IDENTIFYING NOTABLE THREATS TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF AFRICAN ART AND CULTURE

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ABSTRACT: *Studies relating to African cultures and sustainability have increased patently over the last few decades - a trend that has not yielded much for the sustainability of the African cultural identity and Art. This mounting unsustainability of African culture is partly due to the methods and perspectives adopted as many of the studies approached the sustainability challenge from the colonial, post-colonial or westernised viewpoints which considerably subtly exclude vital aspects of the pre-modernised African culture. Therefore, this study approached the sustainability of the African culture via a proposed Traits-Threats-Sustainability (TTS) theory view point in which specific threats to shared cultural traits/values (of the pre-modernised African culture) were identified. The neutralisation of the threats, the theory proposed, will ensure the sustainability of the shared cultural traits. 12 core threats to 11 shared African cultural traits were identified as derived from a review of relevant literatures, genealogical tales and direct observations. This study therefore recommended an unbiased neutralisation of the identified and other related threats as a means of ensuring the sustainability of African Art and culture without hindering the sustainable development of Africa.*

KEYWORDS: African Culture, Sustainability, Threats, Traditions, Traits, TTS-Theory

INTRODUCTION

Culture has been described as a distinctive element that marks a group of people out uniquely from other human societies (Wahab, Odunsi, & Ajiboye, 2012; Idang, 2015). It includes the totality of traits or characteristics that make members of a group different from other people or societies (Idang, 2015). Culture incorporates a people's social structures (e.g. social classification and family patterns), customs and traditions (e.g. traditional values, basic beliefs, practices and ceremonies), languages, religions, style of governance and general cultural expressions (including objects, music, literature, dance types) and so on (Wahab et al, 2012). Citing Tyler (1870), culture has been described as that complex whole which includes knowledge, craft/art/design, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a community (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). These elements work together to regulate how we relate with one another as a community, nation or race and with foreigners or visiting inhabitants. In the aforementioned context, African Art therefore is simply an expression, in visual or non-visual form, of the African culture. Unfortunately, the African culture is eroding subtly (Wahab et al, 2012), a trend ascribable to various threats.

Giving hints on how best to write about Africa, Wainaina in 2019 stated expressly:

"Never have a picture of a well-adjusted African on the cover of your book, or in it, unless that African has won the Nobel Prize. An AK-47 [suggesting wars and savagery]*, prominent ribs* [signifying poverty and starvation]*, and naked breasts* [suggesting lack of enlightenment, savagery and so on]*: use these. Make sure you show how Africans … eat things no other humans eat…"* (Wainaina, 2019)

This is a perfect description of the light in which the African, like the aboriginal, culture was painted and acceptable especially in the non-African media (video, audio, off or online prints). As observable over the years, the pre-modernised African culture had been painted more in a bias light as a culture of barbarism, savagery, hostility, social backwardness and such like. Undeniably, there are or were cultures within pre-modernised Africa that presented such initial fronts, but, usually, they were more of protective fronts targeted at dissuading 'predatory visitors' such as the colonial masters and other local African invaders - a practice that was a part of the culture anyway. Although does not justify the so called 'savagery' or 'hostility', the eventual colonisation[1] of the African territories by foreign invaders was testament to the fact that the Africans were right about suspecting the 'visitors'. Like any other people anywhere in the world, Africans are territorial in behaviour. The same is noticeable about all other people and races (whether western, Asian or aboriginal). It is only normal for Africans to be protective of their heritage which finds expression in its ethics/values, arts and crafts including dance, clothing, symbols, folklore, cuisines and languages, religion, social support system, politics, choices and actions or inactions. The seeming negative portrayal of the African culture makes it easily classified as a culture that needs to be changed or completely eradicated in some aspects which gravely threatens the sustainability of the African culture.

Unlike it has been represented in the Western media, especially at the onset of the exploration of the African continent and culture, the African culture also had its pleasant parts that must never be lost. Although diverse, there had always been some unique characteristics (presented in similar or divergent ways) common to many African cultures. These cultural traits were what defined Africans as a people and made them uniquely distinct and undiluted away from cultural intrusions sometimes disguised as a form of 'modernisation'. No wonder the African Union Commission in 2015 stated clearly in its Agenda 2063:

*"Africa shall be a continent where democratic values, **culture**, practices, universal principles of human rights…justice and the rule of law are entrenched."* (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2016)

African culture remains suppressed under the weight of foreign stereotypes which are reinforced through mainstream media (Wahab et al, 2012), social and political propagandas. Unfortunately, factors such as non-African media's negative portrayal of Africa, bad governance (as were observable in many African nations) were not the only threats mitigating the sustainability of the African culture. This study therefore highlights some shared traits in the African culture and factors that threaten the sustainability of these cultural characteristics describing how they may impact on the traditional African way of life and expressions

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[1] According to (Igboin, 2011), colonisation significantly altered the belief system and values of Africans and its structure was almost completely eroded.

(Art/crafts) as a rationale for more comprehensive quantitative study. Emphasis was laid mostly on the non-material aspect of the African culture.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative method of data collection including survey of relevant literatures, genealogical tales or oral traditions (Ogundele, 2000; Onyima, 2016) and interview. This method was informed by the nature of the study as well as the challenges the African culture faces in representation. For example, unless a literature on African culture met certain standards as presented by sources such as Wainaina (2019), they hardly get accepted for publication which thus meant that only limited publicly available literatures truly represented the pre-modernised African culture. Senior citizens whose ages ranged from 62 to the excess of 103 years were interviewed between 1992 and 2017. Interviews were sometimes in the form of casual daily discussions for the purpose of ease of expression. Google scholar, as well as the general Google search engine to widen the scope of relatable data, was used to gather the relevant literatures. The historical and sociological approaches were adopted to analyse the collected data as adopted in a previous study (Adetunbi, 2020). The study approached the subject through the pre-modernisation viewpoint.

THE PROPOSED TRAITS-THREATS-SUSTAINABILITY (TTS) THEORY AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

While much effort had so far been put into ensuring the sustenance of the African culture, with the volume of the body of literature attempting to address the issue rising over the years, the African culture yet remains an endangered core. This challenge is partly due to possible laxities in the approaches adopted so far as many of the previous studies for instance approached the issues arising from a modernised or post-colonial view point which invariably subtly excludes or diminishes the significance of certain core aspects of the pre-modernised African culture (which bears within it the true identity of the African nations). Hence, this study approached sustainability of the African culture from the perspective of its pre-modernised version.

This study proposes a Traits-Threats-Sustainability theory premised on the thesis that for any culture with identifiable traits or distinct characteristics, neutralising the factors that threaten such identifiable traits will ensure the sustainability of the culture. The Proposed TTS-Theory is composed of 5 key steps (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Proposed TTS-Theory

Source: Odji Ebenezer (2020)

(A.) *Cultural traits identification*: The first step is to identify specific traits in the culture(s) under consideration. Cultural traits are specific characteristics that are prominent in the culture. Such may include specific values (such as respect for elders), artifacts, culturally significant spaces, belief systems and so on. Identifiable traits are components that constitute the culture in consideration. Therefore, preservation of these traits is the preservation of the culture.

(B.) *Assessment of trait strength*: A cultural trait may be considered sustainable if its strength is greater than the strength of an equivalent cultural threat.

(C.) *Cultural threat identification*: Cultural threats are factors drastically or subtly eroding the strength of the identified cultural traits.

(D.) *Assessment of threat strength*: When threat strengths are higher than any trait strength, a cultural trait may be considered endangered.

(E.) *Simultaneous threat mitigation and trait encouragement*: This may include such factors as policy making and enforcement, constitutional amendments, awareness creation and so on. The success of this step will culminate in the preservation of the identified cultural traits.

A detailed empirical evaluation of the proposed TTS-Theory is intended for further studies. Therefore, this study was limited to steps A and B only as a rationale for future studies - identifying some of the shared traits amongst African communities and threats that endanger their sustainability, with emphasis on the pre-modernised African culture. If these traits are preserved, according to the proposed TTS-theory, the probability of sustainability of the culture in consideration is sustained or increased. However, if the traits are endangered, diminished or eradicated, the probability of sustainability diminishes until the culture is eradicated. For this study, the African culture was the target culture.

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE AFRICAN CULTURE

Need for the sustainability of culture has been emphasized in previous studies. It has become a growing priority within sustainable development agendas, depicted as the fourth of the four cardinal pillars of sustainability after social, economic and environmental sustainability (Loach, Rowley, & Griffiths, 2017; Odji, 2019). The term 'African culture' may insinuate that the African continent has just one culture, but that is wrong. The African continent is composed of numerous people, languages (about 3000) and cultural groups so intertwined yet diverse. Parker & Rathbone (2007) described this state as "*the unity and diversity of the African cultures.*" This is because, although the different cultural groups in Africa had distinctively unique ways of life, there were ultimately shared values that were common to many of them ranging from the West, East, Central to the North and Southern Africa. This section discusses some common values shared culturally in pre-modernised Africa and some common pressures threatening their existence. Some of these factors have not been discussed in officially published, publicly available documents (due partly to the identified threats to the African culture) making an unbiased systematic review difficult without sidelining the core values of the pre-modernised African culture. Therefore, a general review of available relevant literature, with reference to tales passed down orally through lineages (some of which have not been officially documented), was conducted adopting the proposed Traits-Threats-Sustainability approach. True sustainability in the African context is embedded in the sustenance of the pre-modernised African culture without hindering social, economic or environmentally sustainable development.

Some Common Characteristics of the African Culture

Although cultural traits are best understood within the context of a particular culture, a group of communities may share common characteristics (Hassan & Stacey, 2019). Shared traits or values strength may differ from community to community though. The African culture shared a few characteristics prior to its contextual value attenuation by interfering cultures, most of which were orally transmitted (Onyima, 2016) and consequently subjected to recurrent triviality in the past description of the African culture. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the following senior citizens were interviewed: Odji B. U. (1992), Akinfemi (2002), Aluko F. (2010), Youdoun (2013), Cigarette (2014) and Fasoranti (2017) whose views as well as views represented in relevant literature informed the details of this section. Although diverse, some common traits which partly erode the multiplicity of the various African communities' way of life include but not limited to the following:

A. *Social Support or Close Daily Social Interactions*: According to George Mead,

> "*All human action is interaction -with others, ourselves, our natural and created physical world - within culturally defined contexts that determine not only action, but its meaning*" (Banuri & Helsinki, 1987).

Close interactions were a common aspect of the African culture that cuts across peoples, villages and states. Eating together, playing together, sharing responsibilities, communal roles, festivals, leadership and followership were a normal part of most African cultures. Alterations such as segregation have been closely associated with colonial intrusions (Alozie, 2020).

B. **Contact Greetings**: Greetings are very significant part of the African culture denoting various meanings. They implicit an array of socio-pragmatic meanings (Veronica, Silvia, & Silvia, 2012) and may or may not involve contacts. Few factors were prominent in the African culture, some of which included: (a) greeting people first when you enter a place or home. Doing otherwise was considered disrespectful irrespective of your level of acquaintance with the residents (b) contact greetings involving handshakes were always with the right hand. Handshakes with the left hand were reserved for certain cults or considered disrespectful (c) reciprocation of respectful greetings. Shunning an extended greeting was considered a direct insult or a signal of possible hostility and so on.

C. **Honour/Self-Respect**: Analysing 1000 years of Sub-Sahara African history in a review of John Iliffe's Honour in African History (2005), Moyd (2006) recognized the strong position occupied by codes of honour in the African culture - influencing choices, actions and inactions. Honour was a prominent aspect of the pre-modernisation African culture which promoted dignity and integrity. It made the individual members of a community careful about what they did, said or how they lived. Preservation of self-respect and integrity was paramount. This helped to limit many vices and crimes such as rape, immorality[2], prostitution, fraud and such like. According to tales passed down from generations to the current generation, for example, farmers needed not to necessarily haul their harvests to the market centres or homes. At times, they simply placed them beside the road with price tags on them and went to their various houses. Whoever was interested in buying took the goods and drops the equivalent amount of money or needed goods (in case of a trade by barter) in the same spot and went his/her way. Anytime the original owner of the goods came, he finds his money or equivalent goods untouched. This was common practice in pre-modernised Africa. Integrity and dignity kept the order in the communities.

D. **Communal shared belief system**: Members of African communities had shared beliefs which limited divergence-of-views (which was known to breed conflicts) to a manageable level, ranging from social, political to dutiful or spiritual concepts. Usually, such shared beliefs had ancestral or religious backgrounds and a strong belief in a deity played major roles in enforcing the concepts. Almost all African communities are or were identifiable with one form of deity or another.

E. **Respect/honour for elders/persons in authority**: This was one of the most common traits of the African culture cutting across languages and people. Respect for elders had always been considered a key height of good character- a signal of good home training. It was believed that those who respected their elders would also be respected when they become elders. Naturally, elders in well cultured African communities expect appropriate levels of honour from the younger generations. The absence of it was considered a direct (worded or wordless) insult to an elder. Some ways of showing respect to elders included: (a) timely greetings (b) allowing an elder to offer his/her hand of greetings first i.e. for an handshake and not the youth offering the handshake first (c) listen more; talk less when interacting with a senior citizen (except when requested to do otherwise) (d) prioritising elders' opinions or points of view[3] (e) kneeling (by females) or prostrating (by males)

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[2] The context of what is moral or immoral was subject to core African cultural values.
[3] The only exception to this rule was when the elder's view was anti-cultural.

when greeting an elder (f) avoidance of arguments or any form of hostility (g) value guided obedience and so on.

F. *Protection of sexual dignity*: Sexual dignity was a principal part of pre-modernised African cultures with stringent measures taken against flaunting this rule. Sex and or sexual activities were reserved for the confines of marriage only. Therefore, the pre-modernised African culture had almost zero tolerance for such things as fornication, adultery, rape as well as intolerance for sexual objectification, homosexuality and other related preferences. Unfortunately, there were few or no publicly available journals, books or other documents or acceptable storage media that documents these traits.

G. *A philosophy of care*: All over Africa, (in time past) the philosophy of caring for ones' immediate/extended family, friends/peers and neighbours was embedded in the daily ways of life. The average African was 'his brothers' keeper.' For example, caring for children and the aged was a community responsibility. Care for parents and other senior citizens was a mandatory responsibility of the able offspring. Such communal values were embedded in the codes of conducts of most African societies before its cultural dilution which birthed a culture of uncaringness in which parents were ignored and every man began to live only for himself and only his immediate relatives and the good of one superseded the good of all.

H. *Defined gender roles*: There were clearly defined gender roles in pre-modernised African culture (Aina, 1998). While it differed from community to community or nation to nation, gender roles were strictly defined in most parts of the African culture. When roles are undefined, a society has the tendency to degenerate into chaos. In African societies, according to Ikiroma-Owiye (2020), traditional values create order and social cohesion.

I. *Collectivism, community welfare Priority or communitarianism*: While North American culture embraced individualism in contrast to Asians' more collectivist approach, African communities embraced mostly collectivism (Hassan et al, 2019). Collectivism inclined citizens were more likely to sacrifice personal interests for the achievement of community goals (Brewer & Chen, 2007; Hassan et al, 2019). The good of the community was considered the good of all in pre-modernised African culture. The African culture emphasized the duty of a community member to his/her community and the significance of the family unit. The welfare of the community was prioritized over personal gains. Culture is so important that it supersedes individual craves and ambitions. The community came before the individual although the individual's rights were not debatable. For instance, religion is a significant determinant in the African culture, but the culture itself ought to supersede religion. In the pre-modernised African culture, an individual's personal ambitions were important but his responsibility to the community was more important. When an individual reverses this priority in his/her deeds, even the entire family unit may be excommunicated, for example, as a consequence. While individualism cannot be eroded in the waters of communitarianism, a reconciliation of both factors will serve for optimized sustainability of the African culture (Aghamelu & Ejike, 2017) with respect for individual rights.

J. *Extended family system*: This was a common trait found in the majority of the pre-modernised African societies in contrast with the overly 'nuclearised' post-colonial African culture.

K. *Culturally significant spaces and artifacts*: Various terms have been adopted in the description of culturally significant spaces including shrines, heritage sites, market squares (Agboola, Azizul, Rasidi, & Said, 2018) and so on. Almost every community in Africa has or had one or more of such spaces, land areas or objects. They were associated with one form of festival, worship, identity, culturally significant memory/activities, stories or another and when access to such spaces are limited or cut off, it diminishes cultural sustainability.

The above listed notable characteristics of the original collective African culture were not without their flaws such as inequality (Ngubane, 2010), but they did not project or represent the original African identity which is fast eroding- endangered by various threats. Gender inequality or marginalisation for example, lending hands to the feminist sociological and Africa feminism theories (Ajidahun, 2020), had been presented as one of the key flaws of the African culture with reference to sexual roles (Ngubane, 2010), resource management/sustainability (Mukoni, 2015) and politics (Okrah, 2017) for instance. However, the extent of some of these flaws had been greatly exaggerated and, more importantly, unduly backdated with a view to painting the African culture negatively. Many of the pervading flaws date back more to the modernisation or early post-colonial era which was characterized by deterioration of communitarianism, greed, selfishness and such like disrupting the communal order that was once a hallmark of a typical African society in time past. In defence of the African culture, Cheikh Anta Diop (1987) in the book Black Africa described a form of original African leadership system using the term 'bicameralism'. The African bicameralism was a type of governance African ancestors used to rule their people which afforded women a position of influence in the society (Okrah, 2017). Although the patriarchy system in the Africa culture cannot be denied (Abidemi, 2005), women have undeniably played leadership roles in the development of various African societies (Afisi, 2010). Examples include prominent ancient leaders such as Amina Mohamud (an Hausa warrior ruler of Zaria empire in today's North-western Nigeria),Yaa Asantewaa (Ashanti warrior queen, Ghana, who led the War of the Golden Stool against the British colonials in 1900), Kandake or Candace (an empress of the old Ethiopian empire), Nefertiti (a queen of ancient Kemet, Egypt), Makeda (queen of Sheba, Ethiopia), Nandi (Zulu Kingdom, South Africa) and Moremi (of Ile-Ife, Yoruba, in today's Western Nigeria) and so on. This historical fact negates the male-dominant unicameral view that had been postulated about the original African culture. Most of the observable marginalisation of women and some of the other notable flaws were colonial or post-colonial era offshoots (Afisi, 2010; Ngara & Ayabam, 2013).

> "*Before Africa came under the dominance of any foreign powers, women had
> a position of influence in society*" (Okrah, 2017).

Mukoni (2015) insinuated 'a distorted past' with reference to the post-colonial theory and African feminism. The original African culture had been under attack ever since the annexation of Africa by foreign powers. Various threats have intrusively weakened the core of African values and, except these threats are identified and mitigated, the sustainability of the African identity is not guaranteed.

Some Common Threats to the African Culture

Undoubtedly, various aspects of the lives of the citizens of African communities have been affected both positively and more negatively in diverse ways by diverse cultural influences.

The emphasis here is the impact of seeming threats on the original African culture. While some African cultural groups such as the Yorubas have been able to preserve some elements of their original culture (Udo, 2020), the same may not be said of other constituent African cultures. Generally, the African ways of life have been considerably altered over the years 'till date in various ways via various pressures threatening its sustainability[4] including:

A. **The Drive for '*Modernisation*'**: Modernisation is good[5] in itself. However, with or without lending hands to antagonism or the protagonist's approach, the desire for modernisation is one of the major threats to the sustainability of the African culture (Onyima, 2016). Could Africans be driving the African culture into extinction through the crave for modernisation? Modernisation has been described as the process of adapting something to contemporary needs (Lexico, n.d.). Hence, modernisation means the process of adapting an organized group of people or a community to modern needs. The key objectives in this process include: political and economic development, industrialization, literacy and research, infrastructural development, technological advancement and such like (Giovanni, 2001; Armer & Katsillis, 2020). According to the modernisation theory, modern cultures are "*more productive, children are better educated, and the needy receive improved welfare*" (Giovanni, 2001). However, modernisation, as theorized and sort after by an average African may not necessarily contribute to development. For example, some social/cultural changes adopted in the name of modernisation do not contribute to the development of the region. They merely alter or even deface its culture. For example, in the name of modernisation, the face of the Nigerian woman had transformed from Plates 1 and 2 (denoting beauty, dignity, decency and responsibility etc.) to Plates 3 and 4 (signifying more of sexual objectivity, immorality and irresponsibility) and that was what the average little African girl was beginning to see herself becoming in the nearest future. Is that really development? How has such transformations contributed to the sustainable development of Africa? They even do not lend hands to African feminism which, according to a previous study, embraces "*...beauty, power, serenity, inner harmony, and a complex matrix of power*" (Diedre, 1998) interrogating gender discrimination from the African perspective.

Plate 1: Modern African Woman

Source: Tamilore (2019)

Plate 2: Modern 'Traditional' African

Source: Muhammadtaha Ibrahim Ma'aji (2019)

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[4] Sustainability as adopted herein is not such that hinders development.

[5] The term 'good' is here adopted in the subjective context depending on specific cultural definitions.

Plate 3: 'Modernised' African Woman[6]
Source: Joanna Nix-Walkup (2017)

Plate 4: 'Modernised' 'Traditional' Africans
Original Image Source: Livereport (2019)

Although Plates 3 and 4 are excellent creative works of design, they however have the fingerprints of foreign influences (over cognitive processes) written all over them. Modernisation should demystify, develop, beautify, advance and teach etc. and not immorally objectify, erode and disintegrate healthy or ethical cultural structures and order. The 'nuclearisation' of the family system, which has hampered socialisation and internalisation processes (Wahab et al, 2012), is another common offshoot of modernisation that has done little or nothing to contribute to sustainable development. The connotation of morality and disintegration, without diminishing the desire for self-actualisation, may be subject to further philosophical or empirical considerations.

This is not to mean that foreign influences were always wrong. The questions however are: how do they contribute to the sustainability of the African culture while promoting sustainable development? Is the African culture still able to express itself unimpeded through its Arts/Crafts? For any culture to be sustainable, its power of self-expression must not diminish. According to Hancock (1923), "*the passion for self-expression is one of the most powerful factors in social development*." The art and ways of life of Africa is its way of expressing itself, but when that means is hindered, sustainability is not guaranteed.

B. ***Deliberate/predatory acculturation drives***: Acculturation is the process by which the culture of an isolated group of people is altered in contact with a different culture, usually a more 'advanced' one. Acculturation naturally ought to be, as described by Berry (2003), a mutual process. Therefore, it becomes predatory when it is not mutual or is forced via physical, economic, policy driven or social pressures. Sometimes, the cultural alteration on contact might be positive. A good example is the stopping of the killing of twins in Southern Nigeria (Bastian, 2001; Umoren, 2018). At other times, it might completely negate a people's values and ways of life amounting to 'cultural predation'. For example, a significant ruler from the Western world[7], on one of his trips to Africa, was once rumoured to have approached an African ruler and asked that he approves and champions

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[6] This does not question the excellent creativity of the designers, photographers or other professionals who worked on these designs (Plates 3 and 4). Citation was for the purpose of academic discuss only as relating to African Art and culture.

[7] Name withheld for security reasons.

or supports the drive for the legalization of gay marriages in his country and in Africa at large. As reported by Onishi (2015), *"antigay sentiments are widespread across Africa."* That is because homosexuality, lesbianism, gender identity alterations, cross-dressing and such like generally negate the original core values of the unadulterated African culture and, as indicated in a publication of the Law Library of Congress (2014), that stance is still reflected in its various laws today. Of course, being a 'cultured African', the African leader politely refused on the ground that it negates the values of the African culture[8]. There have been reported open/peaceful protests against such in African countries such as Kenya (Wendling, 2015). Another obvious example is the use of force as in the case with religious extremists' imposition on other peoples' ways of life[9]. As established in a previous study, *"the US social service system actively legislates against west African cultural coping mechanism"* (Wahab et al, 2012). The attempted alteration of the ways of life of African nations by foreign influences[10] and religious impositions (with fatal implications) were obvious examples of deliberate predatory acculturation.

C. *Inferiority complexities*: Inferiority complex on the parts of some Africans, especially those who view other cultures, Asian, Western, etc., as superior, had also been a major threat to the existence of the African culture as such dispositions have forced many Africans to abandon their art and traditions and taken up Western or Asian ways of life. These adjustments are noticeable in their dressings, choice of words/slangs, music/entertainment preferences, arts and so on. This trend, perhaps, partly informed the seeming professional and lifestyle transitions insinuated in Plates 1 to 3 and 2 to 4 respectively.

D. *Poverty*: Poor economic virility is another major challenge confronting the African culture. Poverty impacts negatively on health (Ngoma & Mayimbo, 2017), social life both within and outside the community, impacting negatively on social support (interaction with friends and relatives), political participation and communal/organizational activity (Mood & Jonsson, 2015) all of which are components of the African culture. A nation without substantial economic power cannot stand its ground against undue cultural-suppressive–pressures from foreign influences. The African continent is noted specially for its aggravating poverty level. An estimated 40% African residents live below US$1.90 per day (Donnenfeld, 2020). Africa was reported to account for the largest percentage of the global population living in poverty (60% of them living in sub-Saharan Africa) with Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) accounting for about 150million of them (Donnenfeld, 2020). Therefore, when a country like the United States of America or Japan, as insinuated in previous studies (Audrey, 2016), attempts to effect or encourage a specified change in the culture of other nations using e.g. foreign aid policies as instruments, nations such as Nigeria and DRC will most likely be most vulnerable unlike nations such as China or Saudi Arabia. Poverty has left many African nations vulnerable to the infiltrations, demands, influences of foreign cultures and their leading figures and this situation will only get worse unless sustainable poverty alleviation mechanisms and policies are engineered and implemented.

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[8] This notion does not denote that there are no gay people in Africa (Onishi, 2015).

[9] Examples: Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria (Amalu, 2015; Brechenmacher, 2019)

[10] Some of which are backed by foreign policies (Audrey, 2016)

Internally, poverty had also pressured many Africans to attach less value to culture, resort to uncultured acts such as (both heterosexual and homosexual) prostitution, (online and offline) fraud, militancy, theft as well as other crimes or antisocial behaviours, for 'survival'. As long as poverty persists in Africa, the African culture will persistently diminish in value.

E. ***Technology and Economic Model Importation rather than Technological Development***: China, undeniably, is one of the fastest growing economies in the world as at 2020 driving its way up to becoming one of the leading world powers. Yet, the influence of more developed nations has had only manageable impacts on its culture unlike what is applicable in most African countries. How was this possible? There have been two key instruments applied by China namely: avoidance of the importation of technology and economic development models. Most African nations, since independence, have done the exact opposite (Chulu, 2015) with the more developed nations encouraging them to continue in the same vein. For African nations like Zambia, the dependence on importation and adoption of foreign economic developmental models "*have brought misery and poverty for most citizens*" (Chulu, 2015). China, rather than 'importing technologies,' sent out its citizens to more developed countries like the UK and USA to 'learn/acquire their technologies' and then return home to develop them locally (Le Bail & Shen, 2008). For example, though the 2013 reports indicated that 92% of Chinese postgraduates remain in USA after studies[11], the reports as at 2016 indicated over 56.95% increase in those that returned to China (Le Bail & Shen, 2008; Kelly, 2018). In a more latter report (Quinn, 2020), about 86% of Chinese currently studying abroad desire to return to their country of origin. China imported more of 'technological expertise (aimed at local implementation) rather than importing technological products and expatriates. Most African nations like Nigeria do otherwise priding themselves on their natural resources and unsustainable capacity to import expatriates and products. Unfortunately, the same nations who offer them frivolous loans are often amongst those to whom the local contracts for developmental technologies and structural developments are offered meaning that the loans go back to where they came from and leave the debtor in more debts with infrastructures and developments that are not sustainable.

The more technology Africa imports, the more her traditions are watered down/influenced. China went to those countries to learn (limiting importation of foreign cultures) but Africa imports those technologies affording major foreign influences the opportunities to dilute its cultures and as long as this trend persists, cultural sustainability is not guaranteed.

F. ***Wildly Growing Corruption***: Corruption is one of the impediments limiting the development of Africa (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2016). Corruption beclouds the judgment of the corrupted so much that such individual ignores the obvious difference between choices/actions that are right and those that are wrong; and invariably attempts to justify the means by its ends (which are gains of corruption) usually at the detriment of other citizens in contrast to cultural values. Corruption is simply the decadence or weakening of (cultural) values.

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[11] Which is probably to gain professional experiences aside from other personal benefits including citizenship.

G. ***Contempt for Values, Cultural Triviality and Selfishness***: The relative backwardness of Africa has been attributed to many causes. One of them is the 'curse of ignoring ancestral values. (Mazrui, 2002) asked:

> *"Have the ancestors cursed the first two or three generations of postcolonial*
> *Africans because of our apparent contempt for the legacy of our ancestors?"*

Values are philosophies that propel the choices and actions of men (Igboin, 2011). Except the actions of men are guided by some forms of value, they eventually become a danger to their own existence. One of the values of the African culture often least spoken of is 'communal welfare priority' (a cultural value on which nations such as America pride themselves). For instance, some Africans will choose Africanism only if it personally benefits their course and vice versa. Due to reasons including inferiority complexes, poverty and corruption etc., many Africans have gradually become accustomed to ignoring local cultural demands (including community welfare, communal codes/ethics/values and so on) and seeking selfish 'gains. For example, as long as an option profits an individual in one way or another, he settles for it irrespective of its negative impact on the larger society. This attitude, for example, is a key prerequisite for the bad leadership that has over the last post-colonial years characterized most African nations. It is also the reason why oil or other natural resources rich community chieftains will rather receive a bribe (that benefits only their personal welfares) than insist that the Government or investors in the region adopt more sustainable environmental or economic safety or sustainability strategies. Summarily, Africans are killing Africa (including its culture, environment, government and its future) through their growing disregard for cultural values and ethics.

H. ***Modernised African Laws***: Although, the laws in most African countries were built on values rooted in its religions and cultural codes (which are fundamental identifiers of the culture), some of these laws have however been adjusted in ways that threaten the initial African values. For instance, although Africa's stance against such sexual orientations as lesbianism, homosexuality, bisexualism, and transgender (LGBT) have been strongly criticized describing them as homophobic as LGBT rights must be protected (Ibrahim, 2015; Amusan, Luqman, & Adekeye, 2019), it however should be noted that the stance was an offshoot of its undiluted pre-modernised/pre-westernised culture which marked its original way of life and projects the African unique identity that must also be protected. Therefore, when Africa begins to enact laws which permit such practices, then it is gradually undoing its own original culture in ways that does not necessarily promote development or sustainability.

I. ***Communicable Diseases***: Communicable diseases have been a key bottle neck to Africa's development (Odji, 2020a) economically and culturally and one of the most effective means of combating communicable diseases is taking preventive measures (Odji, 2020b) such as social distancing, contact avoidance, controlled population movement and so on. These measures, though most effective and mandatory health wise, have been hindering the free expression of some vital aspects of the African culture such as contact greetings, close communal interactions, communal celebrations or gatherings and such like. Festivals were cancelled on the account of communicable diseases such as Covid-19, Lassa fever and Ebola. Religious gatherings were hampered by the same or

similar threats. Citizens became scared to greet one another via contact as in the past. All such were direct threats to the continued existence of the African way of life.

J. ***Diminishing access to culturally significant spaces and objects***: For minority cultures, access to lands or ancestral spaces is directly linked with cultural sustainability (MRG, 2016). According to MRG (2016), natural resource mining, political clashes, large-scale infrastructural extensions and such like are consuming culturally significant ancestral spaces or land areas hence diminishing accessibility to such culturally significant spaces. Theft of culturally significant artifacts also poses a major threat to the African culture (McGuire, 1990; Tijhuis, 2012). For example, many culturally significant artifacts have been smuggled from Africa and now resident in Western owned museums overseas with subtle or blunt refusal to return them to their original cultural homes.

K. ***Excessively westernised educational system***: Excessively westernised educational system with little African contents is a tool that has been effectively reshaping the minds of Africans and eroding its cultural values, replacing them with western or Asian equivalents.

L. ***Religious Extremism***: Religious crises had been erupting in Africa partly because the original African way of life had been abandoned or was undergoing forceful acculturation. As the original culture erodes, crises erupt. For instance, the African culture teaches communal care and peace, honour, respect for constituted authorities (especially traditionally constituted ones) and so on. This is not far from what the imported religions (including Christianity and Islam) teaches (Aluko P. O., 2017) which makes these imported religions partly reconcilable with the original African culture as opposed to views hypothesized in studies such as Onyima (2016) which presented Christianity for example as a total threat rather than a reconcilable religion. As long as that culture was in place, the society remained organized. Unfortunately, rather than aiding the reconciliation of the foreign religious values with the tenets of the existing African culture for more sustainable developmental co-existence, extreme adherents of the imported religions have been attempting forceful acculturation at the fatal detriment of the African culture. The Boko-Haram attacks in Nigeria were an excellent example (Amalu, 2015; Brechenmacher, 2019). Due to religious extremism, Artworks which were pure African symbols expressing the African uniqueness such as shown in Plate 5 became considered as abominable pieces. Gradually, what used to be known as the African Art including African symbols, dances, poetry and so on became derogatorily tagged 'idolatry' in the bid to discourage them.

Plate 5: Handcrafted Statues for Sale at a Benin Republic Festival

Source: Stratton (2019)

Summary of Results

Identified traits and threats to the pre-modernised African culture were as summarised in Table 1. Some of the identified traits were endangered by more than one of the identified threats at any time. The neutralisation of the threats, the TTS theory proposes, will ensure the sustainability of the shared cultural traits which bears the original identity of the pre-modernised African culture.

Table 1: Summary of African Cultural Traits and Threats Identified in this Study

Identified Endangered Cultural Traits	Identified Threats
1. Collectivism/Communitarianism	1. Corruption
2. Communal shared belief system	2. Poverty
3. Defined gender roles	3. Technology and economic model importation
4. Philosophy of care	4. Contempt for Values, Cultural Triviality and
5. Protection of sexual dignity	Selfishness
6. Respect for elders/ authority	5.Religious extremism
7. Contact Greetings	6. Drive for modernisation
8. Social Support or Close Daily Social	7. Predatory acculturation
Interactions	8. Modernised African Laws
9. Honour/Respect for Self	9. Inferiority complexities
10. Culturally significant heritages	10. Communicable diseases
11.Extended family system	11. Land/artifact/space-access dearth or theft
	12. Excessively westernised educational system

Source: Odji Ebenezer (2020)

The identified threats were directly linkable to individual Africans' complexities/laxities as well as on African constituted authorities. Therefore, the responsibilities for ensuring the sustainability of the African identity and culture rests on individual Africans, communities or collective efforts as well as the Government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results summarized in Table 1, in partial fulfillment of the 5th step of the TTS-theory, the following recommendations were proposed as means of neutralising or alleviating some of the identified threats to the African culture:

(A.) The Individual Approach

1. Individual African citizens should take pride in their cultural identity. The African culture is not inferior to any other culture. It is merely different in some aspect from others.

2. Acculturation and drive for modernisation: Integration (in which an individual maintains his/her own cultural identity yet accommodating to a healthy part of another culture) should be embraced, while assimilation (giving up one's own cultural identity and embracing another culture), marginalisation (rejects both his/her own culture as well as others' culture) and separation (accepts one's own culture with simultaneous intolerance for others' culture) should be discouraged. Integration should be premised on the condition that the foreign culture does not negate the core values, legal or moral trait of the African culture.

(B.) The communal Approach

1. Promotion and communication of shared (indigenous or non-indigenous) beliefs among African community members rather than the imposition of personal beliefs on others. Predatory or forceful acculturation has high retrogressive impact on the African culture and should be discouraged.

2. Encouragement of communitarianism.

3. Formulation of positive reward systems that encourage communitarianism, culture of care, appreciation of cultural values and so on.

(C.) The policy level approach

1. Enactment of policies at the local and international levels protecting African heritage sites, oral traditions, artifacts, ancestral spaces and other related land areas or objects without limiting millennium developmental goals. Other African nations may take cues from the Nigerian cultural policy enacted in 1988 which emphasised the preservation, promotion, presentation of culture and the institution of administrative structure and provision of resources for its implementation (Onyima, 2016).

2. Amendment of constitutions should be carried out strictly with utmost consideration for the 'African identity' sustainability. Amendments may be effected to accommodate social, economic and structural developmental strides without compromising what makes Africans African in the first place (the identifiable African cultural traits).

3. Reduced dependence on importation of technology and economic models. This may be achieved, for example, by training local experts abroad rather than importing foreign expatriates and technologies.

4. Designing and adopting a more Africanised educational system in which classes may be taught in local languages and the African cultural values may be expanded on.

CONCLUSION

It is the responsibility of Africans, individuals, communities and governments, to preserve the African culture. Further detailed research, development and adoption of the proposed TTS theory will serve to promote this sustainability agenda. To preserve the culture in any particular African community, the specific traits that identify that culture as a culture in its own rights must be identified and then active threats to the identified traits must also be identified and consciously mitigated through collective efforts. The unbiased neutralization of the identified and other related threats will ensure the sustainability of the culture without hindering the sustainable economic, social or environmental development of African communities.

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