tales featuring only animal and personified-object characters ("object" here is as defined above).

8. **Multiple-character tales**: these are tales featuring characters derived from three or more character-types as classified above.

It should be noted that each of the above tales classification, in being anchored on character-types, represents some basic unifying characteristics of

the character drawn from the tales in each category. For instance, all animal tales are unified by the mere fact of being animals, as defined above. Also note that the emphasis here is on a *set* of characters (e.g, animals) rather than a specific character (e.g, tortoise). This classification, however, allows anyone who so wishes to explore the character traits of single actors (as we did, in this essay, in our earlier discussion on the deployment of the hyena and the tortoise as symbolic characters).

Tales Distribution by Character-Types

A total of the 1000 folktales collected from different parts of Nigeria, categorized according to their character-types, are distributed into the eight sections of *People, Animals, Spirits and Objects: 1000 Folk Stories of Nigeria*, as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

Character-Type	Range of Tales	No. of Tales	% of the Entire Tales
1. Human Tales	1 - 233	233	23.3%
2. Animal Tales	234 - 563	330	33%
3. Human-Animal Tales	564 - 756	193	19.3%
4. Human-Spirit Tales	757 - 867	111	11.1%
5. Human-Object Tales	868 - 909	42	4.2%
6. Animal-Spirit Tales	910 - 938	29	2.9%
7. Animal-Object Tales	939 - 953	15	1.5%
8. Multiple Character Tales	954 - 1000	47	4.7%
	Total =	**1000 Stories**	**100%**

From the above table, one gets the impression that human beings like using animals to portray human behaviour, especially the foibles of individuals and the inequities in the society. Perhaps, this could explain why 33% of the tales (the highest for any singular character type) are animal tales. However, the

bulk of the 1000 tales (62.6%) are stories featuring human beings in interaction with human and non-human characters.

Conclusion

As we have analysed, familiarization with the symbolic value of the characters heightens the reader's appreciation of the tale and its import. Characters play a central role in generating and developing conflicts in folktales, and conflicts are what make folk stories interesting to the audience. In whichever way conflicts are resolved, happily or unhappily, they ultimately teach some morals. These morals, no matter the cultural root of the tale, are usually universal truths. Understanding the social values represented by the characters enhances the reader's enjoyment of the story and the kind of moral truths drawn from it.

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