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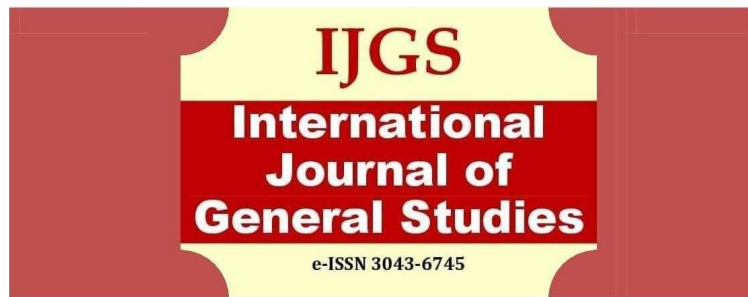
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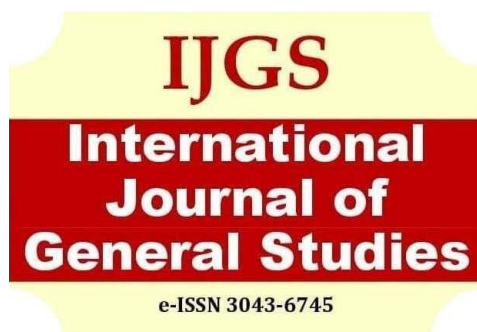
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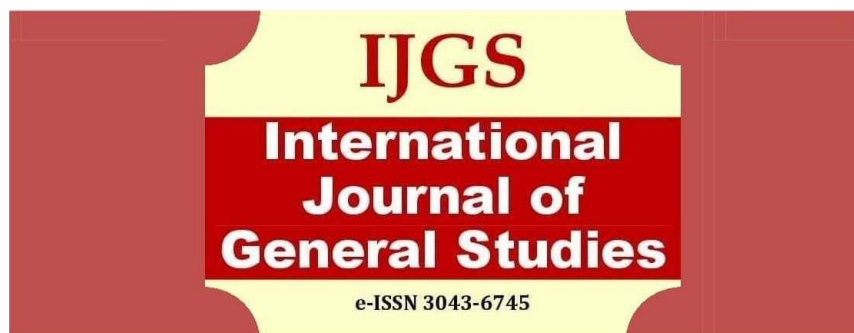
About IJGS

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An Exploratory Study of the Therapeutic Value of Outdoor Environments in Psychiatric Hospitals in Southeast Nigeria

Chijioke Chinyere Onwuzuligbo, Tochukwu Stephen Onyeyili & Ifeoma Josephine Nnaemeka

ABSTRACT

This exploratory study investigated the relationship between outdoor environmental features and patient satisfaction in psychiatric hospitals in Southeast Nigeria, a region experiencing rapid urbanisation, where cultural perceptions of nature's therapeutic role may differ from Western contexts. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was conducted across four psychiatric facilities, sampling 121 inpatients to assess their experiences and satisfaction with the outdoor environment. The findings revealed that the most common outdoor environment consisted of buildings and walls, with a generally neutral to slightly negative perception of the outdoor views among patients. Contrary to expectations based on theories like the Stress Reduction Theory, Theory of Supportive Design, and Biophilic Design Theory, no statistically significant association was found between the dominant outdoor views and patient satisfaction. The study, therefore, highlights the importance of socio-cultural influences which define patients' preferences and perceptions of therapeutic environments. It suggests that social support and opportunities for family visits may be more critical to patient well-being in this context than the aesthetic qualities of outdoor views. The research also acknowledges the potential impact of varying levels of urbanisation and familiarity with natural settings on patients' environmental perceptions. The study concludes that designing therapeutic outdoor spaces in Southeast Nigeria requires a nuanced approach that considers cultural, social, and individual factors, emphasising the need for accessible outdoor environments that foster social interaction and patient autonomy.

Keywords: environmental psychology, social support, Igbo kinship, healthcare design, socio-cultural

INTRODUCTION

The built environment is crucial in psychiatric healthcare, influencing patient recovery and overall well-being. Among the various environmental factors that may influence health and well-being, outdoor views and their associated landscapes are often considered therapeutic, supported by various theories that border on biophilia and environmental clues that reduce stress and provide support in diverse settings (Abraham et al., 2010; Umeora et al., 2023). This theoretical foundation has driven the adoption of biophilic design principles in mental health facilities and advocates for integrating natural elements to enhance patient healing (Totaforti, 2018; Nejade et al., 2022). Nevertheless, it is important to note that while theoretical frameworks strongly suggest a positive correlation between exposure to natural environments and improved mental health, the actual experiences of patients in real-world settings may deviate from these theoretical expectations given socio-cultural, geographic and economic differences (Slater, 2014; Rapoport, 1980; Herzog et al., 2000; Huang et al., 2022). Beyond buildings and the physical environment, various studies acknowledge the influence of social and cultural factors on other design aspects such as health and healthcare systems, product, communication, fashion etc (Hernandez & Blazer, 2006; Levesque & Li, 2014; Moalosi et al., 2010; Anyanwu & Chiana, 2022; Unwin, 2013).

The increasing urbanisation in southeast Nigeria, as with other regions in the country, has resulted in the replacement of soft and green outdoor areas with hard and built-up scenery (Aliyu & Adamu, 2017; Egwuagu & Anikeze, 2024; Echeta et al., 2023a; 2023b). With a mix of soft and hard landscape features, psychiatric hospitals in Southeast Nigeria, a geographical location predominantly inhabited by the Igbo tribe, present a unique opportunity for investigating context-specific interpretations and interactions of patients with nature. In this region, psychiatric hospitals are situated in diverse urban, semi-urban, and rural settings where outdoor environments range from green spaces to highly built-up areas. Additionally, cultural perceptions of the therapeutic role of nature may differ from those in Western contexts, where much of the research on the patient-nature connection has been conducted. Unlike studies where decentralised nature integration is widely recognised and practised, mental healthcare in Nigeria still faces fundamental challenges of lack of understanding, institutional neglect, funding constraints and widespread stigma, all of which are reflected in the design of the facility and surrounding environments (Labinjo et al., 2020; Ogbonna et al., 2024; Onwuzuligbo, 2024).

The theories underpinning this study are: Stress Reduction Theory (SRT) (Ulrich, 1984) which posits that exposure to restorative environments leads to physiological and psychological stress reduction, contributing to improved emotional states; Theory of Supportive Design (Ulrich, 1991; Andrade & Devlin, 2015) which emphasises that healthcare spaces should provide positive distractions, a sense of control, and opportunities for social interaction to optimise recovery; and Biophilic Design Theory (Kellert, 2006) that argues that humans have an innate affinity for nature, and integrating natural elements into built environments enhances psychological well-being. Put together, these theories frame the current study by suggesting that stressful spaces, such as healthcare environments, should offer visual design clues that promote autonomy, meaningful social interactions and positive distractions through restorative visual environmental features, thus leading to patient satisfaction.

Despite the increasing discussions on the role of environmental factors in psychiatric care, there is limited empirical research assessing how specific environmental elements influence patient experiences in southeast Nigeria. Existing studies carried out in the country focused on the therapeutic value of the physical building in Northern Nigeria (Manga et al., 2023) and on the perceived therapeutic milieu from the staff's point of view in Western Nigeria (Oluwatosin et al., 2021). There is, therefore, limited understanding of the extent to which the outdoor environment of psychiatric wards in Southeast Nigeria contributes to patient well-being, such that they are both effective and contextually appropriate. Thus, as an objective, the study seeks to determine the extent to which outdoor environmental features assumed to be beneficial in psychiatric settings contribute to patient satisfaction in Southeast Nigeria, by hypothesising that there is no significant relationship between the two. By so doing, the study will provide insights that contribute to both architectural design and mental healthcare planning, ensuring that environmental strategies align with the realities of psychiatric care in diverse socio-cultural settings.

METHODS

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional research design. A structured survey was conducted in psychiatric hospitals across Southeast Nigeria, allowing for a comparative analysis of different environmental conditions. The study was conducted in four different types of hospitals, encompassing different ownership structures and hospital specialties. While ownership structure may influence funding, hospital types may influence the effects of deinstitutionalisation of mental healthcare (Anesi & Kerlin, 2021;

Saldanha et al., 2013). All four facilities are located in 3 of the 5 states in southeast Nigeria, which are predominantly inhabited by the Igbos (one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria). The facilities included:

- i. State Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital, Nawfia, Anambra state (SNH)
- ii. Psychiatric Department of Enugu State University Teaching Hospital, Parklane (ESUTH)
- iii. Federal Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital, New Haven (FNH)
- iv. Department of Mental Health of Federal Medical Centre, Umuahia, Abia State (FMC)

Of the 181 patients obtained from hospital records based on bed counts, 138 participants were sampled. Inclusion criteria included:

- i. currently admitted in the selected psychiatric hospitals,
- ii. being cognitive and emotionally stable enough to participate in the study, as determined by at least 2 nurses on duty,
- iii. willingness to provide informed consent.

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire, which included items measuring patient experiences in relation to their hospital environment. The variables included:

- i. Dominant outdoor environment patients were exposed to, coded as DOEN.
- ii. Patient experience, which was a single-item measure to assess patient satisfaction with the outdoor environment. This was coded as PPOV.

The collected data was analysed using frequency distributions, and measures of central tendency to summarise patient responses, while the Chi-square test of independence was used to determine if environmental categories significantly influenced patient satisfaction with the outdoor view.

Ethical approval was obtained from the individual hospitals before data collection took place. Informed consent was obtained from the individual participants, while confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the period.

RESULTS

A total of 121 inpatients participated in the study, providing responses on

their hospital outdoor environment and satisfaction with such views. The distribution of each variable is presented in Figures 1 and 2.

The most common outdoor environment within the study area is made of buildings and walls (53.28%), while the least common is tendered green space (2.46%). Similarly, the median and mode for this variable DOEN remained buildings and walls.

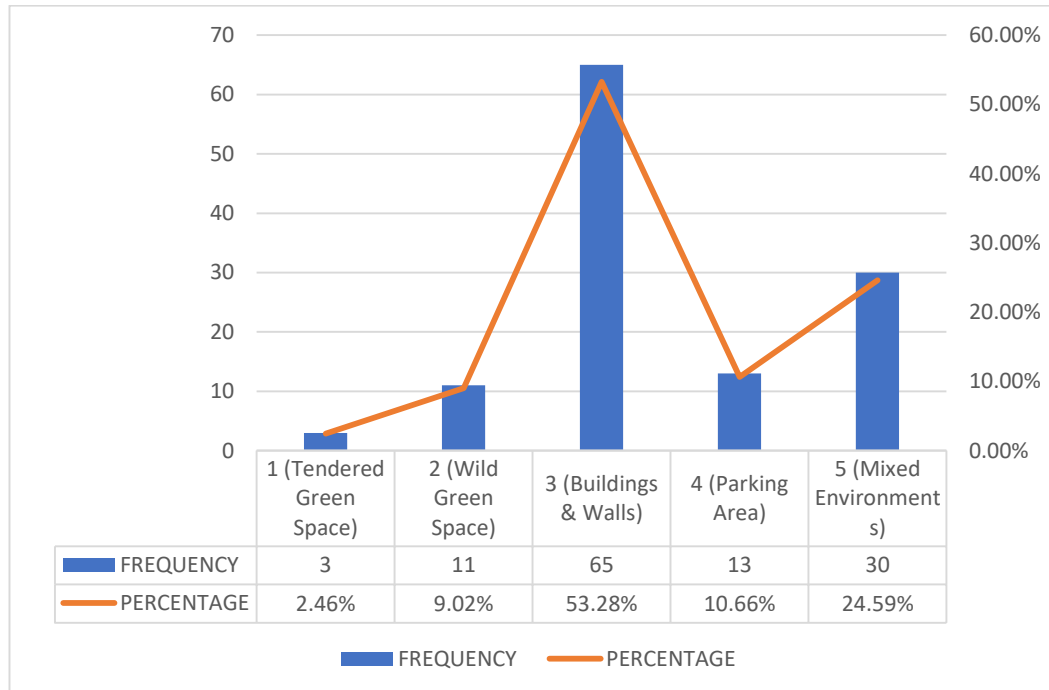


Figure 1: Distribution of Dominant Outdoor Environments (DOEN)

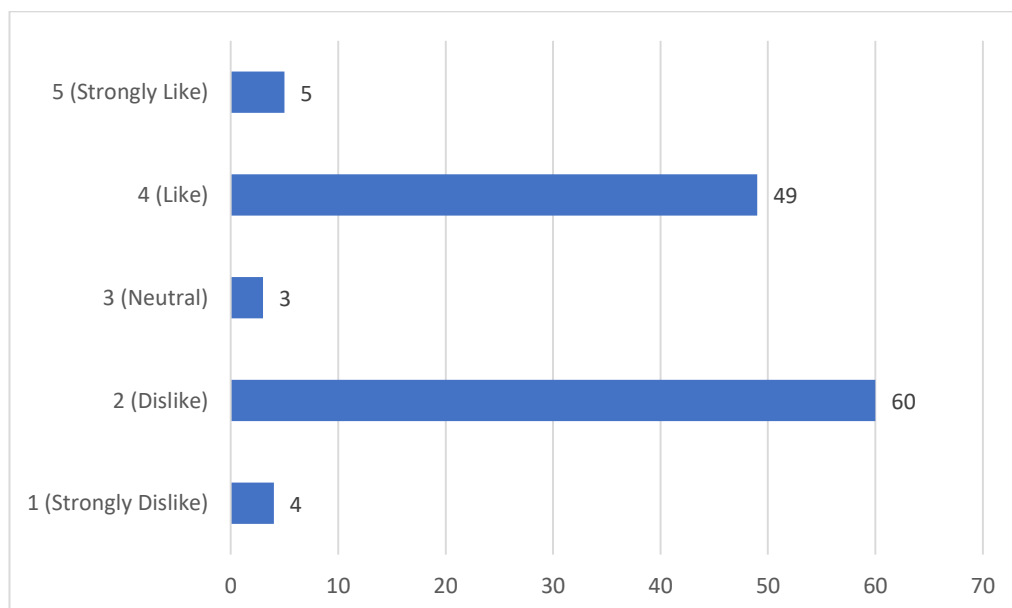


Figure 2: Distribution of Patient Satisfaction with Outdoor View (PSOV)

When queried on satisfaction with their dominant outdoor view, the highest response was “dislike” at 49.59%, while the lowest was “neutral” at 2.48%. The

mean PSOV score was 2.93, signifying a neutral to slightly negative overall perception. Similarly, the median and mode PSOV scores were 2 (dislike).

The Chi-square test of independence was used to determine if the type of dominant outdoor environment significantly influenced patient satisfaction with the outdoor view. The results are shown in Tables 1 and 2. The cross-tabulation table, Table 1, shows how patient satisfaction is distributed across the different categories of dominant outdoor views. For instance, it was observed that the most prominent responses of likes (n = 30) and dislikes (n = 29) came from patients who viewed buildings and walls, suggesting the subjective nature of preferences and perception. From Table 2, the results show that the association between dominant outdoor view and patient satisfaction with the view was not statistically significant, χ^2 (16, N = 121) = 15.80, p = 0.467 > 0.05. Thus, the study does not have sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis initially stated.

Table 1: Crosstabulation result of DOEN and PPOV

Crosstab							
		Satisfaction with the outdoor view					Total
		Strongly dislike	dislike	neutral	like	Strongly like	
Dominant outdoor view	Tendered green space	0	1	0	1	1	3
	Wild green space	0	7	1	2	0	10
	Buildings and walls	2	29	2	30	2	65
	Parking area	0	7	0	5	1	13
	Mixed environments	2	16	0	11	1	30
Total		4	60	3	49	5	121

Table 2: Chi-Square test of independence result of DOEN and PPOV

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.80	16	0.467
Likelihood Ratio	13.31	16	0.650
Linear-by-Linear Association	-0.048	1	0.600
N of Valid Cases	121		

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the impact of dominant outdoor views on patient satisfaction in psychiatric hospitals in Southeast Nigeria. The aim was to determine if different outdoor environments, as characterised by their dominant views, were associated with patient satisfaction. The chi-square test of independence results revealed no statistically significant association between the dominant outdoor view and patient satisfaction with the view (χ^2 (16, N = 121) = 15.80, p = 0.467). This result indicates that, within this sample, observed differences in patient satisfaction were not systematically related to the type of dominant outdoor view. These findings present a deviation from the general applicability of widely accepted assumptions in environmental psychology and healthcare architecture that the mere exposure to natural environments positively influences well-being as in several studies (Ulrich, 1984; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989, as cited in Markevych, 2017; Berto, 2014; van den Berg et al., 2003; Depledge et al., 2011; Wichrowski et al., 2021). This exception may be explained by the nuanced influences of patient characteristics.

The complex, yet basic, human-environment relationship introduces a subjective interpretation of what is perceived as satisfactory. It is therefore important to acknowledge that the outdoor preferences and perceptions of what constitutes a "restorative" environment are not universal but are significantly shaped by socio-cultural backgrounds (Gifford, 2014; Milfont & Schultz, 2016; Hartig et al., 2011). Thus, emotional responses to places, including natural settings, are a product of person, place, and time. In the context of the current study, the dominant outdoor view categories might not hold the same aesthetic or restorative value nor elicit the same emotional responses, as they might in other cultural settings. For instance, cultural values related to nature, healing practices, or social interaction patterns might significantly influence what patients in Southeast Nigeria find satisfying in an outdoor view. This is supported by the idea that different cultures prioritise or value different visual elements in a landscape (Huang et al., 2022; Herzog, 2000).

Furthermore, the socio-developmental-induced variations in familiarity with natural settings among the study participants, who were recruited from different locations in southeast Nigeria, may have also contributed to the findings (Herzog et al., 2000; Ewert et al., 2005). While the region includes some urban centres, the degree of urbanisation varies, and even within the urban areas, the nature of urbanisation may differ from that in highly industrialised nations, where studies underpinning SRT, TSD and BDT were conducted. In areas with higher urbanisation, individuals may have less frequent contact with nature, leading to altered perceptions and expectations of outdoor views and potentially a reduced sensitivity to the subtle differences in various types of green spaces (e.g., "tendered" vs. "wild"). This aligns with the concept that the benefits of nature can be affected by factors like the degree of urbanisation and people's familiarity with natural settings (Ewert et al., 2005). Conversely, even patients residing in less urbanised areas might demonstrate varying levels of familiarity with specific types of natural environments, depending on factors such as socioeconomic status and individual experiences (Hartig et al.,

2011; Ewert et al., 2005).

The Theory of Supportive Design (TSD) provides another valuable lens through which the non-significant association observed between dominant outdoor views and patient satisfaction in this study can be interpreted. TSD posits that the built environment can significantly impact well-being by reducing stress, promoting coping, enhancing a sense of control, and promoting social support (Andrade & Devlin, 2015; Ulrich et al. 2018). In healthcare settings, this translates to designing spaces that facilitate healing and recovery by drawing on all available coping mechanisms. For the participants in the study area who are predominantly Igbo, the strong kinship and nuclear/extended family ties introduce a crucial nuance that defines meaningful social interactions.

Among the Igbo, social support networks are paramount and serve as a primary source of resilience in stressful circumstances, suggested by works exploring Igbo social structures which emphasise the centrality of kinship and communal ties (Ekeopara, 2012; Layefa et al., 2022). Consequently, in the context of this study, the social environment within the psychiatric wards might exert a more profound influence on patients' overall well-being and satisfaction than the physical indoor and outdoor environments.

From a Supportive Design perspective, this suggests that design elements prioritising and facilitating social interaction, family visits, and community connections could be more critical in this cultural context than the aesthetic qualities of the view itself. For instance, patients might derive greater comfort and support from having spaces to accommodate family visits and communal activities, even with a less-than-ideal view, compared to having an aesthetically pleasing view but experiencing social isolation (Abubakar, 2015). Therefore, within the sampled facilities, it is possible that the outdoor spaces did not significantly impact patient satisfaction because such outdoor spaces may not have been designed to be easily accessed from the ward, thus limiting their social value. In essence, the design's failure to support culturally preferred coping mechanisms and social support systems might have diminished its overall supportive function, overshadowing the influence of the visual environment.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the available data, the study concludes that patient satisfaction with outdoor spaces is influenced by an interplay of factors that extend beyond the mere visual characteristics of the view. Specifically, the study highlights the importance of considering socio-cultural influences on environmental perception, particularly in Southeast Nigeria, where cultural values and social structures may shape patients' experiences and preferences in healthcare settings. The findings also underscore the potential impact of varying levels of urbanisation and familiarity with natural settings on how patients perceive and respond to outdoor environments in psychiatric wards. Furthermore, the study draws attention to the critical role of social support and kinship ties among the Igbo people, suggesting that design elements fostering social interaction may matter more in creating a therapeutic

environment, regardless of the characteristics of the view.

Therefore, when designing or renovating outdoor spaces in psychiatric wards in Southeast Nigeria, it is important to create avenues for patients to access outdoor environments, which also enhances the patients' sense of autonomy. Enabling access to the outdoor environment strengthens culturally relevant coping mechanisms for psychiatric patients in the region.

The study contributes valuable insights into the complexities of designing therapeutic outdoor environments for improved satisfaction in a specific socio-cultural context. It highlights the need to move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach and to consider the nuanced interplay of cultural, social, and individual factors in shaping patient experiences in psychiatric settings.

To the best of our knowledge, this is a pioneer study investigating the association between outdoor environments and patient satisfaction in psychiatric hospital settings in Southeast Nigeria. It is therefore important to mention possible methodological limitations to this exploratory study. First, even though patients were recruited based on the nurses' cognitive assessments, it is possible their responses were influenced by their fluctuating mental state, diagnosis, medications, and length of stay. Secondly, the study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causality, and it did not employ a mixed methodology by adding a qualitative method for data collection. The philosophy guiding the study is positivism, where the researcher set out to quantitatively study psychiatric patients' assessment of their environment. Therefore, while this approach was appropriate for the study's aims, the study may have benefited, in a different way, from deeper insights afforded by qualitative methods of data collection as an added methodology. Furthermore, patient satisfaction was measured using a single-item measure, which may not fully capture the complexity of this construct. It therefore behoves the scholarly community to investigate the study objective while considering these limitations.

DECLARATIONS

Ethical clearance

Ethical clearance was obtained from each of the four participating hospitals, while the study participants consented to participate voluntarily in the study. Participants were also made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

Availability of data and materials

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

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Effectiveness of Communication Development and Development Communication in Development Administration: An Appraisal of Civilian Governments of Anambra State, Nigeria (1999 to 2025)

Nnenna Grace Okezie

ABSTRACT

This paper seems evaluates the performance of civil rule in Anambra State after the military handed over to civilians in 1999. Civilians have ruled for twenty-six years (1999-2025) in Anambra State. This study assesses the extent to which communication development and development communication have been deployed as effective tools for development administration in Anambra State during this period. The 1999 transition from military to civil democratic rule, at both federal and state levels, is a defining moment in Nigeria's history. The deaths of General Sani Abacha and Chief Moshood Abiola made it possible for the June 12 crisis to be resolved and for democracy to be revived in the country. At the federal level, a President was democratically elected while while elected governors took charge at the states, including Anambra State. The question is: how well have present and past governments of Anambra State used communication development and development communication as effective tools for development administration in the state from 1999 to 2025? The main objective of this paper is to answer this question.

Keywords: Anambra State, civil rule, communication development, development communication, development administration

INTRODUCTION

In the olden days, people communicated through various forms of traditional modes of communication. Besides the physical requirements for food and shelter, man has another fundamental need: the need to communicate with his fellow human beings. Given the gregarious nature of man, this need for

communication is a pressing and continuous one. In our contemporary civilization, communication is a necessity for survival; it is needed to convey development goals, carry out those goals, and mobilize the support of the citizenry throughout the entire process of development. The governors of Anambra State achieved these and other communication needs by making use of the mass media when carrying out their administrative roles in the state.

As information communication technology advances, there is a need to facilitate community development through the effective use of ICT to facilitate development communication. The mass media has a key role to play here as it occupies a strategic position in every society. The mass media inform the populace about events within and outside the society where they operate; journalists are on the fore front to relay information to the general public. Communication development is a comprehensive process that engages the mass media to use deliberate communication strategies to initiate and support lasting social transformation programmes that lead to improved quality of life for the average citizen.

According to Okoro (1999), “Rapid developments in the sphere of mass communication are enormously redefining the Lasswellian Paradigm (Who says What to Whom in Which channel with what effect) in a manner and dimension never thought of Harold Lasswell”. Okoro further explains:

These developments are, no doubt, gargantuan both in communication development and development communication. Even a cursory look into communication history lends credence to this assertion. The developments in the history of mass communication, ever since, have been at a fast clip. When Canadian scholar Marshall McLuhan came up with the ‘global village’ concept, the communication world and academic world witnessed a cacophony of argumentations. At that time, the idea of the world shrinking into a global village sounded very impossible. McLuhan had argued that the new electronic interdependence had created the world in the form of a global village. True to McLuhan’s vision, we are living in a global information society where various countries of the world have become more interdependent in the face of the rapid application of the new information communication technologies (ICTs) (Okoro, 1999:95).

Definition of Key Terms

a. Communication Development

Communication development refers to the purposeful and strategic use of communication processes, tools and technologies to foster social change and advance developmental goals. In essence, it is both an academic field and an

approach that applies the art and science of human communication to help transform societies, for example, by reducing poverty, enhancing socio-economic growth, and promoting social equality. Communication development involves more than just transmitting information; it includes education, behaviour change, social mobilization, and participatory dialogue aimed at empowering individuals and communities. It draws on interdisciplinary research in the fields of communication theory, social psychology, and development studies aimed designing interventions that are sensitive to local cultural and contextual realities. Communication development is the art and science of human communication linked to a society's planned transformation from a state of poverty to one of dynamic socio-economic growth that makes possible greater social equality and the larger fulfilment of human potential (Quebral, 2001). Similarly, organisations like World Bank view development communication as integrating strategic communication into projects so that the goal is not only to disseminate information but also to achieve measurable behaviour change and sustainable development.

b. Development Communication (Devcom)

Development communication is the use of communication strategies, tools, and media to promote social development, behavioural change, and economic progress particular in developing communities. It is used in areas like health, education, agriculture, governance, and environment substantially to drive positive societal change.

c. Development Administration

Development Administration refers to the branch of public administration that focuses on planning, implementing and managing policies, programmes and projects aimed at socio-economic development, particularly in developing countries. It is concerned with improving governance, enhancing institutional capacity and promoting economic growth, social justice and modernization.

Scope of Study

The study covers the civilian administrations in Anambra State, from 1999 to 2025. This paper will examine the use of communication development and development communication in the development administration of Anambra State under different democratic administrations, from 1999 to 2025.

Theoretical Framework.

In the context of development administration, the most relevant mass

communication theories that explain communication development and development communication are highlighted below:

Modernization Theory: This theory was propounded by Walt Whitman Rostow (1960) through his book, *The Strategies of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. However, other scholars like Daniel Lerner (1958) and Seymour Martin (1959) also contributed significantly to its development. This theory argues that the mass media can spread information, change attitudes, and influence social behaviour to promote economic and social development. For example, government can use radio and television to educate rural populations about health, agriculture and literacy.

Diffusion and Innovation Theory: This theory was propounded by Everett Rogers in 1962. It explains how new ideas, technologies and practices spread within a society. In development communication, efforts are made to use mass media to introduce innovations like new farming techniques or health programmes. For example, prompting the use of mobile banking in rural areas to improve financial inclusion. Artisans can pay their tax through USSD mobile apps.

Participatory Communication Theory: This theory was propounded by a Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire (1970). The concept was further expanded by theorists like John Fiske and Henry Jenkins in the context of digital and social media in 2000. This theory emphasized dialogue, empowerment and active participation in communication process, especially in education and social change.

Key Aspects of Development Communication for Development Administration

1. **Participatory Approach:** Through communication development communities are engaged in decision-making rather than solutions being imposed on them.
2. **Behavioral Change Communication (BCC):** This aims at influencing positive changes in attitude and practices, such as prompting vaccination, counselling those living with HIV, advocating for change in ritual practices like Female Genital Mutilation and so on.
3. **Information Dissemination:** The government uses media like radio, television, social media and print media to educate the public concerning issues like farming, planting trees, littering of environment with non-bio degradable materials.
4. **Advocacy Communication:** The government supports policy change and

reforms; for example, by advocating for gender equality, and condemning wife battering, child abuse and trafficking, kidnaping and insecurity.

5. Inter-personal Communication: The government uses face-to-face interactions, workshops and community dialogue for grassroots development. Farmers can be given incentives. Free fertilizers, coconut and palm seedlings can be shared to the community through interpersonal communication. These strategies lead to development administration.

Governors of Anambra State since the State's Creation

Anambra State was created on 3rd February, 1976, when the then East Central State was divided into Anambra and Imo States.

List of Anambra State Governors (1976-2025)

S/N	Name	Title	Took office	Left Office	Party	Notes
1	John Atom Kpera	Governor	March 1976	July 1978	Military	
2	Col. Datti Sadi Abubakar	Governor	Holy 1978	October 1979	Military	
3	Jim Nwobodo	Governor	October 1979	October 1983	NPP	
4	Christian Onoh	Governor	October 1983	December 1983	NPN	
5	Allison Madueke	Governor	January 1984	August 1985	Military	
6	Samson Omeruah	Governor	August 1985	December 1987	Military	
7	RobertAkonobi	Governor	August 1987	January 1990	Military	
8	Herbert Eze	Governor	August 1990	January 1992	Military	
9	Joseph Abulu	Administra tor	27 th August 1991	January 1992	Military	
10	Chukwuemeka Ezeife	Governor	2 nd January, 1992	17 th November, 1993	SDP	
11	Dapo Aliyu	Acting Administra tor	November 1993	December 1993	Police	
12	Mika Attah	Administra tor	9 th December, 1993	21 st August, 1996	Military	
13	Rufai Garba	Administra tor	21 st August, 1996	6 th August, 1998	Military	
14	Emmanuel Ukaegbu	Administra tor	6 th August 1996	6 th August 1998	Military	
15	Chinwoke Mbadinuju	Governor	29 th May, 1999	29 th May 2003	PDP	
16	Chris Ngige	Governor	29 th May, 2003	17 th March 2006	PDP	
17	Peter Obi	Governor	17 th March 2006	2 rd November, 2006	APGA	
18	Virginia Etiaba	Governor	3 rd November, 2006	9 th February, 2007	APGA	Appointe d when the previous

						governor, Mr. Peter Obi was impeached by the state legislature. She transferred her power back to Mr. Peter Obi three months later when the appeal Court nullified the impeachment.
19	Emmanuel Nnamdi Uba	Governor	27 th May, 2007	14 th June, 2007	PDP	He was removed by the Supreme Court after 14 days in office.
20	Peter Obi	Governor	9 th February, 2007	17 th March, 2014	APGA	Two tenures
21	Willie Obiano	Governor	17 th March, 2014	17 th March, 2022	APGA	Two tenures
22	Charles Chukwuma Soludo	Governor	17 th March 2022	incumbent	APGA	

REVIEW OF CIVILIAN ADMINISTRATIONS IN ANAMBRA STATE (1999-2025)

Governor Chinwoke Mbadinuju's Administration (29th May, 1999 to 29th May, 2003)

Governor Chinwoke Mbadinuju served as the governor of Anambra State, Nigeria, from May 29, 1999 to May 29, 2003. His administration was marked by significant challenges, including political instability, economic struggles, and security issues. The effects are analyzed below:

There were serious political challenges and instability during Mbadiuju's administration. He faced serious political instability, largely due to conflicts with influential political godfathers, particularly Sir Emeka Offor. These power struggles affected governance, as he struggled to assert control over the state's affairs. The rift with Sir Emeka Offor, who was instrumental in his election, led to financial issues with the federal government and internal party crises within the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

In the education sector, there was crisis and teachers' strike. One of the most notable failures of Mbadiuju's government was the crisis in the education sector. Teachers in Anambra State went on prolonged strikes due to unpaid salaries which led to the near collapse of public education. Many schools were closed for months, and students were left without access to quality education.

There was security breakdown and crime surge in Anambra State. During his tenure, Anambra State witnessed a rise in violent crime including armed robbery, kidnappings, and political assassinations. The most infamous incident was the activities of the dreaded vigilante group, the Bakassi Boys, which was initially created to tackle crime but later became a source of extrajudicial killings and human rights abuses.

The State was faced with economic and infrastructure challenges. Mbadiuju's government struggled with economic development due to lack of financial stability and development communication in his administration. Basic infrastructures, such as healthcare facilities and roads, deteriorated. Many state workers, including civil servants, experienced long delays in salary payments, leading to widespread discontentment.

He failed in his second-term bid due to the controversies surrounding his tenure, including his fallout with key political backers. Mbadiuju was denied the PDP ticket for a second term. He later ran under Alliance for Democracy (AD) but lost to Chris Ngige in the 2003 elections. His administration failed to provide answers to the real questions bothering the people as his administration did not make use of communication development.

There is no development administration during the time of Mbadiuju. His administration is largely remembered for political infighting, economic stagnation, and insecurity. While he attempted to introduce policies such as free education at the primary and secondary levels, lack of funding and implementation made these efforts ineffective. His tenure is often cited as one of the most turbulent periods in Anambra State's political history.

Analysis of Dr. Chris Nwabueze Ngige's Administration in Anambra

State (March 29, 2003 to March 17, 2006)

Chris Ngige served as the governor of Anambra State from March 29, 2003 to March 17, 2006. His tenure was marked by significant achievements in infrastructural development; there were also political crises and legal battles that ultimately led to his removal from office. In his attempt to bring development communication to the grassroots, he faced political battles and legal issues.

Chris Ngige was declared the winner of the 2003 Anambra State gubernatorial election under the People's Democratic Party (PDP). However, his victory was later overturned by the courts in 2006 after it was established that the election was rigged in his favour. His administration was heavily influenced by a power struggle with his political sponsor, Chris Uba, a powerful PDP financier who expected to control the government. The infamous July 10, 2003, abduction of Ngige by a faction of the police, allegedly orchestrated by Chris Uba, led to a major political crisis. This event exposed the deep-rooted godfatherism in Anambra politics.

There was infrastructural development in the state during Ngige's tenure. Despite political instability, Ngige focused on governance, particularly road construction and rehabilitation, which significantly improved Anambra's infrastructure. Ngige employed communication development in his administration. There was massive road construction in the state. His administration constructed and rehabilitated several roads across the state, including those in Awka, Onitsha, Nnobi and Nnewi. There were improved transportation networks. His road projects facilitated economic growth by improving connectivity and reducing travel time within the state.

Regarding civil service workers' welfare, Ngige's administration made efforts to clear backlog of unpaid salaries and pensions of civil servants, which boosted morale within the public sector. He resisted attempts to misappropriate state funds, which made him popular among civil servants and the general public. In education and health sector, Ngige's government made improvements in education infrastructure, although major reforms in the sector were limited due to the brief nature of his tenure. Healthcare services improved with efforts to equip hospitals and enhance primary healthcare delivery.

However, Ngige faced political turmoil and legal battles. Ngige's tenure was marked by conflicts with the PDP national leadership and Chris Uba, which sought to control state resources. His administration survived multiple impeachment attempts by a faction of the Anambra State House of Assembly. In March 2006, the Court of Appeal ruled that his 2003 election

was fraudulent and declared Mr. Peter Obi of the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) as the rightful winner, leading to Ngige's removal from office. Although Ngige's administration employed communication development, it was a mixture of political instability and commendable governance. Despite facing intense political sabotage, he focused on development administration through development communication. His tenure led foundation for other administrations, particularly in road infrastructure. However, his removal through the court highlighted the persistent issue of electoral malpractice in Nigeria's democratic system. Ngige's administration attempted to provide answers to the research questions and to the real challenges faced by the people.

Peter Obi's Administration in Anambra State (March 17, 2006 to March 14, 2014)

Peter Obi's tenure was marked by interruptions due to legal battles. His administration was known for its focus on good governance, financial prudence and infrastructural development. His period of governorship was the time when development communication was used as a tool for development administration.

Peter Obi's Political Struggles and Tenure Interruptions

Peter Obi was sworn in as the governor after winning the 2003 election under the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA). However, his victory was delayed by court battles until 2006. In November 2, 2006, he was impeached by the State House of Assembly. In February 9, 2007, he was reinstated by the courts. In May 29, 2007, Peter Obi was removed again after a controversial election. Andy Uba was installed. On July 14, 2007, Peter Obi was reinstated by the Supreme Court, which ruled that his tenure should run until 2010. In February 6, 2010, Peter Obi was re-elected for a second tenure.

Peter Obi's Achievements and Reform through Development Communication

There were massive achievements and reforms such as financial prudence and transparency. He left over 75 billion naira in cash and investments for the Anambra State government. Peter Obi reduced wasteful spending and implemented cost-cutting measures. In his education sector reforms, Peter Obi returned mission schools to churches and provided grants to them. He massively invested in schools, leading to Anambra State ranking among the top states in WAEC and NECO examinations.

In infrastructural development, through development communication, Peter

Obi rebuilt roads and expanded networks to improve transportation. He focused on rural road construction to boost economic activities. There was improvement in the health sector also. Peter Obi revamped hospitals and built new healthcare facilities. He partnered with global organisations like Bill and Melinda Foundation on immunization programmes. In security enhancements, Peter Obi strengthened law enforcement with better equipment and funding. There was reduction in crime rates in Anambra State during his administration.

Development Communication as a tool for Development Administration improved Peter Obi's legacy. Peter Obi is widely regarded as one of Anambra's best performing governors; he is credited with laying a solid foundation for the state's development, including the development of the grassroots. His governance style, characterized by frugality and efficiency, became a benchmark for leadership in Nigeria.

Willie Obiano's Administration (March 17, 20014 to March 17, 2022)

Willie Obiano served as the Governor of Anambra State from March 17, 20014 to March 17, 2022. His administration focused on security, infrastructure, agriculture, trade and education. There was security improvement during Obiano's tenure in the state. One of the biggest achievements was significantly improving security in Anambra State. He launched 'Operation Kpochapu', a security initiative that helped to reduce crime, particularly armed robbery and kidnaping. His administration stopped motorcyclists from operating in the major towns in the states in a bid to curb insecurity. Under his administration, Anambra State became one of the safest states in Nigeria.

In infrastructural development, Obiano's government initiated and completed various road and bridge projects, improving connectivity within the state. The Anambra International Cargo and Passenger Airport, located at Umueri, was one of his major infrastructural achievements. He also improved urban planning and modernization in Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi. There was also agricultural growth in Anambra State. Obiano prioritized agriculture by supporting local farmers with funds and improved seedlings. Anambra Rice became a major brand during his administration, making the state a key rice producer in Nigeria. His administration worked on improving trade and commerce, especially in Onitsha, Nnewi and Awka. He promoted industrialization, encouraging local businesses and foreign investments. Obiano's Administration invested in education by upgrading school infrastructure and increasing teachers' salaries. He also improved healthcare by renovating hospitals and providing medical facilities.

Challenges and Controversies during Obiano's Administration

Obiano's administration faced criticism for issues related to alleged mismanagement of funds; some infrastructure projects, like roads, were not completed as promised. After leaving office, he was briefly arrested by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) over allegations of corruption and misappropriation of funds. Despite the controversies, Obiano's tenure was marked by significant improvements in security, infrastructure and agriculture. His leadership helped Anambra maintain its status as one of most progressive states in Nigeria.

Prof. Charles Chukwuma Soludo's Administration

Prof. Charles Chukwuma Soludo was sworn in as the fifth Governor of Anambra State on Mach 17, 2022. In January 2022, ahead of his inauguration, Soludo appointed Chukwuemeka Fred Agbata as the Managing Director of Anambra State ICT Agency. Under Agbata's leadership, the agency has focused on expanding broadband access, digitalizing government sectors, including the legislative arm of the state. His tenure, so far, has been marked by efforts to enhance the state's technological infrastructure and improve governance through digitization.

How the Civilian Governors in Anambra State Utilized Development Communication in their Administrations from 1999 to 2025

From 1999 to 2025, Anambra State had several civilian governors who incorporated development communication strategies into their administrations. Development communication involves using communication tools and participatory methods to facilitate social development. Chinwoke Mbadinuju (1999-2003) failed to incorporate development communication in his administration. His administration faced significant challenges, including issues with civil service and education sectors, which may have impacted the implementation of key communication strategies.

Chris Ngige (2003-2006): Ngige's tenure was marked by efforts to improve infrastructure and public services. However, there is no record of development communication practices during his tenure.

Peter Obi (2006-2014): Obi introduced the Anambra Integrated Development Strategy (ANIDS) in 2006, aiming for simultaneous multi-sectoral development aligned with the Millennium Development Goals. ANIDS emphasized community involvement and utilized various communication strategies to engage citizens in the development process.

Willie Obiano (2014-2022): Obiano's administration continued the use of

development communication through initiatives like “Choose Your Project” program, which empowered communities to select and execute projects based on the needs. This participatory approach fostered a sense of ownership and directly involved citizens in the states’ development agenda.

Charles Chukwuma Soludo (2022-present): Soludo’s government has prioritized effective communication in project execution. For instance, the Commissioner for Power and Water Resources highlighted the importance of communication in informing citizens about governmental achievements and plans, ensuring transparency and public engagement.

Peter Obi, Willie Obiano, Charles Chukwuma Soludo have actively employed development communication strategies in their administrations between 1999 to 2025. These strategies have been pivotal in promoting participatory governance and ensuring that development projects align with the needs and aspirations of citizens residing in Anambra State.

Development Administration in Anambra State from 1999 to 2025

From 2006 to 2025, Peter Obi, the lead actor in development communication as well as Willie Obiano and Charles Chukwuma Soludo leveraged communication development and development communication to enhance governance and drive socio-economic progress. These strategies facilitated transparent governance, citizen engagement and dissemination of development initiatives. There is rebranding and participatory communication. The state government employed participatory approaches to reshape its image and communicate plans. Initiatives like ‘Anambra Wheel of Development’ utilized social media and community engagement to involve citizens in the development discourse, fostering a sense of ownership and collective responsibility.

There was an adoption of indigenous communication models. Recognizing the limitations of Western communication paradigms, Anambra State explored Afro-centric models tailored to local contexts. This approach ensured that development messages resonated with the cultural and social realities of the populace, enhancing the effectiveness of communication strategies.

There was an integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The establishment of the Anambra State ICT Agency in 2019 marked a significant milestone in the state’s communication development. This agency spearheaded the digitization of government services, improved internet accessibility, and supported technological startups, thereby fostering a digital economy and enhancing service delivery.

In the agricultural sector, there were agricultural communication strategies. The state developed Medium-Term Sector Strategies (MTSS) emphasizing inclusivity and climate-smart agriculture. These strategies were communicated to stakeholders through workshops and policy documents, aligning state agricultural practices with national and international standards. Collectively, these communication initiatives became instruments for promoting transparency, encouraging public participation, and driving sustainable development in Anambra State during the period being reviewed.

Areas Civilian Administrations in Anambra State Achieved Effective and Desired Results through the Use of Development Communication from 1999 to 2025

From 1999 to 2025, notable administrations in Anambra state effectively utilized development communication across various sectors, leading to significant achievements, in spite of challenges.

Chris Ngige made efforts to curb financial mismanagement and stabilize state economy. He boosted the morale of the civil service by regular payment of workers' salaries. Education, which declined during Mbadinuju's tenure, was revitalized by Chris Ngige's administration.

Peter Obi achieved infrastructural development through development communication. The key achievements include returning schools to religious missions and providing funding. Anambra State became first to achieve near-universal primary school enrollment. Road networks linking rural and urban areas improved. General hospitals were built and upgraded. There was promotion of business-friendly policies that attracted private investments. His administration saved billions of naira in state reserves and reduced wasteful government spending.

There were community-driven development initiatives during Governor Obiano's tenure. His "Choose Your Projects" initiatives empowered communities to select and manage development projects, fostering local ownership and participation. This participatory approach led to remarkable success of over 95%, with communities completing projects such as hospitals, schools and skills acquisition centres. He also initiated and completed Anambra Airport that brought development to Umueri rural dwellers as well as supported large farming, making Anambra a top rice-producing state.

Soludo expanded drainage and demolished illegal structures, launched a digital entrepreneur programme and tackled insecurity, especially in rural areas. He recently launched "*Operation Udo Ga-Achi*" which, translated,

means “*Operation Peace Shall Reign*”. This operation aims at combating insecurity within the state. As part of this initiative, the Anambra State Homeland Security Bill 2025 was signed into law, leading to the establishment of a vigilante group known as “*Agunechemba*”. This group is tasked with the responsibility of maintaining law and order, detecting and preventing crimes and safeguarding lives and property throughout the state. The operation comprises 2,000 personnel drawn from various security agencies, including police, army, navy, civil defence, DSS and the Agunechemba Vigilante Group. To support their activities, 200 patrol vehicles have been deployed. Additionally, the state government has implemented advanced technological measures such as a best-class tracking system, a command-and-control system enhancing the use of voice, video, and data in security management, and AI-powered surveillance cameras to monitor communities. Governor Soludo has introduced incentives to encourage public participation in enhancing security. A monthly bonus of ten million naira will be awarded to any local government area that records zero violent crimes. Whistleblowers providing credible information leading to the arrest of kidnapers or armed robbers can receive rewards of five million naira, depending on the significance of the information provided.

Effective Use of Communication Development and Development Communication in Development Administration in Anambra State from 1999 to 2025

Both communication development and development communication play crucial roles in development administration, but they serve distinct functions. Their effectiveness depends on how well they are integrated into governance, policy making and project implementation.

a. Communication Development in Development Administration

To improve the overall communication infrastructure and capabilities within Anambra state, efforts should be made to expand media access such radio, television and internet among the rural dwellers. Training public relations officials in effective communication should be embraced.

Communication development in development administration is vital because it increases transparency and helps governments to disseminate information efficiently. Besides, it improves policy implementation. Government should ensure that policies reach the right audience with clear instructions.

Communication development in development administration encourages citizen participation in governance, creates platforms for public input and increases accountability. Challenges still facing communication development in Anambra State are digital divides and bureaucratic

resistance which hinder communication effectiveness.

b. Development Communication in Development Administration

Since development communication is a strategic approach that uses communication tools to promote social change and community empowerment, it should focus more on two-way communication (dialogue between government and citizens). It should advocate for policy and behavioural changes campaign such as health and environment education, community participation and mobilization.

Development communication enhances policy acceptance. When people understand and relate to government policies, they are more likely to support them. Development communication facilitates social change. It generates awareness of issues such as climate change, health and education. It empowers communities, encourages local problem-solving initiatives and participation in governance.

Challenges facing development communication in Anambra State are resistance to change, misinformation and cultural barriers. These limit its effectiveness.

Conclusion

Communication development and development communication have played significant roles in enhancing grassroots development in Anambra State during civilian administrations. The state employed various communication strategies to engage with the populace. These included town hall meetings, press releases, and the use of social media platforms to disseminate information and gather feedback. Such approaches ensure and foster trust between the government and the communities. The use of participatory communication channels allowed for real-time interaction, enabling the government to address concerns promptly and adjust policies as needed. The integration of communication strategies in Anambra State has substantially enhanced grassroots development.

With information superhighway, towns, communities in Anambra State can now exchange ideas in urban and rural dwellers. Despite the security challenges, the government has engaged in tremendous grassroots development. But development communication is more impactful in creating long-term social change while communication development strengthens the foundation for better governance. A combination of both ensures effective administration and sustainable development. The usage of ICT is still hampered by poor economy and lack of facilities, worsened by epileptic power supply in the state. In spite of these, government and media

practitioners should continue to sensitize the citizens on the benefits of communication development and development communication in development administration of Anambra State.

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Leveraging Social Protection Programmes for Poverty Reduction in Nigeria

Livinus Nwaugh

Abstract

Social protection programme is conceived in Africa to be a magic wand that mitigates all socio-economic maladies countries face. It is this understanding that led to United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and subsequently Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) launched especially to reduce poverty in the global south and the world at large. Poverty is singled out as one of the major drawbacks of development in the global south in general and Nigeria in particular. It is as a result of this that the developed north earmarked 0.7% of their revenue as aids and grants to be sent to the countries of the global south, including Nigeria, for the alleviation of their poverty. However, in spite of such packages, global south countries especially Nigeria, have remained impoverished. Several factors are responsible for the ineffective outcomes of the social protection programmes (SPP); such factors include inept leadership, illiteracy, overpopulation, corruption, social seclusion and environmental scarcity. The latter results from air, land and water pollution, desertification and deforestation; all of these distort food production chain and heighten food insecurity and conflict. There are interconnections between inept leadership, food insecurity, conflict and poverty in Nigeria. This paper concludes that the legions of social protection programmes aimed at reducing poverty in Nigeria would continued to be a mirage until there is a total overhaul of Nigeria's leadership selection process and the enthronement of genuine people-driven democracy as well as accountability, transparency, and probity in all levels of governance in the country.

Keywords: social protection programme, SDGs, poverty, food insecurity, leadership, environmental scarcity

Introduction

One of the socio-economic maladies threatening countries of the world, especially the global south and Nigeria in particular, is poverty (Barrientos & Lloyd-Sherlock, 2002; Onyeonoru, 2018) and to address the scourge the UN has designated poverty reduction as one of its critical Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Nigeria has domesticated the poverty reduction

goal, as enshrined in section (6) c of the 1999 constitution as amended which emphasized political, economic, social, cultural and developmental rights of citizens through several social protection programmes (Onyeonoru, 2018). Even so, there have been several laudable initiatives to stem poverty in the global south and in Nigeria in particular; nonetheless, poverty has remained one of the facilitators of hunger, crime and violent conflict in Nigeria. Poor people globally do not have regular access to good quality food and, as a result of that, often face health related challenges that cut across adults and children (Dutta, Anaele & Jones, 2013). Lack of access to sufficient quality food most times weakens the immune system and makes the poor susceptible to debilitating and life-shortening sicknesses. Hence, poverty, hunger and health related issues are interrelated; they interconnect and predispose the poor to crime and conflict.

It should be noted that poverty is not the only cause of crime and deadly conflicts in Nigeria, and this is not the position of this paper, for there are other causes, such as ethnic rivalry, religious chauvinism, environmental scarcity, terrorism and insurgency (e.g., Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria), militancy (in Nigeria's South South and South East), and injustice, especially that resulting from inequitable distribution of the national wealth and opportunities. Nigeria's ruling class, through inept leadership, systemic corruption and sectionalism, is guilty of the latter.

Since independence in 1960, different social protection programmes aimed at reducing or eradicating poverty have been introduced in Nigeria. They include National Accelerated Food Produce Programme (NAFPP) of 1972, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) of 1979, Better Life Programme (BFP) of 1987, Family Support Programme (FSP) of 1994, and Community Action Programme for Poverty Alleviation (CAPPA) of 1997. Others are Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) of 2000, National Poverty Eradication Programme of 2001, Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) of 2015, Social Investment Network Programme (SINP) of 2015, Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) of 2016 and COVID-19 pandemic relief mechanisms by federal and state governments. All these social protection mechanisms were aimed at lifting the Nigerian populace from abject poverty in tandem with the United Nations SDGs' Goal number 1.

The UN Sustainable Development Goal pertaining to poverty reduction has gradually assumed universal relevance as every nation in the world is faced with one form of poverty indicator or the other. However, the prevalence of poverty is severe mostly in the global south despite the fact that many countries in this region are endowed in rich natural and human resources. One may be attempted to ask; why has the global south, particularly Nigeria, remained poor and always in need of assistance from the countries of the

north, some of which are less endowed than countries of the south in terms of natural resources? Whatever reasons may be advanced, the fact remains that most countries of the south are poor not because they lack natural resources but principally because they mismanage human and natural resources. Hence, they need managerial guidance from external bodies, particularly the United Nations who has intervened through its SDGs programme aimed at reducing poverty globally before the year 2030.

As the year 2030 draws nearer and all the indices still indicate that many impoverished countries of the south are yet to significantly reduce poverty in their domains, one fears that even by the year 2060 poverty may still remain endemic in the south unless drastic measures are taken to rescue these countries from inept leadership and systemic corruption. According to an MPI 2023 report, 1.1 billion out of 6.1 billion people (just over 18%) live in acute multidimensional poverty across 110 countries. Sub-Saharan Africa (534 million) and South Asia (389 million) are home to approximately five out of every six poor people in the world. The report, however, hoped that poverty reduction is achievable; with the global south's poor living mostly in the rural areas, where there is virtually no basic infrastructure, one wonders how this would be achieved in 2030.

Relevance of the Study

Scholarly literature on social protection programmes and poverty reduction in Nigeria and elsewhere exists; they include *The Role of Social Protection Programmes in Affected Situation* (Holmes, 2011); *Issues in Social Protection: Non-contributory Pension and Social Protection* (Barrientos, A & Lioyd-Sherlock, P, 2002); and *Social Protection in Nigeria* (Onyeonoru, I. P, 2018). However, a gap exists as these studies are not focused on the aspect of leadership system, a critical engine that drives or mars development initiatives, including such social protection programmes and poverty reduction programmes in Nigeria. Hence, this study seeks to address the effect of leadership defects on the implementation of social protection programmes; it argues that successful implementation of social protection programmes in Nigeria may remain elusive as long as they are managed by corrupt and insensitive leaders.

Conceptual clarification

Social protection

This concept has assumed omnibus connotation as it generally means steps or procedures implemented to provide largess to the most vulnerable ones in the society. This becomes necessary since resources are not evenly distributed, leaving a large number of people extremely poor while a few are

extremely rich; hence, the need for policy makers and nations to devise measures to alleviate or reduce the plight of the vulnerable.

Nations and governments all over world have identified the need to address poverty and socio-economic disequilibrium in order to create a just and egalitarian society where the disadvantaged individuals/or states are empowered.

Dervereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004), cited in Onyeonoru (2018), define social protection as “all public and private initiatives that provide income and consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against destitution, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalized: with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of the poor”. In Nigeria, governments at all levels occasionally give handouts in form of relief packages to its vulnerable population. These ad-hoc measures in the long-run do not eradicate conditions of the vulnerable poor but only cushion the effect of poverty, which later resurfaces. What may alleviate or reduce poverty is a well concerted programme that empowers the vulnerable population through job creation, giving of short-long and medium term loans with low interest rate, subsidized agricultural implements, products and other goods and services, and accountable, prudent and people-driven leadership.

Poverty Reduction

In looking at how to solve the problem of poverty, the words “reduction” and “alleviation” have been used interchangeably. Generally, they refer to efforts being made to arrest or abate the growing trend or effect of poverty in a given period or region in order to improve the living condition of the people affected by poverty. Semantically, the two words stand apart. Reduction according oxford dictionary is an action or fact of making something smaller or less in amount, degree or size while alleviation is a process of making a deficient state or problem less severe or the process of providing a relief. However poverty alleviation is the process or strategy aimed at reducing or mitigating poverty by improving economic and social well being of the people overtime.

Development

Some people have said that Europe is the cause of Africa’s under-development. Okowa (1996) has countered the argument, asserting that the underdevelopment of Africa is not Eurocentric; rather, according to him, Africa is underdeveloped by its environment. This leads us to the question, “What is development?” Development has been looked at in terms of natural resources increase and also in terms of increase in human capacity and

efficiency.

Anao (2015:8) sees development as enhancing people's capacities so as to enable them achieve higher levels of well-being. Anao further postulates that development is "about effective utilization of the resources available to a people such as land, capital, knowledge and innovation to make the people more productive and more effective so that they can apply themselves more effectively to enhance their standards of living". This definition, for this paper, encapsulates the essence and values of development that may best address and reduce the prevalence of poverty in Nigeria and elsewhere in the global south.

Nigeria's Slide from Prosperity to Poverty

In the 1970s the Nigerian economy was strong and competed favourably with other economies in the world due to its petrol dollar inflows (Nwaugh, 2023). It was the period when Nigeria's naira was equal to the US dollar and the standard of living of Nigerians was relatively high. Things degenerate around early 1980 as corruption and embezzlement of public funds became the order of the day and gradually Nigeria became one of the most indebted Nations (MINS) by 1985, and by 1986 with the introduction of structural adjustment program (SAP) Nigerians began to feed on the dustbin and poverty escalated even till date.

The number of poverty related deaths globally outweighs the number of people that die in wars and diseases globally. Sadly, poverty has different degrees of manifestations, from structural to systemic. It is structural when it is caused by individual inability to access the basic needs, such as food, shelter and clothing resulting from health conditions or indolence while systemic poverty occurs as a result different government policies that impoverish the people through misappropriation of public funds, looting, embezzlement and all forms of corrupt practices. Systemic poverty also emanates from violent conflicts and wars caused by divisive and oppressive government policies.

There is this persistent call to reduce poverty at national, regional and international levels. This clarion call is a realization that one of the major drawbacks to development globally is poverty. This understanding is based on the fact that the major crux of development anywhere is to pilot an improved condition of living where people would live in a less cumbersome environment, where food, health facilities and security are provided (Runesewe, 2014). This vision of a prosperous world, according to Mimiko (2010) is threatened by globally induced poverty emanating from global economic meltdown and pandemics that lead to job loss and plunge millions

of people globally into extreme poverty (Strauss-Kahn, 2009).

The stark reality is that in spite of the dogged and strenuous efforts by policy makers to eradicate poverty, poverty has remained an existential malady that manifests in different forms, including intellectual poverty and physical poverty. Poverty is caused by so many factors that it would be impossible to eradicate it; however, it certainly can be reduced if governmental and other relevant agencies design and implement adequate policies, such as the global SDG strategies, transparent and accountable governance, and equitable distribution of resources. Only then would social protection programs empower the populace. This was showcased during the COVID-19 pandemic when the global North provided for the social, economic and emotional needs of its people while the reverse was the case in Nigeria where some state governments hoarded the relief materials meant to alleviate the plight of its citizens. It was even reported that COVID-19 funds were looted by government officials; according to reports, it was hoarded relief materials that the youth looted in various state capitals during the EndSARS protest saga of 2020.

Poverty and food insecurity are major drivers of violent conflict in Nigeria and elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa (Nwaugh, 2023). Food insecurity is opposite of food security. Food security, according to WHO in Runsewe (2014), occurs “when all the people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life” while food insecurity occurs when there is insufficient food. According to global hunger index (GHI) 2023, Nigeria placed 109th out of 125 countries on the global ranking. Nigeria’s poverty index (NPI) reached 38.8% in the second quarter of 2024; it was precipitated by the effect of fuel subsidy removal which has continued to adversely affect the purchasing power of Nigerians.

According to Runsewe (2014) over 30 million children in Sub-Saharan Africa are underweight and suffer from different kinds of diseases such as Beriberi and Kwashiorkor. Factors responsible for this pitiable state of Africa and Nigeria in particular include overpopulation, drought, desertification, air, land and water pollutants, effects of global warming and environmental scarcity (Nwaugh, Ireunmi & Kolawole-olu, 2024). This may be why some scholars maintain that global south poverty is environment-driven; others trace the genesis of global south poverty to colonialism and neo-colonialism. This was the position of Walter Rodney (1972), Oritsejafor, Emmanuel, Cooper & Allen (2021), Amartya (1999), Apata (2022), Kohli (2020), and Gulger (1982) all of whom assert that the underdevelopment of Africa is the development of global North. The fact, however, remains that independent African countries, including highly-endowed Nigeria, with accountable and visionary leadership in place, can

steer themselves away from poverty, much of which is internally induced.

Nigeria's Global Poverty Record

In 2018, when the Extreme Poverty Index (EPI) metric indicated that 87 million of her citizens live within the bracket of extreme poverty, Nigeria snatched from India the unenviable record of being the world's poverty capital (Brookings, 2018). Extreme poverty, according to the World Bank, is measured as the number of people living on less than \$1.90 per day. According to Brookings (2018), extreme poverty today is mainly about Africa:

According to our projections, Nigeria has already overtaken India as the country with the largest number of extreme poor in early 2018... At the end of May 2018, our trajectories suggest that Nigeria had about 87 million people in extreme poverty, compared with India's 73 million. What is more, extreme poverty in Nigeria is growing by six people every minute, while poverty in India continues to fall. In fact, by the end of 2018 in Africa as a whole, there will probably be about 3.2 million *more* people living in extreme poverty than there are today.

Already, Africans account for about two-thirds of the world's extreme poor. If current trends persist, they will account for nine-tenths by 2030. Fourteen out of 18 countries in the world—where the number of extreme poor is rising—are in Africa.

Apparently, with every New Year the number of Nigerians living in extreme poverty increases; since 2022/2023 even more people have become extremely poor as a result of the removal of fuel subsidy and the devaluation of the naira due to the floating of NGN-USD exchange rate (Nwaughu & Ihezue, 2024; Nwaughu & Umoru, 2023). The skyrocketing of prices of commodities in the market makes it very difficult for poor people to afford a meal per day, making the overall picture of poverty in Nigeria very gloomy (Umoru, 2022). As Naira further depreciates, poverty within the rural population aggravates.

Leadership and Implementation of Social Protection Programmes in Nigeria

Social protection mechanisms have not been able to address poverty in Nigeria because of policy summersaults and corruption. The leadership style in Nigeria is a confiscatory system where state officials engage in what Dokubo (2001) described as lootocracy. There is no way development can be possible when the political and economic elites are concerned about what they can grab from state resources. As Nwoke (2005) puts it, "there is ample

fact that poor leadership in Africa is one of the main reasons for the failure of the development projects in the continent”; he cautioned that political leadership and far-sighted statesmanship are crucial for Africa’s development

Conclusion

Having examined the need for social protection programmes to cater for the vulnerable population, the paper concluded that for social protection programmes to make an impact towards the alleviation of poverty in Nigeria a well concerted programme should be in place to empower the vulnerable population through job creation, giving of short-, long- and medium-term loans with low interest rate. Also, agricultural implements and essential products and services should be subsidized for the poor. There should be frequent and improved metrological survey predictions to forewarn the populace about imminent natural disasters. Basic infrastructure should be put in place, and people-people and people-government communication and relations should be improved. Above all, accountable, prudent and people-driven leadership should be enthroned to replace the current system of “lootocracy” that makes the implementation of poverty-reduction programmes across the country inefficient and ineffective.

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Biblical Understanding of Ecology: The Spiritual and Economic Benefits of Mountains as a Vehicle for Sustainability in Nigeria

Oghenekevwe Kate Jibromah

ABSTRACT

Mountains and hills hold profound significance in African religious traditions, both indigenous and orthodox, mirroring their importance in biblical narratives, particularly to the people of Israel. They feature prominently in the stories of Moses, the prophets, and Jesus Christ. In Nigeria, the concept of Prayer Mountains is integral to Christian practice, serving as dedicated spaces for spiritual exercises. These locations, including mountain tops, groves, forests, and river banks, are particularly significant within African Indigenous Churches (AICS). Despite existing literature on mountains, this study delves into their spiritual and economic benefits, focusing on their potential for sustainability in Nigeria. Employing historical, contextual and hermeneutical research methods, the paper explores the religious and economic value attributed to natural landmarks, specifically mountains and hills. It concludes that Nigeria stands to gain substantially from leveraging mountains as a tool for sustainability, emphasizing the multifaceted benefits they offer to the nation.

Keywords: biblical, ecology, economic, mountains, sustainability, vehicle, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Mountains have held deep spiritual, cultural, and economic significance throughout human history. In many religious traditions, they are seen as places of divine encounter, worship, revelation, and spiritual transformation. The Bible, particularly in Jewish and Christian traditions, is filled with accounts of God's presence, miracles, and significant religious events occurring on mountains. From Mount Sinai, where Moses received the Ten Commandments, to Mount Zion, which became central to Jewish worship, and Mount Moriah, the site of Abraham's test of faith, mountains are revered as sacred spaces that symbolize divine authority and covenant

relationships.

In the New Testament, Jesus frequently used mountains as places of prayer, teaching, and revelation. Events such as the Sermon on the Mount, the Transfiguration, and His post-resurrection appearances on mountains highlight their continued significance in Christian spirituality. These biblical narratives have influenced the way Christians perceive and engage with mountains as places of prayer, divine revelation, and spiritual renewal.

In contemporary African Christianity, mountains continue to play a central role in spiritual practices. Many believers retreat to mountains for intensive prayer, fasting, and seeking divine intervention. Across different African countries, churches and Christian movements have established Prayer Mountains where individuals and congregations gather for worship, deliverance, and personal encounters with God. Notable examples include Ori Oke Baba Abiye in Nigeria, Namugongo Prayer Mountain in Uganda, and Mount Moriah in South Africa. These sites are considered sacred, and many testimonies of healing, breakthroughs, and spiritual empowerment are associated with them.

However, while the use of mountains in African Christianity has brought spiritual renewal and deeper devotion, it has also raised important theological, ethical, and practical concerns. Issues such as syncretism (mixing Christian beliefs with traditional African spirituality), commercialization of prayer mountains, safety risks due to extreme fasting, and misconceptions about the necessity of mountains for divine encounters have emerged. This raises the need for a balanced biblical and theological understanding of the role of mountains in Christian faith.

The Place of Mountains in Jewish Tradition

Mountains hold a significant place in Jewish tradition, serving as sacred sites for divine encounters, covenantal revelations, and acts of worship. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, mountains symbolize closeness to God, places of refuge, and locations where divine commandments are given. This section explores the role of mountains in Jewish spirituality, history, and theology

Mountains as Sites of Divine Revelation

Mountains have long been central to Jewish tradition, serving as pivotal sites of divine revelation. Mount Sinai, for instance, is where God delivered the Torah to Moses, establishing the foundational laws and covenant between God and the Israelites (Exodus 19–20). This event, marked by the mountain shrouded in smoke and trembling under God's presence, symbolizes divine

authority and holiness. As noted by Kalimi (2002), "Mount Sinai is depicted as the quintessential place of divine revelation, where the Israelites receive the Decalogue amidst awe-inspiring theophany" (p. 15).

Similarly, Mount Moriah holds profound significance as the site where Abraham was tested in the binding of Isaac (Genesis 22:2). This location later became the site of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem, solidifying its status as a sacred space in Jewish religious life. Kalimi (2002) observes, "The identification of Mount Moriah with the Temple Mount underscores its enduring sanctity in Jewish consciousness" (p. 22).

Mountains as Places of Worship and Pilgrimage

Mountains have historically served as central places of worship and pilgrimage in Jewish tradition, symbolizing both divine presence and national identity. They are not merely physical elevations but hold deep theological, historical, and eschatological significance.

The Temple Mount (Mount Moriah) and Jewish Worship

The **Temple Mount**, located on **Mount Moriah**, remains one of the most sacred places in Judaism. According to biblical tradition, it was the site where King Solomon built the First Temple (1 Kings 6) and where the Second Temple was later reconstructed during the post-exilic period (Ezra 6). This made it the focal point of Jewish worship for centuries, drawing thousands of worshippers for rituals and sacrifices.

Pilgrimage to the Temple Mount was a fundamental part of Jewish religious life, especially during the three pilgrimage festivals:

- Passover (Pesach): Commemorating the Israelites' exodus from Egypt
- Shavuot: Celebrating the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai
- Sukkot: A festival of thanksgiving for the harvest and divine protection

As Reiter and Dimant (2020) observe, "*The Temple Mount has been the epicenter of Jewish religious life, with pilgrimages during key festivals underscoring its centrality*" (p. 45). The destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE profoundly impacted Jewish worship, shifting the focus from sacrificial rituals to synagogue-based prayer and study. However, the Temple Mount remains a symbol of Jewish eschatological hope and is still revered in contemporary Jewish prayers and traditions.

Mount Zion and Jewish National Identity

Another mountain of great spiritual significance is Mount Zion, which became a powerful symbol of Jewish faith, divine protection, and national unity. In biblical literature, Zion is frequently referenced as the dwelling place of God and a representation of His eternal kingdom.

- Psalm 125:1 states, *"Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever."*
- Isaiah 2:3 prophesies, *"For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."*

Mount Zion also became associated with the Davidic monarchy, reinforcing its role as a national and religious symbol. Kornberg (2018) notes, *"Mount Zion not only represented divine protection but also the restoration of Israel's sovereignty, particularly in post-exilic and Second Temple periods"* (p. 87). Over time, Zion became synonymous with Jerusalem itself, and the longing for its restoration is a recurring theme in Jewish liturgy and eschatology.

Prophetic Encounters on Mountains

Mountains have been pivotal in Jewish prophetic narratives, serving as settings for profound divine encounters. Mount Carmel is notably associated with the prophet Elijah's confrontation against the prophets of Baal, as detailed in 1 Kings 18:16–40. This event, where fire descended from heaven to consume Elijah's sacrifice, reinforced the belief in monotheism and God's sovereignty. Na'aman (2020) discusses this episode, highlighting its reflection of religious-cultural dynamics of the time.

Similarly, Mount Nebo holds significance as the place where Moses viewed the Promised Land before his death, as recounted in Deuteronomy 34:1–5. Although Moses was not permitted to enter, this moment on Mount Nebo became a profound reflection on God's promises and leadership. This narrative underscores the themes of fulfillment and transition in the Israelites' journey.

Mountains as Symbols of Strength and Stability

Mountains hold profound symbolic significance in Jewish thought, often representing divine strength, protection, and eternal stability. This is exemplified in Psalm 121:1–2: *"I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord..."* Here, the psalmist associates the enduring presence of mountains with the unwavering support provided by God, suggesting that just as mountains are steadfast, so

too is divine assistance.

In rabbinic literature, mountains are frequently employed as metaphors for various spiritual concepts. For instance, in the Talmud, Rabbi Yose discusses the foundational role of mountains in the world's structure, stating that the earth stands upon pillars, which in turn stand upon water, and the water upon mountains (Chagigah 12b). This cosmological depiction underscores the perceived stability and foundational importance of mountains in the created order. Moreover, mountains are seen as symbols of faith and wisdom, representing the challenges one must overcome to achieve spiritual growth. The Talmudic narrative of God suspending Mount Sinai over the Israelites during the giving of the Torah (Shabbat 88a) serves as a powerful metaphor for the weight and significance of divine commandments, as well as the profound responsibility of accepting them.

These symbolic interpretations highlight the multifaceted role of mountains in Jewish tradition, portraying them as embodiments of strength, stability, and the spiritual ascent inherent in the pursuit of faith and wisdom.

Mountains in Jewish tradition are more than just geographical features; they are sacred places where God's presence is revealed, laws are given, and faith is tested. They serve as sites of pilgrimage, divine encounters, and symbols of strength and stability. Whether as the setting of foundational religious events or as metaphorical expressions of spiritual ascent, mountains remain deeply embedded in Jewish religious consciousness.

The Role of Mountains in the New Testament

Mountains continue to hold significant theological and symbolic roles in the New Testament, often serving as sites of divine revelation, spiritual transformation, and pivotal moments in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus frequently retreats to mountains for prayer, delivers key teachings from elevated places, and performs miracles on or near mountains. These instances highlight the continued association of mountains with divine presence, authority, and revelation in Christian thought.

Mountains as Places of Divine Encounter and Revelation

Just as Mount Sinai was a place of divine revelation in the Old Testament, mountains in the New Testament serve as settings for profound encounters between God and humanity. One of the most striking examples is the Transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor (or possibly Mount Hermon).

- **The Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36):** Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a mountain, where He is transfigured

before them, shining with divine glory. Moses and Elijah appear, symbolizing the Law and the Prophets, affirming Jesus as the fulfillment of both.

- **Significance:** This event reinforces Jesus' divine nature and mission. The voice from heaven declares, *"This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!"* (Matthew 17:5).
- **Parallel to Old Testament Revelation:**
 - Just as Moses encountered God on Mount Sinai, Jesus reveals His divine nature on a mountain.
 - Elijah, also present at the Transfiguration, had his own mountain encounter with God on Mount Horeb (Sinai) (1 Kings 19:9-13).

According to Luz (2007), *"The Transfiguration narrative intentionally echoes Old Testament theophanies, reinforcing Jesus as the ultimate revelation of God's presence among His people"* (p. 231).

The Sermon on the Mount: Mountains as Places of Teaching

One of the most significant instances of Jesus teaching occurs on a mountain, reinforcing the biblical tradition of mountains as places of divine revelation and transformation.

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7):

The **Sermon on the Mount** is considered one of Jesus' most important teachings, outlining the principles of the Kingdom of God. Delivered from an elevated place, the sermon includes the Beatitudes, moral instructions, and directives on prayer, fasting, and righteousness. Jesus reinterprets the Law, calling His followers to a higher standard of love, humility, and righteousness that surpasses mere legalistic obedience.

According to France (2007), *"The Sermon on the Mount is best understood as a new Sinai event, where Jesus, as the authoritative teacher, declares the deeper, spiritual essence of the Law"* (p. 183).

As Harrington (1991:79) notes, *"By delivering His teachings on a mountain, Jesus is presented as the new Moses, giving a new law that surpasses the old covenant"*. This setting reinforces the authority of Jesus' words and highlights His role as the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets.

Jesus' Mountain Prayers as a Reflection of Old Testament Traditions

The Jewish tradition often associates mountains with divine encounters and spiritual elevation. Many key figures in the Old Testament—such as Moses

(Exodus 19:3, 33:18-23), Elijah (1 Kings 19:8-13), and David (Psalm 121:1-2)—sought God's presence on mountains.

- **Moses on Mount Sinai:** He received the Ten Commandments after forty days of fasting and prayer (Exodus 24:12-18).
- **Elijah on Mount Horeb:** He encountered God in a "gentle whisper" after fasting for forty days (1 Kings 19:8-12).

By frequently praying on mountains, Jesus aligns Himself with these prophetic traditions, reinforcing His role as the ultimate mediator between God and humanity. Stein (2008) notes, "*Jesus' mountain prayers reflect the biblical tradition of seeking God on high places, reinforcing His deep relationship with the Father*" (p. 145). As France (2007) explains, "*Jesus' all-night prayer on the mountain before choosing His disciples illustrates His deep communion with the Father and the necessity of prayer in leadership and decision-making*" (p. 212).

- **Spiritual Meaning:**

- This prayer illustrates total surrender to God's will in the face of suffering.
- The mountain setting symbolizes the spiritual burden Jesus carries as He prepares for His sacrificial death.
- It reflects how mountains, though places of strength, can also represent spiritual trials that test one's faith and obedience.

As Wright (2012) states, "*The Mount of Olives becomes the stage for Jesus' final test of obedience, highlighting the mountain as a place where divine strength is sought in times of human weakness*" (p. 312).

As Witherington (2001) observes, "*The Gospels repeatedly portray Jesus withdrawing to mountains to pray, underscoring prayer's role as a means of spiritual fortification and divine direction*" (p. 198).

The Mount of Olives: A Place of Prophecy, Suffering, and Ascension

The Mount of Olives plays a crucial role in the final days of Jesus' earthly ministry, serving as a setting for prophetic teachings, deep spiritual struggle, and His glorious ascension. This mountain, situated east of Jerusalem, holds both symbolic and theological significance in Christian thought, representing divine revelation, suffering, and ultimate victory.

The Olivet Discourse: A Prophetic Warning (Matthew 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21)

During the Olivet Discourse, Jesus delivers one of His most profound prophetic teachings, foretelling the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, signs of the end times, and His second coming. Speaking privately to His disciples on the Mount of Olives, He warns about false messiahs, wars, persecutions, and the necessity of vigilance.

- **Connection to Old Testament Prophecy:** The Mount of Olives was already linked to eschatological prophecy in Zechariah 14:4, which foretells that the Messiah will stand on this mountain in the last days. Jesus' discourse reinforces this association, emphasizing the mountain as a place of divine revelation and future judgment.
- **Spiritual Meaning:** By delivering these prophetic words on a mountain, Jesus signals that His teachings carry divine authority, just as Moses received God's law on Mount Sinai.

As Keener (1999:521) notes, *"Jesus' choice of the Mount of Olives for His eschatological discourse aligns with Jewish apocalyptic traditions, reinforcing His role as the fulfillment of messianic prophecies"*.

According to Marshall (2001:288), *"Jesus' agony in Gethsemane highlights the depth of His human suffering, yet also His unwavering commitment to the Father's plan"*.

The Ascension: A Moment of Glory and Promise (Acts 1:9-12)

The Mount of Olives is also the site of Jesus' ascension into heaven. After His resurrection, He appears to His disciples, giving them final instructions to spread the Gospel.

- Acts 1:9-12 records that Jesus ascended into heaven before their eyes, and two angels assured them that He would return in the same way.
- Connection to Zechariah 14:4: This event fulfills prophecy, as the Old Testament predicts the Messiah will return to this very mountain.
- Spiritual Meaning:
 - The Mount of Olives serves as a bridge between Jesus' earthly ministry and His heavenly reign.
 - His ascension signifies the completion of His mission and the beginning of the Church's responsibility to evangelize the world.

As Wright (2012) states, *"The Mount of Olives serves as the bridge between Jesus' suffering, His prophetic teachings, and His ultimate glorification, symbolizing both judgment and redemption"* (p. 312).

The Place of Mountains in African Christianity in Contemporary Times

Mountains hold significant spiritual and cultural value in African Christianity today, serving as places of prayer, retreat, divine encounters, and pilgrimage. Many Christian communities across Africa associate mountains with spiritual power, divine presence, and supernatural experiences, similar to biblical traditions. This section explores how mountains continue to shape Christian worship and belief in contemporary African contexts.

Mountains as Sacred Prayer Retreats

In many African Christian movements, particularly among Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, mountains are considered sacred spaces for prayer, fasting, and divine encounters. Believers retreat to these elevated locations, often spending days or weeks in prayer, seeking:

- Spiritual empowerment for personal and ministerial growth.
- Divine intervention in difficult situations, such as health issues, financial struggles, and family challenges.
- Healing and deliverance from spiritual oppression, demonic influences, and generational curses.
- Hearing from God through visions and revelations, often receiving prophetic insights for themselves or their communities.

Examples in Contemporary African Christianity:

- **Ori Oke (Prayer Mountains) in Nigeria:** Many churches, especially the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM), and the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), encourage believers to pray on mountains, believing that elevation brings them closer to God. These mountains are often regarded as places where barriers between the physical and spiritual realms are weakened, allowing for clearer divine communication.
- **Mount Kenya in East Africa:** Some Kenyan Christians climb Mount Kenya for prayer retreats, believing it to be a site of divine encounters. Pilgrims often report experiencing visions, angelic visitations, and renewed spiritual strength.

- **Sierra Leone and Ghana:** Some churches organize corporate fasting and prayer sessions on hills and mountains, drawing inspiration from Jesus' mountain prayers (Luke 6:12, Matthew 14:23). These gatherings often attract large crowds seeking both personal breakthroughs and national revival.

In addition to personal devotion, churches and Christian leaders frequently organize mountain prayer retreats for congregational intercession, ministerial direction, and national spiritual awakening. Some believers even build small huts or prayer camps on these mountains, dedicating their time solely to communion with God. According to Ogunleye(2020), "*Mountains in African Christianity are seen as gateways to divine power, reinforcing the belief that solitude in elevated places fosters deeper spiritual encounters*" (p. 114). This perspective aligns with biblical traditions where key figures such as Moses (Exodus 24:12), Elijah (1 Kings 19:8-12), and Jesus (Matthew 17:1-9) sought divine revelation on mountains.

While this practice continues to grow, it also raises concerns about safety, as some believers engage in prolonged fasting, leading to health risks, and theological debates, as critics caution against equating physical elevation with God's presence. Nonetheless, the belief in mountains as places of spiritual renewal, divine revelation, and supernatural power remains deeply rooted in contemporary African Christianity.

Pilgrimage to Mountains for Spiritual Encounters

Just as Mount Sinai, Mount Zion, and the Mount of Olives hold significance in biblical tradition, many African Christians undertake pilgrimages to mountains, believing them to be portals of divine visitation. These pilgrimages are often motivated by the desire for spiritual renewal, divine revelation, and supernatural breakthroughs. Some churches designate specific mountains as sacred prayer sites, encouraging believers to journey there for extended periods of prayer and fasting.

For many, these mountains serve as places where barriers between the physical and spiritual realms seem thinner, making it easier to receive divine instruction, visions, and prophetic guidance. Pilgrims often climb mountains barefoot, believing that removing their shoes signifies reverence and humility before God, as seen in Moses' encounter at the burning bush (Exodus 3:5).

Examples in Contemporary African Christianity:

- **Mount Zion Prayer Camp in Ghana:** A popular site where thousands gather for prayer, healing, and prophetic encounters. Testimonies from

worshippers often include miraculous healings and divine revelations.

- **Mountain of Fire Campgrounds in Nigeria:** The church organizes mountain prayer meetings, emphasizing spiritual warfare, deliverance from demonic oppression, and intercessory prayers for individuals and nations.
- **Table Mountain in South Africa:** Some Christian groups engage in intercessory prayer and worship here, believing that its high elevation creates an atmosphere of divine presence.
- **Kilimanjaro Prayer Retreats in Tanzania:** Although primarily a tourist attraction, some Christian organizations hold prayer retreats on or near the mountain, seeing it as a site of spiritual renewal and dedication to God.

These pilgrimages reflect a broader belief in seeking God through intentional spiritual discipline and withdrawal from daily distractions. They also create a sense of community and shared faith, as large numbers of believers gather to pray collectively.

As Mbiti (1999) states, *"African Christianity has contextualized the biblical concept of sacred mountains, incorporating local traditions that view high places as sites of divine-human interaction"* (p. 231). This blending of biblical narratives with African cultural traditions has contributed to the enduring significance of mountains as places of worship, spiritual warfare, and divine encounters.

Mountains as Places of Spiritual Warfare and Deliverance

Many African churches believe that mountains provide an atmosphere for breaking spiritual strongholds, casting out demons, and seeking divine protection. This belief is influenced by biblical references such as:

- **Jesus resisting the devil on a mountain (Matthew 4:8-11)** – Symbolizing victory over temptation and demonic influence.
- **Moses encountering God on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:3-6)** – Demonstrating the mountain as a place of divine revelation and spiritual authority.
- **Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:16-40)** – Representing spiritual warfare and the supremacy of God.

For many African Christians, mountains are seen as spiritual battlegrounds, where prayers are more effective in overcoming personal struggles, demonic

oppression, and generational curses.

Economic Importance of Mountains

Mountains hold significant economic importance in various ways, both locally and globally. Here are some key aspects of their economic significance:

1. **Natural Resources:** Mountains are rich in natural resources such as minerals, timber, water, and biodiversity. These resources support various industries including mining, forestry, agriculture, and tourism, contributing to local and national economies.
2. **Water Supply:** Mountains are often the source of major rivers and watersheds, supplying water for irrigation, drinking, hydroelectric power generation, and industrial use downstream. The reliable flow of water from mountains supports agriculture and industry, driving economic activity in downstream regions.
3. **Tourism and Recreation:** Mountainous regions attract tourists and outdoor enthusiasts seeking recreational activities such as hiking, skiing, mountaineering, and wildlife watching. Tourism in mountain areas generates revenue through accommodations, restaurants, transportation, guided tours, and souvenir sales, stimulating local economies and creating jobs.
4. **Hydropower Generation:** Mountains provide ideal conditions for hydropower generation due to their steep terrain and abundant water resources. Hydropower plants harness the potential energy of flowing water to generate electricity, providing renewable and reliable energy sources for local communities and contributing to national energy grids.
5. **Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services:** Mountain ecosystems harbor high levels of biodiversity and provide valuable ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, watershed protection, and soil stabilization. These ecosystem services have economic value in terms of mitigating climate change, maintaining water quality, and supporting agricultural productivity.
6. **Cultural Heritage and Indigenous Knowledge:** Mountainous regions often have rich cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge systems that contribute to local economies through cultural tourism, handicrafts, traditional medicine, and ecotourism initiatives.
7. **Transportation and Infrastructure:** Mountains present engineering challenges for transportation infrastructure such as roads, railways, and tunnels. Investments in mountain infrastructure improve connectivity between remote communities, facilitate trade and commerce, and enhance

economic development opportunities in mountainous regions.

Overall, mountains play a crucial role in supporting economic activities and livelihoods, both within mountain communities and in downstream areas that benefit from the resources and services provided by mountain ecosystems. Sustainable management of mountain resources is essential to ensure their long-term economic viability and environmental integrity.

Contemporary African Practices:

- The Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM) in Nigeria teaches that mountains are battlefields where believers engage in intense spiritual warfare. Prayer retreats on mountains are common, where believers engage in vigorous prayers, fasting, and prophetic declarations against evil forces.
- Zion Christian Church (ZCC) in Southern Africa conducts special mountain prayers for protection, healing, and deliverance from demonic oppression. Many followers travel to Mount Moriah in Limpopo, South Africa, where the church has established a prayer center.
- The Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) in Nigeria emphasizes mountain prayers as a means of accessing divine power. Believers visit prayer mountains such as Ori Oke Baba Abiye in Ede, Osun State, to seek deliverance, healing, and divine intervention.
- Prophet Shepherd Bushiri's Enlightened Christian Gathering (ECG) Church in Malawi and South Africa encourages believers to seek God in remote, elevated places, believing that mountains amplify spiritual encounters.
- Uganda's Namugongo Prayer Mountain has become a pilgrimage site where Christians gather for intercessory prayers, night vigils, and spiritual warfare sessions.
- The Koma Hills in Nigeria attract many Pentecostal Christians who believe that praying in secluded mountainous areas enhances their spiritual authority and breakthrough experiences.

According to Adogame (2013), *"African Pentecostal movements associate mountains with supernatural power, making them essential sites for prayer and deliverance sessions"* (p. 189). Similarly, Kalu (2008) notes that *"prayer mountains in Africa function as both sacred and strategic spaces where believers engage in deep spiritual battles to reclaim their destinies"* (p. 276).

Many African Christian leaders emphasize that mountains provide a distraction-free environment where believers can focus on spiritual warfare, prophetic revelations, and intercession. However, there are concerns about the dangers of extreme fasting, exposure to harsh weather, and the commercialization of prayer mountains by some churches. Despite these challenges, mountain prayer retreats remain a key feature of contemporary African Christianity, symbolizing divine power, protection, and deliverance.

Conclusion

Mountains hold profound spiritual and economic significance in both biblical traditions and contemporary African Christianity. From Jewish traditions, where mountains such as Mount Sinai, Mount Moriah, and Mount Zion were sites of divine revelation and worship, to the New Testament, where Jesus frequently used mountains for prayer, teaching, and significant events like the Sermon on the Mount and the Transfiguration, their role in faith cannot be overstated.

In contemporary African Christianity, mountains have become places of prayer, fasting, spiritual warfare, and pilgrimage, reflecting both biblical influences and indigenous beliefs in sacred high places. Many believers retreat to mountains for personal spiritual growth, divine encounters, healing, and deliverance. However, alongside these benefits, certain challenges and controversies have emerged, including:

- **Syncretism**, where traditional African religious beliefs about sacred mountains mix with Christian practices.
- **Safety concerns**, as extreme fasting, lack of medical attention, and exposure to harsh conditions have led to health risks.
- **Commercialization**, with some churches turning prayer mountains into profit-driven ventures by charging fees for access or spiritual services.
- **Theological debates** on whether mountains are necessary for divine encounters or if God's presence is equally accessible anywhere.

Despite these challenges, mountains continue to be regarded as sacred spaces that facilitate deep spiritual encounters. The biblical and historical significance of mountains reinforces their continued use as places of divine connection, prayer, and worship. However, their usage should align with sound biblical teachings, responsible spiritual practices, and ethical leadership to prevent exploitation and misconceptions.

Recommendation

To ensure that mountains continue to serve as beneficial spaces for Christian worship and spiritual encounters, the following recommendations should be considered:

- Church leaders should emphasize that God's presence is not confined to mountains, teaching believers that effective prayer can happen anywhere (John 4:21-24, Matthew 6:6).
- Sound biblical doctrine should be reinforced to prevent misconceptions about mountains as the only places of divine revelation.
- Sermons and teachings should differentiate between biblical mountain traditions and cultural beliefs that may contradict Christian faith.
- Churches and religious organizations should establish safety protocols for those engaging in extended fasting and prayer on mountains.
- Medical teams should be made available at popular prayer mountains to prevent health risks such as dehydration and exhaustion.
- Worshippers should be educated on responsible fasting practices, ensuring that they prioritize both spiritual and physical well-being.
- Church authorities should prevent the commercialization of mountain prayer retreats, ensuring that prayer sites remain freely accessible rather than being turned into money-making ventures.
- Government and religious institutions should regulate mountain-based religious activities to prevent financial exploitation of vulnerable believers.
- Accountability measures should be implemented to ensure transparency in financial contributions related to mountain prayer retreats.
- While mountains remain important, churches should encourage other forms of spiritual discipline, such as personal prayer retreats, church-based prayer gatherings, and home fellowship groups, to ensure a balanced Christian life.
- Believers should be taught that spiritual encounters are not limited to high places but can also happen in homes, churches, and everyday life.

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