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- Contributions of the Istmian Press
- The Light of Insecurity in Nigeria
- Maternal Image in Arundhati Roy's

Discovering Thoughts, Inventing Future

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Social Representations of Deafness and Psychological Suffering in Parents of Deaf Children

By Sébastien Yougbare, Kouami Adansikou & Zinsou Selom Degboe

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Abstract- The core problematic of the present study is the relationship between the deaf child and the hearing parents. The objectives of the study are to describe the social representations of deafness and psychological suffering among parents of deaf children, and to establish the link between their suffering and these social representations. It is a cross-sectional study conducted from August 15, 2011 to January 16, 2012 in the ENT department (Oto-Rhino Laryngology) of the CHU (Teaching hospital) Sylvanus Olympio and at the school for the deaf EPHATA in Lomé. A sample of 127 participants was obtained using the all-comers method. The data were collected using the semi-structured interview. The results show that the psychological suffering of parents of deaf children is presented on three spheres: the painful experience of communication between the hearing parents and the deaf child, whose concern about the deprivation of their child's oral communication is more noted at 74.80%.; the parents' experience of the child's disability is more marked by anxiety about the child's future (74.02%) and relationship difficulties (44.88% of the parents), with 44.88% of parents saying that they are or think they are being made fun of by the people around them.

Keywords: parents, representations, deafness and psychological suffering.

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Social Representations of Deafness and Psychological Suffering in Parents of Deaf Children

Sébastien Yougbare [α], Kouami Adansikou [σ] & Zinsou Selom Degboe [ρ]

Abstract- The core problematic of the present study is the relationship between the deaf child and the hearing parents. The objectives of the study are to describe the social representations of deafness and psychological suffering among parents of deaf children, and to establish the link between their suffering and these social representations. It is a cross-sectional study conducted from August 15, 2011 to January 16, 2012 in the ENT department (Oto-Rhino Laryngology) of the CHU (Teaching hospital) Sylvanus Olympio and at the school for the deaf EPHATA in Lomé. A sample of 127 participants was obtained using the all-comers method. The data were collected using the semi-structured interview. The results show that the psychological suffering of parents of deaf children is presented on three spheres: the painful experience of communication between the hearing parents and the deaf child, whose concern about the deprivation of their child's oral communication is more noted at 74.80%.; the parents' experience of the child's disability is more marked by anxiety about the child's future (74.02%) and relationship difficulties (44.88% of the parents), with 44.88% of parents saying that they are or think they are being made fun of by the people around them. On the other hand, 63.78% of parents consider deafness as an act of witchcraft and 29.92% of them have an organic conception of deafness. Overall, we can say that deafness is a handicap that shakes not only the psychological system of the individual affected by this disorder, but also that of their parents. Thus, further studies will be necessary to explore other aspects, especially the effect of deafness on early mother-child interactions, on inter-sibling relationships, etc.

Keywords: parents, representations, deafness and psychological suffering.

I. Introduction

Having a child is like a journey that never goes as planned. This is arguably even more true for healthy, able-bodied parents who give birth to a child with a disability. WHO (1988) definition of disability is based on three main concepts: deficiency, inability and disadvantage. The United Nations' umbrella health institution specifies that deficiency is "any loss of substance or alteration of a psychological, physiological or anatomical function or structure" (WHO, 2011). This clarification on the deficiency concept leads us to quote deafness which is any decrease in hearing acuity, regardless of its degree of severity as being a deficiency. The possible causes are numerous: hereditary ear disease, bacterial or viral infection, intoxication, sound trauma, otitis, etc.

Thus, in the case of deafness, the inability is audio-vocal communication (to varying degrees) and the social disadvantage can vary; we will quote as examples: access to culture and insertion into the professional world. Perceived as a communication disability, deafness constitutes an emblematic figure of otherness that challenges society in its capacity to welcome, listen to and understand the difference. The pejorative representations (Jodelet, 1984) of deafness are observable in the ordinary use of language. Thus, a commonplace expression such as "dialogue of the deaf" reminds us that in the social imagination, deafness is synonym of failure, overwhelming conflict and non-communication. This expression implies the dubious idea that deaf people cannot dialogue. This negative connotation has very old origins. It is not indifferent that in classical Greek, the term logos means both reason and speech. The ancient definition of man as an "animal endowed with *logos*" places *de facto* the deaf-mute in a situation of radical otherness. Numerous testimonies of deaf people and their families show that the difficulty in mastering a language explains in large part this psychological ill-being (Gueydan, 2015).

The inability to acquire a language in a natural and spontaneous way in order to communicate leads to multiple difficulties for deaf children, which can cause psychological suffering (Millet, 2001). A study by the "Deafness" subgroup of the "Disability and School Inclusion" working group of the Scientific Council of the French Ministry of National Education revealed that on the perceptions and behaviours related to the health of deaf people, nearly half of the deaf people interviewed said they were in psychological distress, three times more than in the general population (UNISDA, 2011).

As for suicide attempts, they concern 13.9% of the deaf compared to 5.5% of the average French people.

These difficulties do not spare hearing parents with a deaf child. Indeed, the majority of deaf children are born to hearing parents. These parents find themselves projected into a world they know nothing about, that of deafness. However, one may wonder whether learning that our child is deaf is as easy as learning that our travel destination has been changed. As human beings, we react according to the

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representations we make of our environment (Dethorre, 1997). According to her, "deafness sends back to the speaker the sensation of an absence, a partial emptiness in him-/herself, comparable to the loss of one of their parts (speech and by extension, language) leading to a significant narcissistic suffering."

Relying on the psychoanalytical theories and some works of psychologists, Diderot (2004) got to the conclusion that there is no psychology of the deaf nor psychopathology of the deaf. The deafness disability is, however, particular since it is not seen. And yet, a trauma without wound, without visibility can prove to be all the more pathogenic that there is no narcissistic overinvestment of the suffering organ. But because of their organic damage and what this causes as a sideration and possible trauma in the family of the deaf, as well as the way in which the disability will be managed by the medical and educational teams of the family, all this generates for the deaf, a psychological potentiality or a borderline potentiality by building a false self which may break down with time. In a work of psychoanalytical family therapy engaged with a family, Dorey (2002) found that the inaugural and generally traumatic announcement of deafness provokes an experience of break in the experience of relational continuity; it staggers the emergence of a gap opening up to the establishment of intersubjective relations and initiates a defensive return to the concrete character of the undifferentiated link.

Guillon (2011) found that certain social representations of deaf children's parents, on all issues concerning deafness, remain. Indeed, she could see, for example, that sign language was still considered by some parents as a barrier language, but also as a "divine" language.

In a study conducted in Burkina Faso, Bourcheix (2009) highlighted the representation of deafness, communication and integration of the deaf. The anthropological approach allowed him to get to social, psychological and cultural results of deaf people in their daily life. Deaf children are considered genius children; the parents present their child as a victim of God's will, meningitis or a congenital disease. Deafness is caused by a spell cast against the family or a curse, by witchcraft, which is in fact a warning, the punishment of the surrounding against the parents. He noted the reactions of fear, the feeling of rejection from society, the fear of the future of their child. This anthropological conception of deafness supports the conception of misfortune logic described by Sow (1971) in the African dynamic psychology. Parents of deaf children face stressors unknown to parents without children with a disability or chronic illness (Jutras *et al*. 2005). Beyond the formal diagnosis of deafness (Marschark, 1996), communication stress is emphasized by parents (Greenberg *et al*., 1997). Throughout their lives, they will be subject to distressing experiences: rejection of their child by peers, difficulty for the child to participate in sports or social activities, intense parental supervision, financial costs, lack of time and energy for themselves and their families (Henggeler *et al*., 1990).

This booming literature on the representation of deafness on family relationships and observations of parents' attitudes at EPHATA, a care school for deaf children, motivated us to conduct this study. These attitudes can be broken down into attitudes of abandonment and overprotection. Indeed, some parents leave their very young child at school without asking for news, without a sign from them during a whole term or even a school year. On the other hand, others are determined to do what is best for their child, by keeping appointments and coming early to pick their child up. This study examines the factors that may explain, in a general way, the psychological suffering of hearing parents of deaf children.

Thus, the objectives of the study are to describe the social representations of deafness and psychological suffering among parents of deaf children, to establish the link between their suffering and these social representations.

II. Method

a) Study framework

This was a prospective, cross-sectional study conducted in the ENT (Ear, Nose and Throat) department of the Sylvanus Olympio Teaching Hospital and at the school for the deaf (EPHATA) of the Assemblies of God Church in Lomé. The ENT Department is located in the north-east of the Sylvanus Olympio Teaching Hospital in Lomé. The latter is the most important hospital in Togo in terms of health. It receives an average of seventeen thousand visits per year. It is public with social character. It is located in the west of Lomé in the Tokoin district on the plateau. It is limited in the south by the Tokoin registry office, in the north by the Tokoin Seminary post office, in the east by the hospital pharmacy and in the west by the Alpha school. The ENT department receives annually, according to reports available at the secretariat of the department, 72675 patients.

The EPHATA school is located in Djidjolé district of Lomé, along the street opposite the gendarmerie of the said district. The EPHATA school is a specialized confessional school. It focuses on the education of deaf children in sign languages. The education provided is based on the national program of primary education. Some of the deaf children are also accommodated in the school. The school provides classes for deaf children according to the national curriculum of Togo. Parents of deaf children also come to learn sign languages in order to better communicate with their child. At the said school, speech therapy sessions are also conducted.

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b) Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

This cross-sectional research is qualitative in nature. The participants in the study are the hearing parents of children between the ages of 3 and 10 years who have been diagnosed with deafness. They were recruited using the *ad'hoc* method. This resulted in a sample of 127 parents with a female/male sex ratio of 17.17. These participants were subjected to a semi-directed interview guide that was validated beforehand by a group of four clinical psychologists. The study was conducted in accordance with the basic rules of ethics relating to information, anonymity, confidentiality and verbal informed consent of the participants in strict compliance with the Declaration of Helsinki according to which no intervention likely to alter the dignity, integrity and right to privacy of the respondents should be used. Content analysis in its logico-semantics form was used to exploit the data from the interviews. Statistical tests such as the chi-square (χ^2) and the contingency coefficient (*C*), which are relationship indices that can provide information on the existence and intensity of relationships between qualitative variables, were used.

III. Results

a) Socio-demographic data

The age of the participants is between 24 and 55 years with a mean of 39 years and a standard deviation of 1.95 and a sex ratio of 17.14. Single people represent 15.75% (n = 02), married people represent 85.04% (n = 108), against 13.39% of divorced people (n = 17). Among them, 33.86% (n = 43) are illiterate, 42.52% (n = 54) have a basic level of study, followed by 22.05% (n = 28) of secondary school and 2 participants have been able to do higher study or 01.57% of the sample. In terms of religious affiliation, 53.54% were practicing traditional African religions; 33.07% (n =42) were Christians and 15.75% (n =20) were Muslims.

b) Study variables

i. *Degree of deafness*

The data show that the sample is composed of 40.16% (n = 51) of subjects whose children suffer from profound deafness, 31.49% (n = 40) of children with severe deafness, followed by 24.40% (n = 31) whose children have moderate deafness. Parents whose offspring are mildly deaf represent only 3.94% of the participants, i.e. (n = 05).

ii. *Representations of deafness*

For social representation of deafness variable, the hearing parents who think that deafness is an act of witchcraft predominate with 63.78%, followed by those who think that they are subject to persecution with 52.76%; those who explain it by an organic conception are at 29.92% and those who associate it with a divine will represent 27.56%. Some of them (14.17%) are convinced that they are undergoing a divine punishment and 11.81% assume that it is a curse. It should be noted that two or three representations can exist in the same parent of a deaf child.

iii. *Painful experience of parent-deaf child communication*

The painful experience of communication between hearing parents and deaf children can be summarized as 74.80% of worries about the deprivation of oral communication, 59.05% of worries about the limitation of oral communication, 35.43% of discomfort with gestural communication and 18.89% of difficulty in understanding the child's requests.

iv. *Relational difficulties*

With regard to relational difficulties due to the deafness of their child, the frequency of the items in this variable of the study is as follows: 44.88% of the parents feel that they are teased by their family and friends, 25.98% admit to conflicts about the child within the couple, 23.62% say that they are rejected by their family and friends and in 14.17% of the cases, deafness was mentioned as the source of divorce between the parents.

v. *Experiencing the child's disability*

The hearing parents experience the child's disability in terms of: anxiety about the child's future (74.02%); feelings of powerlessness (70.87%); shame (68.50%); pity (66.14%); narcissistic injury (54.33%); devaluation (44.88%), guilt (41.73%) and insecurity (08.66%). A significant proportion of these parents, 18.90%, deny the diagnosis.

Correlation between painful communication experience, relationship difficulties, parent-child disability experience and degree of deafness

- Painful experience of communication and degree of deafness

Table 1: Relationship between painful communication experience and degree of deafness

Painful communication experience	Degree of deafness			
	Deep	Severe	Average	Low
Worry about Deprivation of oral communication	29 (22.83%)	40 (31.50%)	25 (19.69 %)	01 (0.79%)
Worry about the limitation of of oral communication	33 (25.98%)	22 (17.33%)	15 (11.81%)	05 (3.94%)

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Discomfort with gestural communication	02 (1.57%)	09 (7.08%)	30 (23.62%)	04 (3.14%)
Difficulty in understanding the child's requests	08 (6.30%)	10 (7.84%)	04 (3.15%)	02 (1.57%)
$\chi^2_{cor} = 42.53 > \chi^2_{lu} = 16.91$	$C = 0.38$	ddl= 09	DS ($p < .05$)	

The results in Table 1 show that the difference in χ^2 is significantly positive at .05 threshold, which confirms the existence of a medium intensity relationship ($C = 0.39$) between the painful experience of parent-child communication and the degree of their child's deafness.

- Relational difficulties and degree of deafness

Table 2: Link between relationship difficulties and degree of deafness

Relational difficulties	Degree of deafness			
	Deep	Severe	Average	Low
Laughter from surrounding	31 (24.41 %)	13 (10.24 %)	10 (7.84 %)	03 (2.36 %)
Conflicts within the couple	05 (3.94 %)	07 (5.51 %)	20 (15.75 %)	01 (0.79 %)
Rejection from the surroundings	05 (3.94 %)	18 (14.17 %)	05 (3.94 %)	02 (1.57 %)
Divorce	10 (7.84 %)	02 (1.57 %)	04 (3.15 %)	01 (0.79 %)
$\chi^2_{cor} = 37.51 > \chi^2_{lu} = 16.91$	$C = 0.46$	ddl = 09	DS ($p < .05$)	

The results of this table allow us to conclude that there is a significant relationship ($\chi^2_{cal} = 37.51 > \chi^2_{lu} = 16.91$) and average ($C = 0.46$) at .05 threshold between the relationship difficulties of hearing parents and the degree of their child's deafness.

- Child's experience of disability and degree of deafness

Table 3: Relationship between the child's disability experience and degree of deafness

Experiencing the child's disability	Degree of deafness			
	Deep	Severe	Average	Low
Anxiety about the child's future	30 (23.62 %)	35 (27.56 %)	24 (18.90 %)	05 (3.94 %)
Feeling of powerlessness	32 (25.20 %)	29 (22.83 %)	26 (20.47 %)	03 (2.36 %)
Shame	29 (22.83 %)	25 (19.69 %)	31 (24.41 %)	02 (1.57 %)
Pity	24 (18.90 %)	45 (35.43 %)	14 (11.02 %)	01 (0.79 %)
Narcissistic injury	19 (14.96 %)	20 (15.75 %)	25 (19.69 %)	05 (3.94 %)
Feeling of devaluation	20 (15.75 %)	18 (14.17 %)	15 (11.81 %)	04 (3.15 %)
Guilt	17 (13.39 %)	16 (12.60 %)	18 (14.17 %)	02 (1.57 %)
Fits of weeping	09 (7.10 %)	11 (8.66 %)	06 (4.72 %)	02 (1.57 %)
Denial of diagnosis	02 (1.57 %)	05 (3.94 %)	14 (11.02 %)	03 (2.36 %)
Feeling of insecurity	01 (0.79 %)	03 (2.36 %)	04 (3.14 %)	03 (2.36 %)
$\chi^2_{cor} = 40.60 > \chi^2lu = 40.11$	$C = 0.25$	ddl = 27	DS = .05	

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The results in Table 3 show that $\chi^2_{cal} = 40.60 > \chi^2_{lu} = 40.11$ at .05 threshold; the relationship is significant. In addition, the contingency coefficient ($C = .25$) suggests that there is a moderate relationship between the emotional experiences of hearing parents and the degree of deafness.

Correlation between the painful experience of communication, relational difficulties, the child's disability experience and the hearing parents' representation of deafness

- Painful experience of parent-deaf child communication and parents' representation of deafness

Table 4: Relationship between painful experiences of parent-deaf child communication and parents' representation of deafness

Hearing parent representations	Painful experience of parent-deaf child communication			
	Concern/limitation of oral communication	Concern/deprivation of oral communication	Discomfort with gestural communication	Difficulty in understanding
Act of witchcraft	31 (24.41 %)	26 (20.47 %)	15 (11.81 %)	09 (7.08 %)
Persecution	24 (18.90 %)	31 (24.41 %)	11 (8.66 %)	01 (0.79 %)
Divine Will	04 (3.15 %)	22 (17.32 %)	05 (3.94 %)	04 (3.15 %)
Curse	05 (3.94 %)	04 (3.14 %)	03 (2.36 %)	03 (2.36 %)
Organic conception	10 (7.84 %)	16 (12.60 %)	07 (5.51 %)	05 (3.94 %)
Punishment	01 (0.79 %)	08 (6.30 %)	04 (3.14 %)	05 (3.94 %)
$\chi^2_{cor} = 22.76 < \chi^2_{lu} = 24.99$ $C = 0.28$ ddl = 15 DNS ($p = .05$)				

The results in Table 4 show that at the threshold $p = .05$, $\chi^2_{cal} = 22.76 < \chi^2_{lu} = 24.99$, the link is not significant. This confirms that there is no link between the painful experience of parent-deaf child communication and their representations of the additional deafness.

- Relational difficulties and representations of deafness

Table 5: Link between relational difficulties and representations of deafness

Representations of deafness	Relational difficulties			
	Laughter from surroundings	Conflicts within the couple	Rejection from the surroundings	Divorce
Act of witchcraft	25 (19.69 %)	28 (22.04 %)	17 (13.39 %)	11 (8.66 %)
Persecution	31 (24.41 %)	11 (8.66 %)	24 (18.90 %)	01 (0.79 %)
Divine Will	20 (15.75 %)	04 (3.14 %)	07 (5.51 %)	05 (3.94 %)
Curse	04 (3.14 %)	03 (2.36 %)	04 (3.14 %)	03 (2.36 %)
Organic conception	07 (5.51 %)	16 (12.60 %)	10 (7.84 %)	02 (3.15 %)
Punishment	08 (6.30 %)	01 (0.79 %)	05 (3.94 %)	04 (3.14 %)
$\chi^2_{cor} = 31.30 > \chi^2lu = 24.99$ $C = 0.33$ ddl =15 DS ($p < .05$)				

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The results in Table 5 show that $\chi^2_{cal} = 31.31 > \chi^2_{lu} = 24.99$ at the threshold $p = .05$. The link is therefore significantly positive and of average intensity ($C = 0.33$) at this threshold. We conclude that there is a link between the representations of deafness and relational difficulties.

- The child's experience of disability and representations of deafness

Table 6: Relationship between representations of deafness and emotional experience

Experience of the child's disability	Representations of deafness					
	Act of witchcraft	Persecution	Divine Will	Curse	Organic conception	Punishment
Anxiety about the child's future	07 (5.51 %)	25 (18.69 %)	04 (3.14 %)	01 (0.79 %)	12 (9.45 %)	02 (3.15 %)
Pity	12 (9.45 %)	05 (3.94 %)	08 (6.30 %)	01 (0.79 %)	01 (0.79 %)	02 (3.15 %)
Shame	06 (4.72 %)	10 (7.84 %)	01 (0.79 %)	09 (7.10 %)	06 (4.72 %)	11 (8.66 %)
Guilt	05 (3.94 %)	10 (7.84 %)	02 (3.15 %)	02 (3.15 %)	06 (4.72 %)	01 (0.79 %)
Narcissistic injury	15 (11.81 %)	02 (3.15 %)	10 (7.84 %)	03 (2.36 %)	01 (0.79 %)	03 (2.36 %)
Denial of diagnosis	10 (7.84 %)	15 (11.81 %)	01 (0.79 %)	02 (3.15 %)	02 (3.15 %)	02 (3.15 %)
Powerless	12 (9.45 %)	01 (0.79 %)	05 (3.94 %)	01 (0.79 %)	10 (7.84 %)	01 (0.79 %)
Insecurity	03 (2.36 %)	06 (4.72 %)	04 (3.14 %)	01 (0.79 %)	01 (0.79 %)	01 (0.79 %)
Devaluation	12 (9.45 %)	02 (3.15 %)	02 (3.15 %)	02 (3.15 %)	02 (3.15 %)	(3.14 %)
Fits of weeping	05 (3.94 %)	01 (0.79 %)	02 (3.15 %)	02 (3.15 %)	01 (0.79 %)	02 (3.15 %)
$\chi^2_{cor} = 98.28 > \chi^2_{lu} = 61.65$	$C = 0.49$	ddl = 45	DS ($p < .05$)			

The results in the table above show that $\chi^2_{cal} = 98.28 > \chi^2_{lu} = 61.65$ au $p = .05$. The relationship is therefore significant at this threshold. Moreover, the calculated contingency coefficient $C = 0.49$. This suggests that there is an average relationship between the representations made by the hearing parents of deafness and their experience of the child's disability.

IV. Interpretations

A child in general and more particularly an African child is a trigger for upheavals in the group from which he or she was born. By his/her arrival, the gives his/her parents new status as father and mother. The child's presence is thought of in the continuity of a lineage to which he/she must participate in one way or another in their recognition in the social landscape.

Before his/her birth, the parents project on their child something of the image that one has of oneself, that one hopes to achieve or they expect from the child a true restoration of themselves. This image of the constructed child, idealizes itself in the conscience of the parents. Having the desire that their child be the fulfillment of their dreams, they give themselves, especially the mothers, to a whole series of manifestations which can be manifestations of the type of this construction in time, or to other elements, a meaning insofar as by looking at the child, they hallucinate these desires. However, the announcement of the deafness compromises all their desires (fantasies). The parents see a part of themselves removed.

Referring to the psychoanalytical or psychodynamic theory of Freud, more precisely of his second topical, the "Overself" is the internalization of the law, the moral conscience; it says what is good and what is bad. It is also the ideal of the "Ego", the model of the character to become. Indeed, the hearing parents of a deaf child live in a society, in a social group where cultural norms have been internalized. This integration of cultural norms leads them to define a normality in relation to themselves. That is to say, they consider themselves as a model and it becomes difficult to find reference points when faced with others who are considered different. In order to enter into a true relationship, one in which we do not deal with a body but with a person, the other person must exist for me

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and I must recognize his or her otherness. And the other side of this recognized otherness is the identity, the possibility of recognizing oneself in the other and of recognizing the other as similar to oneself despite this difference.

The announcement of the children's deafness puts the hearing parents in a situation of frustration linked to the image they make of the deafness of the deaf child in relation to the values and the sociocultural standards. This frustration leads to a conflict between the different instances of the psyche, a conflict between the "Ego", the "Overself" in relation to the "Reality". For Freud (1988), the "id" is the pole of impulsive representatives where the instinctual desires are located. This conflict also results between the "id" and the "reality". The ideal so much wanted by the parents which is the request of the unconscious (id), is confronted with the "Reality" which is the deafness (disability) present in the child. To find oneself in front of a handicapped child is to enter into the dissatisfaction of one's desire as a father or mother. The deaf child does not represent the ideal so much wanted, which is for them a narcissistic attack.

In fact, mothers expect behaviours from their children that do not happen, they expect a reaction when they speak, when they pronounce the name of their child, etc. The non-answer of the child causes frustration to the mother. To accept the deaf child as similar to oneself is to accept deafness with all its consequences. To reject deafness as a difference is to reject the child who is, in fact, a continuity of one's own body or image. The experience of the child's disability collected in this study is in fact the observable manifestations of these conflicts in the parents. Faced with this situation, the psyche is unable to carry out its usual task, which is to integrate the elements of the external world. To fight against this conflict, the psyche adopts as a defense mechanism the denial of the reality; this is expressed in the hearing parents by the refusal of the deafness diagnosis. When we meet a person with a disability, we recognize a distortion, which is not part of the representations that we have constructed for ourselves (in the Overself). These representations distort, clash with their representations of the normal and the real. When parents are told that their child is deaf, they find themselves "speechless". Faced with a child who cannot hear, they no longer know how to communicate. They often give up speaking, because they are no longer heard, and they see no reason to continue using it. They then lose their own speech towards their deaf child, not knowing how to address the one they believe to be locked in silence. This explains the painful experience of parent-deaf child communication.

The socio-cultural representations that parents make of their child's deafness are in fact one of the defense mechanisms of their intrapsychic conflict, which is nothing more than a projection outside of denial.

Andolfi, Angelo, Penghi and Nicolo (1987) consider the family as a system in perpetual change, whose evolution is determined by its capacity to abandon stability and then recover it by reorganizing itself. Usually or naturally, the arrival of a child in a family is the source of this change or disorganization. The presence of the child in the family generates a problem; the presence of a handicapped child accentuates this disorganization, and weakens the family system even more. This conflict testifies to the relational difficulties of hearing parents of a deaf child (rejection from the surroundings, conflicts within the couple...). The arrival of a child in general, and that of a disabled child in particular, is considered from the point of view of this theory as extrinsic sources of change in the family equilibrium. Faced with this situation (the child's disability), the hearing parents of a deaf child become rigid. This situation creates the psychological suffering that these parents experience. In doing so, the families do not put into practice their property of dynamism to maintain their equilibrium that underlines this theory of family psychopathology. The psychological suffering of these parents is only a radical refusal to any new experience on their part. They neglect this property in the face of the child's handicap (the child's deafness) within their family.

The disease in Africans has an autonomous existence, independently of the organism that supports it and that it attacks from outside. In order for the attack or aggression to reach the individual, the aggressor must be closer, i.e. have a blood link with the ego. In Sow's (1971) theory of Black African psychopathology, the African personality is the individual (Ego) and the poles or axes that link them. Pathogenesis is the conflict between the ego and one of its three founding poles, which are the vertical pole, the horizontal pole and the Bio-Lineage Existence (BLE).

We can say that the socio-cultural representations of the hearing parents of this study are external manifestations of the conflicts between the parents' egos and the different axes that link them. The vertical axis constitutes the supreme being, the founding ancestor. The BLE is the bio-lineage essence. (H) horizontal axis is the extended society. The ideas of bewitchment, punishment linked to a transgression, are emanations of the conflict between the horizontal axis (extended society) and the Ego. The horizontal axis defines all the relational configurations within the community; in particular, the place of each person in relation to all, but also and more generally, the rules, institutions, relations and social practices, as well as the relationship to the world and to nature. Bewitchment is a process through which the sick individual perceives themselves as a victim of another initiated individual

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who has cast a curse on them. The hearing parents in this study perceive their deaf child as a victim of a curse from a relative. The act of witchcraft is a manifestation of the conflict between the Ego and the BLE. Witchcraft is a process through which the individual perceives the loss or diminution of his or her vital state due to the evil action of another individual who is a witch. The fact that these hearing parents see the total or partial loss of their child's ear leads them to attribute their child's illness to the act of witchcraft.

V. Discussions

The results of the present study show that hearing parents experience feelings of fear, helplessness, devaluation, insecurity and guilt in relation to their child's disability. These results corroborate those of William *et al.* (2003) who showed that some siblings of children with disabilities experience negative emotions such as anxiety and depression because siblings are part of the family or act as parents at times. In contrast, the present study did not find antisocial behavior or delinquent acts among hearing parents as reported by William *et al*. (2003). It should also be noted that the aspect of narcissistic suffering was also found by Dethorre (1997). The results of the present study on the representation of deafness coincide to a large extent with those of Bourcheix (2009), who also found as representations of the parents, the divine will, organic conception, curse, witchcraft, punishment. Likewise, the aspects concerning psychological suffering in terms of reactions were found, namely fear of the future, feelings of rejection, fear.

Our results, concerning the experience of the child's disability such as the fits of weeping, the refusal of the diagnosis and the guilt, were also found by Touma (2007) in his study on the factors influencing parental reactions in relation to deaf children. However, to explain these reactions, Touma (op. cit.) relied on factors such as fear of the unknown, ignorance, lack of information, the negative gaze of the surroundings, and fear of judgment, whereas in the present study, the parents' reactions are explained by the degree of children's deafness and the parents' representations.

Furthermore, the results of the present study do not corroborate those of Guillon (2011) despite the fact that she took into account the social representations of hearing parents of deaf children and tried to see the relationships between these parents and their child. This can be explained by the specificity of indicators of the subjects' representations in our study.

VI. Conclusion

The objectives of this research are to describe the sufferings of parents and to assess the link between the degree of child's deafness and the psychological sufferings of his/her parents on the one hand and the hearing parents' representations of deafness on the other hand. The psychological sufferings that are summarized on three levels: experience of the child's disability, relational difficulties, painful experience of the parent-deaf child communication. Among the factors to which we have linked the suffering of the subjects of our study, are the hearing parents' representations of the deaf children's deafness, which include the act of witchcraft, persecution, organic conception, divine will, punishment and curse.

We reviewed, without pretending to be exhaustive, the psychological sufferings that some parents of deaf children undergo. In this problematic of the psychic shaking of which the close relations and the disabled persons are the object, the present study, whose subjects are the hearing parents of deaf child, could not answer other questions which can exist. Thus, it would be preferable that other studies be envisaged to explore certain aspects that were not taken into account in this research, among others the representations of these parents towards their deaf child, the attitude of hearing parents towards their deaf child.

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Battlegrounds. Net Art and Virtual Worlds in the Work of Chinese Artists

By Magdalena Furmanik-Kowalska

Introduction- Art historian Wu Hunga, one of the first to describe contemporary Chinese art, suggested that in the Chinese context it should rather be called experimental (*shiyan yishu)*[1] then postmodern, as it diverges chronologically from the development of Western art. In 2005, he wrote that he saw the following stages: 1979-1984, the time of the formation of unofficial art; 1985-1989, known as the 'New Wave of Art '85' and the 'China/Avant-garde' exhibition in Beijing as a result of this period; then 1990-1993, when Chinese experimental art entered the world market; and finally, from 1994 to the present, art as a critique of the socio-cultural situation in China[2]. Now, after more than fifteen years, it would be appropriate to add further stages, including certainly the extremely intense development after 2004 of art using new information technologies and social media.

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Battlegrounds. Net Art and Virtual Worlds in the Work of Chinese Artists

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I. Introduction

Art historian Wu Hunga, one of the first to describe contemporary Chinese art, suggested that in the Chinese context it should rather be called experimental (*shiyan yishu)*[1] then postmodern, as it diverges chronologically from the development of Western art. In 2005, he wrote that he saw the following stages: 1979-1984, the time of the formation of unofficial art; 1985-1989, known as the 'New Wave of Art '85' and the 'China/Avant-garde' exhibition in Beijing as a result of this period; then 1990-1993, when Chinese experimental art entered the world market; and finally, from 1994 to the present, art as a critique of the socio-cultural situation in China[2] . Now, after more than fifteen years, it would be appropriate to add further stages, including certainly the extremely intense development after 2004 of art using new information technologies and social media.

This change is aptly described by Juan Martín Prada, a researcher into the influence of network culture on art:

> "If the shift from the information society to the means-of-access-to-information society had been particularly fruitful for the development of multiple lines of media art, then the changes that were bringing about a personal-means-of-access-to-and-broadcasting-of information society were proving to be even more promising. Before long, blogs, microblogging platforms, metaverse, social networks and the emerging collective archives for photography and video had all become new contexts for artists to carry out critical action and exploration. This was the beginning of social media art, the range of artistic practices that would use the emerging participative platform of Web 2.0 as their own particular filed of the action"[3] .

The strong impact of social media in particular on artistic creativity is also highlighted by US journalist Naomi Martin, stating: "Almost every aspect of our lives is now being dictated by social media. We look to the omnipresent, all-seeing forces of Instagram, Facebook and Twitter to communicate, keep up with the world, schedule our events, satisfy our most materialistic needs or even quench ourthirst for activism, the list goes on. It is therefore only natural for art, in its ceaseless ability to both reflect and influence its host cultures, to be entwined in the ever-growing web of social media[4]".

While, in 2017, preparing for the fourth edition of a book *Themes of Contemporary Art: Visual Art after 1980*, art historians Jean Robertson and Craig McDaniel decided that it is important to extend their publication to include the impact of digital technologies on contemporary art. They wrote: "The languages of digital media are bound to have a radical impact on visual art as the twenty-first century continues to unfold. Artists who are exploring this area are pioneers in helping us to confront what it means to live in world of accelerated information flow from multiple channels and to find ourselves entranced by manufactured virtual worlds[5] ".

It is not surprising, then, that in the age of networked globalisation, Chinese artists have been keen to embrace the new possibilities offered by the webs, virtual spaces and social media as well. However, studying their work raises many questions. Is creation in the virtual world becoming for them an escape from the surrounding reality? A zone of relaxation? Or perhaps a place where it is safe, beyond censorship, to describe reality? Outside surveillance to point out social problems? To talk about their inadequacies, but also to create a safe space for the exchange of experiences? Let us therefore take a look at selected works by Feng Mengbo (b. 1966, Beijing), Bu Hua (b. 1973, Beijing), Cao Fei (b. 1978, Guangzhou), Lu Yang (1984, Shanghai), Silas Fong (b. 1985, Hong Kong) and Funa Ye (b. 1986, Kunming), among others, to try to find answers to these questions. The artists identified belong to several different generations, having been brought up in different realities that have significantly influenced their inspirations and the subjects they take up. This selection makes it possible to see the broad spectrum of their different attitudes and artistic strategies employed.

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[1] Cf. Wu Hung, *Transience. Chinese Experimental at the End of the Twentieth Century*, The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago Press, Hong Kong 2005, p. 15.
[2] Ibid, p. 16.
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II. Fighting as Entertainment

One of the first Chinese artists to use computer software and networking capabilities as part of his art was Feng Mengbo (b. 1966, Beijing). In the early 1990s, he painted oil paintings combining the style of frames from popular RPG computer games with the iconography of the Cultural Revolution period (*Game Over: Long March*, 1993). Inspiration from youth pop culture would become a hallmark of his subsequent work. His first interactive work available online was the game *My Private Album,* which was based on family photographs and memorabilia. By following the fate of the artist's ancestors, we learn a micro-history that becomes a universal story about the past of the Chinese people in the past century. It depicts changes in customs and culture, which we read, among other things, from the transformations in clothing or the way the characters in the photographs self-present themselves[6].

However, the most distinctive work for Feng is *Q4U* (2000-2002) presented in 2002 at Documenta 11 in Kassel[7]. It was a personalised version of the game Quake III Arena, a typical first-person shooter. It featured a 3D likeness of the artist holding a video camera in one hand and a plasma rifle in the other. During the presentation in Germany, three gaming stations and three large-format monitors were set up to follow the gameplay. The artist, on the other hand, was in China engaging in a game with players from all over the world via the Internet during the event. Participation in this bloody game during Documenta was banned for minors and therefore paradoxically censored.

In China, the amount of time children and young people spend playing consoles and computers has increased significantly since the 1990s, so it wasn't long before the media started talking about video game addiction, calling it 'digital heroin'[8]. It was considered particularly worrying that video games were meant to distract students from learning. For them, they provided a platform for communication and the building of small communities, which they had been deprived of due to the 'one-child' (jìhuà shēngyù zhèngcè) policy introduced in 1977. In June 2000, due to concerns about video game addiction, the State Council passed a bill containing regulations on their content and regulations on the operation of internet cafes and arcades[9] , which was one of the first censures imposed on this type of entertainment. In context, Feng Mengbo's creation of a work that is a personalised version of one of the most popular multiplayer games becomes an expression of rebellion against top-down leisure regulations. The choice of bloody entertainment in the face of this also seems to be no accident. Participation in a game taking place in an alternative reality was a form of safe discharge of emotions and frustrations acquired in the real world. For the artist, it was also a reckoning and, for others, a reminder of the historical events that took place during the Red Revolution. As a work of art, it drew attention to the issue of the restriction of freedom.

III. A Collision of Realities

Christina Penetsdorfer, author of the biography Bu Hua (b. 1973, Beijing) in the catalogue 'Stepping out! Female identities in Chinese Contemporary Art' states that the artist: '(...) is considered an early representative and pioneer of so-called flash animation. One of her first animated works, *Cat*, was released online in 2002 and went viral before digital platforms like YouYube even existed[10] ". For this animation, Bu Hua received the Best New Director Award at the 2003 China Qingdao International Animation Week. It tells the story of the love between a female cat and her kitten, who, in order to bring her back to life, follows her mother into the underworld. It foreshadows Bu Hua's later works, in which wandering between different worlds is a defining element.

The hallmark of the artist's work, however, is above all the figure of the Young Pioneer Woman with a red kerchief around her neck. She is the artist's alter ego, the perfect embodiment of the *sa mi,* or fearless and swaggering girl, according to Beijing dialect. This character appears in almost all of Bu's creations - paintings, prints and animated films. They are distinguished by the style developed by the artist, which combines inspirations from both Eastern tradition, particularly Chinese woodcut, and Western tradition. "Eclectic influences from sources as diverse as Surrealism, Japanese 1920s modernity, contemporary anime and manga, and Art Deco design are evident here. Bu Hua loves Astro Boy and Salvador Dali equally[11]", aptly observes Luise Guest, author of Half the Sky: Women Artists in China. One can also find influences of German Expressionism or references to the *horror vacui* typical of Baroque art. In her works, the iconography of Chinese art is intertwined with motifs characteristic of Western still lifes or modern ornamentation (the result of continuing art studies in Amsterdam between 1996 and 1998).

[6] Birgit Hopfener, *Feng Mengbo*. In China. Artbook, eds. Uta Grosenick, Caspar H. Schübbe, Dumont, Köln 2007, p. 88-95.
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[9] Ibid.

[10] Christina Penetsdorfer, *Bu Hua.* In *Stepping out! Female identities in Chinese Contemporary Art,* eds. Nils Ohlsen, Kunstforeningen GL STRAND 2022, p. 82.
[11] Luise Guest, *Half the Sky: Women Artists in China*, Piper Press 2016, p. 16.

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Seemingly frivolous and free-form, the artist's animations address important issues in contemporary China, such as the social transformation, comsumptionism, and ecological destruction. *Savage Growth* (2008), for example, tells the story of a Pioneer woman struggling against urbanisation. We move with her from an idealistic world full of friendly and beautiful creatures to a 'nightmarish world of cities that never stop growing, like mutating cancerous cells'[12]. Resistance becomes impossible. The consequences of this imbalance between civilisational development and nature, in turn, are illustrated by the flash animation *LV Forest* (2010). Being "more nightmare than fairy-tale"[13] shows a world of excess, inequality and intolerance. In the film, we follow the figure of a naked girl dancing amidst accumulated possessions, riding triumphantly on skeletal monsters, and during a violent fight with other women on the streets of a phantasmagorical city.

Quintessential to both the style and content of the artist's message is a monumental silk wall carpet, measuring 200 x 300 cm, under the title *Brave Diligent (*2014). It depicts the Young Pioneer Woman standing at the top of a mountain, in the rays of the setting sun, taking up arms against an approaching plane symbolising industrialisation. Her image is framed by chrysanthemums, signifying longevity in Chinese tradition, as well as cranes, magpies, phoenixes and other mystical birds. The artist's alter ego attempts to save the world she has created (read: desired) from annihilation. By accompanying her, we want it to succeed.

IV. Utopia as a New Reality

Not much younger than Bu Hua, Cao Fei (b. 1978, Guangzhou) grapples with similar issues in her work. In order to address issues such as identity or ecology safely and beyond censorship, they both create alternative universes. According to art historian Luise Guise, who researched and interviewed dozens of Chinese women artists for five years, she states that: "These are artists [Bu Hua and Cao Fei] who have little or no first-hand experience of the tragedy and bitterness of the Cultural Revolution, growing up during a period in which an isolationist Cold War mentality gradually collapsed. They are generally not making work about democratic freedoms, despite what some western commentators might wish and expect Chinese artists to do. They do, however, make reference in their work to the issues that concern them: from materialism and urbanisation to environmental degradation; from sexuality and motherhood to the impact of biotechnologies on the human body. Many are deeply interested in a revival of spirituality, in particular the traditions of Buddhism and Taoism"[14] .

In 2006, Cao Fei made the video *Whose Utopia*[15], showing workers at the Osram light bulb factory in Guangzhou. We see them not at their traditional workplaces, but playing out their dream life roles/occupations. Most of them are so-called 'itinerant workers' who have lost their citizenship rights after leaving their home village in search of income opportunities. Often working beyond the norm, without health care or other labour privileges. It is difficult, therefore, not to read this work as a critical commentary on China's overly rapid urbanisation and the legal changes that did not follow in parallel. It certainly became the impetus for the artist's subsequent long-term and intertwined projects *Second Life* and *RMB City,* created in collaboration with Vitamin Creative Space since 2007. In both, she creates virtual worlds, imitating a contemporary Chinese city with its advantages and disadvantages.

Within the former, she creates an avatar - an idealised version of herself named China Tracy. Her adventures in an alternative, parallel universe (on the virtual platform Second Life) were documented using technology specific to computer gaming. Their course was then publicly traceable for the first time by viewing the work *i.MIRROR - A Second Life Documentary Film by China Tracy* in the China Pavilion at the 2007 Venice Biennale. The work was presented, inside a cloud-like tent in the garden of the pavilion, which was further intended to introduce the audience to a space different from the everyday. The aim of this procedure, but also of the entire installation, was to blur the boundary between fiction and reality, between documentary and fantasy, between the virtual and the material dawn. This was to further emphasise the illusion of the utopia of the created worlds, for as Luise Guest aptly commented on this work, "Despite the apparent freedom of the artist's avatar there is a sense of isolation and detachment[16] ". Ironically, although we create ideal virtual realities, we also make the same human mistakes in their spaces. "(...) Perhaps no longer important to draw the line between the virtual and the Real as the border between the two Has been blurred. In the virtual land, we are not what we originally are, and yet we remain unchanged[17] ", commented the artist herself.

[12] Luise Guest, *Half the Sky: Women Artists in China*, Piper Press 2016, p. 15.
[13] White Rabbit. Contemporary Chinese Art Collection, https://explore.dangrove.org/objects/470
[14] Luise Guest, Half the Sky: Women Artists in China, Piper Press 2016, p. 15.
[15] For more on this work *Whose Utopia* see Monica Merlin, *Cao Fei: Rethinking the global/local discipleship,* Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art Vol. 5, No. 1, 2018, pp. 41-60.
[16] Luise Guest, *Half the Sky: Women Artists in China*, Piper Press 2016, p. 28.
[17] Christina Penetsdorfer, *Cao Fei.* In *Stepping out! Female identities in Chinese Contemporary Art,* eds. Nils Ohlsen, Kunstforeningen GL STRAND 2022, p. 102.

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In the concurrently emerging *RMB City*[18] - *a* virtual world accessible online - the artist focuses on the issue of consumerism and materialism, as Bu Hua does in her works. "Her imaginary city, surrounded by water, is a hybrid of communism, capitalism and socialism, a construction which appropriates the architectural icons of Chinese cities, such as Beijing's 'Bird's Nest' stadium, all condensed into one, indistinguishable megalopolis. She satirises the Chinese obsession with real estate[19]". Indeed, the titular metropolis is inspired by the urban planning of Beijing, but also Shanghai and other Chinese cities. It features the Gate of Heavenly Calm with a portrait of a panda in place of Mao Zendong's portrait, the CCTV building or the Oriental Pearl Tower. The artist, through her avatar China Tracy, sold virtual real estate to the willing, thus revealing the mechanisms behind the rapid redevelopment of Chinese cities. In addition, the digital world has become a platform for free discussion of art, urbanisation and other thorny issues affecting Chinese citizens[20] .

V. Virtual Mandala

Lu Yang (1984, Shanghai) is another artist creating virtual worlds as part of her artistic work. Like Bu Hua and Cao Fei, she will create her avatar; moreover, like the pioneer in this field, Feng Mengbo, she uses the specificity of video games to address issues such as contemporary spirituality, identity, gender, discrimination and personal freedom. A strong fascination with Japanese pop culture is also discernible in her work.

Since the late twentieth century, the Chinese, but also Koreans and other Asian nations, have imitated selected creations of contemporary Japanese culture, such as manga and anime, cosplay and the related *otaku* subculture and *kawaii* aesthetic[21]. Called *Cool Japan* for short, this phenomenon also extends to America and Europe. Yoshiko Shimada, an artist and writer, in her essay 'Afterword. Japanese Pop Culure and the Eradication of the History', states that the creation of an image of Japan in Asia through the use of pop culture aims to erase the tragic events of 20th century history perpetrated by the Japanese people, such as mass murder and slave prostitution. In this way, new generations of Asians see Japan only through the prism of 'cool' comics, films and fashion[22] . It sees them as a reflection of freedom, liberty and tolerance. This is especially true of the generation born around 1980, looking for new social role models, a generation which, according to Harold Grieves: "(...) is not only marked by conflicts between traditional values and the furtive promise of an anticipated future, but also by an outright 'fear of plunging into the brutal nightmare of a society based on a combination of totalitarian politics and materialist values'[23] "[24] .

Lu constructs virtual worlds that follow the rules typical of RPGs, combining indigenous beliefs, inspiration from Japanese aesthetics and the effects of contemporary neuroscience research. This is perfectly evident in her projects such as *UterusMan* (2013), *Wrathful King Kong Core* (2014), and *Lu Yang Delusional Mandala* (2015). The superhero of the first is an androgynous figure whose body mimics the shape of a womb, "rides in a pelvis-shaped chariot, conquers enemies by altering their DNA, even unleashes streams of blood that set off atomic explosions[25] ". The second a Tibetan Buddhist deity, Yamantaka, guardian of the gateway to hell, in the third is a genderless avatar based on a 3D scan of her face. They all traverse virtual worlds like typical video game characters. This artist's work is perfectly summed up by the art critic Barbara Pollack:

> "In the psychedelic world of Lu Yang, consciousness is the product of a 3-D printer, manufactured from a blend of neuroscience, androgynous genitalia, digital circuitry, and Tibetan Buddhism. At one moment, an angry deity is eviscerated by a team of scientists; in another, disabled patients twitch to the beat of techno music. Her work is always intriguing and often disturbing, as she foregrounds her research into scientific phenomena and religious experience without allowing this sheer mass of information to overwhelm her keen sense of style[26].

Communing with Lu Yuan's works is difficult but also absorbing. They are reminiscent of dreamlike images or even nightmares. They affect all the senses, often evoking a feeling of revulsion, while at the same time focusing attention on difficult existential dilemmas. They raise sensitive issues of sexuality and creative freedom. They pose questions about the consequences of modern technology and genetic modification. Their aesthetics, verging on kitsch, are part of the Camp

[18] Official website of the project: https://rmbcity.com/

[19] Luise Guest, *Half the Sky: Women Artists in China*, Piper Press 2016, p. 28.

[20] Xhingyu Chen, *Chinese Artists. New Media, 1990-2010*, Schiffer Publishing Ltd., Atglen 2010, p. 165.

[21] For more see Magdalena Furmanik-Kowalska, Uwikłane w kulturę. Współczesna sztuka artystek Japońskich I Chińskich [Culture Trouble: The Contemporary Art of Japanese and Chinese Women], Kirin Publishing House, Bydgoszcz 2015; Magdalena Furmanik-Kowalska, Social media art and/or interactive art? Exhibitionist: PeeP Stream by Ye Funa and Bei Ou, "World Art.", Volume 12, 2022, Issue 1, pp. 49-66, doi: 10.1080/21500894.2021.1991464

[22] Cf. Yoshiko Shimada, *Afterword. Japanese Pop Culure and the Eradication of the History*. In *Consuming Bodies. Sex and Contemporary Japanese Art,* ed. by Frank Lloyd, Reaktion Books, London 2002, pp. 186-191.

[23] Hou Hanru, *Cao Fei. A Mini-Manifesto of New New Human Beings*, Flash Art, no. 242, May-June 2005, pp. 126-127.

[24] Harold Grieves, *Any World's an Abyss*, http://www.ima.org.au/pages/.exhibits/utopia150.php.

[25] Barbara Pollack, *Lu Yang: Delusional Mandala,* COBO SOCIAL, 27 Jun. 2022, https://www.cobosocial.com/dossiers/lu-yang-delusional-mandala/

[26] Barbara Pollack, *Lu Yang: Delusional Mandala,* COBO SOCIAL, 27 Jun. 2022, https://www.cobosocial.com/dossiers/lu-yang-delusional-mandala/

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aesthetic described by Susan Sonntag in her essay titled *Notes on 'Camp' in* 1964: "For Camp art is often decorative art, emphasizing texture, sensuous surface, and style at the expense of content. (...) It offers no opportunity, (...) for a contrast between silly or extravagant content and rich form"[27]. Camp art is artificial, theatrical, affected, ironic, based on exaggeration and stylisation. We can easily find all these characteristics in Lu Yang's works, in which the protagonists have to face stereotypes, intolerance, prejudices, fears... and the viewers follow them with their own as well.

VI. Talking to a Stranger

Although he does not build his own virtual realities, Silas Fong (b. 1985, Hong Kong) nevertheless creates typical pieces of web art using networked tools. In 2008, this led to the work *Surveil the stranger*, which was presented as a computer installation with a weblog displayed on a monitor containing material submitted by his readers of the title observations made. The artist encouraged this act of voyeurism by writing on the website:

> "Because you are curious, because you feel excited. Around you, there are people that you don't even know, that you have never seen, that you are not familiar with, that you are curious of, that you have watched for some time. Surveil them, forget your sense of guilty, follow your curiosity, share what you know about them like everyone does"[28].

This was not the artist's only work addressing the issue of watching others without their awareness. In the same year, he produced *When the door opens,* a video recording behaviour on the underground, and a year later *Waiting,* of people sitting on benches at Times Square in Hong Kong. And in 2013, he invited stalkers to give him interviews, from which he edited *Interview Service Provider.*

The reactions and feelings associated with contact with a stranger are the centre of his interest, which he explores in his work using online tools. He explores the boundaries between private and public, intimacy and ostentation. The web is also a way for the artist to disseminate his art. In an interview in the catalogue of the exhibition Work in Spreading: Images of Circulation and Retranslation, he stated that:

> "In my opinion, in the contemporary art, two space [the artwork in the exhibition hall or in the media] is the same important, but most people are still more accustomed to finding the exhibition methods is more serious, more attractive; in other media, especially networks, can break through geographical restrictions, immediately display works to the world[29] ".

Another interesting work by Fong is *Memory Disorder* (2011). This time the artist explores the mechanisms involved in memory. To this end, he placed footage ranges from telecined super 8 film, web cam, photographs and digital video cameras at different qualities, which 'was displayed in a web browsing environment in multi-channels. With different internet connection speed, system of the computer and the dimension of monitor, the work can be viewed differently in the sequential arrangement and content narrated"[30]. The website imitates the activity of the human brain, which emits different memories depending on various stimuli. They are not recalled chronologically, but non-linearly, which is how internet networks work. By creating virtual worlds, in order to escape reality, we build them by mimicking our human experiences in the real world.

VII. Cute and Queer

Networked technological possibilities are also used by Ye Funa (b. 1986, Kunming), who, like Lu Yang, creates under the significant influence of Japanese pop culture. She was initiator with involvement of Bei Ou of three artistic events from *Exhibitionist: PeeP Stream* Series, called *The Book of Otaku* in December 2015, in which several unprofessional performers took part. It was shown live on line. At the same time, previously invited viewers were able to post their comments about it in a specially created chat room-thus becoming active participants in the events. Their statements, including gift icons and emojis, were included as a part of the artistic project. As Ye Funa commented in correspondence with the author of this article:

> "Live streaming culture has become very popular in China over these two years. More than 500 different apps [applications] have been in developed. We work with some of most popular apps such as *yi zhibo*, *Re Bo Jian*, *Douyu* etc"[31]. (Ye 2017).

These three episodes of *Exhibitionist* with the common title of *The Book of Otaku* include: *The Book of Kichiku, The Book of Otome,* and *The Book of Fag hag*. They exhibited various forms of the *otaku* as well as homosexual subculture[32]. All the events had the same composition and camp aesthetic. The presenters' shows were interlaced with five different scenes- stories about violence in The *Book of Kichiku*, about sexuality in *The Book of Otome,* and about devotion in The Book of *Fag Hag*. At the same time the stories are reviewed on social media communicators.

[27] Sontag, Susan (1964), 'Notes on Camp', *Partisan Review*, 1964, p. 3; https://archive.org/details/SontagNotesOnCamp1964. Accessed 20 October 2017.
[28] http://silasfong.com/news/2008/04/06/poetry-of-colors/
[29] *Work in Spreading: Images of Circulation and Retranslation* (exhibition catalogue), eds. Zuo Jing, Dong Bingfeng, Sun Jianchun, Timezone 8 Limited 2010, p. 67.
[30] http://silasfong.com/news/2011/04/10/memory-disorder/
[31] Funa Ye, email to author, 24 September 2017.
[32] Funa Ye, '*Exhibitionist Series*', 2015, http://funaye.com/archives/245. Accessed 20 October 2017.

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Exhibitionist: Peep Stream Series was an innovative art project, which on the cover on funny entourage, raised a question about contemporary consumerism, violence and admiration, the boundaries between what is public and domestic, sexual identity, and a lot of other significant social-political issues. Through the use of new technologies, it circumvents the prevailing censorship and allows networking to help in the silent struggle against discrimination and restrictions on personal freedom.

VIII. Better Reality or Battlespace ?

A symbolic, 'bang on' (figuratively and in fact) entry of women into the Chinese contemporary art scene was the performance *Pistol Shot Event*[33] by Lu Xiao (b. 1962, Hangzhou) in 1989 during the exhibition 'China Avant-Garde', presented at the National Art Gallery in Beijing. The exhibition was a summary of the avant-garde movement '85 New Wave Art' (*'85 meishu xinchao)*[34] , which, despite its innovative approach to art, was still male-dominated. Lu Xiao's action was an expression of rebellion against the patriarchality of Chinese society and art circles at the same time. Leonora Elkin comments on the performance, and on the situation of female artists in China at the time, as follows: "While this act may have signaled women's independence and strength in making art, the furor and world attention that subsequently caused a commercial rush of acquisition of post Tienanmen art was directed to work produced by men. Regardless of state directed gender equality reform, China remains largely a patriarchal society and women were not supported by galleries and the cultural establishment[35].

Lu Xiao's performance was an extremely talked-about event and made a lasting mark in the history of contemporary Chinese art, as it became, among other things, the pretext for the censorship and consequent closure of the China Avant-Garde exhibition by the authorities. However, it became an important signpost for subsequent generations of female artists such as Bu Hua, Cao Fei, Lu Yang and Ye Funa. Unlike Lu Xiao, however, they moved their battles to virtual realities and into cyberspace. Furthermore, according to Luise Guest, their work was guided by the following goal: "They have a restless desire to blur boundaries - between fine art and design, between the artworld and the commercial marketplace, between genres and conventions of artistic practice, and between eastern and western modes of expression[36] ". Similarly, male artists (Feng Mengbo and Fong Silas), for whom pop culture and new technologies have become an effective artistic medium for sharing reflections on social and political issues. In the works of all these artists, virtual spaces are both a place of escape from reality and a battleground.

[33] For more see Thomas J. Berghuis, *Perfomance Art in China*, Timezone 8, Hong Kong 2006, p. 90-91; Adele Tan, *Elusive Disclosures, Shooting Desire. Xiao Lu and the Missing Sex of Post-89 Performance Art in China* [in:] *Negotiating Difference. Contemporary Chinese Art in the Global Context*, ed. Birgit Hopfener, Franziska Koch, Jeong-hee Lee-Kalisch, Juliane Noth, VDG Weimar, Weimar 2012, p. 127-140.

[34] For more see Xu Hong, *Dialogue. The Awakening...,* p. 18; Xu Hong, *Chinese Art:* In *Art and Social Change. Contemporary Art in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Caroline Turner, Pandanus Books, The Australian National University, Canberra 2005, pp. 333-335.

[35] Lenora Elkin, *Women's Work. The History of Women's Art in China.* In Micheal Cor, Lenora Elkin, Lawrence Ly, Veronica Krawcewicz, Kelsey Stephenson, Lu Qing, *Ma-China,* University of Alberta, Edmonton 2009-2010, p. 11.

[36] Luise Guest, *Half the Sky: Women Artists in China*, Piper Press 2016, p. 11.

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Women Searching for Missing Persons in Mexico. Guidelines for a Public Policy with a Gender Perspective

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Abstract- The increase in the disappearance of people in Mexico has been the reason why women in various circumstances carry out actions at any risk to find their loved ones, others voluntarilyjoin this cause; they are called seekers and their search leadership is forceful. In this study, itis noted that there are no official figures that identify how many there are and their various situations are posed as a public problem that requires a gender analysis to understand and reveal the dimension of their realities in which they operate under a context of abandonment violence, inequalities and discrimination that derive from structural causes in a patriarchal society. It is reflected that guidelines are proposed towards a public policy that recognizes their own identity and has a transforming effect to guarantee and protect their human rights as women.

Keywords: women, gender analysis, public policy, disappeared persons, human rights.

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Women Searching for Missing Persons in Mexico. Guidelines for a Public Policy with a Gender Perspective

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Abstract- The increase in the disappearance of people in Mexico has been the reason why women in various circumstances carry out actions at any risk to find their loved ones, others voluntarilyjoin this cause; they are called seekers and their search leadership is forceful. In this study, itis noted that there are no official figures that identify how many there are and their various situations are posed as a public problem that requires a gender analysis to understand and reveal the dimension of their realities in which they operate under a context of abandonment violence, inequalities and discrimination that derive from structural causes in a patriarchal society. It is reflected that guidelines are proposed towards a public policy that recognizes their own identity and has a transforming effect to guarantee and protect their human rights as women.

Keywords: women, gender analysis, public policy, disappeared persons, human rights.

Resumen- El incremento de la desaparición de personas en México, ha sido el motivo por el cual, mujeres en diversas circunstancias, realizan acciones bajo cualquier riesgo para encontrar a sus seres queridos, otras más, se suman voluntariamente a su causa; a ellas se les llama buscadoras y su liderazgo en las búsquedas es contundente. En este estudio, se advierte que no hay cifras oficiales que identifique cuántas son y sus diversas situaciones se plantean como un problema público que requiere de un análisis de género para comprender y revelar la dimensión de sus realidades en las que se desenvuelven bajo un contexto de abandono, violencias, desigualdades y discriminación que derivan de causas estructurales en una sociedad patriarcal. Se reflexiona proponen pautas hacia una política pública que les reconozca su propia identidad y tenga un efecto transformador para garantizar y proteger susderechos humanos como mujeres.

Palabras clave: mujeres, análisis de género, política pública, personas desaparecidas, derechos humanos.

I. Introduction

The starting point of this research is the phenomenon of the disappearance of persons in Mexico, which serves as a triggering basis for another problem: women in search of their loved ones. The focus of this study aims to reveal that it is necessary to address the realities experienced by women immersed in the search for persons based on the conceptual tools of Gender Theory in order to understand the dimension of their situation, which derives from the structural systems that give rise to gender gaps; these begin with discrimination and lackof recognition as members of a family.

The analysis based on their roles is a guide to know what kind of power relations they have been involved in before, during and after the disappearance of their loved ones. For this reason, the research departs from the victimological perspective, not to distort it, but to contribute methodological approaches with the objective of understanding the scope of this problem and to propose lines of action to transform it. Seen as a social process of human rights protection (Moyn, 2012), these women moralize through their social activism and make themselves heard as mandates of hope.

In the triangle of inequality, discrimination and violence, I place special emphasis on this last element, since there are documented cases of lethal violence that has led to state and social neglect. This must be reversed with awareness and commitment to prevent and eradicate violence through actions and omissions contrary to fundamental human rights: life, security and access to justice.

The gender analysis methodology aims to quantify the number of women involved inthe search for people, identify who they are, detect the inequality of opportunities and the mechanisms that perpetuate them in this context, as well as to know their material needs, strategic interests, living conditions, their social position and, with this, explore a path that leads them to empowerment through alternative ways of solution.

In this sense, the proposal of a public policy with a gender perspective requires the design and construction of indicators that expose the realities of these women and dimension the problem, as well as serve as a basis for the projection of a public policy that transforms the situations of these women based on their human rights. The fact of starting from the bottom rung of the stormy climb towards the search for people, added to the obstacles due to their gender condition, places them in a vulnerable condition.

The incorporation of gender markers is intended to raise awareness, generate commitment and propose actions to combat the aforementioned problems; they will also help define the scope of their measurement to expose situations that may arise and provide the basis for a public policy that generates changes in favor of women.

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II. Methodology and Results

This article followed the foundations of gender analysis and its theoretical tools in order to organize and interpret information (obtained from different sources) related to women searching for missing persons. The purpose of the articulated and schematized gender analysis is to get to the different types of inequalities - such as sexism, subordination or other form of oppression- that "express, create or maintain inequality and discrimination" (García, 2013). It also allows considering information, in this case, required to cover all aspects involved in the situation of women searching for missing persons.

We hope to go beyond the roles by which these women have been identified (especially as mothers) by posing the following questions: a) How many and who are they? b) Does their gender have a differential impact on the search for people and on the problems that arise from the search itself? c) What is required to generate actions to transform the abandonment and violence in which they find themselves? and d) How to construct human rights indicators that describe and make visible the gender differences that affect them?

The purpose of these questions is to lay the foundations that, in the first place, recognize the stereotypes of gender differences as a public problem and establish the route towards a logical framework that responds to the realities of women by preparing the foundations of a transforming policy.

Finally, with regard to the findings, it is mainly recognized that violence is added to their circumstances, which result in the deprivation of life with impunity, lack of protection, state abandonment and social indifference. At the organizational level, the gender analysis highlights the lack of sensitivity and awareness of decision-makers regarding gender inequalities with respect to women.

III. The Trigger. The Systematic Disappearance of People in Mexico

Different crises will mark the history of this 21st century, one of them is the dehumanization with multiple faces manifested in the disappearance of people as a mechanism of impunity used in various parts of the world. For the purposes of this study, the dimension of this phenomenon is the starting point for the analysis of the situation faced by many women in the country who are searching for missing persons. In Mexico, the rate of disappearances is on the rise. According to the official records of the National Commission for the Search for Disappeared Persons, during the period from March 15, 1964 to November 6, 2022, the official figure amounts to 107, 204 missing and unaccounted for persons -without taking intoaccount underreporting, which suggests a higher number- (Comisión Nacional de Búsqueda de Personas Desaparecidas, 2022).

The impact is devastating because it is not limited to the victims, but transcends humanity, as highlighted by the Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED) and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (Report of the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances, 2022) when mentioning the joint responsibility of authorities and society to address this phenomenon.

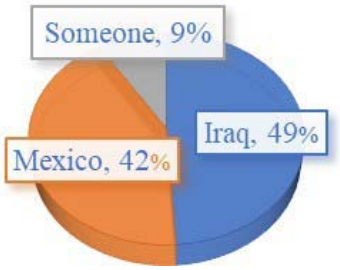
In its report, it reported that, in 2020, the countries with the highest number of missing persons were, in first place, Albania, Bangladesh, China, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, France, India, Iraq, Ireland, Mayannar, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Islamic Republic of Iran, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Thailand, Turkeyand Vietnam.

The disappearance of persons was characterized for being a strategy originallyemployed by authorities (the so-called forced disappearance) to cause fear to enemies in times of war, and the almost total impunity generated that the practice was employed not only by authorities, but also by criminal organizations and individuals in democratic times; such is the case of Mexico and Peru, main countries in Latin America that carry out such practice. In Mexico, for example, the General Law on Forced Disappearance of Persons, Disappearance Committed by Private Individuals and the National System for the Search of Persons was published in the Official Journal of the Federation on November 17, 2017 (Leyde Desaparición Forzada de Personas, 2017); this is just a proof of the acts of dehumanizationby authorities and society itself.

In the case of Mexico, most of the disappearances are attributed to criminal groups in complicity with authorities; in Peru, 67% of the complaints of this type correspond to women, girls and adolescents, a pattern that can be analyzed under a gender violence line (Infoabe, 2022). In any latitude, the trace of pain and impotence that each disappearance leaves for their loved ones is indescribable, which worsens, putting the focus of attention only in Mexico, before the expanded silence of a society that perceives it as a daily and even normalized event that subtracts dignity to the human sense.

Back to the regional context, two problems stand out in Central America: forced disappearance and the disappearance of migrants in Mexican territory or in their own countries. For example, Guatemala has 45 thousand cases of forced disappearance; El Salvador, 8 thousand. Likewise, according to the United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED), the percentage of disappearances is divided as follows:

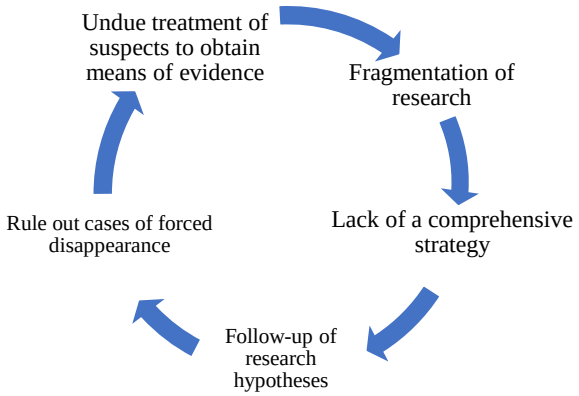
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Own elaboration. Taken from Comité contra la Desaparición Forzada en México, 2021.

Figure 1: Forced disappearance

Based on the reports of the aforementioned Committee, the main obstacles in the search for missing persons have been identified in the country:



Own elaboration. Taken from Comité contra la Desaparición Forzada en México, 2021.

Figure 2: Main obstacles in the search for individuals

In addition, this report highlights other aspects that aggravate the complexity of the criminal phenomenon, such as the forensic crisis, in which more than 52,000 unidentified deceased persons are reported. The figures speak for themselves about the dimension of this tragedy that hurts the families of missing persons and humanity. Despite the risks involved, many women go out in search of their loved ones; this is where the focus lies.

IV. The Search Engines. A Gender Approach

a) Why talk about them?

The disappearance of a loved one leads to the active participation of men and women to findthe person they have lost; however, in Mexico the leadership of women in the discovery of clandestine graves has stood out (Nmas, 2022). It is recognized that they have been a key piece in the search for missing persons; with the visibility they have obtained worldwide, they have achieved normative and institutional advances. Their actions give meaning to the verb 'to search' which, within its meanings, means "to do what is necessary to find or locate a person" (RAE-ASALE, 2022). In this sense, and without forgetting the context in which women operate, a "seeker" can be defined as a brave woman who does what is necessary to locate someone, despite the risk of losing her own life; for this reason, on many occasions they have been compared to Antigone because of the sacrifice this character made in Sophocles' tragedy.[1]

Participation in the search for missing persons is supported by the Guiding Principles established by the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances, with the aim that such practice "can be carried out fully and safely, with freedom to form or join organizations and associations whose purpose is to contribute to establishing the conditions of enforced disappearances and the fate of missing persons" (UN, 2019, p. 4); however, in the national case, these Guiding Principles have not been applied.

The searchers call themselves in different ways according to the collectives to which they belong and

[1] Sophocles' tragedy presents this dichotomy between the interests of the State and the inescapable mourning that comes to a person when he or she has lost a loved one. The tragedy has been considered as a watershed ofthe ethical and moral principles that guide society. In the subject expressed in the present article, it is linked tothe right to burial, to the possession of the physical remains of a person and to the clarification of his or her death.

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with which they self-define themselves with accurate precision in wars; one of their various appellatives is "excavators", a name with which they seek to make evident the challenges that with pain, love, fear and strength they carry out in the face of disappearances. At the regional level, the world remembers in Latin America the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo that took place during a dictatorship that marked terrible pages in the history of Argentina; their struggle left lessons of love and persevering humanity in the face of the search for their loved ones.

In Mexico, unfortunately, disappearances are accompanied by stigmatization of the victims themselves, impunity framed by complicity between authorities and criminal organizations, and even the disappeared are often held responsible for their circumstances without considering the value of human meaning. Nevertheless, the searchers take on with dignity the duty that would correspond to the State by searching for the disappeared without stigmas and with sorority.[2] Those who have already located their loved ones continue the search in solidarity with many others who have not succeeded and others join this cause aware of the risk they run, as Cecilia Flores narrates in an interview when she denounces the threats she has received from organized crime and authorities (Barragán, 2022). Unfortunately, the vast majority of women searchers find themselves under these circumstances and, in many cases, the threats are carried out with impunity prevailing.

Their realities should not be ignored, they require an analysis and a response that isnot limited to the rights of victims contemplated in the national legal framework; it isnecessary that, in the first place, they are identified as women whose lives are complex in themselves; women who experience inequalities, discrimination and violence (often before, during and after the disappearances) for the simple reason of being women, For all of theabove, it is essential to use the conceptual tools of Gender Theory to dimension the situation.

The concept of gender is understood as an identifier of inequalities based on a biological determinism between men and women, in order to reject and reverse them (García & Constant, 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to move away from the womanist vision[3] that considers, among other things, aspects that are only "women's issues"; it is necessary to distinguish the reality with its multiple inequalities. As a concept that arises from social construction, it needs to be part of this study.

Being a man and being a woman can have multiple and diverse meanings that respond to cultural and social aspects (such as race, age, social class, ethnicity, migrant status, disability, economic situation, etc.) and to the social gender order established by power relations based on sex. As far as Mexico is concerned, a patriarchal society persists in whichwomen find themselves in an inferior position in society in relation to men, without full human integration being consolidated.

Women searchers, in addition to their active participation in the disappearance of persons, are in charge of different tasks, among them, the care of their families; this fact leads them to confront the differences in power relations based on gender through winding roads. In other words, there are special characteristics that require conceptual gender tools that expose their circumstances and include cross-cutting criteria to make these particularities visible.

b) Sizing a public problem: How many seekers are there?

Returning to the questions posed earlier (see Methodology and Results), the first question that should be answered is: how many women seekers are there? There is no census or registry of them in the country, but their presence in society is increasingly visible in collectives, groups and mobilizations; there are cases of women who are given coverage in the media or even in documentaries to learn about their search actions. The National Registry of Victims (RENAVI) is an administrative unit of the Executive Commission for Attention to Victims (CEAV) whose task is to create a national registry of victims and register their data and human rights violations at the federal level.

Similarly, at the state level there are registries that register and record the victims in a registry and the violation of human rights at the state level. None of these registries includesa register or database that includes the number of people who are searching for their relatives (even less, that is structured in different sections for men and women); if there were, it would show the striking difference in the search actions of civil society, in this case, of the victimsthemselves.

As already mentioned, the official number of missing persons (107,204 as of November 2022) suggests that the number of women searchers will continue to grow as much as the tragedy of disappearances; however, so far, the registry is absent. In spite of this, manyof these voices that represent all of them are clearly heard clamoring to find their relatives, friends and acquaintances alive, demanding truth and justice in the face of the crime against humanity they have been affected by. The problem is not only theirs.

[2] Solidarity. 2. Among women, especially in situations of sexual discrimination and sexist attitudes andbehaviors (RAE-ASALE, 2022).

[3] "Es una acepción utilizada por ciertos hombres con significados diversos para definir a las mujeres que defienden los derechos de las mujeres, o para referirse a las mujeres como personas vulnerables que necesitan protección" (Mayorga, 2018, 204).

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Their courage becomes a sacrifice in the face of the helplessness of the authorities and of society itself.

c) *A public problem from a gender analysis. Who are they?*

The answer to this question will require identifying them and, in order to know this population, it will be necessary to construct indicators that allow dimensioning their reality; this requires variables that guarantee that the measurement is reliable and valid (Walker, 2017), under a gender approach that quantitatively and qualitatively measures the realities of women seekers. The data obtained from victim registries that collect information on sex, age, type of victim (direct, indirect, potential or collective), scope (federal or local), subject, among others, are not sufficient. There are no variables that provide strategic information to measure the situation of the female victims, therefore (even though it is still insufficient), open sources of their own testimonies are used for the purposes of this study.

Understanding the reality of these women requires a methodology under a gender analysis that generates useful information for the proposed objectives. Under this reflection, "it is necessary to know the scope, characteristics and evident or hidden forms of inequality in order to design or implement efficient interventions that make it disappear" (García & Constant, 2020).

Historically, women have been subjected to multiple inequalities due to their tasks and responsibilities within the family. An important aspect that must be considered is that many women play diverse roles and face their needs in conditions of poverty, deficient health services, insecurity and the roles they have to fulfill (a historical task in the division of labor based on the determinism of the sex into which they are born). For this reason, I consider it particularly necessary to delve a little deeper into their roles within society.

V. Gender Roles

As mentioned in the previous section, it is necessary to delve a little deeper into the roles that a woman plays in all the spheres and social groups in which she finds herself. Moser's framework (Moser, 1993), which is based on the triple role of women, is useful (in this case, we will frame it in terms of women seekers):

a) The productive role
b) The reproductive role
c) Organizational community role
d) The political community role

In the case of *the productive role*, we find women who carry out sporadic and occasional activities or work, either in the production of goods or generating services for self- consumption or commerce, but always focused on meeting the needs and contributing to the sustenance and well-being of the family to which they belong.

The reproductive role refers to mothers or those women who have caregiving tasks —a topic extensively addressed by Camila Ruiz Segovia and Melissa H. Jasso (2020) in the Mexican context. This research also highlights their protagonism in the truth and justice agendas in the country— and unrecognized or unpaid domestic responsibilities in the home.

However, *the community organizational role* is distinguished by the tendency to be involved in non-wage-earning activities, generally of goods for collective consumption and basic services. For this reason, it is important to distinguish the community and unpaid service roles of the women searchers whenever, thanks to their actions, clandestine graves have been found, identifying and delivering bodies to other families of missing persons. This role has caused, in many cases, the murders of women after constant threats and violence by criminal organizations and some authorities; despite this, a phrase with love and pain is repeated: "that and more is done for a child" (Universidad Veracruzana, 2020). From this angle, it is noticed that just as the clandestine graves represent "a degree of social decomposition and dehumanization that has been reached as a product of a combination of factors" (González, 2019), also the situation through which each one of them goes through represents a sample of a society in crisis of humanity.

In *the political community role*, women tend to be community leaders; there is a clear participation in decision making and organization at political levels. In this case, their collaboration in meetings with authorities and international organizations to generate actions to search for missing persons is notably active.

In addition to the description of the different roles applied in the study of women searchers, other aspects to be addressed in order to understand the gender analysis (according to Moser's analytical framework) are the following aspects:

- To know their living conditions. Reference is made to the material needs of the situation in which the women live. In many cases, the women searchers lack the basic elements or services for their own subsistence and that of their dependents.
- Understanding their social position. This approach takes into account the status or symbolic hierarchical position of women foragers in society.
- Recognize their material needs. This refers to the full awareness of the lack of means of well-being in accordance with the characteristics of being a woman; that is, based on the tasks associated with their gender roles.
- Identify their strategic interests. Priority is given to the concerns attributed to them because of their gender.

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The above elements are important to recognize the reality of the female searchers, some of whom, dedicated to informal commerce, have seen their income reduced due to the time they spend searching, which impacts the activities they carry out in terms of gender order; likewise, the effects of the pandemic have had repercussions on many of them. As domestic workers, the activities they can perform to earn any remuneration are the main support for their families, but these activities are incompatible with the search activities. Some others claim: "Searching for the disappeared was not my life project: mother of a migrant" (IBERO, 2022). More is required than the provision of a basic food basket (in the best of cases) to address their situation, although most of them do not even receive such support. There is no knowledge of the situation of each one.

None of the women are exempt from psychological or even physical harm. The health of many of them has been undermined, as they do not have the resources or social security services to combat the illnesses that afflict them. Likewise, the social abandonment of the family members of the searcher adds to the situations they have to cope with when they move away from the activities and roles they performed within their families before the search process began. If they participated in any type of free community recreational event, they are likely to be stigmatized and re-victimized for the disappearance of their family members or loved ones.

Other matrices that contribute to gender analysis and make it possible to examine resources, benefits and decisions are those mentioned by García Prince: a) Access matrix, which refers to the capacity to use certain tangible goods; b) Participation matrix, which refers to the intervention in the processes that affect the lives of the people involved; and finally, c) Control matrix, which refers to the capacity to decide on their use, results and exploitation (García & Constant, 2020). In order to exemplify the information, the following table is provided:

Table 1: Examples of Matrices

Access to…	The seekers must have access to housing.
Participation in …	Decide on their participation in the sites with respect to the search actions.
Control over …	On the destination of resources or support received.

Own elaboration

a) *Identification of the gender gaps in which women seekers find themselves*

Gender gaps respond to a quantitative analysis of the existing inequalities in the elements we have mentioned: access, participation and control of the resources referred to by García Prince. Recent data show that Mexico ranks 31st in the gender gap ranking (Expansión, 2022), thus representing the inequality of opportunities and resources between men and women in the country. On the contrary, they need to be measured and the practices and stereotypes that discriminate them need to be modified.

In this sense, it seems relevant that women searchers have elements that promote theestablishment of a real and effective process of empowerment and that transform their conditions of inequality based on gender. Although they can participate in the searches and in some decision-making during the research process, it is also necessary to go beyond that, to their integrity as women, in order to strengthen the place, they have in a social environment and eliminate the inequalities that affect them.

Since this is a gender analysis, planning will be necessary in which there will be adequate actions aimed at transforming some circumstances, prior to knowing and evaluatingthe problems surrounding these women. For this reason, it will be essential to construct indicators that produce information to learn about their situations and the obstacles to the exercise of their rights.

b) *Violence against women seekers*

It is not possible to fail to expose the violence experienced by women seekers and that arises from power relations in the face of a gendered social order; the risks are manifested with expressed or silent, but patent threats. Some experts reveal that, according to official figures,from December 1, 2018 to September 30, 2022, there have been 14 479 violent deaths of women of which 3 662 are investigated as femicides and 10 817 as intentional homicides, which indicates that only 1 in 4 violent deaths of women are investigated as femicide (Navarrete & Arista, 2022).

Unfortunately, women searchers are part of these figures; at the time of this investigation, two searchers (Blanca Esmeralda Gallardo and María Carmela Vázquez Ramírez, mothers of the disappeared) were murdered and their deaths remain unpunished. The last of these occurred on November 6, 2022, in the municipality of Abasolo, Guanajuato, when she was searched in her home and riddled with bullets. She had joined the Collective of Missing Persons of Pénjamo, Guanajuato, in search of her son Osmar, who disappeared on June 14, 2022.

With the intention of making clear the memory of some of them, since there is no record of murdered

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women searchers either, I will mention the following cases, datarecovered from journalistic information:

Zenaida Pulido, murdered on July 19, 2019 in the coastal community of Pichinlinguillo, Municipality of Aquila, state of Michoacán. 43-year-old woman. She was part of the collective Familiares Caminando por la Justicia (Relatives Walking for Justice). Subsequently, her family suffered further attacks. Activist and searcher. María del Rosario Zavala, murdered in February 2020, when she had been searching for her missing 16-year-old son for 10 months. Two years later, another of her sons was shot and killed.

Aranza Ramos. A member of the Colectivo Madres Buscadoras de Sonora, she was murdered on July 15, 2021 in the community of Ortiz, in Guaymas, Sonora. She was looking for her husband Brayan Omar Celaya Alvarado, who disappeared on December 6, 2020.

Ana Luisa Garduño. Also, an activist for the femicide murder of her daughter in Morelos; she actively participated in the exhumation of irregular graves in Morelos in the municipalities of Tetelcingo Jojutla, in addition to the genetic identification, transfer and burial of bodies found in the Forensic Medical Service of the entity.

Brenda Jazmín Beltrán. Member of the Guerreras Buscadoras de Cajeme Collective. She had been looking for her brother since 2018. She was found dead from asphyxiation in a Ciudad Obregon motel in 2022.

Rosario Lilián Rodríguez. 44-year-old woman who was looking for her son Fernando Abixahi Ramirez Rodriguez who disappeared in 2019. Member of the group Corazones sin justicia, killed in August 2022 as part of the commemoration of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearance.

Blanca Esmeralda Gallardo. She was looking for her missing daughter and was murdered on October 4, 2022 in Puebla. She was a member of the collective "A dónde van los desaparecidos". After the murder, activists promised to continue the search for her daughter. The protective measures they should have had were absent (Martínez, 2022).

As can be seen, most of them joined collectives in the face of abandonment, inefficiency and, in many cases, out of fear of the authorities themselves. The names of the collectives and organizations to which they belong identify the causes they pursue: "Las rastreadoras", "A dónde van los desaparecidos", "Corazones sin justicia", "Madres buscadoras de Sonora", "Madres guerreras", among others. The collectives express a search strategy from the civil society, preponderantly headed by women who prefer not to be mentioned due to insecurity and fear.

The achievements of these collectives have a high impact on the success of the searches, therefore, in the research of the author María Teresa Villarreal Martínez (2016) the strategies of interlocution with government authorities through dialogue tables are highlighted. Reference is made to the cases mentioned below: Fuundec (Fuerzas Unidas por Nuestros Desaparecidos en Coahuila) in 2009; from 2011 in Nuevo León, the Agrupación de Mujeres Organizadas por los Ejecutados, Secuestrados y Desaparecido; from 2012 in Xalapa, Veracruz, Colectivos por la Paz.

c) Guidelines for a transformative public policy

As I have previously pointed out, the situation faced by women seekers is a problem that requires a public policy that institutes "courses of action aimed at solving common problems or problems of general interest" (Del Tronco, 2018). For Aguilar Villanueva (2007, p. 13), public policies are strategies that "pursue objectives based on fiscal resources collected [...] they are government decisions that incorporate the opinion, participation, co-responsibility and money of private parties in their capacity as voters and taxpayers".

Based on these conceptual foundations and recognizing the elements that make up a gender analysis, a process of government actions and decisions aimed at women seekers is required that includes a MED/WID development approach with the objective of integrating them into the development process that empowers them and makes it possible to transform unequal relations between men and women.

In the generation of actions that recognize the situations of women seekers based on their gender condition, it is considered that a public policy with a gender approach would promote a social process with different components that would allow improving the conditions of equal opportunities and empowerment of such women.

With the intention of reaching this process, it is necessary to design a methodology that is useful to address such a public problem from a gender approach based on a logical framework (García, 2013) and thus generate a vision that reaches reality or, at least, comes as close as possible to it. In order to build this planning tool, it is necessary to analyze the objectives, alternatives and produce a project matrix.

In the first instance, it is essential to identify the target population, create informationbased on indicators that are strategic and reliable for this purpose; therefore, human rights measurement indicators must be considered, which have the objective of knowing the realityof the characteristics that allow the dimensioning of the public problem.

With the appropriate methodology in the construction of a public policy, it is expectedto show the consequences of discrimination both in people and in the achievement of development objectives. Likewise, it will be necessary to have alternative projects to modify the inequalities, discrimination and violence that women seekers experience as women.

d) Proposals

It is necessary to have information and a diagnosis of the situation of women seekers in order to generate efficient actions with respect to their circumstances; however, derived from these (which come to light in different media and which have been

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taken up in this research), the following general and perfectible proposals are presented, which are intended to provoke reflection on actions that contribute to the social reaction to the figure of such women, whose situations are a public problem:

1. That the work performed by the women searchers, in addition to being a right of victims, be recognized as work for the community and, therefore, deserving of remuneration that meets their needs, given the impact this activity has on their lives and the importance of these women as leaders in the searches. Even more so, considering that the search for missing persons is an obligation of the State as it is a crime against humanity.
2. That there be a list with the number of specific women searchers that is part of the National Search Registry (RENAVI), which should include variables that indicate their living conditions, economic position, material needs and strategic interests. Likewise, women from civil society who join the searches should not be left out of the registry, in order to generate mechanisms that provide greater security and protection measures at the federal and state levels.
3. That the legal frameworks that make their human rights as women seekers effective be reviewed and adapted, and that coordination and cooperation processes be carried out between state and federal entities and international organizations to improve themand supervise their compliance.
4. That the methodology of a logical framework be used in the design of a public policy with a gender perspective that identifies and responds to the material needs and strategic interests of the women seekers and, thus, articulates efforts between civil and academic society, institutions and authorities at all levels of government.
5. Promote awareness in the society in which the searchers operate towards the prevention of disappearances, allocating more space for media coverage and, in this way, promote workshops and courses with experts in forensic science in the search and identification of missing persons, in which the participation of the searchers is contemplated.

VI. Conclusions

The situation of the women searchers needs to be shown as a public problem based on the tools provided by the Gender Theory. To do so, it is possible to dimension their realities with the differential impact that occurs in the environment in which they are located as women, either as victims and/or participants or in the context of abandonment and violence that affects them.

Based on the above, the construction of a public policy is required under a gender analysis that identifies their roles, material needs, strategic interests, social position, living conditions and reveals the inequalities, discriminations and violence that affect women; it isnecessary to transform the circumstances in which they find themselves from their situationas victims.

To achieve this transformation, it is necessary to make adjustments in legal, administrative, institutional and budgetary frameworks that recognize how their work transcends socially and emphasize the guarantee of the human right that every person has: to be sought with the persistence, conviction and tenacity as they do, dignifying the value of every person. However, we must not forget the reality of the reality of the women searchers, which is marked by abandonment, inequalities and violence on the part of the State and society. Their identities run the risk of being omitted in order to be identified as members of a family.

There is a need to construct indicators to measure and monitor the protection of the human rights of women searchers as women. They need to be recognized as women and their human rights must be respected and protected; the logical framework methodology offers, for public policy planning, different paths that respond to the diverse situations that make the situation of women searchers more complex in the face of a gendered social order.

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Contributions of the Istmian Press in National Development its Beginnings and Times of the Colonies

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Abstract- The appearance of the written press in Panama dates back to the first half of the 19th century, in the midst of constant political, social and economic debates. This article is a contribution to scientific knowledge, 30 existing newspapers between 1821 and 1903 are listed and systematized. The year of launch, the intention and associated writers are taken into consideration; categorized into 5 periods attending the Justo Arosemena Institute School of Journalism, which had its first graduation in 1956.

Keywords: panama, national newspapers, postcolonial era.

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Contributions of the Istmian Press in National Development its Beginnings and Times of the Colonies

History of the Isthmian Press Colonial Period

Garrit Geneteau Delis

Abstract- **The appearance of the written press in Panama dates back to the first half of the 19th century,in the midst of constant political, social and economic debates. This article is a contribution to scientific knowledge, 30 existing newspapers between 1821 and 1903 are listed and systematized. The year of launch, the intention and associated writers are taken into consideration; categorized into 5 periods attending the Justo Arosemena Institute School of Journalism, which had its first graduation in 1956.**

Keywords: panama, national newspapers, postcolonial era.

I. Introduction

According to the Dictionary of the Royal Academy, the written press is the set of publications printed on paper, with varied periodicity, whose objective is to inform and entertain society. Newspapers are part of the most widely distributed written press. According to Saint Charles in (Arona Castillo, 2016), newspapers "are the best instruments of the history of an era, whatever point of view from which one wants to study it." They are published daily and offer general information on political, social, economic, geographical, cultural, sports, judicial and educational issues of a region, country, territory or state (Kayser, 1974). For UNESCO, newspapers are all printed media published in a certain country, intended for the public, whose publications constitute a continuous series, with the same title, with a certain periodicity not exceeding oneyear, dated and numbered copies (Arona Castillo, 2016).

In Panama, the written press has its origins at the beginning of the 19th century, when José María Goytía imports to the isthmus the first printing press destined for the propagation of liberal doctrines (Castillero, 1958), the first newspaper Miscelánea del Istmo (Luna Vásquez, 2012), edited by Juan José Argote, Manuel María Goytía, Juan José Calvo and Mariano Arosemena. It was a four-page weekly with a small format, which appeared every Sunday. This newspaper supported the independence of the Isthmus from the Spanish crown and its adherence to Colombia (Candanedo, 2003).

Despite the wide variety of newspapers that have circulated in Panama, there are few scientific documents, published in Spanish and open access that can demonstrate the contribution of newspapers in the historical development of the national context or, present a systematization or record of these newspapers as a strategy to understand the evolution of the country. In this document we present chronologically the newspapers that emerged, evolved and became extinct from the Isthmian press, during the period of the Unification to Colombia -1821 to 1903, attending the School of Journalism of the Institute Justo Arosemena, located in Panama.

II. Developing

First Period

In the period of union between Panama and Colombia, the government created in 1823 an organ of information: *The Official Gazette of the Department of the Isthmus* which, towards the end of 1825, was called *Gaceta del Istmo de Panamá* (Del Rosario, 1968) in (Estrella de Panamá, 2021). Published the administrative acts of the Government of Colombia. In 1823, the first official newspaper of the Department under the name of Gaceta Del Gobierno Independent of Panama. Apparently it is not a new newspaper but a name change of the Gazette founded the previous year. He is followed in order by *The Prosecutor* and *The Law* and later *The Panamanian* (Castillero, 1958).

Table 1: Newspapers of National Circulation. 1821-1827

Name of the Newspaper	Year	Description
THE OFFICIAL GAZETTE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ISTHMUS	1823	Sole Interest of its Publishers it accepted subscriptionsto cover the expenses of paper.
THE COMET OF THE ISTHMUS	1823	It presented as its motto the following thought of Rousseau: “When Legislation Weakens, Customs Degenerate; But then the judgment of the censors will dowhat the force of the laws has not done”.

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THE PROSECUTOR AND THE LAW	1824	Printed Fortnightly. His motto was "The Constitutioncan be free and not be the citizen", De Monstesquieu.
THE PROSECUTOR		The Previous Journalistic Work continued. He was a Constitutionalist and in his editorial he frequently recor- ded "The prosecutor has kept quiet all the time that his voice was insignificant"
THE DISCOVERER OF THE ISTHMUS	1827	He called himself the brother of the prosecutor, with whom he later merged. It Was Characterized By Pointing Out The Irregularities Of The Administration O· n Duty.
GREAT CIRCLE ISTHMIAN	1827	Newspaper Linked To Liberal Ideas. Its editors were Mariano Arosemena, José de Obaldía and José Agustín Arango.

Second Period

Researchers of the matter place this stage between the 1830s and the mid-19th century, in which economic conditions, the California gold mines, the construction of the Panama railroad, among others, facilitated the proliferation of approximately 30 newspapers, Table 2, characterized by theirpolitical ideal, their euphoria for having achieved their "own virtue". His primary desire was the permanent validity of these ideals, fighting at all costs the contrary outbreaks.

Table 2: Newspapers of National Circulation. 1930-1953

Name of the Newspaper	Year	Description
THE UNION	1830	Edited by the company of José Ángel Santos and company. Its printing wasprohibited by General Espinar, whom he frequently lashed out.
THE CONSTITUCIONAL OF THE ISTMUS	1831	Weekly. Promoted the publication of information on the latest administrative provisions and others of public interest. The annual subscription cost tenpesos and was distributed at home.
FREE TRADE	1834	By Mariano Arosemena. Circulation was free and he defended what was called the greatly plan of free transit trade.
THE WATCHMAN OF THE ISTHMUS	1834	Sunday publication. He was greatly concerned about the prosperity of the Isthmus, as stated in one of his slogans.
THE FRIENDS OF THE COUNTRY	1834	Published by Arosemena, Obaldía and Arango. He was a tireless defender of the progress of Panama.
THE POLITICAL MONKEY	1836	Printed by Jaime Bousquet. Small format and only two pages. Its content of a satirical nature offered intentional parables and business epigrams.
THE CLADY FOX	1836	Posted by José Ángel Santos. Sunday. It was one of the most important political humor publications of the time.
THE POLITICAL MONKEY	1836	It happened to the POLITICAL MONKEY, which had caused a great impact in the political circles of the Isthmus. It had the same characteristics of theprevious publication.
TELESCOPE OF BOTH SEAS	1841	It appeared when there was important news to communicate, the monthlysubscription costing four reales (Four Five-cents) at the time.
THE POPULAR PRIMER	1843	Fortnightly, He dealt preferentially with the problems of the people and the isthmian education. The annual subscription cost six reales at the time.
THE NEWS OF THE AMERICAN ISTHMUS	1847	It reported on the most recent independence events and the latest commercial note.
THE MAIL WITCH	1848	His concern for current politics was evident. The achievement was accompa-nied by the following explanation: "This newspaper will come out when convenient and is distributed in the store of the lady, María José Paredes."
THE PANAMANIAN	1849	Weekly. Posted by José Ángel Santos. It is distinguished for being one of the most prestigious and important newspapers during the last century.
THOSE WISHING FOR INSTRUCTION	1849	Published by the students of Panama Higj School (Colegio Panamá), who declared it "Literary and News".
OFFICIAL CHRONICLE	1849	Due to its official status and its relative duration. Crónica Oficial is considered one of the most important publications of the mid-19th century.
THE STAR OF PANAMA	1853	Published by The Star Editors (Editorial La Estrella). General newspaper, standard size, currently in circulation.

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Among the most prominent newspapers

The Union dedicated itself to fighting and fighting for the integrity of the Isthmus under a democratic government. The war on Press Censorship made itself felt with the closure of all printing presses and the suspension of the Union, which, because it has such an ephemeral and important life, is classified as the first victim of a tyranny in the territory of the Isthmus.

The Isthmus Constitutional was created for government acts. After the movement of General Espinar was suffocated and the Isthmus returned to the bosom of Gran Colombia, other newspapers with very different tendencies arose, perhaps less conservative and more broad-minded.

The Commercial Trade, founded by Mr. Mariano Arosemena to defend the Department's fiscal affairs. Colonel Tomás Herrera founded the Civic Society Los Amigos del País in January 1831 and to sustain their patriotic brotherhood, they founded a newspaper with the same name, whose publication lasted until 1841. With this newspaper, the first outbreak of informative journalism appeared on the Isthmus, since local and foreign news and daily incidents and armed conflicts that occurred in other provinces were published in its columns.

The Star of Panama "La Estrella de Panamá" centennial newspaper, founded in 1853 It was born from a need for information for gold prospectors heading to the legendary California, and a century later it continues to be published, fulfilling an admirable function, a newspaper that places it among the most prestigious from the Continent and even from the Old World. Since its foundation, this newspaper kindly cared about the social and cultural improvement of the isthmus.

The Star of Panama "La Estrella de Panamá", in force today, has been a true champion of Spanish-American interests, an eager propagator of whatever could redound to the good of the various sections, a defender of their rights and the disseminator of all the information it could procure on its immense natural resources.

Third Period

This third period opens with the *Aspin Wall Courier,* published in English in the city of Colón, although with a small section in Spanish. Due to the work on the Trans-Isthmic Railroad, something that publicists took advantage of to found this body that has been published for more than a year.

Subsequently, a series of jocular-style newspapers burst into national life. From their titles it is clear that a wave of humor had invaded the Isthmus and that things were taken half jokingly and half seriously. The content of its columns is a valuable source of information to learn about the customs of that time. Some of the titles that are known are: *The Triangle, The Tarantula, The Comet, The Muleteer, Death, Boot Foot, The Whip. (El Triángulo, La Tarántula, El Cometa, El Arriero, La Muerte, Pie Bota, El Látigo). With clearly political tendencies, The Tribune "El Tribuno"* appeared in 1856. El Pueblo made its appearance in 1858 supporting the presidential candidacy of Don José Domingo de Obaldía.

La Nueva Era began publication in February 1861 to strongly oppose the government of General Santiago de La Guardia. and closes this third period El Istmeño, published in 1867, organ of the Conservative Party and during the validity of the Constitution of Rio Negro, which, despite being "an organized anarchy", enshrined the rights of the law on printing and advocated because it was the press that assumed the responsibilities of their actions.

Fourth Period

In this time of a true literary awakening, we must include the first journalistic organs that appeared in the interior provinces, thus demonstrating that humanistic concerns were spreading beyond the valleys and mountains of our countryside. We have to mention in the foreground *The Torch "La Antorcha",* a handwritten newspaper that circulated in David, Chiriquí, around the years of 1854. Then appears *El Coclesano,* in Penonomé, written by the illustrious Simeón Conte and Manuel de Jesús Quijano. In Santiago de Veraguas, *El Republicano* is published. *La Voz De Chitré* made its first edition in 1882.

The Isthmus was also distinguished by its literary effervescence, a latent restlessness animated the intellects and the newspapers flourished with different tendencies. El Cefiro was published to collect the literary production of a romantic generation that throbbed poetry and emotion.

Fifth Period

This period is known as the pre-independence period and *The chronicler "El Cronista trail"* opens. Then follows *The Republican Union* "*La Unión Republicana"* in 1884, a political newspaper founded to support the candidacy of Dr. Justo Arosemena for president of the Sovereign State of Panama. *The Idea* "*La Idea"* in 1888 with a fighting spirit and fight for independence. Finally, The Regeneration "*La Regeneración"* appears in 1897, advocating for an immediate separation from Colombia, in order to organize The Isthmians "El Istmeños", a free and sovereigngovernment.

III. Conclusion

It is concluded that, during the post-colonial period, there was an ephemeral proliferation of newspapers with national circulation, newspapers that supported the expressions of liberal thought, politics and the separatist movements of Panama from Colombia. Only the Star of Panama remains today.

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Diversity of Maternal Image in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

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Abstract- Despite the rise of scholarly interest in maternal theory and observation, motherhood studies is a relatively new concern in India which has started over the last decade. Usually, the concept of "Motherhood" has the societal obsession with biological affinity associated with dominant social mores around "sacrosanct" marriage. Scholars of motherhood studies have tried to show the difference of mother, mothering and motherhood. They have included 'non-biological mother' in it, which has received less concern and, to some extent, no critical consideration. The theorization of "Motherhood", mostly under feminist consideration, was dealt by renowned scholars like Adrienne Rich, Sarah Ruddick and, Barbara Katz Rothman, who have tried to show motherhood in a different light, unlike the traditional representation of it. Collecting information from motherhood studies and queer theory, this article will focus on the diverse images of motherhood sketches by Man Booker-winning Indian writer Arundhati Roy in her second novel, The Ministry of Utmost Happiness.

Keywords: motherhood, non-biological, queer motherhood, heteronormative, diversity.

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Abstract- Despite the rise of scholarly interest in maternal theory and observation, motherhood studies is a relatively new concern in India which has started over the last decade. Usually, the concept of "Motherhood" has the societal obsession with biological affinity associated with dominant social mores around "sacrosanct" marriage. Scholars of motherhood studies have tried to show the difference of mother, mothering and motherhood. They have included 'non-biological mother' in it, which has received less concern and, to some extent, no critical consideration. The theorization of "Motherhood", mostly under feminist consideration, was dealt by renowned scholars like Adrienne Rich, Sarah Ruddick and, Barbara Katz Rothman, who have tried to show motherhood in a different light, unlike the traditional representation of it. Collecting information from motherhood studies and queer theory, this article will focus on the diverse images of motherhood sketches by Man Booker-winning Indian writer Arundhati Roy in her second novel, The Ministry of Utmost Happiness. Apart from representing the traditional mother image as Jahanara Begum, this study will highlight non-biological and queer mother figures like Tilo, Anjum, Saeeda, Revaty and, Mariam Ipe to show the prevalence of diverse maternity outside the dominant paradigm of "Motherhood". Moreover, the diversification of maternal image in this study will showcase how the ideology of "Motherhood" is stereotyped and influenced by the hegemonic forces that are supported by the heteropatriarchal institutions of power. The diverse ideas of motherhood in this study will also challenge the prevailing heteronormative motherhood in the patriarchal society.

Keywords: motherhood, non-biological, queer motherhood, heteronormative, diversity.

I. Introduction

In her book *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, Adrienne Rich states that, "All born of women are inevitably connected to motherhood, but cautions that the images, ideals, archetypes, and theories of the archetypal mother are sanctioned and promoted by patriarchal culture to reinforce the conservatism of motherhood as an 'institution' and so convert it to an energy for the renewal of male power" (*Rich, 15*). This quotation of Rich suggests that, the concept of *Motherhood* is flavored with patriarchal norms and expectations of society. Hence, the common definition of *Motherhood* declares it as a collective group, to the state of being a mother, and to the qualities attributed to mothers. So, it is quite clear that *Motherhood* is not simply biological or innate, instead, it is also a social institution that functions ideologically and politically. However, the study of "Motherhood" has come to light in the last few decades. *The Encyclopedia of Motherhood* states that, *Motherhood* has emerged within the academy in the previous thirty years as a significant issue of scholarly inquiry (*The Encyclopedia of Motherhood*, vol. 2, 831). Hence, with the advancement of time, the concept of *Motherhood* is also changing and expanding its consideration area. For understanding the true nature of *motherhood*, it is necessary to explore the use of the words: mother, mothering, and motherhood. These terms are interconnected but each of them underlines some different meaning and function. Mother is the individual, the identity of a person, and "mothering" can be defined as the action of taking care of the child. Lastly, *Motherhood* is generally understood as the social system in which mothering is performed. External forces like physical, social, emotional, and scientific forces are influential in the execution and establishment of the concept of motherhood. *Motherhood* in the patriarchal society is perceived as the biological inter-connectedness between the mother and child and, the mother is regarded as the sole caregiver of the child and the father is almost free from this responsibility. Sarah Hardy clarified this archetypical conception of motherhood by saying that, "the idea of a good mother is deployed through material and discursive spaces in order to mobilize subjectivities that are socially adapted and useful" (*Sarah Hardy, 16*). Thus, in the heteronormative social system, *Motherhood* turned into an institution of child care almost only by the mothers. Adrienne Rich exclaimed that, "[motherhood], the institution, has been a keystone of the most diverse social and political systems" (*Rich, 13*). The devaluation of motherhood in a patriarchal society is well described by Rothman, who stated, "Our bodies may be ours, but given the ideology of patriarchy, the bodies of mothers are not highly valued. The bodies are just the space in which genetic material matures into babies. In a patriarchal system, even if women own their bodies, it may not give them any real control in pregnancy. Women may simply be seen to own the space in which fetuses are housed" (*Rothman, 1994*). From the traditional point of view, it is noted that, *Motherhood* is a set of ideals determined by the established traditions and inherited history of a society, which sees women as

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primarily responsible for meeting their children's daily needs.

In the 21st century, due to political, cultural, and most of all, social developments, a variety of mother roles has emerged and made it impossible to define *Motherhood* exclusively. Several feminists and sociologists have differentiated between the act of giving birth, which implies the biological aspect of *Motherhood*, and the rearing of children, which means the sociological part of *Motherhood*. They argue that while the first is biologically possible for all women, the latter lies in their personal choice (*Maxwell, 3*). Thus, they have tried to emphasize that, *Motherhood* is related to more about upbringing and care of a child than giving birth. Martha Joy Rose makes this new idea of *Motherhood* more explicit by saying, "to reiterate, mothers are defined as those performing mothering labor within social constructions of motherhood: their individual perspectives and experiences as well as a framework of fluid and varying gender differentiations and the oppositional constraints imposed upon them" (*Rose, 30*). Thus, motherhood can be defined with a more fluid identity where anyone, who ensures a child's basic needs and safety, can occupy the place of mother. Sarah Ruddick expands the periphery of *Motherhood* by asserting that, like women, men can also perform the duty of a mother. She said, "A mother is a person who takes on responsibility for children's lives and for whom providing child care is a significant part of her or his working life" (*Ruddick, 40*). Rothman also goes beyond the concept of *Motherhood* based on gender, biology, or genetics by establishing the idea of the family based on "more than genetics, more than lineage," towards "families made interracially, interculturally, internationally, gay and lesbian, as alternative kinds of families" (*Rothman, 19*). As a mother, she expresses her dream of a world based on communal feelings regardless of discrimination. In her *Book of Life,* she asserts, "The world that I live in, and the world that I want for my children, is not a world of scattered isolated individuals, and not a world of walls. It is a world of communities, of social solidarity, of connectedness between individuals and between communities, a world in which people and communities grow from and into each other" (*Rothman, 233*). Hence, it can be seen that the renowned scholars of motherhood studies have challenged the pre-existing assumptions of *Motherhood* and introduced it with much fluidity. Considering their definition of *Motherhood*, a plethora of variations in mothers can be found which include typical mothers, single mothers, childless mothers, child-free mothers, LGBQ mother, and so on.

Arundhati Roy is one of the world's prominent writers who guides her pen to sketch the social evils and exceptional problems of society. She dreams of a world of equality that will free from subjugation and oppression. As a conscious observer of the age-old social norms, Roy could easily understand the inner mechanism of the patriarchal world that held women subordinate and less powerful. Along with representing numerous sociopolitical problems prevailing in the post-modern world, she also deals with gender role issues, which gets its clear expression in her second most striking novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness.* In this novel, she delineates transgender issues with other political issues prevailing in India. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* achieves its specificity by representing *Motherhood* in a different light. In this novel, she showcases some mother figures who fall beyond the norms of the established archetypical concepts of *Motherhood*. By introducing these non-traditional mothers, Roy tries to establish the idea that, for becoming a mother, one does not need to have any biological interconnectedness. Moreover, by representing queer mothers like Anjum and Saeeda, and a childless mother like Tilo, Roy has dismantled and challenged the fabricated, age-old patriarchal conception of *Motherhood.* This study will represent the diversity of maternal images created by Roy in the novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* and match those mother figures according to the above-mentioned categories of mothers.

II. Discussion

Erma Bombeck writes in her book *Motherhood: the Second Oldest Profession* that, "Motherhood is not a one-size-fits-all, a mold that is all-encompassing and means the same to all people … No mother is all good or all bad, all laughing or all serious, all loving or all angry. Ambivalence runs through their veins" (*Bombeck, 10*). This assertion of Bombeck suggests the diversity of *Motherhood* prevails in the contemporary world as present-day mothers are going through a time of transition. Arundhati Roy, the writer, and social activist, concentrated on penning down maternal issues with diverse topics such as India's nuclear weapons and American power giant Enron's activities in India. While talking about her principles of writing, she stated, addressing the audience at Sharjah International Book Fair, "I have never been particularly ambitious. I am not a careerist; I am not trying to get anywhere in a career. It is more important to engage with society, to live it, to have different experiences" (*The Indian Express*, 2012). Her social engagement leads her to scrutinize the exceptional and hidden issues and the problems of society. She has dealt with the sensitive issues like gender roles and motherhood. Roy has become successful in demonstrating her efficiency in walking beyond the circle. This mastery of dealing with almost untouchable issues gets its strong expression in her second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* where she focuses on the dynamic representation of maternal images, most of which fall outside the traditional conception.

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Among the mother figures pictured in the novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* the most archetypical one is Jahanara Begum, the mother of Anjum. She is represented as the most submissive mother, who fulfills all the conditions of the patriarchal notion of *Motherhood*. She exemplifies best the term 'Motherhood as Institution' coined by renowned feminist scholar Adrienne Rich. In her book *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Institution and Experience,* Rich has talked about *Motherhood,* which is reinforced by patriarchy. This notion of *Motherhood* doesn't seem to treat women as an individual human being. Jahanara is showcased as the submissive wife of Mulaqat Ali, who had to conceive the fourth baby after three daughters with the guilt of not bringing any male child into this world. Jahanara keeps obliging her husband and plays the role of an 'ideal mother'. While talking about the nature of motherhood as an institution, Rich asserts, "Institutionalized motherhood demands of women maternal 'instinct' rather than intelligence, selflessness rather than self-realization, relation to others rather than the creation of self. Motherhood is 'sacred' so long as its offspring are 'legitimate'" (*Rich, 42*). All these requirements of *Motherhood* in a heteronormative circumstance are fulfilled by Jahanara Begum, who continues to obey her husband without any self-assertion. Rich also suggests that institutional *Motherhood* keeps the fathers free from childcare responsibilities. In contrast, the mothers always remain under tremendous pressure to provide the best health, education, and moral well-being to their children. Thus, when the hermaphrodite child Aftab was born, she voluntarily took all the guilt and responsibilities upon herself for giving birth to an 'abnormal' child. Keeping the secret of Aftab's gender, she lets Mulaqat Ali be free from all anxieties. Besides, when Mulaqat Ali decided to have Aftab a gender-changing surgery, she did not feel it essential to opine about it. When Anjum left home, as a mother, Jahanara could not claim before Mulaqat Ali for the stay of Anjum as an intersex in this house. She met Anjum secretly at Khawabgah without the knowledge of her husband. All these submissions of Jahanara Begum represent her as the best example of *Motherhood* as an institution.

Several scholars in the post-modern era have denied the idea of mother as the primary caregiver. For de-centering emphasis on the traditional, heteronormative family and establishing the intersections of *Motherhood*, they put more importance on the care for the child than the biological connectivity. Sara Ruddick, in her *Maternal Thinking* introduced the idea of an 'ethics of care', where mothers could work for world conciliation and the preservation of the life of all the children. Ruddick tried to show mothering as a 'work or practice' and she attempted to separate it from the act of giving birth. She declared that, this would allow the biological mothers to relinquish care of the child to others, perhaps the father or adoptive parents (*Ruddick, 76-94*). The scholarly experiment on alternative models of family and kinship leads to probing the theory and practices of non-biological, adoptive, and other non-normative forms of *Motherhood*, among which 'queer mother' is the most understudied area of research even these days. Margaret F. Gibson, in her work "Queer Mothers and the Question of Normalcy", diverted the readers' age-old concentration away from the presumed gender, family, and sexual relations of the dominant culture to a new ideology of *Motherhood* by including-

i) Women
ii) Who have queer sexual identities, particularly as lesbian, bisexual, and queer-identified (LBQ) women and/or women in romantic/sexual relationships with other women, and
iii) Who parent children, whether as adoptive parents, foster parents, birth or "biological" parents, social or "non-biological" parents, or stepparents, either with or without legal recognition (*Gibson, 12*).

Gibson also strengthened her idea of queer motherhood by stating that, "Queering motherhood must attend, not only to motherhood as it occurs in overarching discourses and institutional restrictions, but also to everyday activities, material inequities, and embodied relationships" (*Gibson, 10*). In the novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* Anjum, the transgender, adopted the girl named Zainab and reared her as a mother. She can be considered a queer mother, who deviated from all the established social norms about *Motherhood*. Roy shows the possibility of re-envisioning motherhood through the lens of "trans subjectivities" by representing Anjum's urge for being a mother. Her concern and unconditional love for Zainab serves to shed light on the oft-neglected stories of Hijra mothers in Indian society. Anjum helps all the outcasts and marginal people in the community by providing service through Jannat Guest House and Funeral Services. Hence, she turns into a universal mother figure. Her proclamation reveals her motherly instinct, "I am Anjuman. I'm a mehfil, I'm a gathering. Of everybody and nobody, of everything and nothing… Everyone's invited" (*Ministry, 8*).

The concept of trans parenting is demonstrated by another queer mother, Saeeda, who holds the following position concerning affection for Zainab. When Anjum left for Gujarat, her vacated place as a mother of Zainab was held by Saeeda. The significance of her mother role can easily be predicted when Zainab introduced her as 'mummy' and Anjum as 'Badi Mummy'. Later, Anjum consigned to Saeeda all her motherly responsibilities for Zainab and shifted to the graveyard. This collaborative parenting by this two transgender can be termed polymaternalism, which Shelley M. Park introduced as "a way of moving toward a notion of families as coalitional entities requiring practices of solidarity among and between the various

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inhabitants of diasporic homes" is validated in the novel in differing contexts (*Park, 13*). Through queer mothers like Anjum and Saeeda, Roy challenges the traditional concept of *Motherhood* and focuse on the lived reality of LGBTQI populations in India.

Another image of *Motherhood* can be added in motherhood studies by mentioning the single mothers, which is quite common in contemporary patriarchal social circumstances but never accepted as a part of normative parenting. Moreover, the term 'single mother' does not cover all the aspects and circumstances related to a single mother. Valerie Heffernan & Gay Wilgus tried to demonstrate the limitations of the concept of a single mother by stating that,

> We recognize the myriad ways in which mothers can find themselves parenting alone, whether by circumstance or by choice, as well as the multiple ways in which this can affect their mothering decisions and identities. We use the blanket term 'single mothers' here in full knowledge of its shortcomings, but as a means of pointing to how culture, the media and public discourse have tended to marginalize mothers whose family situations do not follow normative patterns, and make sweeping assumptions about their experiences (*Valerie Heffernan & Gay Wilgus, 4-5*).

Hence, it can be assumed that, a single mother does not mean only being the mother of a fatherless child, rather, there may be some unnoticed, unaccepted patriarchal circumstances that compel a mother to be single. Contemporary critiques have also asserted that single mothers can be single either by personal choice or by some forces of social norms. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* Maryam Ipe, a Syrian Christian and mother of Tilo, is such a kind of single mother who has given birth to Tilo without wedlock. Due to the conservatism and social stigma that entails unwed *Motherhood* in India, Tilo herself was adopted by her unmarried biological mother. Here, the transition of biological *Motherhood* into disguised queer motherhood occurs due to the social forces supported by patriarchal ideology. However, Maryam remained single but at the same time fulfilled the responsibility of a mother by rearing Tilo. Thus, she challenged the mainstream ideology of *Motherhood*.

The twentieth century saw a cultural shift from an understanding of *Motherhood* as a social expectation, a 'civic duty' towards its conception as a lifestyle choice. At the same time, the terms 'voluntary childlessness', 'childless by choice', and 'child-free' have emerged since the 1970s as counter-discourses to the traditional narrative of childlessness (*Plant, 7*). From this statement by Plant, two diverse images of *Motherhood* can be traced. One is 'voluntary childlessness' and another is "child-free". Irene Reti, in her introduction of the book *Childless by Choice: A Feminist Anthology (1992),* stated, "Women who choose not to have children 'live in the negative, in the absence, always on the defensive. The women whose voices are represented in the anthology offer many different explanations for their decisions to live child-free (*Reti, 1*). Thus, it can be said that childlessness may be either voluntary or non-voluntary. In some very exceptional cases, the mother can choose to be a disguised child-free mother for the safety of the child. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* Revathy, a female guerrilla member of the outlawed Communist Party (Maoist) in Andhra Pradesh, refuses to adopt *Motherhood* forced upon her by the agents of a state in the most brutal way possible. Notably, she does not terminate her pregnancy, nor does she resign herself to the life of a traditional mother. Instead, for the baby's safety, she brings her to Delhi, far away from the dangerous geopolitics of Andhra Pradesh. In this way, Revathy fulfills her role as the biological mother by giving birth but renouncing her institutional duty of *Motherhood* by refusing to nurture a child born out of a violent rape. The concept of a child-free mother gets its best expression through Revathy.

Arundhati Roy's novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* not only depicts women who are queer, but also women, who adopt *Motherhood* in extraordinary circumstances. Thus, they strongly deviate from the norms of biologically induced *Motherhood* or *Motherhood* within the realm of heteronormative marriage. Tilo is one of the most important characters who depict 'voluntary childlessness' (biologically) and contradicts the conventional construction of *Motherhood*. Tilo demonstrates non-biological *Motherhood,* which is one of the areas of concern for sociologists and scholars of maternal studies. Dorothy Dinnerstein is one of the scholars, who denies biologically-based notions of *Motherhood,* and assertes that, *Motherhood* is a social practice which alters. She considered that the subordination of women was directly related to the social requirement for them to nurture their children, a problem increased by the extended period of dependence on human infants (*Dorothy Dinnerstein, 112*). Even after being married for 14 years, Tilo does not give birth to her biological child deliberately. She herself is a queer child who is adopted by her biological mother. Tilo's mother never admitted to public that, Tilo is her natural child. As a result, the mother-child bondage between them is never intense. Mother-blaming theory is applicable to demonstrate the cause of Tilo's disconnection from her mother and her decision to embrace non-biological *Motherhood*. John Bowlby was an influential scholar who argued that infant's care at the early age are very important for the mental health of the child. The theory of maternal deprivation was developed by him, who argued that, a child could be damaged if, for any reason, he/she is deprived of mother's care for at least the first three years of life (*John Bowlby, 13*). Hence, Maryam's inadmissible attitude towards Tilo affects her psychologically, which influences her to decide to renounce biological

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Motherhood. Thus, even after being pregnant with her Kashmiri lover Musa's child, she decides to undergo an abortion because she does not "wish to inflict herself on a child" (*Roy, 397*). But Tilo does not avoid *Motherhood*. She kidnaps a baby from the streets of Jantar Mantar in Delhi, and ensured her safety by providing proper care. In this way, Tilo introduces herself as a newly separated single woman who has never given birth. Her bold choice of renouncing biological *Motherhood* and picking up an abandoned girl from the street showcased her as a woman of denying the concept of conventional heteropatriarchal family. Tilo took shelter in Jannat Guest House, where she and Anjum collaboratively raised the adoptive baby, whom they named Baby Udaya Jabeen. Anjum and Tilo's act of adopting a non-biological child and collaborative concern for their positionality and safety in the heteronormative world puts more emphasis on their choice of *Motherhood*. This colaborative parenting is termed "chosen parenting" by Laura V. Heston that puts much emphasis on individuals with no biological or legal ties to the children they are parenting and additionally with no "romantic connection to their child's other parents" (*Heston, 255*).

III. Conclusion

The traditional notion of *Motherhood* in the male chauvinistic society holds mothers as the sole caregiver of their biological offspring, and ignore the individuality and potentiality of mothers. Defining *Motherhood* following any fixed ideology is quite tricky since mothers find themselves in multiple roles with the advancement of time. Consequently, diverse images of *Motherhood* can be found outside the heteronormative mother role. Most scholars and theorists of motherhood studies have agreed that motherhood studies should not be limited to the area of biological spare. *Motherhood* is not only bondage based on physical connectivity, but also responsibilities for ensuring the child's safe future. Many influential scholars root their arguments in a maternal body, while some others argue that, *Motherhood* cannot simply be ignored as a gender-specific and probably gender-constructing experience. The critiques of the modern era suggests to evaluate mothering as a symbolic act, a social position, available to any, and all who choose to do maternal work. Arundhati Roy is a socialist writer who has observed *Motherhood* in as many diverse ways as she can. She surpasses all the borders of age-old patriarchal norms concerning *Motherhood*. She tries to sketch a realistic image of diversified *Motherhood* through the characters who do not fit into to standardized rules and regulations of society. Thus, by creating characters like Anjum and Saeeda, Roy shows that transgender can be a mother. The 'born to be free character' like Tilo, challenges the patriarchal notion of *Motherhood* and demonstrates that a woman can choose not to give birth to her child or she may do opposite. Maryam Ipe and Revaty unfold the dark norms of society by showing how the societal obsession with *Motherhood* based on sacred marriage forced a mother to turn her biological child into an adoptive one. The helplessness and subjugation of a typical mother is masterfully represented by Jahanara Begum. All these atypical mothers work as mouthpieces for Roy to unfold the true nature of motherhood and suggest changing the stereotypical idea of *Motherhood*.

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Hermeneutical Study of Psalm 23: 6 in the Light of Insecurity in Nigeria

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Abstract- In recent times, some Christian faithful in nearly all Church traditions in Africa especially Nigeria have always close worship services or any Christian event in churches or homes with the recitation of Psalm 23: 6 as against the long standing tradition of closing these with Benediction or Grace. Attempt is made in this study to investigate the reasons for this change. In this Study, Psalm 23:6 is interpreted in the light of Security which is fundamental to the survival of the African people. The study adopted the African Biblical Hermeneutics which provides a useful lens to reread biblical text in African Context so that the Bible can be relevant in African situations and times. It was discovered that the book of Psalms was very popular and used by ancient Israel and by the early Christians. Portions of Psalms were written on parchment, clothes, houses, and any other things that are associated with them. They recited, sung and prayed from the Psalms. In the same way, some churches in Nigeria held that the contents of the Psalms are divinely potent and as such they recite, sing and pray from the Psalms especially in difficult times.

Keywords: christian faithful, recitation of psalm 23: 6, security, africa yoruba, interpretation and Nigeria.

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Abstract- In recent times, some Christian faithful in nearly all Church traditions in Africa especially Nigeria have always close worship services or any Christian event in churches or homes with the recitation of Psalm 23: 6 as against the long standing tradition of closing these with Benediction or Grace. Attempt is made in this study to investigate the reasons for this change. In this Study, Psalm 23:6 is interpreted in the light of Security which is fundamental to the survival of the African people. The study adopted the African Biblical Hermeneutics which provides a useful lens to reread biblical text in African Context so that the Bible can be relevant in African situations and times. It was discovered that the book of Psalms was very popular and used by ancient Israel and by the early Christians. Portions of Psalms were written on parchment, clothes, houses, and any other things that are associated with them. They recited, sung and prayed from the Psalms. In the same way, some churches in Nigeria held that the contents of the Psalms are divinely potent and as such they recite, sing and pray from the Psalms especially in difficult times. Psalm 23: 6 can be used to invoke security and success on those who desire them in the same way as words of incantation *(ogede)* are used among the Yoruba ethnic group of Nigeria. It is the view of the African Christians that whenever, Psalm 23: 6 is recited by a Christian, instead of enemies *(ota)* following the individual, it is goodness and mercy shall follow the person all the days of his life. Since there are evils *(ibi)* accompany every day of the week this Psalm serves as immunity against all evils. The Christian is confident that his security is guaranteed and as such he is not afraid because God will watch over him at all times. Therefore, Biblical scholars and interpreters must ensure that the Bible and its contents are correctly contextualized to bring real-life interest that are of great concern to the Africans into the text for a better interpretation and understanding of the text under consideration.

Keywords: christian faithful, recitation of psalm 23: 6, security, africa yoruba, interpretation and Nigeria.

I. Introduction

The book of Psalms is widely read and cited among Christians in Africa especially in African Indigenous Churches in Nigeria. This is based on the view that the book is more potent than all other books of the Bible. Psalms are like the trends in modern speech act theory which maintains that words are potent and effective (Nasuti, 2001: 144). The book of Psalms is the best and most cited book in the Old Testament especially by the African Indigenous churches because of the believe that its contents are most potent and effective words in the Bible. Most times, the African Indigenous churches draw their prayer items, sermon topics and songs from the contents of the Psalter (Awojobi, 2021: 9).

Psalm 23 is one of the most familiar Psalms in the Bible (Crenshaw, 1993: 127-135). This Psalm the most loved book of the Psalms. Basically there are two ways of reading this Psalm: as a Shepherd to a Sheep and as God to a human. Africans would prefer that the Psalm be read as God to a human for the purposes of protection, provision, healing and success in all aspect of life which are the fundamental concerns of the African people (Adamo, 2018: 9). Psalm 23 is one of the classical Old Testament passages depicting Yahweh as Shepherd. The words and imagery of this Psalm will certainly accompany the faithful reader 'all the days of his life'. In this Psalm we encounter an individual who confesses trust in the good Shepherd who will provide in all circumstances. Psalm 23 stands out as the most familiar book in the Old Testament (Botha, 2015: 283-300; Kennedy, 1984: 14-21; Merrill, 1965: 354-360; Morgenstern, 1946: 13-24). Most Christians love Psalm 23 and as such it is referred to as 'American icon' (Holladay, 1993: 359) and 'nightingale of the Psalms' (Segal, 2013: 103) by some biblical scholars. This Psalm is believed to have filled the whole world with 'melodious joy' (Segal, 2013:103).

Western scholars in biblical studies have given different theme and titles to Psalm 23. As far as May is concerned the theme of this Psalm is 'the Lord Is My Shepherd' (1994:14). To Segal, it is 'With Me' (2013: 103), while Kraus sees it as 'Security in the Goodness and Mercy of Yahweh' (1988: 302-305). According to Schaefer (2001: 58), the theme that better describe the Psalm is 'You are with me'. Bullock sees it as 'The LORD Is My Shepherd I lack nothing' (2015: 166). Waltke and Houston calls it 'The Good shepherd' (2010:416) but to Watts it is 'Psalm of Trust, Thanksgiving and Praise' (1984395-406). To my mind all the above interpretations are good and appropriate as theme of Psalm 23 in the light of its contents and the context of the writer at the time of the composition of the Psalm. However, this study will focus on Kraus theme for Psalm 23 as 'Security in the Goodness and Mercy of Yahweh'. This agrees with Psalm 23: 6 in the African (Yoruba) context. African (Yoruba) approach to the interpretation of Psalm 23:6 as way of understanding the mind of some Yoruba Christians of Nigeria whenever they read or recite Psalm 23:6. They recite it every day before leaving their homes

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for work or business of the day for the purpose of protection, security, success, healing and provision. There are churches in Nigeria that will always close their worship services with the recitation of Psalm 23:6. This study seeks to investigate the reason for the recitation of Psalm 23: 6 in worship services after prayer and benediction or doxology in some churches and by some individual Christians in Nigeria. Psalm 23:6 is interpreted in the light of Security which is fundamental to the survival of the African (Yoruba) people. The study adopted the African Biblical Hermeneutics. The central focus of this method is to provide a useful lens to reread biblical text in African context. This is done to make the Bible relevant to the African situations and times. This actually distinguishes African Christianity from western Christianity. As far as the Africans are concerned, the western way of reading the Bible are too foreign to meet the urgent needs of Africans (Adamo, 2005: 39). This is not to jettison or abandon the western interpretation but to make an African contribution to the existing scholarship. To this end a review of the western interpretation of Psalm 23:6 will be done before we consider the African Yoruba approach to it.

II. The Text in Hebrew and English Language

[6] אַךְ טוֹב וָחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל־יְמֵי חַיָּי וְשַׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית־יְהוָה לְאֹרֶךְ יָמִים׃

[6] Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever (Psa 23:6 NIV)

a) *Psalm 23 in Western Biblical Scholarship*

This Psalm opens with a powerful metaphor: 'The Lord is my Shepherd' (Adamo, 2018: 7).Shepherd is a title that is synonymous with a King. This metaphor is used as a polemic argument that the vocation of a King is protection, guidance, care, and even substituting ones' life for the people (Botha, 2015: 283-300). A metaphor is when a word or a phrase is used to describe somebody or something else, in a way that is different from its normal use, in order to show that the two things have the same qualities and to make the description more powerful (Hornby, 2015: 976). Metaphor does not describe by comparison but only identifies by equation (May, 1994:115-119). Many symbols are actually metaphors, because they are based on analogies within human experience. A symbol could be culture and history bound. That explains why the symbol of God as a Shepherd was so prominent in Israel's early history. In a society where the main means of subsistence was sheep-farming, a symbol such as that of the Shepherd could easily be associated with God (VanGemeren, 1997: 1225). As far as Foreman (2011) is concerned, Psalm 23 possess one of the powerful animal metaphor in biblical literature as he classified its imagery as mammal and pastoral. Yahweh being described as a Shepherd in this Psalm reflects the image of the God of Israel as seen in many Old Testament Scriptures (Exod. 15: 13, Psa. 77: 21; 78: 52-53) and prophetic oracles in exile and the return of God's people from exile to their home in Jerusalem. From the content of Psalm 23, it appears the author is very familiar with the history of the ancient Israel and when they went through (Botha, 2015: 283-300). The author made use of the life and experiences of the Israelites in the composition of the text under review (Bullock, 2015: 169). However, many scholars are of the view that Psalm 23 originated from late Babylonian exile and was recited in the post- exilic Israel (Adamo, 2018: 6).

It is clear from this Psalm that the Shepherd considered it his responsibility to provide for the Sheep. The Sheep is expected to be loyal, rely and depend absolutely on the Shepherd for provision, protection and guidance from time to time. According to Botha, Psalm 23 best describe the story of an individual in the journey of life (2015: 283-300). Goulder (2006: 463-473) opined that this Psalm may have been composed by a King in ancient Israel because it has national overtones and as such regarded it as a royal Psalm. Also, this Psalm fit into the royal Psalm in the light of Yahweh being referred to as King and Shepherd in ancient Israel, the Author thus becomes a vassal to the King (Merrill, 1965: 354-360; Tanner, 2004: 270-283).

b) *Literary Analysis of Psalm 23*

This Psalm is a Psalm of trust and confidence in Yahweh for his goodness in life and in the life to come. The Psalmist speaks of Yahweh in a personal way as his Shepherd and guidance. Psalm 23 can be divided into three parts and three basic images namely: Shepherds verses 1-2, the wanderer (verses 3-4) and the host, verses 5-6 (Weiser, 1998: 226-231; Clifford, 2002:130). Since God is the Shepherd all that is required from the Psalmist is to trust absolutely in Yahweh.

The first word of the Psalm, "The LORD", evokes the rich images of the provision and protection of God of covenant. The Psalmist maintains that the LORD is "my" Shepherd I shall not want. The common thing in ancient Israel was to address God as "our" Shepherd (Deut. 6: 4). This expression of the Psalmist is an indication that the God of Israel is also the God of individuals as well. The metaphor of the Shepherd point to the relationship between God and his Children (Baker & Kohlenberger III, 1994:823). A good Shepherd is primarily concerned about the welfare of the Sheep and as such provides all the necessities of life for the enjoyment of the Sheep. Due to the trust and confidence that the Psalmist has in the Shepherd he or she is not afraid of evil; 'because you are with me'. In verse 5, the Psalmist changed the image of God from being a Shepherd to a host in a banquet serving a meal in the presence of his enemies (Adamo, 2018:3). Verse 6 is the response of the Psalmist to the care of the shepherd

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or Yahweh. The Psalmist left the realm of imagery to return to the reality of the Temple, where he summarizes God's benevolent attributes that are eternal: 'goodness and love' (VanGemeren, 1997: 1105). As a result of what the Shepherd is doing to him 'surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever'.

It should be noted however that even though, Psalm 23 is a type of individual lament, it also has a communal dimension as it made allusion to exodus traditions with reference to the wilderness- 'even though I walk through the valley and the shadow of death' (Clifford, 2002: 130). In this Psalm, there is interplay of individual and communal elements where the idea of Yahweh is my Shepherd as well as a Shepherd of the people is written (Adamo, 2018: 3).

c) Hermeneutical Study of Psalm 23: 6.

This section is an attempt to critically consider Psalm 23:6 with the aim of understanding the original intention of the Psalmist. The verse started with the Hebrew word אַךְ surely meaning indeed, certainly, verily or truly. As mentioned earlier, verse is the response of the Psalmist to the care of the Shepherd or Yahweh on him. It is an expression of confidence and absolute trust in the ability of the Shepherd that he will care for him in every situation. The word surely occurs 150 times in biblical literature (Hollady, Lexicon). The word surely is a participle that primarily conveys the idea of emphasis and when translated, it is done in accordance with the context either an emphatic affirmative (Gen 26:9; Gen 29:14; Exo 31:13; Jer 16:19; Lam 2:16 etc.) or an emphatic restrictive (Gen 7:23; Gen 9:4; Gen 18:32; Exo 12:16; Lev 11:4; Num 22:20, Josh 22:19; 1Sam 8:9; etc.). In an emphatic affirmative manner it often introduce with emphasis the expression of a truth newly discovered or perceived, especially in colloquial language, For instance, *surely, no doubt*; (Gn 26:9) אַךְ אִשְׁתְּךָ הִוא *of a surety,* lo, she is thy wife! 29:14, 44:28, Ju 3:24, 20:39, 1 Sam. 16:6 *surely* the anointed of יי is before him! (25:21, Je 5:4, Psalm 58:12, 73:1, 73:13). Also, the most common use of "surely" is to translate a verb when emphasized by its own part, as "Thou shalt, surely die" (Gen 2:17) for "dying thou shalt die". In this sense "surely" is sometimes varied by "of a surety" (Gen 15:13, etc.) without the slightest difference in meaning. In the context of Psalm 23: 6, the Psalmist is confident that Yahweh is there for him at the time and as such his security is guaranteed.

Besides, the Hebrew word 'goodness' בּוֹט is a verb meaning good, beneficial, pleasant, favorable, beautiful, delightful, glad, joyful, precious, correct, and righteous, happy, and right. The Hiphil means to actively engage in good, "to do well," good things, or goodness. הַבָּוֹט good, welfare, in contrast to the stative meaning of the Qal. It can refer to doing practical good to someone else (Num 10:29, 32) or it can refer to doing the right thing. Both Jehu (2Kings 10:30) and David (1Kings 8:18) are thus praised. The verb frequently occurs with an impersonal subject, "It is good....".This idiom may describe a state of happiness or well-being as in describing the illusory well-being of the Hebrews in Egypt (Num 11:18), the well-being of a slave with a good master (Deut 15:16), and Saul's restful contentment resulting from David's music (1Sam 16:16).

Five general areas of meaning of good can be noted:

1) Practical, economic, or material good. This is a form of goodness that can be seen physically. It is tangible, visible, touchable and perceivable by humans. בּוֹט "Good" is well attested referring to practical or economic benefit. Good fruit (Gen 2:9) and the grain of Pharaoh's dream (Gen 41:5, 36) were good for eating. Other practical goods denoted by this term are: the promise of victory denied to Ahab (2Chr 18:7); hospitality and friendship (Gen 26:29); beneficial counsel (2Sam 17:7, 14); general economic prosperity (1Kings 10:7); agricultural prosperity (Hos 10:1, ASV); and God's intentions (Amos 9:4).
2) Abstract goodness such as desirability, pleasantness, and beauty. This is a situation of desire or `dreams being fulfilled. בּוֹט is used in respect to a wide variety of abstract perspectives. For instance, a good name is better than descendants in respect to fame and reputation (Isa 56:5). For abstract meanings, "goodness of heart" refers to joy (Deut 28:47; Isa 65:14). The "goodness" of God which can be appealed to for forgiveness (Psa 25:7) is something akin to kindness or graciousness. "Goodness" of taste and knowledge may refer to correctness (Psa 119:66).
3) Quality or expense: It connotes something that is standard and has value. בּוֹט may include ideas of superior quality or relative worth. As such it describes the "pure" gold of Havilah (Gen 2:12) and high quality perfumed oils (Song 1:3; RSV "anointing oils"). Quality craftsmanship is thus designated (Isa 41:7), as is quality or nobility in human character, as when Moses is described as "goodly" (i.e. "noble"; Exo 2:2).
4) Moral goodness: It denotes something that is ethically correct. An important usage of this term refers to moral goodness. The command, "Depart from evil and do good" (Psa 34:14) clearly contrasts "good" with moral evil. The "good way" which God will teach his reluctant people refers to moral life (1Kings 8:36). "Good" and "right", often occur as parallel terms for moral goodness (2Chr 14:1; 2Chr 31:20).
5) Technical philosophical good: This appeals to the minds and thought of the people. Ecclesiastes 2 tells the reader that there is no higher good than the

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life of hedonistic pleasure (v. 24) and, in the context, raises the question of what is the "Good" which man should seek (Eccl 3:2; Eccl 8:15).

Some usages blend two or more of the areas of meaning discussed above. The "good land" of the Old Covenant included practical, economic, and esthetic overtones (Deut 1:25; Josh 23:13). Likewise, the concept of God as "good" is rich with the overtones of all possible meanings of the term "good" (1Chr 16:34; Psa 145:9). In light of the above discussion, each individual usage must be clearly examined to see which of the above meanings are possible.

Furthermore, the Hebrew word חֶסֶד 'mercy' is translated kindness, loving kindness, mercy, love, bowels, and "to be inclined to," "to be gracious," "beneficence," "pity," and "compassion". in biblical literature. Mercy is the opposite of judgment. The Psalmist knowing his nature as human who is fallible knew that he needs the mercy of Yahweh in his life journey. The expression 'surely, goodness and mercy…' is an indication of assurance of Yahweh's continuous care and support for the Psalmist. Mercy is (a) an essential quality of God (Ex 34:6,7; Dt 4:31; Ps 62:12, etc.); it is His delight (Mic 7:18,20; Ps 52:8); He is "the Father of mercies" (2 Cor 1:3), "rich in mercy" (Eph 2:4), "full of pity, and merciful" (Jas 5:11); (b) it is associated with forgiveness (Ex 34:7; Nu 14:18; 1 Tim 1:13,16); (c) with His forbearance (Ps 145:8, "Yahweh is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great loving kindness"; compare Roman 2:4; 11:32); (d) with His covenant (1 Ki 8:23; Neh 1:5), with His justice (Ps 101:1), with His faithfulness (Ps 89:24), with His truth (Ps 108:4); mercy and truth are united in Prov 3:3; 14:22, etc. (in Ps 85:10 we have "Mercy and truth are met together"); (e) it goes forth to all, "Yahweh is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works" (Ps. 145:9). (f) it shows itself in pitying help (Ex 3:7; Ezr 9:9 f), supremely in Christ and His salvation (Lk 1:50, 54,58; Eph 2:4); (g) it is abundant, practically infinite (Ps 86:5,15; 119:64); (h) it is everlasting (1 Ch 16:34,41; Ezr 3:11; Ps 100:5; 136 repeatedly). "Mercy" חֶסֶד is a distinctive Bible word characterizing God as revealed to men. "Mercy" is used of man as well as of God, and is required on man's part toward man and beast (Dt 25:4; Ps 37:21; 109:16; Prov 12:10; Dan 4:27; Mic 6:8; Mt 5:7), "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy"; (25:31-46; Lk 6:36), "Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful"; (Lk 10:30ff; Lk 14:12-16; Jas 3:17). In the New Testament "mercy" is associated with "grace" in the apostolically greetings and elsewhere. From all the foregoing it will be seen that mercy in God is not merely His pardon of offenders, but His attitude to man, and to the world generally, from which His pardoning mercy proceeds.

d) Psalm 23: 6 in the Light of Insecurity in Nigeria Context

It is important to understand the African perspective of security and success before attempting to interpret the text. Africans are always faced with situations that are overwhelming to them. The level of poverty, insecurity and health issues are very high in Africa. All human efforts to bring solution to these issues have failed. This is the reason why an average African will always seek divine intervention on issues of concern. Before the advent of Christianity, African had their own ways of solving security challenges. However, when the White Missionaries came African were told to discard their how approach to issues of security, health, poverty and the likes without concrete alternatives (Adamo, 2005b: 31-52). In their search for solutions to these issues of concern, they discovered the book of Psalms which appeared to offer the desired solutions to their challenges. For instance, among the Yorubas of South Western Nigeria, the contents and the forms of Psalms are classified as *Ofo/OgedeDafidi,* David's incantations, etc. (Kalu, 2006: 140). The contents of the Psalms resemble the African traditional incantations (ogede). This made them to memorize some portions and apply them to their challenges.

Psalm 23 is classified as a Psalm of confidence and trust in Yahweh in the face of insecurity. The structure of Psalm 23 in the African context is classified according to African real life interest and what it can offer to the readers – protection, provision, healing and success (Adamo, 2018:8).This position agreed with the way the Psalms were used in ancient Israel with the verbs רמש[guard] and רצנ[protect] inscribed on them (Schmitz 2002:818–822; Smoak 2010:421–432, 2011:75–92). A good example is the existence of handful of Phoenician and Punic amulets from the first millennium with the same verb 'guard' and 'protect' inscribed on their surfaces (Schmitz, 2002: 818-822; 2010: 421-432; Smoak, 2011: 75-92). Some Jews in ancient Israel wrote the words of the scripture especially Psalms on their bodies, singing and chanting these words in their daily meditations and prayers to Yahweh (Awojobi, 2021:13).

In Nigeria, Psalm 23 is written on vehicles, parchments, doors, clothes and on the body as talisman, recited, chanted and sung with unwavering faith or trust in God (Adamo, 2005: 78b). Psalm 23: 6 is always recited immediately after the benediction in most Pentecostal and Evangelical churches in Nigeria. Reading, wearing and reciting of this portion of the Psalter is consider as prayer for divine intervention or miracle in the life of the person performing the activity as it happened to the Author. This is an indication of cultural and religious parallel between ancient Israel and the Africans. As far as Brown is concerned recitation, chanting of Psalms orally as divine prayers for guidance

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and casting out demons started during the third-century Christian era (2014).

According to Adamo, Psalm 23: 6 is a Psalm for success in all life endeavors. To an average African, success is having many wives and children, passing examination, making good profit in business, going on a journey and safe return, securing an employment, success in court cases and many other things (2005a: 90-95). To realize the above successes, many Africans go to any length. For instance, some of them go to traditional doctors for medicine or charms that will make them to succeed in any of the above endeavors. Africans inscribe the words of this Psalm on their clothes, paper, bill boards, vehicles, houses, and anything that is associated with them with the believe that the content of the Psalm will be a voice for them in the time of trouble.

As mentioned earlier, the study is premised on African biblical hermeneutics which attempted to bring real-life interest that are of great concern to the Africans into the text for a better interpretation and understanding of the text under consideration. Such life interest may be security, provision, and protection. The African biblical interpreter is not keenly interested in the historical, social and literary dimensions of the text but how the text can meet the daily challenges faced by the African people (Adamo 2015b: 31–52b). In other words, Africans are keenly interested in the solution a text can bring to an issue that is confronting them at the moment.

To facilitate understanding of the African concept of Psalm 23: 6, the interpretation shall be done under the following headings:

1. Surely

As mentioned earlier, the word 'surely' אַךְ means, certainly, truly, verily, and indeed. It is used in most case as a response to an action or a statement of fact. The Psalmist in Psalm 23: 6 declared: "surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me, all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever and ever". אַךְ טוֹב וָחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כֹּל יְמֵי חַיָּי וְשַׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית יְהוָה לְאֹרֶךְ יָמִים: This is a declaration of absolute trust and confidence in Yahweh for security, protection, healing, success, provisions and all that is needed in life. This suggests that the Psalmist is very certain of his security and success in Yahweh. This confidence and assurance is because of who Yahweh is and what he has done for the Psalmist (vss 1-5). In verse 5, the phrase: 'You prepared a table before me in the presence of my enemies' should be noted. The 'enemies are of great concern to the Africans. The Yoruba word for enemy is *ota*. Two types of enemies (ota) can be identified in Africa. They are: the world (aiye) and humans (eniyan). Some of the human enemies in Africa include: witches, wizards, sorcerers and the likes (Adamo, 2005b: 77). One of the main prayer of an average African is how to overcome 'enemies'. It is held among many Africans that every human has enemies. These (ota) 'enemies' are said to be responsible for evils in our society. There is a Church in Nigeria called Mountain of Fire and Miracles. The content of their prayers averagely is against (ota) enemies. They always pray that their enemies (ota) should die by fire. This is because of the view that no *ota* will wish anybody well. This group of Christians look for potent words from the Bible especially the book of Psalm in their prayer against the enemy, *ota*.

According to Dopamu, the adherents of African traditional religion use potent words called incantations *(ofo)* pronounced on charms *(epe)* on their enemies (ota) (1987: 58). The effects of this on the so called enemies may be abnormal behavior, death, loss of property, sickness, poverty, loss of job, ill luck, demotion and all sort of evil (1987). The 'enemies' will prevent a person from achieving divine purpose in life. *Ota* could be any person who does not wish another person well. David, the writer of most part of the Psalms had many *ota*. There were *ota* from within and without for David. If not for divine intervention David would not have been King in Israel (2 Sam. 1-6). There is parallel between David's experience and most Africans today.

It is held among the Africans that delay, sicknesses, poverty, insecurity, and any form of misfortune are the activities of *ota* (Awojobi, 2021: 7). The word 'surely' is interpreted *'nitoto'* in Yoruba language connote something that is true, certain, factual and cannot be reversed. The word *'nitoto'* instill confidence and trust in the speaker. It removes any iota of doubt or fear in the speaker. *Ota* could not stop Yahweh in carrying out his purpose for the Psalmist. Therefore, *'nitoto'* Yahweh will handle all *Ota*- 'enemies' of destiny. The Yoruba word *'nitoto'* (surely), expresses the absolute trust or confidence in the person being addressed. It is like drawing conclusion on a matter after a critical examination and being convinced beyond reasonable doubt. It is an affirmation of something that has been trusted and tested to be correct or true by all and sundry.

2. Goodness

The word 'goodness' means something that is good. The "goodness" טוֹב of God is demonstrated in his abundant care and promises (Baker & Kohlenberger III, 1994: 824). As far as the Psalmist is concerned, instead of enemies pursuing him, it is now 'goodness טוֹב and mercy' חֶסֶד of Yahweh pursuing him. In other words, the 'enemies' (*ota*) have been rendered powerless. The Psalmist is now being accompanied by goodness and mercy all the time. The Yoruba interpretation of goodness is *Ire*. *Ire* is the opposite of *ibi,* bad. It is held among the Yoruba that *Ire* is the absence of failure, evil, mishaps and anything that brings sadness to a person. The Yoruba believe that

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there are certain evils that do accompany each day. There is an adage in Yoruba that says: *ti ibi, ti ire la da le aiye*, meaning 'the world was created with good and evil'. In other words, evil and good are together. This is in accordance with the Bible verse that that says: 'redeeming the time for the days are evil' (Eph. 5: 16). *Ibi* always follow humans from time to time. The recitation of Psalm 23: 6 on a daily basis by an African Christian will prevent evils that are associated with a particular day from following him. Some Nigerians inscribe Psalm 23:6 on their clothes, vehicles, houses, and wrist bands that they wear from time to time. Others recite or read this Psalm into water and drink it or sprinkle it on the vehicle before they embark on a journey. In African Indigenous churches, Psalm 23 is considered a protective Psalm that can be chanted, written on parchment and worn on the waist, arm or neck, or hung on motor vehicles as a talisman and it represents the presence of God Almighty (Adamo, 2018: 8).

This is because no evil can stand in the face of good in the presence of God. The Yoruba believe that goodness is an indication of the presence of God around the Christian.

In Nigeria, some Prophets or Pastors in African Indigenous Churches have different types of programs that normally held early in the morning every day. They are usually prayer programs between 5- 6:30am every day. In this type of program, the sermon is short sermon but the prayer time is long. Most of the prayer point are drawn from the Psalter. The program is designed to attack all evils that may accompany the day and that is the reason why it is held in the early hour of the day. African Christian believe that after the prayer program, the day is already secure because the evils of the day as been render powerless. One of such prayer program is the one organized by Prophet Samuel Olukosi of the Christ Apostolic Church, Achievers District Church Council, Offa, Kwara State Nigeria. It is a Radio program tagged: "Goodness at Dawn" between 6- 6:20am on Mondays to Friday every week. Christians from all walks of life tune to this program to know what God has in stock for them for the day. In this program prayers are offered on the felt needs of participants. It is like early morning tonic or drug of prevention against evils that are likely to surface during the day. There are testimonies of answers to prayer by the participants (Olukosi, 2022). One of the main emphasis of this program is prevailing Prayer against enemies *ota* of all sorts that may prevent a person from realizing divine purpose daily. People with differs life threatening problems consult Prophets like Olukosi for special prayers and counselling on their issues of concern.

3. Mercy/Love דסֶחֶ

Mercy is an event or a situation to be grateful for, usually because it stops something unpleasant (Hornby, 2015: 973). The Hebrew word דסֶחֶ means 'mercy' (KJV), 'steadfast love' (NRSV), 'constancy love' (NEB), unfailing love' (NIV). This conventional term refers to unfailing help to the helpless (VanGemeren, 1997: 1107). Mercy is one of the attributes of God. It is held among the Yoruba in Nigeria that every human needs divine mercy to survive every day. The 'love' of God is conventional commitment to bless his people with his promises. Instead of being pursued by enemies who seek his destruction, God's love will follow the Psalmist. He does not need to be afraid, because God's loving care follows him throughout life (Baker & Kohlenberger III, 1994: 824). The love or mercy of God is very important to the Africans in view of the situation around. Africa especially Nigeria is going through tough times at the moment. Our roads are death traps and this make citizens to be afraid to travel in the day or night. Nigerian roads have claimed many lives. Kidnappers, bandits and Fulani herdsmen are having a field day in Nigeria. The kidnappers in Nigeria are so bold that they kidnap people in their homes, schools, churches, on the road and request for huge amount of money as ransom before their victims would be released (Awojobi, 2021:9). Sometimes after the payment of ransom the victims are killed. In most cases whenever beautiful girls or ladies are kidnapped they are married off by the kidnappers. Terrorist activities are on the increase. The Fulani herdsmen, Boko Haram and Bandits of all sorts have taken over our forests and roads. Nigerian always pray for journey mercies (*aanu irinajo*) before embarking on either long or short journeys. Kidnapping has become one of the most lucrative business in Nigeria today. Travelers on Nigerian road are in the attitude of praying before leaving their houses, praying when the vehicle is about to take off and praying when they arrive at their destinations. Today, travelling has become nightmares for some Nigerians. It is a situation where divine intervention is urgently needed. Surely, 'goodness and mercy' of God must be sought and obtained before embarking on a journey in Nigeria.

4. Dwelling in the house of the Lord forever

The Psalmist mentioned that he will dwell in the house of Yahweh forever. The Hebrew word מָלֹוע forever, everlasting, evermore, perpetual, old, ancient, world, always, eternity and so on is used more than three hundred times to indicate indefinite continuance into the very distant future, the meaning of the word is not confined to the future. There are at least twenty instances where it clearly refers to the past (Awojobi, 2021: 6). This implies that he has chosen Yahweh's residence as his place of continuous abode for security purposes. This is an indication that that sorrow and sighing will give way to joy, gladness and uninterrupted happiness for the Psalmist (Cf. Isa. 35: 10). This is a reminder of what happened in Mesopotamia, where the worshippers of the gods dedicated statues in the temple of their god to symbolize the individual continuous

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presence before their god that would guarantee divine safety, peace and goodness (Adamo, 2018: 8). This is in agreement with the theology of inviolability of Jerusalem in the time of Prophet Jeremiah when the Temple was considered as a symbol of safety for Israel. To this end, Israel believed that as long as the Temple remain in Jerusalem the city cannot be attacked and destroyed by enemies.

As far as the Nigerian Christians are concerned, the house of the Lord is a place of security. In African Indigenous Churches, whenever some people are going through challenges, they are asked by Church leader to come and spend sometimes in the Church to seek the face of God. This sometimes means that they will leave their homes to live in the Church for some days. Some Christians spend some days on the mountain to pray to God for solution to their problems. The African Indigenous Church leaders encourages their members to go to the mountains to prayer whenever they are going through divers' problems.

III. Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is clear that Psalms were very popular among the ancient Israel and the early Christians. They considered the words in the Psalms as potent and as such used them in their worship services for healing, success and security. Portions of Psalms were written on parchment, clothes, houses, and any other things that are associated with them. They recited, sung and prayed from the Psalms. This suggests that the words of the Psalter were memorized and recited in ancient Israel for security purposes. In the same fashion, the African Christians especially in Nigeria see the Psalter as divine, per formative and potent. The words of the Psalms can be used to achieve healing, success and security. Psalm 23: 6 is recited among some Christian faithful in Africa especially Nigeria for the purposes of security of lives and property. This is because of the high level of insecurity in the land. This Psalm serves as immunity for the Christians against evils that accompanies every day. The Christian is confident that his security is guaranteed and as such he is not afraid because God will watch over him at all times.

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Acknowledgments

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Authors can submit papers and articles in an acceptable file format: MS Word (doc, docx), LaTeX (.tex, .zip or .rar including all of your files), Adobe PDF (.pdf), rich text format (.rtf), simple text document (.txt), Open Document Text (.odt), and Apple Pages (.pages). Our professional layout editors will format the entire paper according to our official guidelines. This is one of the highlights of publishing with Global Journals—authors should not be concerned about the formatting of their paper. Global Journals accepts articles and manuscripts in every major language, be it Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, French, German, Dutch, Italian, Greek, or any other national language, but the title, subtitle, and abstract should be in English. This will facilitate indexing and the pre-peer review process.

The following is the official style and template developed for publication of a research paper. Authors are not required to follow this style during the submission of the paper. It is just for reference purposes.

Manuscript Style Instruction (Optional)

- Microsoft Word Document Setting Instructions.
- Font type of all text should be Swis721 Lt BT.
- Page size: 8.27" x 11'", left margin: 0.65, right margin: 0.65, bottom margin: 0.75.
- Paper title should be in one column of font size 24.
- Author name in font size of 11 in one column.
- Abstract: font size 9 with the word "Abstract" in bold italics.
- Main text: font size 10 with two justified columns.
- Two columns with equal column width of 3.38 and spacing of 0.2.
- First character must be three lines drop-capped.
- The paragraph before spacing of 1 pt and after of 0 pt.
- Line spacing of 1 pt.
- Large images must be in one column.
- The names of first main headings (Heading 1) must be in Roman font, capital letters, and font size of 10.
- The names of second main headings (Heading 2) must not include numbers and must be in italics with a font size of 10.

Structure and Format of Manuscript

The recommended size of an original research paper is under 15,000 words and review papers under 7,000 words. Research articles should be less than 10,000 words. Research papers are usually longer than review papers. Review papers are reports of significant research (typically less than 7,000 words, including tables, figures, and references)

A research paper must include:

a) A title which should be relevant to the theme of the paper.
b) A summary, known as an abstract (less than 150 words), containing the major results and conclusions.
c) Up to 10 keywords that precisely identify the paper's subject, purpose, and focus.
d) An introduction, giving fundamental background objectives.
e) Resources and techniques with sufficient complete experimental details (wherever possible by reference) to permit repetition, sources of information must be given, and numerical methods must be specified by reference.
f) Results which should be presented concisely by well-designed tables and figures.
g) Suitable statistical data should also be given.
h) All data must have been gathered with attention to numerical detail in the planning stage.

Design has been recognized to be essential to experiments for a considerable time, and the editor has decided that any paper that appears not to have adequate numerical treatments of the data will be returned unrefereed.

i) Discussion should cover implications and consequences and not just recapitulate the results; conclusions should also be summarized.
j) There should be brief acknowledgments.
k) There ought to be references in the conventional format. Global Journals recommends APA format.

Authors should carefully consider the preparation of papers to ensure that they communicate effectively. Papers are much more likely to be accepted if they are carefully designed and laid out, contain few or no errors, are summarizing, and follow instructions. They will also be published with much fewer delays than those that require much technical and editorial correction.

The Editorial Board reserves the right to make literary corrections and suggestions to improve brevity.



Format Structure

It is necessary that authors take care in submitting a manuscript that is written in simple language and adheres to published guidelines.

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Author details

The full postal address of any related author(s) must be specified.

Abstract

The abstract is the foundation of the research paper. It should be clear and concise and must contain the objective of the paper and inferences drawn. It is advised to not include big mathematical equations or complicated jargon.

Many researchers searching for information online will use search engines such as Google, Yahoo or others. By optimizing your paper for search engines, you will amplify the chance of someone finding it. In turn, this will make it more likely to be viewed and cited in further works. Global Journals has compiled these guidelines to facilitate you to maximize the web-friendliness of the most public part of your paper.

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A major lynchpin of research work for the writing of research papers is the keyword search, which one will employ to find both library and internet resources. Up to eleven keywords or very brief phrases have to be given to help data retrieval, mining, and indexing.

One must be persistent and creative in using keywords. An effective keyword search requires a strategy: planning of a list of possible keywords and phrases to try.

Choice of the main keywords is the first tool of writing a research paper. Research paper writing is an art. Keyword search should be as strategic as possible.

One should start brainstorming lists of potential keywords before even beginning searching. Think about the most important concepts related to research work. Ask, “What words would a source have to include to be truly valuable in a research paper?” Then consider synonyms for the important words.

It may take the discovery of only one important paper to steer in the right keyword direction because, in most databases, the keywords under which a research paper is abstracted are listed with the paper.

Numerical Methods

Numerical methods used should be transparent and, where appropriate, supported by references.

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Authors must list all the abbreviations used in the paper at the end of the paper or in a separate table before using them.

Formulas and equations

Authors are advised to submit any mathematical equation using either MathJax, KaTeX, or LaTeX, or in a very high-quality image.

Tables, Figures, and Figure Legends

Tables: Tables should be cautiously designed, uncrowned, and include only essential data. Each must have an Arabic number, e.g., Table 4, a self-explanatory caption, and be on a separate sheet. Authors must submit tables in an editable format and not as images. References to these tables (if any) must be mentioned accurately.

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Figures are supposed to be submitted as separate files. Always include a citation in the text for each figure using Arabic numbers, e.g., Fig. 4. Artwork must be submitted online in vector electronic form or by emailing it.

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Although low-quality images are sufficient for review purposes, print publication requires high-quality images to prevent the final product being blurred or fuzzy. Submit (possibly by e-mail) EPS (line art) or TIFF (halftone/ photographs) files only. MS PowerPoint and Word Graphics are unsuitable for printed pictures. Avoid using pixel-oriented software. Scans (TIFF only) should have a resolution of at least 350 dpi (halftone) or 700 to 1100 dpi (line drawings). Please give the data for figures in black and white or submit a Color Work Agreement form. EPS files must be saved with fonts embedded (and with a TIFF preview, if possible).

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Tips for writing a good quality Social Science Research Paper

Techniques for writing a good quality homan social science research paper:

1. Choosing the topic: In most cases, the topic is selected by the interests of the author, but it can also be suggested by the guides. You can have several topics, and then judge which you are most comfortable with. This may be done by asking several questions of yourself, like "Will I be able to carry out a search in this area? Will I find all necessary resources to accomplish the search? Will I be able to find all information in this field area?" If the answer to this type of question is "yes," then you ought to choose that topic. In most cases, you may have to conduct surveys and visit several places. Also, you might have to do a lot of work to find all the rises and falls of the various data on that subject. Sometimes, detailed information plays a vital role, instead of short information. Evaluators are human: The first thing to remember is that evaluators are also human beings. They are not only meant for rejecting a paper. They are here to evaluate your paper. So present your best aspect.

2. Think like evaluators: If you are in confusion or getting demotivated because your paper may not be accepted by the evaluators, then think, and try to evaluate your paper like an evaluator. Try to understand what an evaluator wants in your research paper, and you will automatically have your answer. Make blueprints of paper: The outline is the plan or framework that will help you to arrange your thoughts. It will make your paper logical. But remember that all points of your outline must be related to the topic you have chosen.

3. Ask your guides: If you are having any difficulty with your research, then do not hesitate to share your difficulty with your guide (if you have one). They will surely help you out and resolve your doubts. If you can't clarify what exactly you require for your work, then ask your supervisor to help you with an alternative. He or she might also provide you with a list of essential readings.

4. Use of computer is recommended: As you are doing research in the field of homan social science then this point is quite obvious. Use right software: Always use good quality software packages. If you are not capable of judging good software, then you can lose the quality of your paper unknowingly. There are various programs available to help you which you can get through the internet.

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6. Bookmarks are useful: When you read any book or magazine, you generally use bookmarks, right? It is a good habit which helps to not lose your continuity. You should always use bookmarks while searching on the internet also, which will make your search easier.

7. Revise what you wrote: When you write anything, always read it, summarize it, and then finalize it.

8. Make every effort: Make every effort to mention what you are going to write in your paper. That means always have a good start. Try to mention everything in the introduction—what is the need for a particular research paper. Polish your work with good writing skills and always give an evaluator what he wants. Make backups: When you are going to do any important thing like making a research paper, you should always have backup copies of it either on your computer or on paper. This protects you from losing any portion of your important data.

9. Produce good diagrams of your own: Always try to include good charts or diagrams in your paper to improve quality. Using several unnecessary diagrams will degrade the quality of your paper by creating a hodgepodge. So always try to include diagrams which were made by you to improve the readability of your paper. Use of direct quotes: When you do research relevant to literature, history, or current affairs, then use of quotes becomes essential, but if the study is relevant to science, use of quotes is not preferable.

10. Use proper verb tense: Use proper verb tenses in your paper. Use past tense to present those events that have happened. Use present tense to indicate events that are going on. Use future tense to indicate events that will happen in the future. Use of wrong tenses will confuse the evaluator. Avoid sentences that are incomplete.

11. Pick a good study spot: Always try to pick a spot for your research which is quiet. Not every spot is good for studying.

12. Know what you know: Always try to know what you know by making objectives, otherwise you will be confused and unable to achieve your target.

13. Use good grammar: Always use good grammar and words that will have a positive impact on the evaluator; use of good vocabulary does not mean using tough words which the evaluator has to find in a dictionary. Do not fragment sentences. Eliminate one-word sentences. Do not ever use a big word when a smaller one would suffice.

Verbs have to be in agreement with their subjects. In a research paper, do not start sentences with conjunctions or finish them with prepositions. When writing formally, it is advisable to never split an infinitive because someone will (wrongly) complain. Avoid clichés like a disease. Always shun irritating alliteration. Use language which is simple and straightforward. Put together a neat summary.

14. Arrangement of information: Each section of the main body should start with an opening sentence, and there should be a changeover at the end of the section. Give only valid and powerful arguments for your topic. You may also maintain your arguments with records.

15. Never start at the last minute: Always allow enough time for research work. Leaving everything to the last minute will degrade your paper and spoil your work.

16. Multitasking in research is not good: Doing several things at the same time is a bad habit in the case of research activity. Research is an area where everything has a particular time slot. Divide your research work into parts, and do a particular part in a particular time slot.

17. Never copy others' work: Never copy others' work and give it your name because if the evaluator has seen it anywhere, you will be in trouble. Take proper rest and food: No matter how many hours you spend on your research activity, if you are not taking care of your health, then all your efforts will have been in vain. For quality research, take proper rest and food.

18. Go to seminars: Attend seminars if the topic is relevant to your research area. Utilize all your resources.
Refresh your mind after intervals: Try to give your mind a rest by listening to soft music or sleeping in intervals. This will also improve your memory. Acquire colleagues: Always try to acquire colleagues. No matter how sharp you are, if you acquire colleagues, they can give you ideas which will be helpful to your research.

19. Think technically: Always think technically. If anything happens, search for its reasons, benefits, and demerits. Think and then print: When you go to print your paper, check that tables are not split, headings are not detached from their descriptions, and page sequence is maintained.

20. Adding unnecessary information: Do not add unnecessary information like "I have used MS Excel to draw graphs." Irrelevant and inappropriate material is superfluous. Foreign terminology and phrases are not apropos. One should never take a broad view. Analogy is like feathers on a snake. Use words properly, regardless of how others use them. Remove quotations. Puns are for kids, not grunt readers. Never oversimplify: When adding material to your research paper, never go for oversimplification; this will definitely irritate the evaluator. Be specific. Never use rhythmic redundancies. Contractions shouldn't be used in a research paper. Comparisons are as terrible as clichés. Give up ampersands, abbreviations, and so on. Remove commas that are not necessary. Parenthetical words should be between brackets or commas. Understatement is always the best way to put forward earth-shaking thoughts. Give a detailed literary review.

21. Report concluded results: Use concluded results. From raw data, filter the results, and then conclude your studies based on measurements and observations taken. An appropriate number of decimal places should be used. Parenthetical remarks are prohibited here. Proofread carefully at the final stage. At the end, give an outline to your arguments. Spot perspectives of further study of the subject. Justify your conclusion at the bottom sufficiently, which will probably include examples.

22. Upon conclusion: Once you have concluded your research, the next most important step is to present your findings. Presentation is extremely important as it is the definite medium though which your research is going to be in print for the rest of the crowd. Care should be taken to categorize your thoughts well and present them in a logical and neat manner. A good quality research paper format is essential because it serves to highlight your research paper and bring to light all necessary aspects of your research.

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Informal Guidelines of Research Paper Writing

Key points to remember:

- Submit all work in its final form.
- Write your paper in the form which is presented in the guidelines using the template.
- Please note the criteria peer reviewers will use for grading the final paper.

Final points:

One purpose of organizing a research paper is to let people interpret your efforts selectively. The journal requires the following sections, submitted in the order listed, with each section starting on a new page:

The introduction: This will be compiled from reference matter and reflect the design processes or outline of basis that directed you to make a study. As you carry out the process of study, the method and process section will be constructed like that. The results segment will show related statistics in nearly sequential order and direct reviewers to similar intellectual paths throughout the data that you gathered to carry out your study.

The discussion section:

This will provide understanding of the data and projections as to the implications of the results. The use of good quality references throughout the paper will give the effort trustworthiness by representing an alertness to prior workings.

Writing a research paper is not an easy job, no matter how trouble-free the actual research or concept. Practice, excellent preparation, and controlled record-keeping are the only means to make straightforward progression.

General style:

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To make a paper clear: Adhere to recommended page limits.



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- Submitting a manuscript with pages out of sequence.
- In every section of your document, use standard writing style, including articles ("a" and "the").
- Keep paying attention to the topic of the paper.
- Use paragraphs to split each significant point (excluding the abstract).
- Align the primary line of each section.
- Present your points in sound order.
- Use present tense to report well-accepted matters.
- Use past tense to describe specific results.
- Do not use familiar wording; don't address the reviewer directly. Don't use slang or superlatives.
- Avoid use of extra pictures—include only those figures essential to presenting results.

Title page:

Choose a revealing title. It should be short and include the name(s) and address(es) of all authors. It should not have acronyms or abbreviations or exceed two printed lines.

Abstract: This summary should be two hundred words or less. It should clearly and briefly explain the key findings reported in the manuscript and must have precise statistics. It should not have acronyms or abbreviations. It should be logical in itself. Do not cite references at this point.

An abstract is a brief, distinct paragraph summary of finished work or work in development. In a minute or less, a reviewer can be taught the foundation behind the study, common approaches to the problem, relevant results, and significant conclusions or new questions.

Write your summary when your paper is completed because how can you write the summary of anything which is not yet written? Wealth of terminology is very essential in abstract. Use comprehensive sentences, and do not sacrifice readability for brevity; you can maintain it succinctly by phrasing sentences so that they provide more than a lone rationale. The author can at this moment go straight to shortening the outcome. Sum up the study with the subsequent elements in any summary. Try to limit the initial two items to no more than one line each.

Reason for writing the article—theory, overall issue, purpose.

- Fundamental goal.
- To-the-point depiction of the research.
- Consequences, including definite statistics—if the consequences are quantitative in nature, account for this; results of any numerical analysis should be reported. Significant conclusions or questions that emerge from the research.

Approach:

- Single section and succinct.
- An outline of the job done is always written in past tense.
- Concentrate on shortening results—limit background information to a verdict or two.
- Exact spelling, clarity of sentences and phrases, and appropriate reporting of quantities (proper units, important statistics) are just as significant in an abstract as they are anywhere else.

Introduction:

The introduction should "introduce" the manuscript. The reviewer should be presented with sufficient background information to be capable of comprehending and calculating the purpose of your study without having to refer to other works. The basis for the study should be offered. Give the most important references, but avoid making a comprehensive appraisal of the topic. Describe the problem visibly. If the problem is not acknowledged in a logical, reasonable way, the reviewer will give no attention to your results. Speak in common terms about techniques used to explain the problem, if needed, but do not present any particulars about the protocols here.

The following approach can create a valuable beginning:

- Explain the value (significance) of the study.
- Defend the model—why did you employ this particular system or method? What is its compensation? Remark upon its appropriateness from an abstract point of view as well as pointing out sensible reasons for using it.
- Present a justification. State your particular theory(-ies) or aim(s), and describe the logic that led you to choose them.
- Briefly explain the study's tentative purpose and how it meets the declared objectives.

Approach:

Use past tense except for when referring to recognized facts. After all, the manuscript will be submitted after the entire job is done. Sort out your thoughts; manufacture one key point for every section. If you make the four points listed above, you will need at least four paragraphs. Present surrounding information only when it is necessary to support a situation. The reviewer does not desire to read everything you know about a topic. Shape the theory specifically—do not take a broad view.

As always, give awareness to spelling, simplicity, and correctness of sentences and phrases.

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This part is supposed to be the easiest to carve if you have good skills. A soundly written procedures segment allows a capable scientist to replicate your results. Present precise information about your supplies. The suppliers and clarity of reagents can be helpful bits of information. Present methods in sequential order, but linked methodologies can be grouped as a segment. Be concise when relating the protocols. Attempt to give the least amount of information that would permit another capable scientist to replicate your outcome, but be cautious that vital information is integrated. The use of subheadings is suggested and ought to be synchronized with the results section.

When a technique is used that has been well-described in another section, mention the specific item describing the way, but draw the basic principle while stating the situation. The purpose is to show all particular resources and broad procedures so that another person may use some or all of the methods in one more study or referee the scientific value of your work. It is not to be a step-by-step report of the whole thing you did, nor is a methods section a set of orders.

Materials:

Materials may be reported in part of a section or else they may be recognized along with your measures.

Methods:

- Report the method and not the particulars of each process that engaged the same methodology.
- Describe the method entirely.
- To be succinct, present methods under headings dedicated to specific dealings or groups of measures.
- Simplify—detail how procedures were completed, not how they were performed on a particular day.
- If well-known procedures were used, account for the procedure by name, possibly with a reference, and that's all.

Approach:

It is embarrassing to use vigorous voice when documenting methods without using first person, which would focus the reviewer's interest on the researcher rather than the job. As a result, when writing up the methods, most authors use third person passive voice.

Use standard style in this and every other part of the paper—avoid familiar lists, and use full sentences.

What to keep away from:

- Resources and methods are not a set of information.
- Skip all descriptive information and surroundings—save it for the argument.
- Leave out information that is immaterial to a third party.



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Results:

The principle of a results segment is to present and demonstrate your conclusion. Create this part as entirely objective details of the outcome, and save all understanding for the discussion.

The page length of this segment is set by the sum and types of data to be reported. Use statistics and tables, if suitable, to present consequences most efficiently.

You must clearly differentiate material which would usually be incorporated in a study editorial from any unprocessed data or additional appendix matter that would not be available. In fact, such matters should not be submitted at all except if requested by the instructor.

Content:

- Sum up your conclusions in text and demonstrate them, if suitable, with figures and tables.
- In the manuscript, explain each of your consequences, and point the reader to remarks that are most appropriate.
- Present a background, such as by describing the question that was addressed by creation of an exacting study.
- Explain results of control experiments and give remarks that are not accessible in a prescribed figure or table, if appropriate.
- Examine your data, then prepare the analyzed (transformed) data in the form of a figure (graph), table, or manuscript.

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- Do not discuss or infer your outcome, report surrounding information, or try to explain anything.
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- Make a decision as to whether the tentative design sufficiently addressed the theory and whether or not it was correctly restricted. Try to present substitute explanations if they are sensible alternatives.
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- Recommendations for detailed papers will offer supplementary suggestions.

Approach:

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References	Complete and correct format, well organized	Beside the point, Incomplete	Wrong format and structuring

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