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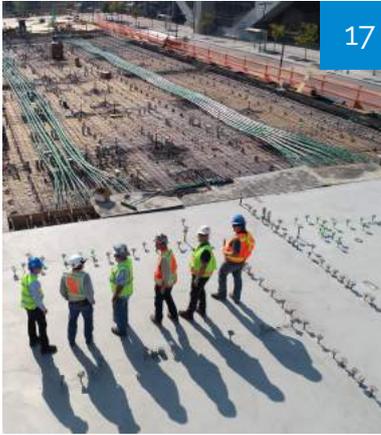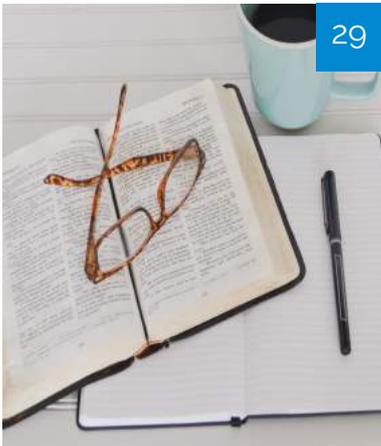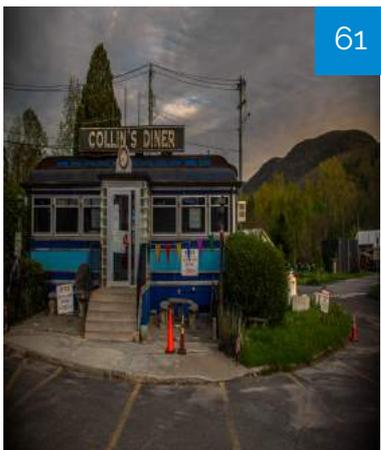
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A Comparison of Trained and Untrained Teacher-Perceptions about Mathematically Gifted Learners in South Africa and USA

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ABSTRACT

The advent of the 4IR demands that we balance equity and excellence in our mathematics education. In the current debates about skills needed in the 4IR, the mathematically gifted have been described as "the world's ultimate capital asset," yet in South Africa reports show that at a time when the educational emphasis is being strongly placed on meeting the needs of the struggling learners, the mathematically gifted learner is often an afterthought. This paper is premised on the view that intervention should start by addressing teacher perceptions of gifted education. Following a quasi-experimental non-equivalent design, 118 Foundation Phase teachers who had not received training on gifted education were surveyed in South Africa. Structured interviews were done with 21 trained teachers in the USA.

Keywords: fourth industrial revolution, mathematically gifted, equity and excellence in mathematics education, teacher perceptions.

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Michael Kainose Mhlolo[α] & Motshidisi Gertrude van Wyk[σ]

ABSTRACT

The advent of the 4IR demands that we balance equity and excellence in our mathematics education. In the current debates about skills needed in the 4IR, the mathematically gifted have been described as "the world's ultimate capital asset," yet in South Africa reports show that at a time when the educational emphasis is being strongly placed on meeting the needs of the struggling learners, the mathematically gifted learner is often an afterthought. This paper is premised on the view that intervention should start by addressing teacher perceptions of gifted education. Following a quasi-experimental non-equivalent design, 118 Foundation Phase teachers who had not received training on gifted education were surveyed in South Africa. Structured interviews were done with 21 trained teachers in the USA. A comparison of their responses reveals similar findings that trained teachers tend to havepositive perceptions about gifted education than untrained teachers. Our recommendations are that such findings should inform the development of teacher development programs for the benefit of our mathematically gifted students.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Today South Africa finds itself at the threshold of the Fourth Industrial Revolution [4IR] also known as the 21st knowledge-based economy [KBE]. The change brought about by this revolution is impacting all disciplines, all economies rich and poor and all industries advanced and less advanced. This revolution is inevitable, it is not optional, it does not wait for South Africa to address basic literacy and numeracy issues and so its educational institutions needed to not only adapt to this new reality but also be cognisant of the changing expectations of the student body who wants to be a partaker of the good things that it offers. Having adequate levels of education and digital skills capacity and capability is pivotal in ensuring that South Africa maximizes the benefits of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). The sooner South Africa embraces and fully incorporates the 4IR in the education system, the sooner the stakeholders will realize and begin to teach its learners the critical skills that are crucial for them to remain relevant in this era. So, what does the 4IR mean for the education system in South Africa?

Although education is meant to support the development of a diversity of talents and abilities in the learners; it is not true that equal importance can be placed on all such talents and abilities as we attempt to meet the challenges of the KBE. Within these debates about skills needed for the 21st century KBE, empirical evidence has shown that the positive impact on a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) can be isolated mainly to Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics [STEM] related achievements as opposed to achievements outside STEM; suggesting that STEM-related achievements are the main drivers of national affluence in the KBE (Tanenbaum, 2016). For this reason, ensuring an adequate supply of STEM skills is at the heart of many governments' strategies for innovation and

productivity. Some researchers have even gone further to try and establish whether all STEM disciplines have equal importance in the KBE and conclusions have been unanimous that all STEM disciplines require an understanding of mathematics suggesting that "Mathematics is the bedrock of science while science is the necessity for technological and industrial development" (Betiku, 1999:49). Given this bedrock status, mathematics has been described as the subject that drives the KBE hence it should be an important part of any efforts at modern-day technological innovation and development.

But what level of mathematical capabilities matter in the KBE? This question is fundamental to our understanding of the skills needed in the 21st knowledge economy. To answer this question we borrow from MacGillivray (2000) who identified the following three distinctive levels of mathematical capabilities that serve different but complementary purposes in society: (1) the quantitative capabilities of the whole of society or an "at-home-ness" with numbers in the everyday life (2) the mathematical capabilities in the broad spectrum of areas with specific quantitative links; and (3) the high-level capability/expertise of the discipline of mathematical sciences. This categorisation does not in any way suggest that any one of these levels has no place in a modern economy. On the contrary MacGillivray posits that improvements in average performance (level 1) and top end performance (level 3) have separate but complementary effects on economic growth. Level 1 provides a sound foundation or what Fensham (1995) referred to as 'induction into science' while the third level provides what has been described as 'empowerment from science". Admittedly, numeracy is an important starting point, but in today's KBE it is necessary, but not sufficient for students to achieve minimal numeracy competence. Hanushek and Wößmann, (2012) for example, explained the benefits of setting aside the quantity of schooling as a measure of human capital in favor of a qualitative measure of 'cognitive skills'. Their proposition was that not only do we need to have equity and close the famous achievement gaps, we also must have innovation if we are going to survive in the

21st knowledge-based economy (KBE). In South Africa, the demise of our mathematical learners has been attributed to current practices where our achievements in education have always been measured from a social equity perspective. Such achievement measures have tended to focus our attention to the "minimums" of mathematical capability, resulting in us overlooking the "maximums". Given this complimentary role of levels 1, 2, and 3 of mathematical ability, our argument is that South Africa must have an equitable educational provision for all learners which accommodates the below average, the average and the above average who have the potential to achieve the second and third levels of mathematical capabilities which are currently missing. Hence South Africa should urgently begin to strike a balance between equity and excellence in mathematics education.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Most countries now recognise that beyond the achievement of basic competences, students also need to develop critical literacy and numeracy skills (level 3) of the kind required for effective functioning in the 21st knowledge-based economy. But how best can an educational system enhance the development of this level 3 mathematical skills? To answer this question, we borrow from Jenkins (1981), who argued that if you are concerned with improving the output of some complex system, [such as education] you must study the component that produces the largest variance first. So which component of mathematics students would produce the largest variance in terms of level 3 skills? We take a quote from Terman (1919) who argued that: *the future welfare of the country hinges in no small degree upon the right education of . . . superior children. ......Moderate ability can follow, or imitate, but genius must show the way.* A similar view is that the progress of human civilization is based on scientific, technological, educational, moral, political, and commercial achievements of the minds of its most talented individuals (Daniels, 2012). Several authors have implicitly or explicitly referred to these superior children with potential for this level 3 capability. For example, in Terman

studies children in that level were colloquially referred to as "termites", Fensham (1995) referred to it as the 'intellectual class', Florida (2012) used the term 'creative class', Hanushek and Wößmann, (2012) spoke of 'rocket scientists', Pritchett & Viarengo (2009) referred to them as 'global performers', and La Griffe du Lion (2004) called it the 'smart fraction' of the population. La Griffe du Lion (2004) then used his 'smart fraction theory' to show that there is a much stronger correlation between high national GDP and this level 3 capability than it is with the average cognitive ability. Other studies have shown that the smart fraction (or gifted or high ability fraction) is not only more relevant than the average cognitive ability level or the non-smart fraction's level on intellectual outcomes but also on non-intellectual outcomes such as criminality, health, government effectiveness, democracy, rule of law and political liberty. In terms of human capital development, Terman's Genetic Studies and the longitudinal Studies of Mathematically Precocious Youth—SMPY are arguably among the most famous longitudinal studies in psychology to date that have tracked mathematically gifted youth for more than five decades with the aim of affirming this thought (Mhlolo, 2017). Results from these studies have confirmed beyond any reasonable doubt that mathematically talented males and females indeed became the critical human capital needed for driving modern day, conceptual economies. From this perspective, the mathematically gifted have been described as "the world's ultimate capital asset" due to their unique potential to become tomorrow's scientists, inventors, entrepreneurs, engineers, and civic leaders in a knowledge-based economy. So, both the smart fraction theory and the intellectual class hypothesis suggest that our future depends crucially on how we educate the next generation of people gifted (intellectual class or smart fraction) in the mathematical sciences. This view is echoed in the more recent South African curriculum documents where inclusivity is now foregrounded and the gifted learner is mentioned as one category of exceptionality that should become the central part of the organization, planning and teaching at school (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

This is even more urgent in the public schools of South Africa where most gifted learners from poor backgrounds attend school. Critics argue that low-quality mathematics education (especially for the poor) becomes a poverty trap from which it is almost impossible to escape. In South Africa, studies have shown that a vast gap persists between the quality of mathematics education provided for and the achievement of White and African students (Maree, 2018). Post-colonial reform in education aimed at reversing such evils of Bantu Education - an education 'for ignorance' where blacks would be taught to develop "manipulation skills" and to have an interest in the soil. An inquiry into how far post-colonial education has closed the poverty gap between blacks and whites, of necessity must therefore begin with an examination of mathematics education - given that the philosophy and ideology of apartheid deemed it absurd to teach a 'Bantu' child mathematics. Admittedly such statements evoke strong emotions but the stark realities of mathematics education in South Africa today require our stakeholders to take the bull by its horns. Have we really reversed that absurdity? Even if we argue that the system has increased accessibility to mathematics education, can we really be proud that our African graduates will compete favorably in the 4IR? We need to constantly take stock of our political history versus our post-colonial vision lest we 'covertly perpetuate' the very same philosophy and ideology of 'absurdity' in teaching mathematics to poor black South Africans. Heuser, Wang, & Shahid (2017) for example pointed to the important role that policies can play in the translation of a vision into practice, sometimes with unintended or inverse consequences. They argue that poorly aligned requirements of certain policies, created out of concern for social equity, might actually create practical limitations to the provision of more inclusive programs for gifted learners from poor backgrounds resulting in another unintended 'covert exclusion'. An important principle is that whatever we do in education, we should remain pragmatic, not doctrinaire, in our approach. We should, as the Chinese would say, 'seek truth from facts'. Where the evidence shows that we are not achieving what

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we set out to gain, we change methods. Where the aims are no longer relevant to circumstances, we revise the aims. In a 2019 synthesis report on the National Higher Education Conference, the Dean of Students affairs [Wits], Jerome September is quoted as saying "... enhanced access and success for disadvantaged and excluded communities equalize the life chances of talented individuals, irrespective of their social origin or financial capacity".

Yet in South Africa reports show that the plight of the gifted learner is seldom mentioned (Kokot, 2011) and that far too many of the gifted from poor backgrounds currently do not stand even the remotest chance of achieving up to near their potential (Maree, 2018). In post-apartheid South Africa education, stakeholders have been hostile to and resentful of gifted education programs which are critical for academic talent development (Kokot, 2011). Speaking at the launch of the Tshawaga Region Maths and Science Teacher Strategy on 31 January 2015, the then UNISA Vice-Principal of Research & Innovation and Professor of Mathematics Mamokgethi Phakeng said: "Unless we increase the quantity and quality of learners who can become the next generation of scientists, engineers and technical specialists, South Africa's vision for a sustainable democracy will not come to fruition". In the preamble of the National Development Plan (Vision 2030) - the National Planning Commission envisages a South Africa where we participate fully in efforts to liberate ourselves from the conditions that hinder the flowering of our talents. The plan goes on to state that schools are where talent is identified, career choices made, and habits learnt.

These calls suggest that we must be concerned about the education of our gifted students in the STEM subjects in general and mathematics in particular. But how best can we respond to these calls? Informed by the research conducted, Spaull (2013) developed four points that must be borne in mind in addressing South Africa's numeracy and mathematics schooling challenge, that (i) although the improvement of mathematics teaching and learning in public schools will not happen fast, it must begin urgently; (ii) poor mathematics and numeracy teaching and learning in public schools accelerate private schooling wherein there is enrolment growth in private extra mathematics lessons; (iii) if South Africa is to be realistic about having a knowledge economy and creating more and better jobs, it will require a sustained focus on teacher and teacher-training development, particularly in mathematics teaching, and (iv) in the interim, it is likely that the country will have growing numbers of innumerate young people, and a majority of young South Africans could be unqualified to be hired in many types of high quality work.

III. PROBLEM STATEMENT

This paper might not have all the relevant answers to concerns raised by Spaull, but it builds on the view echoed in a UNESCO maxim that an education system is only as good as the quality of its teachers because the teacher is viewed as being at the core of quality. With specific reference to mathematics education, Leikin (2011) posits that teachers are the agents of the educational system who should design mathematical challenges appropriate for all the students in general and particularly for the mathematically gifted ones. Hence it can be argued that teachers can either make or break the education system for gifted students. In South Africa, teachers interviewed by Oswald & de Villiers (2013) unanimously concurred that they had never received training on how to identify and support gifted students prompting the authors to recommend that the quality of gifted education is dependent upon the quality of training the teachers receive. Similarly, Kokot (2011) posits that teacher colleges and universities exert direct influence on the education of gifted children by training (or not training) future teachers. Her recommendation was that these institutions should be the major focus of advocates for improving gifted education.

The research project from which this paper draws data responds to that recommendation in that it aims at developing a teacher training program for teachers for the gifted. It shares the view by Davis and Rimm (2004) that the first question to be asked when devising a programme for teachers for gifted learners should be: What is our teachers attitude towards gifted children?

IV.   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

It is against this background that we raised the following research questions:

- What perceptions do mathematics teachers hold before receiving training on gifted education?
- What perceptions do mathematics teachers hold after receiving training on gifted education?
- How can the similarities or differences help to shape teacher training programs for the mathematically gifted learners?

V.   IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY ON TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

In this study, we hypothesized that teachers who have training in gifted education or experience as gifted education teachers would have more positive attitudes toward gifted education and gifted students. Further, we hope that the outcomes of this study will aid in preparing and revising teacher preparation program curricula to better meet the educational needs of Foundation Phase school teachers and for them to meet the educational needs of mathematically gifted learners in their classes. A study by Geake and Gross (2008) shows that a teacher's unconscious negative attitude can be reduced through professional development courses in which teachers become more familiar with the characteristics of gifted students and their learning needs. This paper was premised on this view that teachers' negative attitudes can be reduced through professional development hence we wanted to evaluate the perceptions teachers hold before receiving training and after receiving training on gifted education.

In developing a successful teacher development programme for teachers for the gifted, stakeholders must identify what teachers know and believe about gifted children and their education. In particular, they should be explicit about whether their teachers are interested in and supportive of gifted education. A negative attitude and prejudice can cause discriminatory behaviour,

particularly when it exists within a group of teachers (Bohner & Wänke, 2002). If teachers develop positive attitudes towards giftedness, they are more likely to be supportive of gifted education, and to be effective in identifying and catering for gifted students. Research shows that teachers, trainers, and education specialists execute programs of gifted education in accordance with their own level of training, and their perceptions and dispositions can serve as important catalysts or barriers (Heuser, Wang, & Shahid 2017). In many developing countries, there are hostile and negative stereotypes that shape teachers' attitudes and expectations regarding gifted students – attitudes and expectations that become barriers to the process of learning and belie the egalitarian ideals that form the philosophical foundation of many schools. Therefore, if the negative attitude of teachers about gifted students is not changed through training, they are likely to retain this attitude in their professional practice.

VI.   METHOD

6.1 Context of the research sites

Perceptions of teachers before training on gifted education were collected from Foundation Phase Teachers in 20 schools in the Free State Province of South Africa. The Foundation Phase ranges from Grade R (the reception year) to Grade 3. Foundational Phase teachers usually teach all the subjects in the curriculum to learners, whereas teachers in the higher phases teach only certain subjects in which they specialize. Perceptions of teachers after training on gifted education were collected at a university in the USA after attending their 3-week summer programs for gifted students. Their two summer programs are:

- Verbally and Mathematically Precocious Youth (VAMPY) catering for Gr 7 – 10 learners.
- Camp Innovate caters for Gr 3 – 5 learners.

Literature suggests that it is useful to work with pre-existing groups because they provide one of the social contexts within which ideas are formed and decisions made" (Kizinger, 1994:105).

6.2 Research Design

In this study we employed a Quasi-experimental *non-equivalent groups design* (NEGD). Quasi-experimental designs identify a comparison group that is as similar as possible to the treatment group in terms of baseline (pre-intervention) characteristics. The comparison group captures what would have been the outcomes if the programme/policy had not been implemented (i.e., the counterfactual). Hence, the programme or policy can be said to have caused any difference in outcomes between the treatment and comparison groups. In this case we chose experimental group 1 comprising teachers from Free State in South Africa who are not trained on gifted education. We chose experimental group 2 comprising teachers from the USA who have received training on gifted education. In quasi-experimental designs, the programme or policy is viewed as an 'intervention' in which a treatment – comprising the elements of the programme/policy being evaluated – is tested for how well it achieves its objectives, as measured by a prespecified set of indicators. In this case training of teachers on gifted education in South Africa (treatment group) is viewed as an intervention which should change their perceptions and support of gifted learners in their schools.

6.3 Participants

In accordance with the non-equivalent group design, two sets of participants took part in this study. The first group comprised 118 Foundation Phase Teachers selected from 20 schools from both Xhariep and Motheo districts of the Free State in South Africa.

Table 1: Biographical information about participants (n = 118)

Gender	
Male	2
Female	16
Race	
Black	118
White	0
Coloured	0
Indian	0
Age Group in years	
21 − 30	14
31 − 40	13
41 − 50	40
51 − 60	51
Years of experience	
0 − 5	29
6 − 10	18
>10	71

This group represented the untrained teachers. Our definition of 'untrained' is specifically with reference to training on gifted education. Our view based on literature available is that in South Africa there are no teacher training programmes both pre-service and in-service for teachers for the gifted students. We therefore assumed such a group would provide us with some insights on how gifted education is viewed before one receives training on gifted education.

The second set of 21 participants comprised 1 VAMPY teacher, 3 VAMPY assistant teachers, 2 practicing teachers for the gifted, 1 Camp Innovate teacher, 1 district coordinator for gifted education, 1 educational psychologist, 1 educational counselor, 1 assessment specialist on

gifted education, 1 advocate for gifted education, 1 former elementary school principal with a gifted education endorsement, 1 current pre-service student on the gifted education programme and 7 VAMPY students. The USA does not use similar biographical categories like South Africa but suffice to say that there were 2 male and 19 female participants. This group would provide us with some insights on how gifted education is viewed after one receives training on gifted education.

6.4 Data collection procedure

We used a mixed method approach to collect data, where 118 participants responded to a questionnaire and 21 participants from the USA responded to a structured interview. We wanted to compare perceptions teachers have before receiving training on gifted education and those perceptions after receiving training.

VII. FINDINGS

Let us recall that our first research question was: What perceptions do mathematics teachers hold before receiving training on gifted education? The following tables and figures give responses on different aspects related to gifted education.
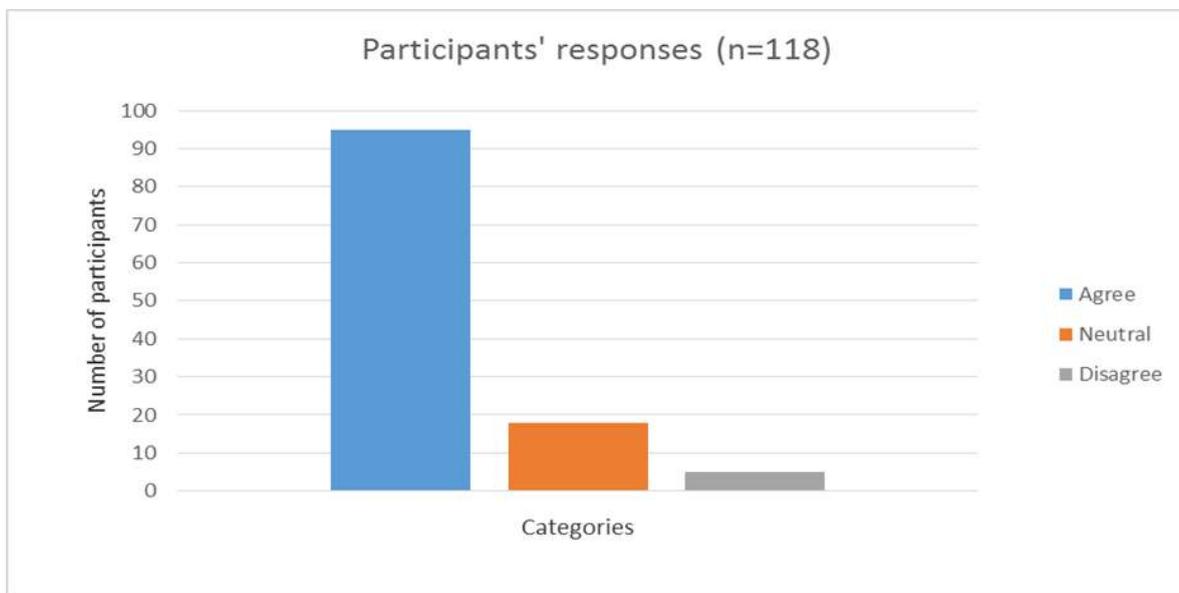
Figure 1: Do untrained teachers believe they have gifted learners in their classrooms?

We first asked teachers whether or not they have gifted learners in the classrooms. Figure 1 shows that 95 teachers agree to having gifted learners in their classes, 18 teachers are neutral to the statement and 5 of them disagree. This is an indication that the majority of teachers recognize the presence of gifted learners in their class according to their different characteristics. Various indicators were mentioned by respondents on how they were able to identify such gifted learners.

We were also interested to capture teachers' perceptions on whether or not gifted students should be of concern to them and why. Literature abounds of the myths that prevent teachers from appropriately educating millions of advanced students. The National Association for Gifted Children [NAGC] compiled a list of the most prevalent myths in gifted education with evidence rebutting each of them. We borrowed 6 of them and developed some statements and asked our participants to tick each of them that they agreed with. Participants were asked specifically to tick all of those statements that they agreed with.
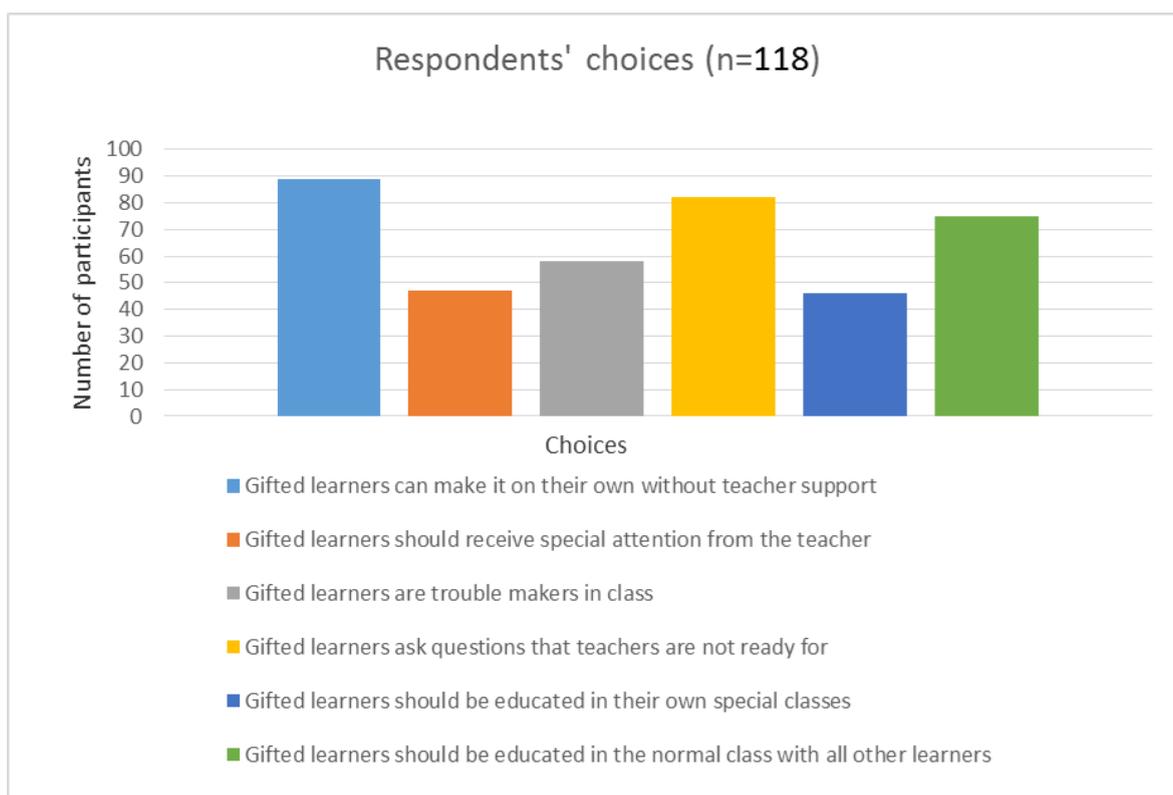
Figure 2: Perceptions of teachers before receiving training on gifted education

As shown in figure 2 there are 89 teachers who chose, "gifted learners can make it on their own without teacher support", 47 teachers chose, "gifted learners should receive special attention from the teacher", 58 teachers chose, "gifted learners are trouble makers in class", 82 teachers chose, "gifted learners ask questions that teachers are not ready for", 46 teachers, "gifted learners should be educated in their own special classes" and the last choice consists of 75 teachers, who chose "gifted learners should be educated in the normal class with all other learners."

We also solicited for responses on what untrained teachers perceived as teacher-related barriers to the education of gifted education. Table 1 captures the responses.

Table 2: What untrained teachers see as barriers to gifted education

Teacher	Response
1020	The teacher who is not preparing well everyday
1021	Teacher development. Teachers must be well trained to deal with such learners. They must be trained concerning their behavior and activities that can be used to keep them meaningfully busy. Lack of information from the teacher or parents to deal with such learners. Teachers consider them as restless learners in the classroom and just need punishment.
1024	Little or no special training is given to educators as to how to deal with such learners.
1028	Well-trained educators
1054	Lack of experience in teaching gifted learners
1074	Lack of quality education can be a barrier to such learners.
1075	Lack of sufficient subject matter. Subject matter knowledge becomes critical for educators working with gifted learners. Lack of content knowledge also affect the use of important pedagogy.
1089	Lack of teacher training for such learners.

Consistent with our assumptions that untrained teachers would still be able to recognise that they have gifted learners in their classes, we also solicited for responses on what grouping strategies they used to meet the needs of such learners. Figure 4 captures the responses.
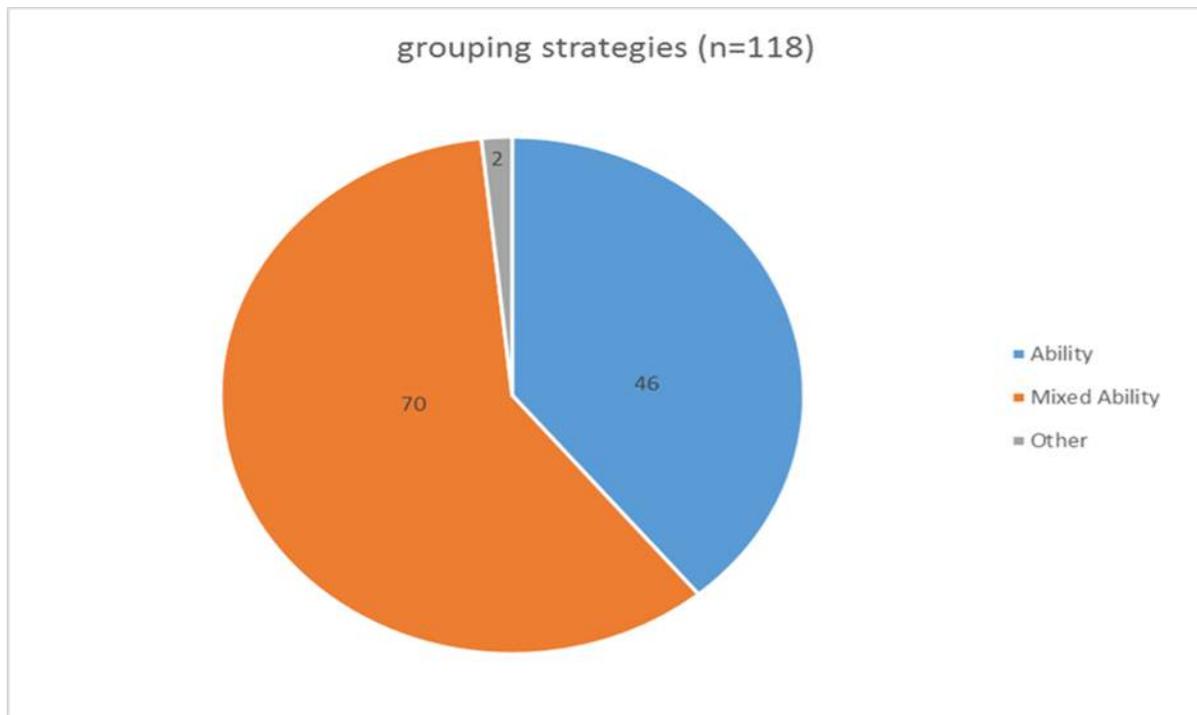
Figure 4: What grouping strategies do untrained teachers use

Figure 4 shows that 46 (39%) teachers group their learners according to their ability. The majority of 70 (59%) of the teachers group learners according to mixed ability. The remaining 2 (2%) of teachers chose "other" for the following reasons below:

Our second research question was: What perceptions do mathematics teachers hold after receiving training on gifted education?

Let us recall that data to answer this question were collected through structured interviews given the diversity [teachers, counselors, psychologists, advocates, trainees etc.] and number [21] of the respondents in the USA. It is therefore not possible to capture such qualitative responses in tables and figures as we did with the first research question. We will however present the qualitative findings in the discussion section of this paper.

VIII. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Within the perceptions that untrained teachers hold, we were interested to know if they believe they have gifted learners in their classes. The results of our study show that 80% of the respondents agree to having gifted learners in their classes. We asked a similar question to a trained advocate for gifted education and in her words, she said:

Gifted children come from all backgrounds, they come from all socio-economic levels, they are boys, they are girls, and we must be looking to make sure that all children have quality educational opportunities and those who demonstrate they are ready for more must have those opportunities on an ongoing basis. We don't want to limit anyone. Diversity must be represented in all services for gifted children because we know that gifted children do come from all backgrounds.

A Comparison of Trained and Untrained Teacher-Perceptions about Mathematically Gifted Learners in South Africa and USA

A concern that has always been leveled against gifted education programs is that such programs favour learners from advantaged backgrounds. As a result, democratic governments, whether long established or newly formed, often have reservations about special programmes that meet the needs of only a few - particularly when those programmes expand the gifts of the already privileged individuals. The inevitable connotation of giftedness as associated with elitism demands that the tension between equality and differentiation take the centre of analyses of gifted education policies and programs, which can lead to the intentional avoidance of formally defining and providing for gifted students in some countries such as South Africa. In South Africa for example, many researchers have shown how the rise in private schooling has been fuelled by the poor education in public schools which serve the poor prompting the view that efforts at eliminating 'overt exclusion' have created another form of 'covert exclusion' of gifted learners from poor backgrounds.

One of the main challenges that will affect the successful implementation of the 4IR in education in South Africa is giving learners from previously disadvantaged communities new 21st-century skills (Meyer & Gent 2016). Consequently, the associated risk of the 4IR for our education is inequality. Inequality within the education sector in South Africa is a highly sensitive topic, and new technological developments have the potential to perpetuate this notion. There is a high risk of only the wealthy portion of the population being able to become relevant in the 4IR while the poor population is left behind. Hence, a bigger inequality gap between the "haves' ' and "have nots" will create further alienation, lack of trust, and social unrest. Consistent with the view of giving learners from previously disadvantaged communities new 21st-century skills, the WKU team provided us with an experience of how they work with gifted learners from less privileged communities. They took us to an off-campus summer math school in partnership with Bowling Green County Education, funded by Dupont, for gifted students from three schools in low socio-economic communities. For the whole week

gifted learners were bused into the school and given an opportunity to meet like minded learners.

We were also interested to capture teachers perceptions on whether or not gifted students should be of concern to them and why. Our results show that the majority of teachers believe that gifted learners can make it on their own. We asked a trained teacher in the USA a similar question and here is what she had to say:

So, I would say that a lot of my reason for choosing to study gifted education, is just the lack of representation that gifted populations have, I think a lot of times, I'm not sure if this would be true in your culture as well. But I think a lot of times people see it as a luxury. Like, we've got to get these kids that aren't getting it. And then those that already have it, they'll be having fun. And so that, for me, I was one of those. So, for me, that is not fulfilling. And that did not keep me challenged throughout my own education. And I would say you probably have a similar experience.

The second largest response to this same question was that gifted learners ask questions that teachers are not ready for. So, we also asked trained teachers in the USA what was challenging when working with these students and here is what they had to say:

Teacher 1:

They grasp things so quickly and they ask too many why questions. They want to move on these challenging problems that I put up. These are problems that I think will take them a long time to do, but quickly they're done. Yeah, 10 minutes, I expected it to take them a couple hours, 10 minutes, they've got the answer.

Teacher 2:

I think the most challenging part of working with gifted children is they can grasp things so quickly, ……. I have a student who has already finished one book and is about a third of the way through his second book. And he's still doing all these challenging problems. He can often see the answers really quickly.

Researcher 1

You must be way ahead of them

Teacher

Yes. And there are times that he asked me questions where I just have to say, I don't know. Can I look at this and get back to you later? Yes.

Researcher 2

So, what do you do in that case?

Teacher 1:

In terms of why questions, I can acknowledge the question and defer answering it until later. In terms of finishing work too quickly I give them more. We have to over prepare so much for this, because they can just move through them very quickly. And so, with this group, they have their book work that they can do. And that is all individual, whatever they're working on. So, they have different textbooks. And then even those who have the same textbooks, they're often at different places in those books. And then on the challenging problems they work together. But, they just can move so quickly. So, this is the beginning of the third week. I have a student who has already finished one book and is about a third of the way through his second book. And he's still doing all these challenging problems. He can often see the answers really quickly.

Teacher 2:

You need to make use of that information without making them feel bored with the very basic stuff..........Gifted children know themselves a lot better than we give them credit for so. I asked her: Do you want some more? and she said give me. So, she is busy working on that for one more hour.

We were also interested to know from the untrained teachers what could be teacher-related barriers to the education of gifted learners. Although couched differently, the overall observation is that teachers feel:

Lack of sufficient subject matter. Subject matter knowledge becomes critical for educators working with gifted learners. Lack of content knowledge also affects the use of important pedagogy.

We asked a similar question to the trained teachers for gifted learners in the USA and here is what they had to say:

Teacher 1:

I have a PhD in math. So, bachelor's degree in math education, Masters and PhD in math.

Teacher 2 & 3:

We are two practicing teachers (and friends) who have recently completed our Masters in Gifted and Talented Studies.

IX.   PROGRAM COORDINATOR

I had them as brilliant undergraduates in mathematics.

One other question we asked untrained teachers was about grouping strategies which they preferred. The majority 60% favored mixed ability grouping. We wanted the teachers to justify their choice of the grouping strategy and 77% of those who chose mixed ability grouping suggested that the strategy allows the gifted to help and motivate the slow/struggling ones or others as well as learning from others and sharing ideas, mixed ability grouping helps gifted learners because others can learn from them while exchanging ideas as they help fellow learners with barriers. Instead of just asking teachers who trained on gifted education to give their view on grouping strategies, we captured the gifted learners' views about the matter.

Table 3: Informal talks with the VAMPY students

Learner	Comments
CSw	I love coming to VAMPY because I can ask all my questions and I get answers. It is really interesting to see how everything around us works and how we can manipulate it to our advantage.
AH	I love math. I have spent three weeks doing math because I love it and I want to be exposed to this community that wants to learn and love math as much as I do.
LH	The best part is working on projects because I meet new people and I am also contributing something.
DJ	In this camp, you can pick anything, and you will get many different viewpoints, but everyone will listen.
LK	We are one big happy family, we belong. That is what I love so much about VAMPY.
CS	We are not just doing a curriculum because we must, we discuss work that is aligning with our interests.
BL	Our home away from home. It is so cool to be part of this group that is thinking and reasoning about things like I do. It is ok to ask many questions.

Clearly learners find it cool to be part of a group that is thinking and reasoning about things in the same way as them. However, studies on the grouping strategies are not in agreement as to which one could best serve the interest of the gifted students. Much really depends on what the teachers do with their gifted learners during the implementation of any of those strategies. Concerns have been raised, however, with mixed ability grouping where teachers use gifted students as assistant teachers. Similarly Burns and Mason (2002) found that elementary school principals, when creating supposedly heterogeneous class groupings, tended to avoid assigning low-performing students and high-ability students to the same classes because the principals assumed that teachers would gear the instructional pace to the lower portion of the class. Burns and Mason also found that students in the high-ability classes received better instruction, had more motivated or better qualified teachers, and benefited from high-ability classmates who contributed to an improved academic climate.

The last question that we raised with the trained teachers was: What motivated them to train as a teacher for the gifted?

Teacher 4:

I am a gifted student myself

Teacher 5:

My brother is gifted and so I felt the need to help him.

Researcher to teacher 4:

How did you know that you are gifted yourself?

Teacher 4:

I wrote the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) used in the talent searches in the USA.

Results from similar studies have confirmed that a person's self-perception as gifted significantly predicted attitudes toward gifted education in one of the reviewed studies (Michener, 1980), suggesting that those who perceive themselves as academically gifted or who have gifted friends and family tend to harbor more positive attitudes toward the gifted. In addition, contact with gifted children, past participation in a gifted program, the presence of a gifted program in the participant's school, and perceived knowledge of giftedness were statistically significant predictors of attitudes toward the gifted in the majority of studies that included these variables (Bégin & Gagné, 1994).

X. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have shown the important role played by mathematics education in the 4IR. We have argued that while the recognised levels 1, 2, and 3 of mathematical capabilities served different but complementary purposes in the KBE, we need to place (level 3) creativity and innovation in the forefront of our educational systems. In this regard we must be concerned about the education of the mathematically gifted learners, especially those from poor backgrounds. We then argued that teacher preparation is central to our efforts to improve the education of the mathematically gifted learners. We further argued that an understanding of their perceptions before and after receiving training on gifted education would help us shape an effective teacher development programme.

Using a quasi-experimental nonequivalent design, we then took a survey of 118 untrained teachers' perceptions about gifted education. Our definition of untrained is with specific reference to receiving special training on gifted education. This was followed by structured interviews with 21 trained teachers in the USA. The Results of our study show that untrained teachers tend to have some negative perceptions about gifted education such as gifted students do not help. On the other hand, trained teachers tend to be passionate about gifted students. This gives us hope that training of teachers on gifted education is likely to transform their negative perceptions into more positive ones. This in turn is likely to change classroom practices for the better.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that if a teacher programme for gifted education is to be developed, questions such as what motivates applicants to want to embark on gifted education training should be considered. We also recommend that further studies be carried out with High School teachers. Our view is that Foundation Phase mathematics learners present less challenges to teachers when compared to High School learners.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Citizen Participation in the Construction of Public Policies for Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

The writing analyzes the realities and the limitations in which citizen participation is submerged in matters of environmental sustainability. The objective of this research is the analysis and reflection on how citizen participation contributes to sustainability and the construction of public policies for sustainable development. To respond to this approach, a structured, theoretical, descriptive methodology was carried out based on documentary and bibliographical exploration based on the qualitative and exploratory research paradigm that uses documentary sources from a hermeneutical historical approach. Among the results, it is highlighted that citizens participate in decision-making processes, and that this allows the construction of public policies aimed at environmental care, that these participations are diverse and include a multitude of options, both recognized and unrecognized, formal and informal, at different levels, influential or systematic, with different levels and possibilities.

Keywords: citizen participation; sustainability; climate change; governance system.

Classification: DDC Code: 363.7050973, LCC Code: GE180

Language: English

Citizen Participation in the Construction of Public Policies for Sustainable Development

Participación Ciudadana en la Construcción de Políticas Públicas de Desarrollo Sustentable

Dra. Karla Haydee Ortiz Palafox

RESUMEN

El escrito analiza las realidades y las limitaciones en las que se ve sumergida la participación ciudadana en materia de sustentabilidad medioambiental. El objetivo de la presente investigación es el análisis y la reflexión de cómo la participación ciudadana contribuye en materia de sustentabilidad y en la construcción de políticas públicas para el desarrollo sustentable. Para responder dicho planteamiento se realizó una metodología estructurada, teórica, descriptiva basada en la exploración documental y bibliográfica a partir del paradigma de investigación cualitativo y exploratorio que recurre a fuentes documentales desde un enfoque histórico hermenéutico.

Entre los resultados se destaca que la ciudadanía participa en los procesos de toma de decisiones y que ello permite la construcción de políticas públicas encaminadas al cuidado medioambiental, que estas participaciones son diversas e incluyen una multitud de opciones, tanto reconocidas como no reconocidas, formales e informales, de distintos niveles, influyentes o sistemáticas, con diferentes niveles y posibilidades. Se concluye además que dichas acciones, se pueden fortalecer, para que las instituciones se doten de una mayor participación, logrando la consolidación de las instituciones que brinden espacios necesarios para la participación. La organización y la inclusión de las personas en la problemática actual y en la discusión, crea posibilidades y oportunidades en torno al cambio climático y a la solución de una crisis de magnitud global, y esta se logra a través de visiones multidisciplinarias, perspectivas distintas y plurales.

Palabras clave: participación ciudadana; sustentabilidad; cambio climático; sistema de gobernanza.

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Correo electronico:karla.palafox@cucea.udg.mx https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4836-7074 El artículo Citizen participation in the construction of public policies for sustainable development forma parte de los diversos trabajos colegiados del cuerpo académico titulado: Democracia: Gobierno Abierto; Participación Ciudadana; Rendición de Cuentas; y Derecho a la Privacidad e Intimidad, con clave UDG-CA 1098.

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The writing analyzes the realities and the limitations in which citizen participation is submerged in matters of environmental sustainability. The objective of this research is the analysis and reflection on how citizen participation contributes to sustainability and the construction of public policies for sustainable development. To respond to this approach, a structured, theoretical, descriptive methodology was carried out based on documentary and bibliographical exploration based on the qualitative and exploratory research paradigm that uses documentary sources from a hermeneutical historical approach. Among the results, it is highlighted that citizens participate in decision-making processes, and that this allows the construction of public policies aimed at environmental care, that these participations

are diverse and include a multitude of options, both recognized and unrecognized, formal and informal, at different levels, influential or systematic, with different levels and possibilities. It is also concluded that these actions can be strengthened, enable and mobilize citizens for greater participation, in addition they achieve the consolidation of institutions to provide the necessary spaces for said participation. The organization and inclusion of people in the current problem and in the discussion creates possibilities and opportunities around climate change and the solution of a crisis of global magnitude, and this is achieved through citizen participation with multidisciplinary visions, different and plural perspectives.

I. INTRODUCCIÓN

El presente trabajo analiza la participación ciudadana en la construcción de políticas públicas en términos de sustentabilidad, donde se busca determinar e identificar la participación de la ciudadanía en términos de la problemática medioambiental.

Múltiples son los problemas hoy en día, la globalización es un proceso que da como nacimiento el capitalismo, este ha traído grandes avances en cuanto a la innovación, a las tecnologías, a la industrialización, sin embargo, describir las tendencias y principales desafíos de las próximas décadas, es algo complicado dado la velocidad en las transformaciones, se puede esbozar respondiendo que las tendencias en las próximas décadas son la profunda desnacionalización, endeudamiento de los países en vías de desarrollo, e inclusive la súper explotación de las regiones en vías de desarrollo, invariablemente requerimos que la hegemonía en curso observe opciones distintas, en donde la participación ciudadana coadyuve en las problemáticas sociales actuales.

El incremento del consumo hacia los hidrocarburos fósiles y el aumento de los gases de efecto invernadero que en el proceso de la quema para la producción de energía eléctrica desprenden gases; entre ellos, el gas de efecto invernadero, provoca alteraciones en el clima, provocando lo que actualmente llamamos cambio climático.

Actualmente el problema ambiental ha sido estudiado durante varias décadas, se ha buscado atender y resolver la problemática del deterioro de la vida en la tierra, dichas reflexiones han sido profundizadas, en ellas se ha responsabilizado al abuso en el manejo de los recursos finitos, las energías basadas en combustibles, los esquemas de crecimiento económico, incluso las acciones directas de los seres humanos, donde se incentiva la modificación de los hábitos individuales y la participación ciudadana en materia de sustentabilidad medioambiental.

La participación ciudadana se define como "la intervención de la ciudadanía en los procesos de toma de decisiones" (Comisión de los Derechos Humanos, 1948). En ese sentido se afirma con dicho concepto que es un derecho legítimo, un elemento fundamental en los sistemas democráticos, que se vuelve representativo e inclusivo en el proceso de la toma de decisiones.

Existen múltiples formas de participación ciudadana que van desde el voto en las urnas, la participación en campañas, la cooperación y protesta de comunidades, estas formas pueden o no estar relacionadas con el estado o la industria privada, hay otras formas que pueden estar relacionadas por ejemplo Silva (2019) indica que también se encuentran los llamados "observatorios, que adoptan como función principal la vigilancia, evaluación y control de ciertos aspectos de la vida pública que son susceptibles de ser intervenidas y/o solucionadas por el gobierno y/o la sociedad civil" (p. 3).

En ese sentido la participación ciudadana puede ser representada por un conjunto de personas organizadas o incluso puede ser de forma individual sin la necesidad de estar dentro de un colectivo.

El planteamiento de la presente investigación es: ¿Cómo la participación ciudadana contribuye en materia de sustentabilidad y en la construcción de

ciudadanía? Para responder dicho planteamiento se propone una metodología estructurada a partir del paradigma de investigación cualitativo, con un análisis descriptivo y exploratorio que recurre a fuentes documentales desde un enfoque histórico hermenéutico. Dado que la investigación es de corte cualitativo, se presenta de forma inicial el referente teórico, determinando las variables de este, como: desarrollo sustentable, la participación y ciudadanía; enseguida se presenta el desarrollo de los resultados para finalmente concluir con algunas consideraciones.

II. ANTECEDENTES DEL DESARROLLO SUSTENTABLE Y LA PARTICIPACIÓN CIUDADANA

La sustentabilidad y la participación ciudadana en conjunto pueden resolver una amplitud de problemáticas, desde crear modelos de responsabilidad social y de desarrollo económico, hasta incluir las distintas visiones y aportes. En ese sentido es indispensable el involucramiento de la sociedad, en la participación, construcción e implementación de políticas sustentables, que se relacionen con los esquemas del crecimiento económico, donde estos últimos puedan adoptar medidas para la mitigación de los daños ambientales, presentes y futuros.

Es importante considerar lo que los autores Dagnino, Olvera y Panfichi (2006) consideran, "la heterogeneidad de la sociedad civil y del Estado configura un mapa extraordinariamente complejo de posibilidades de colaboración y confrontación" (como se citó en Silva y González, 2014, p.11).

Por otro lado, el desarrollo sustentable es un concepto complejo dado que engloba toda una estructura ideológica, que no se basa en una disciplina en concreto y que además tiene variables enraizadas en las raíces filosóficas. Mushett (1998) refiere a la complejidad del término "es posible que parte de esta dificultad provenga del hecho de que tanto ese desarrollo sostenible como el mundo en que queremos llevarlo a la práctica constan de un amplio surtido de disciplinas y técnicas" (p. 18).

Si nos sumergimos a la parte del concepto, por un lado, encontraremos que tiene una apariencia meramente económica, sin embargo, esto no significa referirnos solamente al crecimiento económico, si bien el concepto como tal de desarrollo sustentable nace a partir de que las naciones y los políticos concientizan sobre el falló del modelo económico neoliberal, modelo basado en la extracción de recursos finitos, en el consumo desmedido, en la sobreproducción y en la explotación de la biodiversidad.

Para llegar a esta explotación fue necesario dividir el medio ambiente de la sociedad humana, con esta división nació la lógica mercantil en la sociedad, donde la naturaleza y el medio ambiente se convirtieron en recursos que generan "valor de cambio". Es así como en la sociedad capitalista "(...) el criterio que determina la relación hombre con la naturaleza es el culto al yo y la fijación existencial del sujeto en la acumulación de capital" (Covarrubias, Ojeda y Cruz, 2010, p. 96).

Esta acumulación de riqueza incesante intensificó la depredación del medio ambiente, la generación de gases de efecto invernadero y desechos contaminantes, hasta que llegó el momento en el que el daño y la amenaza que representaba para el sistema social era irreversible. Este fenómeno social es reciente, ya que la sobreproducción y la mercantilización no habían causado tanto daño aún al medioambiente y a la sociedad, esto sin duda ha situado a los políticos y la sociedad en conjunto a considerar premisas de sustentabilidad.

Lo cierto es que a pesar de esta situación no se ha entendido el fenómeno actual en su totalidad, ni se ha incorporado nuevas construcciones conceptuales, sobre todo en el ámbito de las políticas públicas, incluso se ha influido en conceptos ambiguos que no ayudan a la sociedad a comprenderlo en su totalidad. El gramaje del concepto del desarrollo sustentable debiera abordarse de forma conjunta, no solo desde la parte científica y teórica, sino desde los hechos, el consenso y la participación ciudadana.

El enfoque que la economía le da al desarrollo sustentable está basado en una corriente que considera al ser humano como eje central, en un paradigma antropocéntrico donde la oposición es la naturaleza que es vista como producto en beneficio del hombre, y donde no se considera la limitación de los recursos.

Si bien esta visión tiene algunas fallas, también es cierto que a través de los años se ha incrementado la calidad de vida con el aumento de la salud, pero en esta disyuntiva también se ha generado la desigualdad en la sociedad.

La economía tiene influencias importantes en las corrientes epistemológicas del positivismo de Galileano, donde el propósito era el apoderamiento de la naturaleza con beneficios a las clases burguesas, de ahí le siguen disciplinas apegadas a la mecánica newtoniana, desde este punto de vista "(…) el movimiento de precios estimularía la conservación de los recursos, ya que cuando el precio se eleve, el productor asumirá técnicas de conservación y la mano invisible del mercado asegurará la sustentabilidad de los recursos" Underwood y King como se citó en (Bustillo y Martínez 2008, p. 391).

El deterioro del medio ambiente se percibe como un proceso externo que, en condiciones óptimas avala la preservación del medio ambiente y los recursos naturales.
En ese sentido la economía ha estado dirigida a modelos que simulan dinámicas lineales o no lineales donde se busca encontrar "el punto de equilibrio", es decir que los costos se empaten con los beneficios, estos modelos intentan predecir los comportamientos futuros, recargados en un crecimiento ilimitado justificado por medio del "desarrollo económico".

Incluso la palabra desarrollo desde la visión económica, en su tercer párrafo la Real Academia Española (2021) le da el significado de "la evolución progresiva de una economía hacia mejores niveles de vida" (p. 3). Este comportamiento ha regido las naciones y países industrializados por medio de la globalización,

donde se ha permitido y se sigue permitiendo la explotación de los recursos en los países desarrollados y subdesarrollados en aras de prolongar y mantener el consumo ilimitado, manteniendo una visión de las políticas económicas mundiales y el crecimiento simple como fuente de bienestar.

Es así como el desarrollo sustentable es visto por los gobiernos y los organismos internacionales como el "desarrollo del régimen capitalista y no el desarrollo que retorna a la naturaleza originaria" (Covarrubias et al, 2010, p. 97). Es así como la visión desde la economía dominante ha permitido que las políticas medioambientales, sigan siendo auxiliares a las políticas neoliberales.

2.2 La corriente ecológica

Como ya se mencionó anteriormente existen diversas corrientes que intentan contribuir al concepto de desarrollo sustentable desde el punto de vista de la economía ecológica, como alternativa a la economía neoclásica, en esta se considera a los recursos como finitos, es decir agotables, en ese sentido la economía ecológica propone una postura basada en la entropía.

La entropía es una medida de la cantidad de energía incapaz de convertirse en trabajo. Por tanto, debido a que la producción económica requiere de un flujo constante de materiales e insumos energéticos, los cuales son gobernados por procesos entrópicos irreversibles, existirán entonces, lógicamente, límites para el crecimiento económico. (Covarrubias, et al 2010, p. 392)

Además de esta postura la economía ecológica, se basa en los límites ambientales, para frenar la contaminación, pero no contempla la escasez de los recursos. Al respecto Boulding (1991) reconoce que el determinismo entrópico no explica la evolución jerárquica y la complejidad del potencial de los sistemas en lo social y económico.

En ese sentido parece que la economía ecológica, más que su fuerte postura antropocéntrica, reconoce la interdependencia de las actividades humanas y el medio ambiente, donde ambas deben situarse en equilibrio, donde el objetivo es

la conservación de los ecosistemas y no la exclusión de ellos.

Guimares resalta la importancia de factores como el equilibrio climático, la biodiversidad y la capacidad de recuperación de los ecosistemas, que trascienden a la acción del mercado y deja clara la primera paradoja de la sustentabilidad, la presencia de una incompatibilidad o una dicotomía entre la realidad social urbana prevaleciente y una simple propuesta retórica, desprovista de la más mínima posibilidad de implementación. (Como se citó en Miranda y Jiménez, 2011, p. 182).

No se puede denominar desarrollo sustentable sin el involucramiento de medidas de mitigación a los daños ambientales, e de ahí que la palabra sustentabilidad involucra variables importantes, una de ellas es su relación con lo finito, con los límites y la escasez de los recursos, otra variable más, es la relación que tiene la sustentabilidad con la parte social, es decir el crecimiento exponencial de la población, así mismo con la producción limpia y finalmente con la contaminación. Justo la mezcla de estas variables tiene implicaciones fuertes para el planeta.

Implicaciones como concientizar que estamos en un mundo donde los recursos naturales son escasos donde la sociedad siempre creciente en un sistema capitalista tiene necesidades ilimitadas, en donde el consumo energético es inmenso y este al estar recargado en los combustibles fósiles es altamente contaminante, todas estas implicaciones nos permiten comprender que hay una capacidad con límite para un planeta sustentable y que estamos al borde de un colapso medioambiental.

2.3 ¿ Sustentable o sostenible?

El desarrollo sustentable ha sido comprendido de forma errónea, incluso ha sido comprendido como el crecimiento bruto de la economía, confundiéndose como un objetivo del bienestar social. El problema principal del concepto del desarrollo es que suele entenderse como el aumento de la riqueza de un estado, donde dicho aumento no mejora el bienestar social ni el desarrollo humano. Es decir el crecimiento

económico como tal, está definido sin que este contemple las variables como la distribución equitativa, la responsabilidad de producción y la conservación medioambiental.

Desde luego la palabra desarrollo está vinculada y conectado con el desarrollo sustentable, el desarrollo social, desarrollo humano entre otros, en ese sentido el concepto es utilizado para muchas disciplinas sin que este sea claro, pareciese que el concepto como tal del desarrollo no tiene algún significado. Debe ser posible entender y precisar hacia dónde vamos y en qué disciplinas se fundamenta, como bien lo menciona Cortés (2021) "no existe el crecimiento económico, sino tipos de éste que pueden ser inclusivos o excluyentes, equitativos o polarizadores, destructivos o respetuosos de los ecosistemas en que se desenvuelven" (p. 3).

Es importante cuestionarnos porque el término de desarrollo sigue utilizándose "in solo" o queda ausente, la realidad es que los gobiernos, estados, instituciones y personas prefieren no relacionarse con los aspectos políticos y de políticas públicas y omitir la significación y utilización del término.

Hoy después de varias décadas de conocimiento, se sostiene que el desarrollo no es perdurable a largo plazo y que las sociedades y estados no han renunciado al desarrollo como objetivo de crecimiento.

Por otro lado, la sustentabilidad si nos permite tener una visión de largo plazo en el tiempo, jugando un papel interesante, si bien lo sustentable también está relacionado con la temporalidad, debe considerarse entonces "satisfacer las necesidades de la generación presente sin comprometer la capacidad de las generaciones futuras para satisfacer sus propias necesidades" (ONU, 2021, p. 2). La sustentabilidad también incluye los ecosistemas y el sistema social, estos dos enfoques traen consigo instrumentos de política económica ambiental.

Dichos instrumentos son importantes dado que el crecimiento económico no puede denominarse sustentable en ninguna de sus formas, cuando este no ha contemplado medidas de reducción y mitigación. El desarrollo sostenible no puede ser

entendido como algo lejano a la responsabilidad generacional y medioambiental, dado que el término recae mucho en las generaciones presentes, pero estas no deben menoscabar los recursos naturales y medioambientales para no traer consecuencias a las generaciones futuras.

Es importante entonces tener en cuenta dos criterios de relación directa con el desarrollo sustentable, uno de ellos debe responder a la ecología mientras que el otro debe considerar lo social, de esta forma podemos integrar una dimensión realmente ambiental, económica y social que aborde los nuevos problemas y no conduzca a espejismos y contradicciones sociales.

Se vuelve importante definir las variables mencionadas con anterioridad, la ecología y la parte social para cuestionarnos sobre los umbrales del empobrecimiento social y ecológico, y con ellos lograr el establecimiento de modelos de desarrollo que logren realmente minimizar el deterioro, permitiendo optimizar los procesos de los ecosistemas como proveedores de servicios y de alimentos, para elevar la calidad de vida humana, como la función de los ecosistemas medioambientales.

Lograr el cambio requiere que los procesos de transformación biológica y de desarrollo tecnológico e institucional se desplieguen en armonía, con el fin de evitar que el desarrollo empobrezca a un grupo mientras enriquece a otro, sin perder de vista la salvaguarda de la base ecológica que sostiene la productividad y la biodiversidad. (Altieri, 2000, p. 257)

III.   RELACIÓN ENTRE EL CRECIMIENTO ECONÓMICO, LA SUSTENTABILIDAD Y LA EQUIDAD SOCIAL

Altemeyer y Bartscher consideran que la teoría del desarrollo tiene dos implicaciones fundamentales. Por un lado, a nivel teórico, revitaliza la importancia de las instituciones para definir la estructura de derechos y oportunidades, así como, el conjunto de realizaciones relevantes para el bienestar de las personas. Por otro lado, a nivel metodológico, replantea la forma de medir el bienestar, que ya no puede medirse únicamente como el producto por habitante o por trabajador, sino que ha de considerar otras dimensiones básicas del bienestar. (Como se citó en Ortíz, 2020a, p. 168)

Organismos Internacionales y programas de gobiernos comenzaron su preocupación por los años sesenta, se comenzó a divulgar informes internacionales y artículos científicos al respecto todos ellos enfocados a la protección medioambiental, por esos mismos años se comienza con algunos movimientos ambientalistas, que proponen cambios políticos, sociales, culturales y económicos. Las Organizaciones No Gubernamentales (ONG) comenzaron a ser actores importantes iniciando con la importancia de la protección medioambiental, escalando estos temas hasta la agenda global para concientizar sobre la crisis medioambiental.

También intervienen activistas, como la secretaria de las naciones unidas, la activista europea Gro Harlem Brundtland que presentó a través de su comisión el informe "nuestro futuro común" también conocido como el "Informe de Brundtland" en honor a ella. Dicho libro ganó reconocimiento a nivel internacional y clarificó las bases del desarrollo sostenible, asegurando satisfacer las necesidades del presente sin menoscabar las de las generaciones futuras, también puso de manifiesto la relación entre el crecimiento económico, la sustentabilidad ambiental y la equidad social.

Ello permitió crear un tejido social en el que se empoderó al territorio a través de las distintas culturas ciudadanas y sus sistemas de valores, apoyando a preservar y cuidar sus bienes naturales. Es decir la sustentabilidad vista desde las transversalidad, es importante dado que constituye un avance en los subsistemas o territorios específicos, logrando regular entre las comunidades el avance del hombre en su entorno y estableciendo una relación armoniosa en lo social, medioambiental y en el sistema de valores, de esta forma la sustentabilidad se articula y permite repensar la relación hombre- naturaleza.

Como lo afirma Ortíz (2018)"en un acelerado proceso de globalización, las dinámicas territoriales, tanto en la economía como en la calidad de vida, van ganando terreno en el orden político de coexistencia. El territorio da cabida diariamente a nuevas aspiraciones" (p. 294).

Valdría la pena entonces cuestionarla participación ciudadana desde estas dinámicas territoriales y el orden de coexistencia política, desde la visión de la Declaratoria Universal de los Derechos Humanos, la participación ciudadana es la intervención de esta en los procesos de toma de decisiones (Comisión de Derechos Humanos, 1948).

La participación ciudadana es una pieza importante en el sistema democrático, inclusivo y representativo, que además incluye una serie de acciones que forman parte del proceso democrático, si bien la participación no se restringe solo al voto, sino que esta también se ha transformado y ha incluido otras formas de participación, estas formas a su vez se relacionan en bienes, servicios e incluso derechos de ámbito público.

Pese a los avances de la ciudadanía en la incorporación de espacios para su participación en los temas que giran alrededor del desarrollo sustentable y cambio climático, se encuentra poco en la literatura y en el medio, sobre el aporte de la ciudadanía y las responsabilidades que han adquirido, el tema se aborda escasamente y con poca frecuencia, incluso en algunos casos se aborda desde una perspectiva negativa.

Es importante entonces, considerar puntos básicos en los procesos de participación y la mejora de estos, en búsqueda precisamente de un mejor funcionamiento del bien común y del estado y documentar desde luego la participación desde estos procesos, vislumbrar cómo es que la ciudadanía participa en materia de sustentabilidad.

3.2 *Puntos básicos en los procesos de participación ciudadana.*

Se han encontrado tres formas de cómo la ciudadanía aporta y participa en materia de sustentabilidad, la primera de ellas que denominaría participación básica es cuando la misma está informada ante cualquier proceso en materia de cambio climático sin importar incluso la complejidad del tema.

La segunda forma de participación encontrada, que denomino participación intermedia, es cuando la ciudadanía forma parte de procesos en la toma de decisiones, incluso de procesos básicos como los de consulta en materia medioambiental, esta participación, aunque intermedia es aún pasiva.

Finalmente, la tercera forma de participación ciudadana, que denominaré avanzada, logra incidir en las diversas estructuras institucionales y de gobernanza, con una participación responsable, relacionándose de manera formal o informal con las estructuras, pero con gran actividad en los procesos, procedimientos y formas de cumplir las reglas.

Sin embargo, para que la participación ciudadana incide de forma responsable en el Derecho Humano, es preciso cumplir tres requisitos que recaen no sólo en las instituciones y el Estado, sino también en la ciudadanía, el primer requisito será la seriedad y el interés de la participación y esta depende y se relaciona estrictamente con el grado de sensibilidad que se tiene hacia la problemática, con cuanta información se cuenta para la correcta toma de decisiones que desde luego nos permitirá incidir .

El segundo requisito es que el ciudadano conozca hasta donde puede participar, qué significa ello y cómo puede intervenir en los procesos en los que puede verse inmerso, esta participación se da mediante los mecanismos y estructuras, en donde a partir de estos se toman decisiones y se comienza a percibir participaciones más activas y de manera voluntaria, utilizando espacios para ello, donde se emiten percepciones y criterios a partir de los conocimientos adquiridos incluso de las experiencias.

Finalmente el tercer requisito es que la ciudadanía cuente con las herramientas precisas para la participación y es aquí donde deseo ahondar más sobre ello, pues este requisito logra conjuntarse

con lo que denominó la etapa avanzada de participación, dado que hay intervenciones activas donde se forman grupos o colectivos organizados que llevan a cabo sus ideas y son parte de los procesos que permiten llegar a niveles altos de participación, llegando a modificar o reformular las normas, la política pública y las normas legislativas.

Estos últimos ciudadanos requieren de bastante información, dado que no tenerla puede ser un riesgo en la toma de decisiones, con criterios o percepciones sesgadas, que pueden ser contraproducentes y tener un impacto negativo, poco estratégico o reducido. Ahora que planteamos que la información en los ciudadanos participativos es importante, podríamos cuestionarnos entonces si un ciudadano no informado está preparado para participar o debe hacerlo.

Ortíz (2021) indica al respecto

Corresponde a las personas ser conscientes de los efectos del cambio climático, por lo que, se requiere una acción responsable tanto del Estado como de los ciudadanos para modificar hábitos de consumo y producción, a fin de tener prácticas más sustentables y amigables con el medio ambiente. (p. 235)

Por otro lado, Anduiza y Bosch (2004) lo aclaran al respecto y afirman que dependerá de si se considera la participación como un fin en sí mismo o como un medio para conseguir un objetivo. Bajo el supuesto que ninguna persona está obligada a participar, se puede decir que de cara a los problemas medioambientales y al cambio climático lo ideal sería contar con ambas participaciones, dado que es posible que para los temas que requieren la toma de decisiones participen quienes más conocimiento tienen, sin embargo, es importante la participación de todos los demás ciudadanos, dado que lo opuesto a ello sería la nula participación y la apatía.

La inclusión de las distintas visiones, aportes y participaciones pueden compensar las distintas vertientes, logrando una participación inclusiva con percepciones desde distintos enfoques, y desde distintas visiones sociales, reduciendo así la desigualdad de estas.

Justo bajo las diversas visiones sociales fue como se "introdujo el cambio climático en el plan de acción global fijado para orientar las actividades de cooperación internacional sobre problemas ambientales como la diversidad biológica, la protección de los bosques y el cambio climático" (Ortíz, 2019a, p. 7).

IV. GOBERNANZA

La gobernanza es el enlace entre el Estado y la representación de diferentes sectores, es entonces la interrelación de estas dos estructuras que abarca además procesos, procedimientos y formas de que la normas pueda ser cumplidas entre los diferentes actores de la sociedad.

En ese sentido la participación ciudadana dentro de la gobernanza se traduce como el ejercicio de la ciudadanía, dicho ejercicio permite incidir sobre todos aquellos asuntos del bien común, considerando el ejercicio pleno, activo, consciente y responsable tanto de los deberes como de los derechos ciudadanos a la participación.

Los desafíos son difíciles por un lado erradicar la pobreza, reducir la desigualdad y por otro lado direccionar la economía mundial, innovar y transformar evitando el aislamiento del sistema y de capital, tomándolo como una herramienta de capitalización, de un sistema que innova y no de descapitalización hacia algunos países. Las múltiples transformaciones que se han suscitado son principalmente en el campo medioambiental y de sustentabilidad como un sistema definido con componentes, que se vinculan entre sí, ya que las empresas multinacionales y transnacionales además de organismos multilaterales de crédito han iniciado con un poder que va de manera creciente. (Ortíz, 2019b, p. 342)

Aquí cabe mencionar la teoría participativa y la teoría elitista, como dos grandes opuestos pero ambas con el interés de la solución de un conflicto. En la teoría participativa, la ciudadanía activa es aquella interesada en la toma de decisiones y la que no participa, lo hace por insatisfacción, desconocimiento o distanciamiento

de la problemática, esta teoría deja a la deriva la puesta en marcha de algunos mecanismos de participación para aquella que se encuentra distante de la problemática, sin embargo, la participación de la ciudadanía activa no podría ser la muestra representativa del total del conjunto que sufre la problemática, un ejemplo claro es el cambio climático que afecta a todo el planeta, está participación no podría representar a toda la población afectada.

Por otro lado, la teoría elitista considera que la participación es solo en la democracia representativa, dejando la toma de las decisiones solo a los políticos y considerando que la ciudadanía que no toma decisiones o es poco participativa esta en un sistema adecuado que funciona, esta teoría deja de lado los movimientos sociales, agentes de cambios y defensores locales.

La combinación de ambas teorías permitiría vislumbrar y reconocer las nuevas y viejas formas de participación como grandes oportunidades para realizar cambios, se puede juzgar por las teorías que muchas personas y/o generaciones se han distanciado de la participación tradicional, emitir el voto, el partidismo entre otros, sin embargo podrías creer de acuerdo a la combinación de las teorías que quizás no han dejado de participar, pero simplemente participan desde otras formas, donde las acciones pueden ser la protesta, los movimientos sociales y acciones de cambio. Esto puede visualizarse recientemente en el aumento significativo del activismo, firma de peticiones, huelgas, aumento de manifestaciones, mecanismos consultivos en torno a temas climáticos e incluso crecimientos de ONG.

Se ha logrado estructuras que se han transformado en Consejos Científicos de Cambio Climático y en Consejos Consultivos Ciudadano de Cambio Climático, los cuales se encuentran actualmente normados en conformación y se consideran formales, en otros tiempos estos se hubiesen considerado mecanismos informales de participación.

Ahora bien las estructuras informales y/o emergentes, si bien no utilizan los canales de participación institucionales, están llenas de participación de distintas formas, desde miembros activos de ONG, asistencia a marchas y mítines, participando en diferentes plataformas de escrutinio, pegando carteles, participando en manifestaciones y huelgas, haciendo activismo cibernético, boicoteando el consumo de determinados productos por razones medioambientales o políticas , todo ello también es participación con distintos niveles de compromiso, con distintas formas y con distintos grados de influencia que han traído consigo resultados.

Si bien, la participación pública requiere de consistencia, compromiso duradero, iniciativa y esfuerzo más que solo emitir un voto, no se desdeña la participación en todas sus formas, lo destacable en los temas de ambientalismo, cambio climático y desarrollo sustentable, es que estos temas generan preocupación de distintos grupos, tales como los empresarios, ecologistas, activistas, feministas, activistas por la paz, teóricos holísticos, protectores de los derechos de los animales, agricultores, alimentación modificada genéticamente, los de interés por la energía renovable, entre otros.

"Este vacío no podrá ser cubierto mientras no se profundice el conocimiento de la identidad del desarrollo sostenible, (...) se desvela que las diversas definiciones difieren porque tienen distintas perspectivas sobre el campo de influencia de la sustentabilidad" (Ortíz, 2020b, p. 113).

De acuerdo con Norris (2002) el activismo ambiental es contrapuesto a la participación electoral, pero congenia con los movimientos de protesta, en ese sentido el activismo o los movimientos sociales, se suelen apoyar y accionar para gestionar cambios de vida de los actores, que se involucran con problemáticas que viven, más que con formas apoyadas a la política, sin embargo, como ya he comentado ninguna de las distintas formas de participación debería dejarse de lado.

Citizen Participation in the Construction of Public Policies for Sustainable Development

V. MODELOS Y ENFOQUES DE POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS

Si bien ya hablamos de la participación ciudadana y de las distintas formas de participación, así como de sus diferentes niveles, es importante hablar sobre las políticas públicas, estas tienen efectos sobre la sociedad y los ciudadanos, con el fin de estimular la cooperación social y limitar los conflictos dentro de la sociedad. Es importante hablar sobre los modelos de las políticas públicas que describen los procesos e implementación de estas, la literatura actualmente considera tres enfoques, racionalista, incrementalista y mixto.

El modelo con enfoque racionalista considera que las políticas se originan en el gobierno, donde solo se presenta un solo lado en la sociedad, es decir se asume que el gobierno (tomador de decisiones) cuenta con los conocimientos adecuados para tomar las mejores decisiones por medio de análisis cuantitativos. Por otro lado, el enfoque incrementalista considera que dicho análisis cuantitativo ayuda al gobierno a tomar decisiones y a elegir las mejores alternativas en una posición negociadora, este enfoque considera que las políticas pueden ser mejoradas sobre las que ya se encuentran existentes. Este enfoque permite la modificación de las políticas cuando hay crisis, conflictos o hay fuerte movilización de la ciudadanía y sitúa en la agenda política, dichos cambios.

Por otro lado, el enfoque mixto, suele integrar modelos que anteriormente han sido ya descritos, se toman decisiones con base a la proactividad de algún administrador, en este enfoque se acepta que hay un sistema conservador y que aun cuando hay alternativas mejores y viables, es complicado implementarlas debido a dicho sistema.

Dado la mención de los tres enfoques anteriores que algunas políticas públicas optan, es importante mencionar que es esencial la evaluación de las políticas para tener el efecto deseado de la misma, en ese sentido cabría entonces la posibilidad de la modificación de las políticas públicas regionales hasta llegar a su óptimo funcionamiento. Dichas evaluaciones pueden ser realizadas en tres periodos.

La primera evaluación puede ser *antes* de la implementación de la política pública, esta evaluación requerirá de modelos, estimaciones y efectos, la segunda evaluación puede venir *durante* la implementación de la misma, con el propósito de exponer los resultados finales y desde luego realizar ajustes a dichas políticas implementadas, finalmente la tercera evaluación vendría al final de la implementación de la política, con la finalidad de determinar los resultados, compararlos y realizar ajustes posibles.

En estas evaluaciones es necesario observar e incorporar distintos indicadores, pero todos ellos con un enfoque cohesivo, integrador, coherente y desde luego con sinergia para cumplir los objetivos de los distintos sectores o programas. Estos ejercicios son necesarios para que la participación de los ciudadanos tenga un verdadero fin de construcción política y puedan mejorarse los problemas de asimetría y de información. Incluso estos ejercicios se vuelven espacios de consulta y de diálogo en el intercambio de la información.

El cambio climático sin duda es de los desafíos más grandes que tenemos, el que ocasiona mayores conflictos socio – ambientales, en ese sentido puede ser un área de oportunidad para acercarnos a la gobernanza , a la justicia social, a un desarrollo económico inclusivo y por ende a la sostenibilidad ambiental, que permita el correcto desarrollo de las generaciones futuras.

Incluso frente a esta problemática, algunas empresas han empezado a reforzar su responsabilidad social y, más especialmente, el aspecto relacionado con la sustentabilidad. (…) La sustentabilidad puede aportar herramientas para reorientar el comportamiento no solo de los ciudadanos sino también de las empresas con su entorno y redirigir el proceso de compra hacia un modelo sostenible. (Ortíz, 2019c, p. 994)

Sin embargo, el Estado es quien puede y debe tomar decisiones, pero la sociedad puede ser

participe no solo de elegir al candidato y/o representante, sino también de generar propuestas para la toma de decisiones, cuidar nuestros intereses y los intereses de las generaciones futuras como un bien común, ya que esta también es labor nuestra y nosotros somos parte de los procesos de cambio. Como bien indica Granados (2017) "la ciudadanía debe utilizar las mejores herramientas y estrategias para demandar la transparencia y la apertura de espacios, así como participar activa, informada y responsablemente" (p. 28).

VI.   A MODO DE CONCLUSIÓN

La ciudadanía participa en los procesos de toma de decisiones, aunque estas sean diversas e incluyen una multitud de opciones, reconocidas y no reconocidas, formales e informales, influyentes o no, sistemáticas, o con diferentes niveles y posibilidades. En ese sentido la participación ciudadana existe, sin embargo, es imperante cuestionar si dicha participación coadyuva al bien común, si esta cumplen con el propósito para enfrentar la crisis medioambiental.

Si bien las participaciones formales y no formales son necesarias en ellas se encuentra un abanico de diferentes opciones y variables, es importante determinar las acciones y si estas son realmente efectivas y están direccionadas a la disminución del calentamiento global y de la justicia social. Con esta evaluación sugerida se pueden fortalecer dichas acciones, de la ciudadanía para una mayor participación, además de robustecer las instituciones para brindar los espacios necesarios para la participación.

Sin duda es importante estar organizados, incluir a las personas en la problemática actual y en la discusión, contar con una visión a futuro, en miras de crear posibilidades y oportunidades, en torno al cambio climático y a una crisis que es de magnitud global, pero que a través de la participación ciudadana y al aporte de la misma , se puede velar por la sustentabilidad , de manera responsable y correcta , anteponiendo la calidad de vida de y para las futuras generaciones.

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Emerging Adult Graduating Students Adapting to the Covid -19 Pandemic: A Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

Graduating college students are in the stage of life called emerging adulthood. It is a crucial time for identity exploration and making choices about the future, for which some emerging adults struggle while others thrive, depending on their ability to cope. The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted adjustments to the mode of delivery of classroom instruction around the world. Most tertiary education institutions opted for distance learning. As a developing country, almost half of the population of the Philippines has no Internet connection. The purpose of this study was to explore, describe, and interpret the lived experiences of emerging adult graduating students from a state college in Negros Occidental coping with distance learning in the new normal.

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Graduating college students are in the stage of life called emerging adulthood. It is a crucial time for identity exploration and making choices about the future, for which some emerging adults struggle while others thrive, depending on their ability to cope. The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted adjustments to the mode of delivery of classroom instruction around the world. Most tertiary education institutions opted for distance learning. As a developing country, almost half of the population of the Philippines has no Internet connection. The purpose of this study was to explore, describe, and interpret the lived experiences of emerging adult graduating students from a state college in Negros Occidental coping with distance learning in the new normal.

This study utilized the phenomenological research design. The participants were emerging adult graduating students of a state college in Negros Occidental, SY 2020- 2021. Eight graduating students coming from the College Arts and Sciences, College of Education, College of Industrial Technology, and College of Engineering participated in the study. Using the phenomenological in-depth interview, the participants shared their experiences as a graduating student this school year during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thematic analysis was done utilizing Hycner's data explication.

There are three main themes based on the six common themes that emerged from the lived experiences of the emerging adult graduating students. The main themes are: bracing the impact of COVID-19 pandemic; coping with the COVID-19 pandemic; and finding meaning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The common themes are: diverse consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic; psychological challenges during the COVID- 19 pandemic; difficulty of online classes; and inadequate on-the-job training (OJT). The essence of the coming of age of emerging adult graduating students is change - maturity of one's mind, body and emotion, welcoming adaptability amidst difficulties and achieving psychological resilience in adulthood.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has a profound effect on emerging adult graduating college students as they transition into young adulthood. Graduating students felt unprepared to graduate from college due to suspension of activities that equip them as they venture into the world or work. As these graduating students adapt to the new normal, it is imperative that educational institutions provide support services tailored to their needs. A collaborative approach, engaging the different service providers within an educational institution is needed to help empower these graduating college students. As the crisis of development is resolved, these graduating students develop resilience, grit, and adaptability resulting into more successful emerging adults.

This study contributes to the existing literature on distance learning in the Philippines during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in state universities and colleges. This study provides the basis for a social and emotional learning program for students using an online platform.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Graduating college students are in the stage of life called emerging adulthood. Emerging adulthood is a developmental stage marked by identity discovery, uncertainty, conservative sexual beliefs, a self-focused feeling of in-between balanced by responsibilities to parents, and a time of relative freedom from social roles and normative expectation (Arnett, 2000). It is a crucial time for identity exploration and making choices about the future, for which some emerging adults struggle while others thrive, depending on their ability to cope (Peer & McAuslan, 2016).

Coping uses cognitive and behavioral strategies to manage the demands of a situation appraised as taxing or exceeding one's resources to combat the negative emotions and conflict caused by stress (APA, 2020). There are two types of coping based on the Lazarus-Folkman model: engagement and disengagement (Neilsen, & Knardahl, 2014). Engagement coping includes problem-focused coping and some forms of emotion- focused coping: support seeking, emotion regulation, acceptance, and cognitive restructuring. The disengagement or avoidance coping aims to escape the threat or related emotions brought by a problematic situation (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2020). Disengagement coping strategies are prone to depression, while engagement coping strategies are for better psychological outcomes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted adjustments to the mode of delivery of classroom instruction around the world. Most tertiary education institutions opted for distance learning. Distance learning is a learning style where teachers and students are physically separated using different technologies to communicate effectively (University of Kansas Education Online, 2020). Approximately 90% of the world's wealthiest nations have rapidly shifted from traditional to virtual schooling (Burns, 2020). In the Philippines, a massive training program for faculty members to prepare for flexible learning, a combination of online and offline programs, and technical assistance to improve connectivity in universities and colleges were implemented (CHED, 2020). Despite this assistance, college students doing flexible learning scramble to acquire digital devices and a stable Internet connection, causing many difficulties, especially in developing countries (Santos, 2020; Rotas & Cahapay, 2020). As a developing country, 45% of the population of the Philippines has no Internet connection (Joaquin, Biana, & Dacela, 2020).

Republic Act No. 10687, known as The Unified Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education Act (UniFAST) allows students from low-income households, those earning below 11,021 pesos a month, to have the chance to get into college. Most of these students have a very low emotional quotient (EQ) level, making them more susceptible to depression and higher suicidal tendencies (Alayon, 2020). In this view, the researcher is motivated to study the lived experiences of emerging adults graduating from college, especially their adapting to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The present study focused on emerging adult students graduating this academic year 2020-2021. This study was of interest to the researcher because she is currently a registered guidance counselor in a state college. She has experienced a suicide of a graduating college student last December 31, 2019, a few hours before the New Year celebrations, leaving family and friends devastated. The results will have implications in developing a social and emotional learning (SEL) program for college students.

1.2 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to describe, explore, and interpret the lived experiences of emerging adult graduating students from a state college in Negros Occidental adapting to distance learning in the new normal.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The results of the study are valuable to school administrators, faculty, staff, guidance counselors, and future researchers. School

administrators, teachers, and staff understood their role in facilitating positive student adjustment, particularly during a crisis. Guidance counselors are aware of the importance of their role in assisting students, especially at the tertiary level, experiencing psychological distress due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The present study will serve as an impetus for future researchers to focus on the importance of grit, resilience, and adaptability for successful crisis management in preparation for life after the pandemic.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study focused on the lived experiences of emerging adult graduating students of a state college in Negros Occidental, SY 2020-2021. These graduating students were from the different colleges, namely, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Education, College of Industrial Technology, and College of Engineering.

Using the phenomenological in-depth interview, the participants shared their experiences as graduating college students this school year during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings of the study will have implications in developing a social and emotional learning (SEL) program for college students.

1.5 Review of Related Literature

1.5.1 Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on *Education*

Recent evidence suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic affects the students' psychological, social, and academic functioning (Fura & Negash, 2020). The mental health of college students worsened, with some students suffering from depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic disorder (PTSD) (Cao et al., 2020).

Most of the students followed health protocols because they feared infection and were anxious about the well-being of their families (Lovric et al., 2020). They also reported difficulty in concentrating and learning. COVID-19 mainly had psychological effects on individuals, affecting every level of education at varying degrees (Karademir et al., 2020).

A study found that 71% of students noted higher stress and anxiety due to the COVID-19 outbreak (Son et al., 2020). Their stressors were related to the health of family and friends and their academic performance.

In the Philippines, college students experienced an emotional rollercoaster and growth under pressure due to COVID-19 (Cahapay, 2020).

1.5.2 Impact of COVID-19 on Graduating College Students

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted almost all sectors of today's society. Higher education is no exception (Aucejo et al., 2020). Due to COVID-19, less than a quarter of students have delayed graduation, almost half of the graduating students have lost a job, internship, or job offer, and one-third expect to earn less at age 35. In some cases, nearly two-fifths of graduating students had stress, anxiety, and depression (Mekonin et al., 2021).

Recent phenomenological studies on graduating nurses' response to the Covid-19 pandemic revealed their reluctance to take care of patients if they were not fully protected. Students considered low risk in the likelihood of an infection volunteered more to care for infected patients (Lancaster et al., 2021). Students noticed negative experiences when using public vehicles and were afraid of the clinical settings (Lovric et al., 2020). A number of students reported difficulty concentrating and learning, while the majority of students praised teacher support and faculty work in this crisis.

The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is evident in the Philippines (Cleofas, 2020). College students became more uncertain of their future. They were anxious about their future careers because of the lockdowns imposed by the government.

1.5.3 Shifting to Online Learning

The shift to online learning by schools, colleges, and universities has received considerable

attention, although online learning is not a new concept (Henaku, 2020).

Previous qualitative studies outline the impact of online learning on college students. Graduating medical students did not find tele-education and e-learning to be as effective as traditional face-to-face hospital clerkships (Franklin et al., 2021). Both professors and students found online learning not interesting compared to ordinary learning, and professors needed to provide more time in teaching (Elfirdoussi, 2020).

Several qualitative studies that support online learning. Online modality was well- received by nursing students (Mansour et al., 2020). Online learning was time-saving, which resulted in better academic performance despite some challenges in the delivery of lessons. Younger students preferred online learning for the upcoming academic years.

In the Philippines, challenges of college students ranged from learning at home to technological literacy and competency (Barot & Llenares, 2021; Bayagas, 2020). The mental health of college students has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It created a digital divide where almost half of Filipino households and three- quarters of public schools do not have Internet access (Joaquin, et al., 2020). Even students in urban places have limited internet access. Students get bored with online learning after the first two weeks of learning from home (Irawan & Lestari, 2020). Students whose parents have low income had considerable anxiety, because they had to buy quotas to participate in online learning. Mood changes occur due to too many assignments. Overall, online learning was ineffective for students.

1.5.4 On-the-Job Training for Graduating Students

Internship and practicum during the COVID-19 pandemic were cut short and were incorporated into a remote modality. Graduating students manifest diverse experiences in their practicum process, with difficulties inherent to the remote work condition, such as communication difficulties with students and school teachers, didactic and evaluation methods, and adaptation

context (Fierro et al., 2021). The downside is the missed experiences of graduating students and the loss of possible earnings (Abel & Deitz, 2020). This created an "earnings wedge" that can negatively affect total lifetime earnings of the graduating students.

On the contrary, online practicums/practical courses for diploma and undergraduate students in 2020 generally worked well, even if several students encountered difficulties (Yunus, 2020). The proportion of students who completed the practicums/practical courses online was considerably high.

In the Philippines, CHED announced that students could no longer have their internships in the field and abroad due to the threat of the new coronavirus (Mendoza, 2021). This caused anxiety to graduating students who felt that online classes were not enough in building their competence. These students know the importance of OJT in gaining real-world learning experiences and training in their respective professions (Cleofas, 2020).

1.5.5 Coping during a Crisis

Based on the Lazarus-Folkman model, there are two types of coping strategies: engagement and disengagement. Although disengagement coping strategies were most strongly associated with distress, engagement coping strategies were consistently linked to more favorable psychological outcomes (Neilsen & Knardahl, 2014).

Recent studies showed that most students adapted positive coping or engagement coping during the COVID-19 pandemic. College students used the following strategies to cope with the pandemic: realize the importance of facing these times positively, carrying out pleasurable activities, keeping in touch with family and friends, and establishing routines (Branquinho et al. (2020).

International college students diverted their anxiety by listening to music, eating or cooking, video or mobile gaming, seeking support from family and friends, browsing the web, positive

thinking, exercise, spiritual support, and meditation (Lai et al., 2020).

Some of the coping strategies adapted by college students were performing cognitive behavioral activities, increasing their sociability with their support groups through email, social media, or SMS text (Fura & Negash, 2020). The pandemic has also taught college students to be self-regulated and creative by designing their coping strategies to deal with stress and anxiety such as enrolling in technical courses to keep their thoughts busy (Chandra, 2020).

In the Philippines, most college students comply with wearing heath protective gear and adhere to the stay at home policy of the government to relieve them from anxiety (Baloran, 2020). Students cope with the stress of remote learning by finding ways to adapt to the present crisis like relaxation to relieve them from muscle tension, reading books to keep their minds busy, and taking time to talk to friends and family.

Students stress that blended learning implications are primarily negative (Perante et al., 2020). They have learned to adjust as a result of the changes in the learning platform, but not having the necessary resources for blended learning requirements still emerges. Lacking resources is the most challenging. At the same time, most of them need to seek social support to cope with blended learning.

1.5.6 Meaning-Making in the Face of Adversity

Searching for meaning seems to be a natural human response when faced with adversity such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Emerging adults became self-motivated and committed to their studies (Rahiem, 2020). Through lifestyle changes and cognitive students learned to understand the severity of their problems, increasing their resilience as they adapted to the changes in their situations (Tariq et al., 2020).

In the Philippines, college students reported positive outcomes in spite of the challenging experiences (Cleofas, 2020). They were able to self-reflect and reevaluate their lives. They had a better appreciation of things such as in-person classes, freely going outdoors, and personal relationships with family and friends. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has taught them to be conscious of how they use their time when their school tasks are complete, they ask questions from their teachers if they have to, and perform the assigned tasks ahead (Rotas & Cahapay, 2020). Altogether, they found ways to divert their mind from the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic through self-regulation and self- management.

1.5.7 Emerging Adulthood: Coming of Age

Coming of age is the transformation from childhood to adulthood. The coming of age shows the process of adolescents from immaturity to maturity (Fajarrani, 2013). In some cultures, coming of age is determined when a child reaches a particular birthday and is no longer a minor. Thirteen-, 15-, 16-, 18-, and 21-years of age are significant periods for young adults. The coming of age milestone can be a difficult transition, as some children are hesitant to leave their childhood behind (O'Donnell, 2021). A person's coming of age means a person achieved psychological resilience and maturity, where the person can be adaptable in the face of change (Trible, 2015).

Graduating college students range from 18 to 25 years old, this is a period called emerging adulthood. Emerging adulthood is a transition to adulthood, that is, the age of maturity. According to Arnett (2000), there are three criteria for adulthood these are the following: acceptance of responsibility for oneself, ability to make independent decisions, and financial indepen-dence from significant family members or primary caregivers. With that said, emerging adult college students must hurdle the challenges of identity exploration, the age of instability, the age of self-focused, the age of feeling in-between, and the age of possibilities. The experiences they gain during this stage will lay down the foundation of their identity as an adult.

Identity formation is a defining feature of the transition to adulthood. Adolescents go through a period of exploration, possibly lasting into the early 20s (Erikson, 1968). They learn who they

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are and what their role is in society. Both Erikson and Havighurst espoused that achieving these tasks leads to happiness and increases competence. In contrast, failure leads to unhappiness in the individual, difficulty in later tasks and confusing self-identity (Nelson, 2005). Regardless of age, a person feels that they have reached adulthood as soon as they have fulfilled the expectations that are essential for adulthood.

Penaflor et al. (2018) studied features of emerging adulthood and self-efficacy of senior college students in the Philippines and found that the students identified their current developmental stage with the age of possibilities and age of identity exploration the most, while their current state to the age of instability the least. The self-efficacy level of the majority of the students fell within the high-level category. This implies that college years are suitable for emerging adults' self-exploration and self-reflection, and they may benefit from appropriate and adequate adult guidance. Through education and intervention programs aimed at increasing their knowledge about emerging adulthood, career choices, dealing with relationships, defining strengths, and protective factors that may facilitate transition into adulthood, including enhancing one's self-efficacy levels (Penaflor et al., 2018).

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized the qualitative research design using the phenomenological approach. In qualitative research, data collection and analysis allow for a limited sample size. Participants are selected based on their interest in the subject, knowledge of the phenomena under investigation, and personal experience with the phenomenon (Sailor, 2013). Phenomenology examines how people make sense of their experiences and the world, how they shape worldviews, and how they interpret and translate their experiences into consciousness. Individuals' "lived experiences" must be the source of phenomenological study. The data collection and analysis allow for a limited sample size. Participants are selected

based on their interest in the subject, knowledge of the phenomena under investigation, and personal experience with the phenomenon.

Philosophical Assumptions. Husserl believed that an individual's perceptions were reliable and the only source of data from where to begin (Groenewald, 2004). Positivism was one of the most influential schools of thought (Ataro, 2019). The positivist used a quantitative approach as well as objective reasoning and interpretation.

Ontological Assumptions. The recorded conversations like interviews made the participants free from expressing themselves. A verbatim transcript was made. Analysis of data was shown through presenting quotes and themes while keeping in mind the anonymity of the participants. The process of member checking was to secure that the researcher truly captured the world view of each participant. These rigorous procedures ensured the positivist researcher's main role, to report and describe the phenomenon as it is.

Epistemological Assumptions. By applying in-depth interviews and constantly communicating with the participants before the virtual interview, the researcher minimized the distance between herself and the participants. It brought the researcher to the natural setting of the interviewees. The interview was done in a conversation-like manner allowing the participants to express their thoughts and feelings freely.

Axiological Assumptions. The researcher was aware of the value-laden nature of this study. Being a regular teacher with experience from tertiary education and a guidance counselor in school in Negros Occidental has implications on the study. Given the significant impact of distance learning at the Pandemic, surviving a semester of an online class was a big challenge to many college students. Therefore, the researcher's task was to be aware of her background and personal biases. The researcher knew the importance of commitment, determination, honesty, and self-respect in pursuing one's goal; holding these together and not influencing the participants' own

experiences and beliefs as they go through this pandemic crisis was just as important. The information gathered from the field is also value-laden.

Methodological Assumptions. The researcher used the phenomenological research design. Purposive sampling was utilized. This research intended to gather data regarding participants' perspectives about the phenomenon. Analysis of data was based on Hycner's phenomenological analysis of data. At the root of this study was to understand the phenomenon of adapting to distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic as experienced by the emerging adult graduating college students (Groenewald, 2004).

2.2 Participants

The participants of this study were eight emerging adult graduating students of a state college in Negros Occidental SY 2020-2021. The selection of the participants is through the purposive sampling method.

Eligibility criteria for inclusion in the study were the following: a graduating student from the four colleges during the second semester school year 2020-2021 through distance learning; age between 18 to 25 years old; and a male or female.

2.3 Research Instrument

The unstructured in-depth interview was utilized to gather the required data. Unstructured in-depth interviews generate qualitative data through the use of open questions. Validity is increased because it gives the researcher the opportunity to probe for a deeper understanding, ask for clarification, and allow the participant to steer the direction of the interview.

Unstructured in-depth interviews were conducted with the graduating college students. This statement was directed to them to get their experiences, feelings, beliefs, and convictions, "Kindly tell me of your experiences of being a graduating student this school year during this COVID-19 pandemic." This entailed the graduating students to share their experiences of coping with distance learning during the pandemic.

III. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

After securing approval from the proper school authorities for the conduct of this study, the researcher identified the possible graduating students from the four colleges as participants of the study. The researcher presented the purpose and benefit of the study to the four deans to level expectations from graduating students and. To become familiar with the culture of each college. After establishing rapport with the identified participants, the researcher sent the research informed consent and a letter to the participants via Facebook Messenger. As soon as the participants agreed, the researcher set the date and time for the virtual interview. The conduct of the study began on May 3, 2020, starting with the initial identification of the participants. Communication and discussions continued until May 22, 2021, to accommodate the availability of the participants.

The unstructured in-depth interview, which was audiotaped, was carried out in a conversational style, which lasted for one hour. The researcher tried to make a good and safe atmosphere by being relaxed and focused, giving participants enough time to process their answers and clarify things that might be unclear. The participants spoke their native language, which is Hiligaynon and from time to time infused the English language during the conversation.

Debriefing was done after the interview to process the participants' personal experiences. Debriefing was conducted by the researcher, who was a Registered Guidance Counselor. Participants were told if they had questions about the interview or the whole procedure of the interview. Participants were asked if they had resentments or negative feelings while participating or whether they found it disturbing or odd in any aspect of the interview. The researcher processed the feelings and thoughts of the participants. The researcher ensured participants felt okay, relieved from bothersome thoughts, and answered all questions. The researcher once again thanked the participants for their contribution to the study.

Data-collection interviews continued until the topic was exhausted or saturated; that was when participants introduced no new perspectives on the topic.

The researcher reviewed the transcripts and notes. Participants were asked to serve as member checkers for their interviews. The researcher transcribed all the interviews and listened to the tapes many times to secure the correctly written statements.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Thematic analysis was done using the framework of Hycner (1985). According to Hycner, analysis means "breaking into parts" and often means a loss of the whole phenomenon, while explication implies an investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole (Groenewald, 2004). This explication process of Hycner involves bracketing and phenomenological reduction; delineating units of meaning; clustering of units of meaning to form themes; summarizing each written narrative stories, validating it and where necessary modifying it; and extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary (Groenewald, 2004; Hycner, 1985).

4.1 Bracketing and Phenomenological Reduction

The phenomenological reduction is the researcher's deliberate and purposeful opening to the phenomenon. It refers to bracketing out or not allowing the researcher's definitions and perceptions to penetrate the participant's environment, such that no stance is taken for or against the researcher's presumptions (Groenewald, 2004; Hycner, 1985). The researcher repeatedly listened to the audio recording of each interview to become familiar with the words of the interviewee in order to develop a holistic sense.

4.2 Delineating Units of Meaning

The researcher is ready to go over the transcript to evoke the participants' meanings to get to the heart of the matter (Hycner, 1985). The researcher examines the literal material, the number of times meaning is expressed, and how it was stated (Groenewald, 2004). After the interview, the researcher created the verbatim transcripts from the audiotaped interviews; these comprised the basis of her data for analysis. The length of the interview was one hour.

4.3 Clustering of Units of Meanings to Form Themes

To stay true to the phenomenon, the researcher must bracket her presumptions once more with the list of appropriate units of meaning (Groenewald, 2004; Hycner, 1985). Through a thorough examination of the meaning units' list, the researcher extracts the essence of the units' meaning. Grouping units of meaning together usually form clusters of themes, and the researcher selects important subjects, often known as units of importance. Core themes are identified by exploring the different clusters' context, "which reflects the nature of these clusters" (Groenewald, 2004). The researcher used line-by-line coding of the transcribed interviews to highlighted phrases, key ideas, categories, and statements made during each interview process to organize the data of the study.

4.4 Summarizing each Written Narrative Stories, Validating, and Modifying

A review that integrates all of the themes elicited from the published narrative accounts of graduating college students during the pandemic creates a holistic framework. The researcher aims to recreate the participants' inner world of experience (Groenewald, 2004; Hycner, 1985). The researcher utilized a comparative analysis by comparing the codes that emerged from the line-by-line analysis of each participant. After the analysis, the major themes from the data emerged; allowing the researcher to determine commonalities and similarities within the transcribed codes extracted from the interview transcripts.

At this point, the researcher performed a validity check by returning the summary and themes to

the participants and engaged in a dialogue with each participant about what was found so far (Groenewald, 2004; Hycner, 1985). It was necessary for the researcher to dialogue with the participants what she found to determine if the participants agreed. Modifications were made as a result of the validity check.

4.5 Extracting General and Unique Themes for all the Written Narrative Stories and Composite Summary

The researcher looks for the themes common to most in- depth interviews and the individual variations (Groenewald, 2004; Hycner, 1985). The researcher makes sure not to cluster common themes when significant differences exist. The meaning units and themes of all the participants are examined to represent the participants' experiences as a whole. The researcher ended the

explication by writing a composite summary, which would accurately capture the essence of the phenomenon being investigated (Hycner, 1985). The themes that emerged guided the formulation of the essence of the graduating college students coping with distance learning during the pandemic.

4.5.1 Essence of the Phenomenon

Language is used to express meaning when describing an experience. A metaphor is written to convey the meaning of a phenomenological study since language is used as data in qualitative analysis (Sailor, 2013). The researcher chose an acronym to encapsulate all the experiences of the emerging adult graduating students coping with distance learning during the pandemic.

Bracketing and Phenomenological Reduction

↓

Delineating Units of Meaning

↓

Clustering of Units of Meanings to Form Themes

↓

Summarizing Each Written Narrative Story, Validating, and Modifying

↓

Extracting General and Unique Themes for all the Written Narrative Stories and Composite Summary

↓

Discovering the Essence of the Lived Experiences
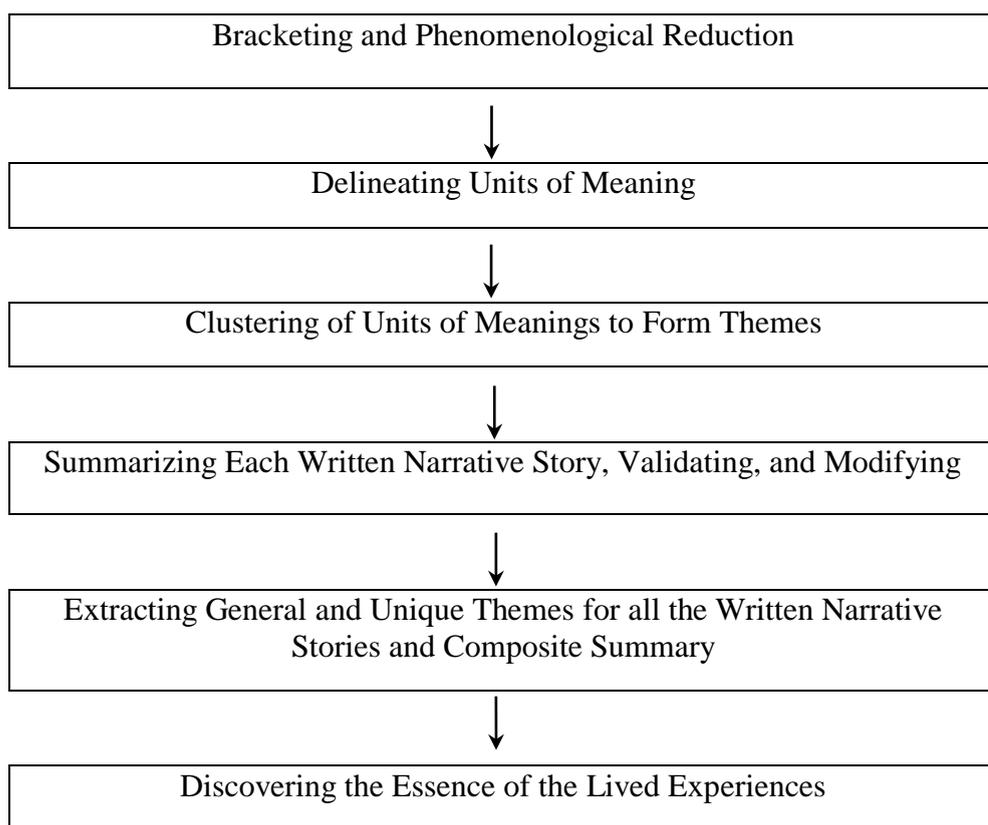
Figure 1: Schematic Diagram for Data Explication

4.6 Ethical Considerations

The researcher addressed the general ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice to ensure the study's ethical soundness.

Social Value

This study served as a catharsis to students who experienced psychological distress amidst the distance learning education. The interview

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provided an avenue to vent out repressed emotions, thereby providing relief and promoting good mental health.

Informed Consent

The researcher secured the informed consent of the participants. Informing the participants that their participation in this study is voluntary, and they have the right to withdraw if they feel uncomfortable in gathering information from them.

Vulnerability of the Participants

Considering the well-being of the participants, the researcher established rapport with the participants before the actual virtual interviews by exchanging messages online. It resulted in the sense of trust and mutual respect between the researcher and the participants.

The researcher ensured that all feelings and thoughts during the interview were addressed and processed individually.

Risks and Benefits

The study presented no risk to participants because data was collected and communicated through the anonymity of color-coding. The emotional baggage that surfaced during the interview was immediately addressed since the researcher is a registered guidance counselor before proceeding to the next question.

Privacy and Confidentiality

The researcher will keep the participants' records for this study confidential in adherence to the Data Privacy Act of 2012. No information that discloses their identity will be released or published without their specific consent to the disclosure, except if necessary to protect their rights or welfare. Likewise, the researcher will not release the information about their participation to people not connected in the study. The researcher will dispose of all materials that have the basic information of the participants at a given time. Participants remained anonymous through the process of coding.

Transparency

Only the researcher involved in the study will be able to access data. Participants will be informed of the result of the study. No information that discloses the participants' identity will be released or published without their specific consent to reveal.

Finally, the researcher declared no conflict of interest since she will not gain any monetary or administrative benefits from conducting the study.

Qualifications of the Researcher

The researcher is a Ph.D. major in Psychology candidate of the Recoletos de Bacolod Graduate School (RBGS). As a Registered Guidance Counselor, she practiced ethical standards in all her dealing with clients. Based on her education and profession, the researcher is knowledgeable of the rigors of qualitative research.

Adequacy of Facilities

Participants who did not have internet load were provided an internet load good enough for a one-hour interview.

Justice

Participants were selected through the purposive sampling method. The researcher personally asked for the list of graduating students from the Registrar's Office and from the Deans' Office.

The participants did not get any payment or service as compensation for their involvement with the research.

Community Involvement

Initial talk about the results of the study transpired between the researcher, the Guidance Director, and the Information Service specialist. The researcher and the Information Service Specialist wrote a proposal to the school's officials. The Guidance Director convened all CHMSC guidance counselors regarding the webinar.

A webinar for the C: Cope Positively of the C.H.A.N.G.E.: Social and Emotional Learning for College Students was conducted to all first-year college students across four campuses last October 28, 2021, via FB Live.

V. RESULTS

5.1 Participants

Participants of the study were four males and four females, aged 22 to 25. The interviews were conducted from May 3 to May 22, 2021.

Participant 1. Pedro is a Bachelor of Science major in Psychology student who used to work part-time in a call center to help his parents. His father works on a farm, while his mother is a housewife. The COVID-19 Pandemic forced him to stop working. (*I'm 25 years old, 4th-year Psychology student, my father ga obra sa kampo, my mom work lang ya sa house. That's why I appreciate my mom for sending me to school. Wala ko ga part-time subong, focus sa studies).*

Participant 2. Juan is an engineering student who plans to work abroad if given a chance. He thinks that by working abroad he can make their lives comfortable. He is in a dilemma whether to take the board exam after graduating because he feels unprepared. (*I'm an engineering student sang CHMSC kag naga istar ko sa Bacolod City. Akon magulang miss, sye na suporta sa akon pag skwela. Online tutor sa English, sa mga Japanese. Homebased sya sang pag pandemic. Kung papalarin gusto ko magwa miss.)*

Participant 3. Tomas is a Bachelor of Secondary Education student, majoring in English The COVID-19 pandemic forces him to buy a new cell phone. His brother buys the things he needs for online classes including, a portable Internet router (*Mga 18 lng kami ka bilog ang ma graduate sa English. Ga review kami miss subong. Sa augusust exam, next year guro kng indi makaya subong.*)

Participant 4. Juaning is a BSIT major in Electrical Technology student, who misses going to school. He volunteers as Brgy. Tanod during the lockdown. His neighbors provide them food during the lockdown. (*Kag sa pag lock down, nag voluntary ko, dire sa alagyan samun pasulod, para makabulig man d miss eh kami ang gabantay, para wala iban na makasulod. tungod sa tupad balay. Kumbaga buligay bla miss ang iban bi gaagi tapus my tanum kami na langka na ginluto. Kung ano sud-an nila,e share nila sa amun.*)

Participant 5. Maria is a Psychology graduating student who tries to maintain her dean's list status no matter how difficult it may seem. She thinks that online classes serve no purpose, it unmotivates her to be at her best. She experiences emotional struggle during the lock-down. (*Ang emotion miss, kis.a daw ka okay lang, kis.a daw ka subo subo gid. Kabudlay budlay gid ya miss mainly mag communicate sa classmates namun. Daw nag paka hapus lang gid, guro indi lang man ako ang ga copy paste sa google miss.*)

Participant 6. Petra is a BSIT major in Food Trades student, she thinks unprepared to apply for a job after graduation. She suffers depression during the height of the lockdown because two of her relatives died. She is stressed and thinks of ways to help her sister with the expenses at home. (*Gaka stress ko miss kay, gapamangkot ko sa kaugalingon ko kung ano bala mabulig ko miss. Akon nga tiyo kay may asthma amo to natabo sa iya kag ang paka isa ko may ano, naaksidente sa ya miss. indi, tetanus miss, naigo iya ulo sang lansang.*)

Participant 7. Inday is a BS Engineering student living with her father and grandparents. She is unable to finish her on-the-job training because of the lock-down. She struggles managing online classes and responsibilities at home. (*Kag ang OJT namon sa sine miss hu, na tymingan gid na may pandemic, ti sa school lang kami ti daw wala kami bala mayu na expose sa iban pa gid bala. Daw wala ka bala lugar nga ma pwede ka ka focus gid nga wala mayu destraction, syempre may mga neighbors ka man. Lain gid bi miss ang classroom setting nga ang focus mo ara lang gid tanan sa lesson.*)

Participant 8. Nene is a Bachelor of Elementary Education, major in General Education. She finds it hard to adapt to the new normal. She experiences emotional meltdown during the lockdown. (*Kabudlay mag adapt sa new normal. Subong na graduating student naka agi kami stress ya miss eh hibi na ko kay mama indi na ko ka intindi miss kung sigehon ko pa ni ayhan ang pag skwela ko kay ka kapoy kapoy na ko nang nabudlayan na kami mangita sang kwarta nga enugpaload. Damo-damo na ko may gin panumdom nga nag sulod sa ulo ko nga kaya ko pa ni ayhan tapus wala na ko miss gakaon.*)

5.2 Common and Main Themes

Common themes are those found in six or more in-depth interviews (Groenewald, 2004; Hall, 2003; Hycner, 1985). These common themes were grouped into main themes. There are three main themes based on the six common themes that emerged from the lived experiences of the emerging adult graduating students. The main themes are: bracing the impact of COVID-19 pandemic; coping with the COVID-19 pandemic; and finding meaning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The common themes are: diverse consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic; psychological challenges during the COVID- 19 pandemic; difficulty of online classes; and inadequate on-the-job training (OJT).

5.2.1 Bracing the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

Diverse Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Graduating college students know that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected all facets of their lives. Their transition to adulthood is impacted by the many limitations brought by the pandemic. The participants accepted, hurdled, and embraced the challenges they encountered.

Ang COVID-19 ga affect gid sya ya sa tanan: sa economeya, sa tawo, sa relationship, kag sa pamilya. (COVID-19 affects everyone: the economy, the person, the relationship, and the family.)

Ang COVID-19 sa subong isa kadako gid nga perwisyo sa economy… sa atun pag obra, sa education, sa government kag sa tagsa-tagsa… ga produce sang negative nga emotion. (COVID-19 is currently a huge problem of the economy … of our work, of education, of government and of each other … it produces negative emotions.)

Ang COVID-19 damo gid gin bag-o sa sistema. Mas damo na gid ang nag pigado. (The COVID-19 has made big changes in the current system; more people become poor.)

Ang COVID - 19 pandemic nagtuga sang lockdown kag damo positive cases. (COVID - 19 pandemic created lockdown and many positive cases.)

Kag aware ko nga ang aton nga health care system daw indi maayo kasarang sa pag handle sang amo ni nga kind sang virus kag sa pandemic. (And I am aware that our health care system does not seem to be well equipped to handle this kind of virus and the pandemic.)

Kabudlay man kay naapektuhan gid ang financial life namun tapos amun daily activities/routine nagliwat. Kabudlay mag adapt sa new normal. (It was also difficult because our financial life was really affected and our daily activities/routine changed. It was difficult adapting to the new normal.)

Psychological Challenges during the COVID-19 Pandemic

According to Arnett, emerging adulthood is a stage of identity exploration, instability, self-focus, ambivalence to the idea of personal independence, and a sense of broad possibilities. As graduating students, the school is one avenue where they could explore endless possibilities about their choices and potentials. It is a time to discover and make their identity and be comfortable with their achievement. However, the COVID-19 pandemic deprived them of these opportunities. The participants experienced a roller coaster ride of emotions as they continued their journey.

Gaka affect sa akon as a student in general kay na anxious ko. (It affects me as a student in general because I'm anxious.)

COVID-19 affects me sa personal ko na life, first and foremost sa akon na emotion. How to adjust sang new world which is nga my ara na sang COVID-19. (COVID-19 affects me in my personal life, first and foremost in my emotions. How to adjust to the new world which has already COVID-19.)

Unstable ko emotionally kay daw wala na bala socialization nga ginatawag haw. Ang emotion ko kung kaisa daw ka okay lang pero kung kaisa daw ka subo subo gid. (I am emotionally unstable because there seems to be no socialization. My emotion is that sometimes I feel okay but sometimes I feel really sad.)

Financially, emotionally kag mentally challenging. Gaka stress ko kay gapamangkot ko sa kaugalingon ko kung ano bala mabulig ko. Wala ko may mabulig. (Financially, emotionally and mentally challenging. I get stressed because I ask myself what I can do to help. I am helpless.)

Naka experience ko lockdown kay kaagi ko upod sa isa ka LSI halin sa Manila. (I experienced a lockdown because I was with an LSI from Manila.)

Akon nga father naka stop work kay tungod nag lockdown. Kag sa studies medyo budlay sya kay syempre like me nga mahuloy-on bala kung mamangkot mangkot sa teacher. (My father stopped working because of a lockdown. And in studies, it is a bit difficult because I am shy to ask questions to the teacher.)

Naga ka stress ko kag naghibi na ko kay mama. Indi na ko ka intindi kung masigi pa ko eskwela kay ka kapoy kapoy kag nabudlayan na kami mangita sang kwarta nga e pa load para sa online classes. (It's stressing me out and I'm already crying to mom. I don't understand if I'm still going to school because I'm tired and we're having a hard time finding money for "load" for online classes.)

Budlayan ko mag adjust kapin pa gid magtuon. May ara gid ya teacher na daw ga adjust man sya sa sitwasyon te indi man kami mag *intindihanay sa klase.* (I struggle to adjust even more to study. There is a teacher who seems to adjust to the situation and we don't understand each other in class.)

Difficulty of Online Classes

The sudden shift to a flexible learning modality threatened the students' psychological, emotional, financial, resourcefulness, and determination. Change means adjusting and adjusting is often difficult because it requires one to get out of one's comfort zone. The participants embraced the new normal with a grain of salt but were relentless in finishing what they started.

Ka less sang learning sa online classes bangod kay indi ma explain sang teachers ang mga lessons. Unlike sa face to face classes, pwedi mo ma approach ang teachers anytime to ask questions. Ang internet connection ka bweset. (Less learning in online classes because teachers can't explain the lessons. Unlike face to face classes, you can approach teachers anytime to ask questions. The internet connection is bad.)

Budlay gid ang online class para sa akon... kis-a nabudlayan ko mag catch up kay lain gid b kung face to face... Kag kis-a hina ang signal. (The online class is very difficult for me ... sometimes I have a hard time catching up because it's very different when it comes to face to face ... And sometimes the signal is weak.)

For me lain gid ya ang learnings sa face to face kung e kumpara sa online class. Sa face to face learning pulido... While sa online classes daw kahapyaw lang sang learnings... mawad-an ka internet te disturbo kay kinanglan gid mag pa load. Dugang pa nga problema ang brown out kag kulang ang gadgets. (For me, face-to-face learning is very different compared to online classes. Face to face learning is polished... While in online classes it seems like the learnings are just a waste ... you will lose internet disturbance because you really have to load more. Another problem is brown out and lack of gadgets.)

Ang online classes sa tuod tuod lang indi ka man gid siling nga maka focus. Dasig ko matak-an sa online classes... indi man ko dayun ka

pamangkot... damo ga cheat... Dugang pa nga kabudlayan ang gasto bakal load kag mahina nga signal. (Online classes, of course, you can never be able to focus. I'm easily discouraged to take online classes ... you can't ask easily ... there are a lot who cheats.)

Ka stressful sang online class kag indi ko mayo maka learn kay wala interaction sa teachers. Unlike sa face to face nga maka learn gid ko kay ga pay attention ko kay teacher. (The online class is stressful and I can't learn because there is no interaction with the teachers. Unlike face to face, I can really learn because I pay attention to the teacher.)

Indi gid daku nga bulig ang online classes kay daw wala man ko may na intindihan sa amon subjects. Nami man gid kung may face to face gid. Dugangan pa sang problema sa signal. (Online classes are not very helpful because I don't seem to understand our subjects anymore. It would be nice if there was a face to face. Adding to the problem is the signal.)

Kadamo distractions sa online classes. Kung face to face mas maka focus gid ko sa akon lessons... need mag perform experiment te indi man mahimo kay online classes. Kabudlay pa gid mag obra sang amon thesis. (Lots of distractions in online classes. If face to face I can really focus on my lessons ... I need to perform experiments but I can't do online classes. It is still difficult to work on our thesis.)

Ang challenge sa akon sa online classes amo ang signal... indi ko kakuha quiz te zero naman eh... Te daw wala gid ko mayo may nahawiran sa amon classes. (The challenge for me in online classes is the signal ... I can't take the quiz and it's zero ... I don't think I've ever learned anything in our classes.)

Inadequate On-the-Job Training (OJT)

The purpose of the OJT is to expose the graduating students to the duties and responsibilities in their chosen field. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it impossible for the participants to undergo their OJT to prepare them to face the next step – finding a job.

Kulang kami sa on the job training, kulang kami sa exposure. (We lack on the job training, we lack exposure.)

Kulang sa time para may ma acquire pa gid ko na experiences nga ma usar ko pa gid sa field. Kay nakulbaan ko bala kung sa field na gid. (I don't have enough time to acquire more experiences that I can use in the field. Because I was nervous when I was in the field.)

Budlay ang internship... Kabudlay gid mag build relationship using the phone kag mga gadgets. Wala gid ya feedback. (Internship is hard ... It's really hard to build a relationship using the phone and gadgets. No feedback at all.)

Daku gid ya ang impact sg COVID-19 sa OJT namun. Ang time bla dapat na e OJT namun, nga e obra namun, na e dugang sa knowledge kag sa experience namun nadula tungod sa pandemic. (The impact of COVID-19 on OJT is huge. Time supposed for our OJT, to work, to add to our knowledge and experience are all gone due to the pandemic).

Excited ko nga mag OJT sa mental facility. Tapus nabal-an ko wala kami OJT... indi gid ya namun ma experience bala mag OJT sa mental facility. (I was excited to do OJT at the mental facility. Then I found out that we didn't have OJT ... we never had the experience of doing OJT in a mental facility.)

Nag online OJT kami. Indi gid sya daku nga bulig. Kay daw wa-ay man ko may na intindihan gid. (We did online OJT. It was never a big help. Because I don't seem to understand anything at all.)

Hasta lang kami sa check-check sa construction site sa sulod sang campus... Laban lang kami sa pungko-pungko, gasaka saka sa babaw, lantaw lantaw kung ano ila gina obra. Laban gid ya nga time namun tanga lang kag pungko... sa amun ya isa lang ka semana amon OJT. (We just went to check-in at the construction site inside the campus ... We sat- down, climbed to the top, looked at what they were doing. It's really just wasting time, sitting ... we've only had an OJT for a week).

… nag virtual OJT kami. Wala kami kabalo kung ano amun madangtan sa ulihi at least tani man lang na feel man namun kung pano magtudlo sa students… As in daku-daku nga pag nugon. (… we did a virtual OJT. We don't know what we will end up with in the end and at least we can feel how to teach the students … As in great loss).

5.2.2 Coping with the COVID-19 Pandemic

According to Folkman, positive coping is engagement coping. Through engagement coping, participants used a variety of strategies to address the concerns at hand such as prayer, focus on schoolwork, self-motivation and self-determination, positive thinking, and teamwork. The COVID-19 pandemic made education more challenging, and participants learned to adapt.

Ang coping ko sa akon nga pag eskwela amo nga gatuon ko sa akon lang… ma search nalang ko da sa internet since nga indi man ko nalipay sa online class. (My coping with my schooling is that I study on my own… I can only search the internet since I'm not happy with the online class.)

Ga pray ako every night na tani matapus nani, nga tani mabalik na sa normal. Ga attend ko Mass sa Church. (I pray every night that it will end, that it will return to normal. I attend Mass in the Church.)

Determination. Will power… dapat gid maninguha kay amidst sang pandemic… (Determination. Will power … must strive amidst the pandemic.)

Ang una gid guro miss pray gid. Ga pray gid sa tanan nga ibalik ang sang una kag buligan ang mga tawo nga gapangyu tungod sa COVID. (First, pray. I really pray for everyone to return to what it used to be and help the people who are needy because of COVID.)

Gina comply ang tanan na requirement on time. Bisan copy paste lang basta on time. (All requirements are complied with on time. Even just copy paste as long as it is on time.)

Gina prioritize ko ang mga requirements. Ga think lang ko positive. (I prioritize the requirements. I just think positive.)

Teamwork na lang sa mga classmates. (Just teamwork with classmates.)

Gina motivate ko ang akon kaugalingon nga kinanglan ko gid tapuson kay may ginikanan ko nga dapat buligan. (I motivate myself that I really need to finish because I have a parent to help).

5.2.3 Finding Meaning during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The easiest way to recover from any adversities is to find meaning from them. Self-determination, self-reliance, appreciating the present, and being positive helped the participants manage. The participants' journey may be difficult, but finding meaning to the realities of life is making them stronger.

You have to face what is given to you and engage yourself in order to learn something. Indi dapat mahuya para maka survive. (You have to face what is given to you and engage yourself in order to learn something. You must not be ashamed to survive.)

Ang gintudlo sa akon sang pandemic amo nga wala gid ta ya kabalo kung ano matabo sa aton sa future kag kung ano ang mga possibilities. (What the pandemic has taught me is that we never know what will happen to us in the future and what the possibilities are.)

Ang gintudlo sang pandemic sa akon amo nga mangin self-reliant bisan wala sang dako nga bulig from the teachers and classmates. (What the pandemic taught me was to be self-reliant even without much help from teachers and classmates).

Ako na lng mangita way kung paano madugangan ang akon knowledge related sa akon course. Dapat gid ko maninguha, magtuon kag e train ang akon self nga e face ang reality… (I'm have to find a way to increase my knowledge related to my course. I really have to try, study and train myself to face reality …)

Bisan bala nga ara ka na sa situation na daw kabudlay na, ma look ka lang gid into positive

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sight. (Even if you are already in a situation that seems difficult, you can still be positive).

At the end of the day, self ko lang ang makabulig sa akon nga ma overcome ang tanan. Ara sa akon ang lyabe sa pwertahan para makaguwa sa mga negativities nga nagakatabo bangod sang pandemic. Positive lang dapat. Go go go. (At the end of the day, only myself can help me overcome everything. I have the key to the door to get out of the negativities that are happening because of the pandemic. Just be positive. Go go go.)

5.3 The Essence of the Lived Experiences of these Emerging Adults Adapting in the New Normal

The educational system in the Philippines continues to be challenged due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This experience may be one of the most challenging experiences for emerging adult graduating college students. Their transition into adulthood is a roller coaster ride because the situation forced them to adjust drastically to the changes brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. The adjustment is never easy since it will test the emerging adults psychologically, financially, and spiritually. Overcoming the challenges can result in more mature young adults. A mature young adult copes positively; hopes for the best; adapts to change; never gives up; grows, excels, and succeeds. Thus, a strong foundation for adulthood is essential. According to Charles Darwin, "he who can adapt to whatever life gives you survives." Arising from this process of adjustment is the coming of age of the emerging adult graduating student. Metaphorically, this coming of age of emerging adult graduating students is change - maturity of one's mind, body and emotion, welcoming adaptability amidst difficulties and achieving psychological resilience in adulthood.
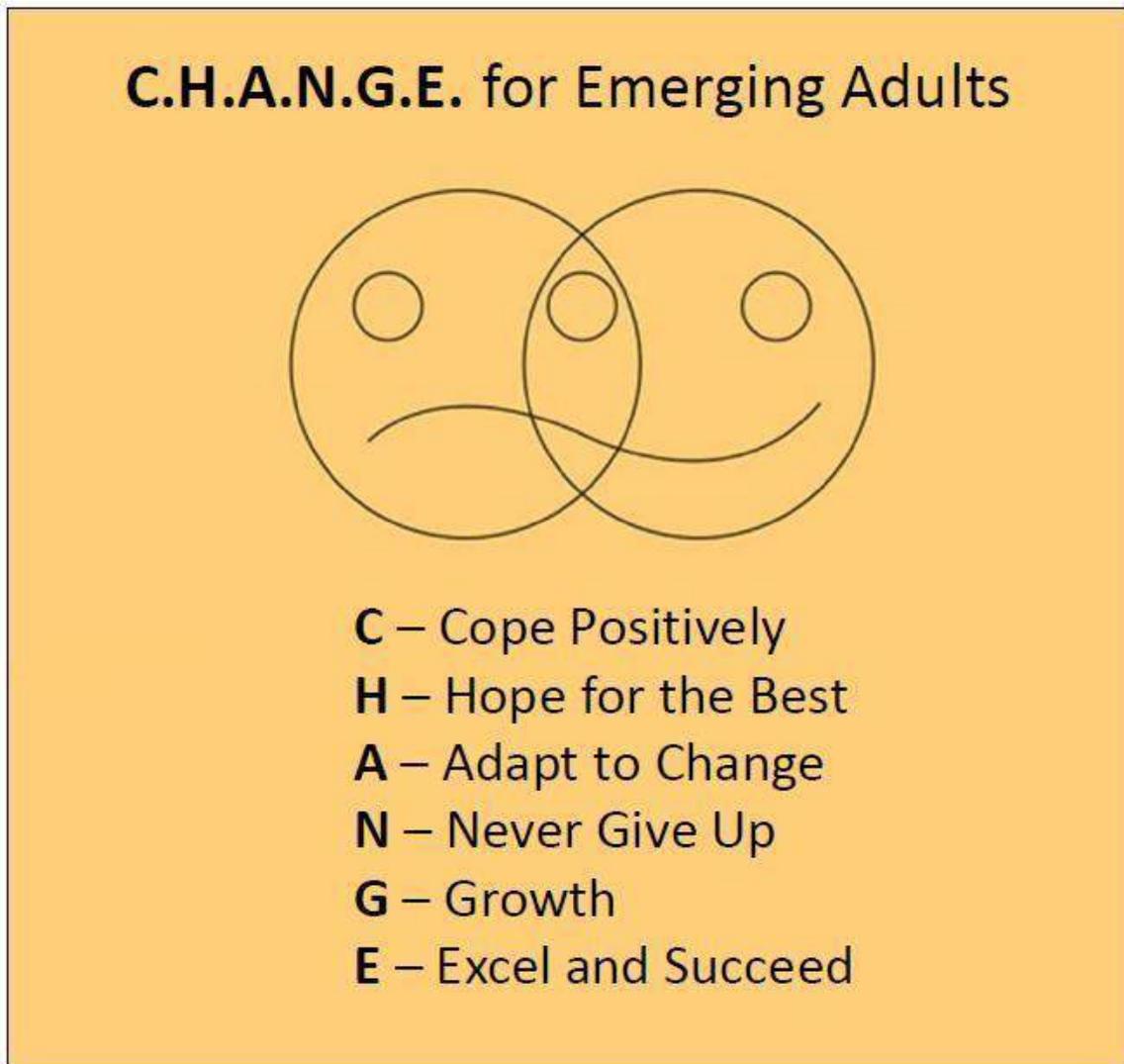
Figure 2: Visual Representation of the Essence of the Lived Experiences of the Emerging Adult Graduating Students

VI. DISCUSSION

Bracing the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic: Nobody is Spared

Exiting from adolescence and entering adulthood is crucial for emerging adults because it will become the foundation of their adult life. Adding more to this crucial period are the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants braced the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic in the following areas: financial, emotional, online classes, and OJT. The challenges are a strong foundation for mature adults.

The coronavirus pandemic has taken an even deeper financial toll on colleges and universities than expected (Murakami, 2020). Similarly, college students in the United States experienced anxiety/depression and financial instability (Jones et al., 2021). The pandemic created job loss for students and their families (Aucejo et al., 2021). Their families undoubtedly heightened students' financial hardship, making it even more challenging to meet their basic needs, let alone pay their college tuition. The pandemic has also challenged the finances of college students due to a lack of resources to meet the demands of the new learning modality and in buying a quota for internet load (Perante, 2021; Rotas, and Cahapay, 2020).

The emotional and psychological setbacks brought about by the current crisis are evident in stories of these emerging adult graduating college students. Forced adjustment to the new normal while in hindsight fearing one's health made the transition to adulthood seem all of sudden and instantly, not allowing oneself to digest and process their experiences, allowing growth to come naturally. Most college students in SUC have low EQ (Emotional Quotient), making them more susceptible to depression (Alayon, 2020), which was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. They became emotionally unstable, depressed, stressed out, and hopeless when they didn't have control of the situation and were forced to adjust and adapt to the new normal.

The COVID-19 pandemic affects the students' psychological, social, and academic functioning (Fura & Negash, 2020). Due to the social distancing, isolation, and distance learning, the mental health of these graduating students have been negatively affected, which has decreased their academic performance (Cao et al., 2020; Son et al., 2020). They also worry about their future career prospects and lament that the restrictions imposed by the lockdowns have disrupted their career plan (Cleofas, 2020).

Online classes seemed to serve less purpose for most of these emerging adult graduating college students. Most of them agreed that there was less learning, unlimited distractions, limited social interactions, problems with the internet connection, no space at home for this kind of learning and geographical locations. They felt that online education could not compensate for the absence of face-to-face classes. Most of them acknowledged the effort of the teachers to give their best during online courses. While these emerging adult graduating students have eventually adapted to online classes, they will not recommend online classes for the next school year.

Both professors and students found online learning unattractive during the pandemic compared to ordinary learning, and professors needed to provide more time in teaching (Elfirdoussi, 2020). Online classes were also insufficient in making graduating students proficient (Cleofas, 2020). Students know the importance of real-world learning experiences and training in their respective fields to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge.

These graduating college students were supposed to be having their on-the-job training. Most of them were looking forward to it. Their OJT is usually a time for excitement, friends, the outdoors, and career exploration. The lockdowns delayed their graduation and with it the planned celebration. Internships in the field and abroad due to the threat of the new coronavirus were suspended by CHED (Mendoza, 2021).

The cancellation of their OJT made them feel unprepared, unready, unmotivated, and not excited after graduating. They thought that the COVID-19 pandemic deprived them of the opportunities to hone and practice their skills and knowledge to equip them better when they work. Suspension of OJT created a share of worry about future career prospects to these graduating students (Cleofas, 2020). They felt that online classes were not sufficient to build their competence.

Coping with the COVID-19 Pandemic: Buffering against Distress

These graduating students eventually learned to cope and adapt to online learning. Among the four kinds of adaptation: the overwhelmed, the surrenderers, the maintainers, and the adapters, adapters appreciated the level of autonomy and were better able to self-regulate their learning, investing more time and effort in their self-study (Biwer et al., 2021). In a time of independent learning, self-regulation is a must.

College students cope through stress (Barot et al. 2021). Managing one's time and scheduling one's activities seemed fine for these graduating college students. Prioritizing tasks are necessary as part of coping in online classes. Internal factors such as time management and difficulty focusing while learning online for a more extended period are challenges of distance learning (Amir et al., 2020). Other Filipino college students faced the challenges of online learning through interaction

and engagement, determination and commitment, prioritization and time management, communication and discernment, and relaxation and enjoyment (Cordero et al., 2021).

Compliance of requirements was still necessary to pass the course for online classes. These graduating students thought that teachers would consider their predicaments due to the pandemic. Through learning on their own, they experienced genuine independent and individual learning, and viewed this mode of education as a means to comply and to cope with the set standards given the available measures and resources (Delute & Ada, 2021).

Self-discipline was a significant factor in overcoming the challenges of distance education, plus the support of the faculty through a compassionate and flexible pedagogy (Gelles et al., 2021). Students' satisfaction with the e-learning experience is influenced by e-learning self-efficacy (Aldhahi et al., 2021). Self-efficacy and academic motivation of these graduating college students remained high, thus increasing their commitment to finishing their studies (Yapo, et al., 2021).

These students adapted strategies that helped maintain their hope to move forward and continue despite the challenges and limitations brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Their coping strategies involved: identifying study place and time, establishing time management plan, creating linkages with needed resources, seeking support from others, and adapting relaxation techniques such as calming activities and prayer (Arslan &Yıldırım, 2021; Salman et al., 2021; Rotas & Cahapay, 2020).

Finding Meaning during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Benefit Finding Helps

These emerging adult graduating students tried to find personal meaning to their experiences to move forward from these difficult situations. One of the easiest ways to move forward during a crisis is to find personal meaning from it. Benefit finding is an essential coping strategy during the pandemic among these graduating students

(August & Dapkewics, 2020). Meaning in life promotes complete mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic (Arslan et al., 2020). Meaning in life is also related to increasing cultivation of happiness and reduced loneliness for college students (Datu & Fincham, 2021).

Emerging adults became self-motivated and committed to their studies (Rahiem 2020; Rotas & Cahapay, 2020; Branquinho et al., 2020). Self-regulation and self- management proved to be effective for these emerging adults in facing the crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught them to be self-regulated and creative by designing coping strategies to deal with stress and anxiety (Chandra, 2020). These graduating students coped with the stress of remote learning by finding ways to adapt to the present crisis like relaxation to relieve them from muscle tension, reading books to keep their minds busy, and taking time to talk to friends and family (Baloran 2020).

These graduating students taught themselves to be optimistic even if uncertainties abound. To be optimistic amidst the crisis made them stronger, and they looked forward to graduating.

Cognitive restructuring helped these graduating students change their negative beliefs about their situations, which allowed them to adapt while finishing school (Tariq et al., 2020). This explains how COVID-19 stress is related to subjective well-being (Arslan & Genc, 2021). They reported positive outcomes from these challenging experiences (Cleofas, 2020).

C.H.A.N.G.E.: Coming of Age of Emerging Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Coming of age is a challenging process toward psychological resilience and maturity essential in adulthood. The challenges experienced by these emerging adult graduating students at a time of the COVID-19 pandemic is an excellent foundation as they move forward into adulthood.

While adapting to a new educational platform brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, these emerging adult college students learn to overcome their struggles. They chose to continue schooling and not give up amidst the difficulties

of distance learning. These graduating college students see a silver lining from the COVID-19 pandemic and find a new meaning in their lives as they transition to mature persons. Their experiences resulted in the synthesis of a model signifying the coming of age of emerging adults dealing with a crisis, the C.H.A.N.G.E. Model for Emerging Adults: "C" is for cope positively; "H" is for hope for the best; "A" is for adapt to change; "N"is for never give up; "G" is for growth; "E" is for excel and succeed.

Man is capable of changing the world for the better if possible, and of changing himself for the better if necessary.

Victor E. Frankl

VII.   SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of Findings

Though the experiences of emerging adult graduating students may differ from each other, there are similarities in their experiences of distance learning through online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are three main themes based on the six common themes that emerged from the lived experiences of the emerging adult graduating students. The main themes are: bracing the impact of COVID-19 pandemic; coping with the COVID-19 pandemic; and finding meaning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The common themes are: diverse consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic; psychological challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic; difficulty of online classes; and inadequate on-the-job training (OJT).

7.2 Conclusion

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has a profound effect on emerging adult graduating college students as they transition into young adulthood. Usual activities like going to school every day, experiencing on-the-job training, preparing for future careers were suspended and modified to mitigate the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic on their academics. Students felt unprepared to graduate from college

due to suspension of activities that equip them as they venture into the world or work.

One of the challenges in transitioning to online learning is maintaining student productivity and engagement. As these graduating students adapt to the new normal, it is imperative that educational institutions provide support services tailored to their needs. A collaborative approach, engaging the different service providers within an educational institution such as student affairs, guidance services, and other networks, is needed to help empower these graduating college students.

Despite their fears and frustration, the COVID-19 pandemic taught these graduating students to cope, reflect, and appreciate life. The journey toward adulthood may be challenging and dreadful due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the crisis of development is resolved, these graduating students develop resilience, grit, and adaptability resulting into more successful emerging adults.

VIII.   RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are suggested.

COVID-19 is considered as the ultimate disruptor and the educational industry has not been spared. This resulted in a major shift from in-person learning to online learning. Ability to adapt to change is crucial in the success of graduating college students as they will enter into the world of work that has already become more digitally-based. College students should avail of services given by trained guidance counselors in social and emotional learning in order to successfully hurdle the developmental tasks they will face as they transition from emerging adulthood to young adulthood ready to enter the world of work.

The limitation of this study is using a small sample. It is recommended that future researchers recruit a more diverse sample. It is also recommended that social and emotional learning activities be integrated in course subjects and in guidance programs to strengthen the

adaptability of college students. Future research must be conducted to determine the effect of mental health and psychosocial support on those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as the world prepares for a new normal after the pandemic.

Proposed Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Program for College Students

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process by which people develop the knowledge, self-awareness and personal well-being to strengthen the emotional competencies that help them succeed (Kampen, 2021). According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), SEL helps people understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, have empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Dymnick, et al., 2013).

When SEL is provided, students have good social emotional skills, improved academic performance, and better social outcomes. It provides the building blocks for life-long learning and important interpersonal skills; the ability for collaboration, the capacity to empathize, and communicate effectively with others (Kampen, 2021).

IX. RATIONALE

College students with strong social and emotional skills cope better with challenges they encounter and benefit academically, professionally, and socially. From effective problem-solving to self-discipline, from impulse control to emotion management and more, SEL provides a foundation for positive, long-term effects on college students. Students thrive. Schools win. Work-places benefit. Society strengthens. These are the results of social and emotional learning.

Social and emotional learning help set college students for success through fostering relationship building and school connectedness, improving students' mental health, involving community outreach, and creating foundation for skills necessary for the workforce (Page, 2019). Social and emotional learning create the foundation for skills such as critical thinking,

adaptability, and interpersonal communication skills that are essential in setting college students up for success.

Most college students have yet to develop the capacity and strategies to handle stressors and emotions. Integrating SEL practices that promote positive mental health strengthens resilience in college students, which improve academic outcomes.

This social and emotional learning (SEL) program entitled C.H.A.N.G.E.: Social and Emotional Learning for College Students was patterned from Gallagher and Stocker SEL Manual (2018) and the Department of Education (DepEd) Most Essential Learning Competencies (2020). The C.H.A.N.G.E. program engages students and teachers in a collaborative learning and in a fun way at the same time injecting values for the promotion of social emotional skills of the students.

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Figure 3: C.H.A.N.G.E.: Social and Emotional Learning for College Students

Area	Objective	Activity

C: Cope Positively
 	
Title of SEL Activity: *Coping Strategies Menu*
	By the end of the session, students will be able to identity and reflect their coping strategies.	Learning Task 1: Let's Try This!
		1. Using the coping strategies list, choose at least 3 strategies that best described what you practice. (You can write coping strategies that are not listed here).
		2. Think of the situations that you used these strategies.
		3. Identify the outcome of these strategies.
		Learning Task 2: Let's Process This!
		1. How did you feel while doing the activity?
		2. Which coping strategy worked well for you Why?
		3. How these strategies helped achieve your goal?
		4. What lesson have you learned from this activity?
		Learning Task 3: Let's Synthesize.
		  Stress is a part of life. What matters is how we deal with it — or in other words, our coping mechanisms. Coping mechanisms are the strategies /techniques people use to deal with painful emotions and adjust to stressful life events.
		Learning Task 4: Let's Evaluate.
		  Write a reflection about your coping strategy during the first cycle of virtual classes. Limit your answer to 100 to 150 words only.

Area	Objective	Activity
H: Hope for the Best Title of SEL Activity: *Finding Silver Lining*	By the end of the session, the students will choose to look on the bright side even when things go wrong.	Learning Task 1: Let's Try This! 1. List five things that make you feel like your life is enjoyable, enriching, and/or worthwhile at this moment. 2. Think about the most recent time when something didn't go your way, or when you felt frustrated, irritated, or upset (only one answer). 3. In a few sentences, briefly describe the situation in writing (refer to question number 2). 4. List three things that can help you see the bright side of this situation. For example, perhaps you missed your bus this morning. *Three ways to look on the bright side of this situation might be:* a. Even though you missed the bus, you got some good exercise when you were running to catch it. b. You're fortunate to live in a city where there was another bus just 10 minutes later, or where buses run reliably at all. c. Ten years from now, you likely won't remember what happened this morning. Learning Task 2: Let's Process This! 1. What were you thinking while doing the activity? 2. What difficulty did you encounter during the activity? Why? 3. How do you feel while answering number I and 2 questions? Explain. 4. What positive take away of this activity?

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Area	Objective	Activity
		Learning Task 3: Let's Synthesize. Most of us ruminate on things that have gone wrong in our lives – a mistake we made at home, a day that didn't go as planned. It can sometimes seem like our lives are filled with these mishaps and disappointments. Focusing on them too much, however, can cast a pall over our lives and even be associated with depressive thinking. Learning Task 4: Let's Evaluate. Assignment after the session: Complete Steps 1 through 4 on five consecutive days. Your five positive things from Step 1 do not have to change each day. However, you should use a different situation for Step 2 each day.

Area	Objective	Activity

A: Adapt to Change
 	
Title of SEL Activity: *Making Stress Your "Friend"*
	By the end of the session the students will be able to assess their framing of a stressor (and how they interpret their body's response to it) to be more productive for their well-being and flexibility.	Learning Task 1: Let's Try This!
		1. Watch the TED talk by Dr. Kelly McGonigal (about 15 minutes).
		2. Think about an event that may be occurring in the near future (next couple of weeks) that you are currently feeling 'stressed' by. In a few sentences, briefly describe this stressor.
		3. Think about yourself in this particular event. How might you be feeling?
		4. As you think about this stressor, do you think of it as a 'threat' or as a 'challenge' (as described in the material above).
		a. If you view it as a threat: Let's try to re-frame this. Describe, in a few sentences, times when you have successfully met the demands of a stressor in your life. Look – you've met big challenges before!
		    • Second, are there resources or internal abilities that you haven't currently taken advantage of that you could? Describe those. Make a plan to use them.
		b. If you view it as a challenge: Let's try to understand this. Describe in a few sentences, times when you have successfully met the demands of a stressor in your life. Look – you've met big challenges before!
		    • Second, what resources or internal abilities were you able to use to succeed in those stressful events? Describe those. How could you use them in this current situation?
		Learning Task 2: Let's Process This!
		1. How do you feel while doing the activity?
		2. What were your thoughts while thinking of your stressor?
		3. What did you learn from yourself in this activity?
		4. What positives can you take away from the activity?
		Learning Task 3: Let's Synthesize.
		If you believe that you have the resources or ability to

Area	Objective	Activity
		meet the demands of the stressor, then you are more likely to view it as a "challenge" and are more able to interpret it as an opportunity for growth and accomplishment. Learning Task 4: Let's Evaluate. After you complete this activity, you will submit the writings that you completed for Steps 2 through 4.

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Area	Objective	Activity

N: Never Give Up
 	
Title of SEL Activity: *Use Your Strength*
	By the end of the session the students will be able to identify one of their personal strengths – a positive trait that contributes to their character, such as kindness or perseverance – and consider how they could use it in a new and different way.	Learning Task 1: Let's Try This!
		1. Take a moment to think about one of your personal strengths – for instance, creativity, perseverance, kindness, modesty, or curiosity. Consider how you could use this strength today in a new and different way. For example, if you choose the personal strength of perseverance, you might make a list of tasks that you have found challenging recently, then try to tackle each one of them. Or if you choose curiosity, you might attempt an activity that you've never tried before.
		2. Describe in writing the personal strength that you recently use.
		3. Write in detail about what you did, how you felt, and what you learned from the experience.
		Learning Task 2: Let's Process This!
		1. How did you feel during the activity?
		2. Do you have difficulty thinking about your personal strengths? Why? Why not?
		3. What did you learn from this activity?
		4. How can you apply what you learned from this activity in your life?
		Learning Task 3: Let's Synthesize.
		    Reflecting on these strengths can help remind people that they do have important positive qualities, and this reminder can build confidence and self-esteem – and, in turn, increase happiness.
		Learning Task 4: Let's Evaluate.
		    After you complete this activity, you will submit the reflection that you wrote as part of Step 4.

Area	Objective	Activity
G: Growth Title of SEL Activity: *Meaningful Photos*	By the end of the session the student will be able to recognize and appreciate sources of meaning through photography	Learning Task 1: Let's Try This! 1. In your cell phone, name 3 photographs of things that make your life feel meaningful or full of purpose. These can be people, places, objects, or pets. (Option 2 if no available personal cell phone or gadget: Write 5 personal photographs that make your life more meaningful). 2. Take time to look at and reflect on each one. For each photo, write down a response to the following question: "What does this photo represent, and why is it

Area	Objective	Activity

	which can help make them more tangible and serve as a reminder of what matters most to them, allowing the self to grow in the process.	meaningful?
		Learning Task 2: Let's Process This!
		1. What were you thinking while doing the activity?
		2. What did you find out from yourself in this activity?
		3. What did you notice from your answers?
		4. Lessons from this activity.
		Learning Task 3: Let's Synthesize.
		    To grow is to reflect on the greater meaning of our everyday experiences.
		Learning Task 4: Let's Evaluate.
		    After you complete this activity, you will submit a Word document that contains your five photographs and responses via g- classroom per GECSEL teacher.

E: Excel and Succeed Title of SEL Activity: *Goal Visualization*	By the end of the session the students will be able to describe a goal and to visualize the steps they will take to achieve it.	Learning Task 1: Let's Try This! 1. Identify one goal that you would like to achieve this semester in your GECMATH class and briefly describe it in writing. Make sure that this goal is realistic (e.g., "complete and turn in all of the homework assignments on time" rather than "get 100% on all of the homework assignments") and will actually help you to succeed in the course (e.g., "participate meaningfully in class by asking at least one question" rather than "staying awake in class"). 2. To help you visualize how you will go about accomplishing this goal, describe in writing the steps that you will take to get there. For example, if your goal is to complete and turn in all of the homework assignments on time, these are the steps that you might take to achieve it: a. schedule one hour every Monday and Wednesday that you will devote to GECMATH homework; b. turn off your cell phone/other distractors; c. put on some comfortable clothes; d. turn on some upbeat music; e. break down the job into sub-tasks: skim the chapter for a refresher; look over notes from class; carefully read the homework assignment instructions; and so on; and f. remind yourself that it's ok if you don't do everything perfectly or don't understand everything completely. Learning Task 2: Let's Process This! 1. What were you thinking while doing the activity? 2. What did you find out from yourself in this activity? 3. What did you notice from your answers? 4. Lessons from this activity. Learning Task 3: Let's Synthesize. When you believe that you will be successful at something, it encourages you to work harder toward <u>achieving that goal—and this greater effort increases the</u>
		chance that you will actually succeed. Plus, the more you succeed, the more confident you will be about future goals. Learning Task 4: Let's Evaluate. After you complete this activity, you will submit your three goals (from step 1) and the steps you decided you need to take to complete each goal (from step 2).

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Lecturers' Acceptance and use of ICT for the Sustenance of Research Supervision Amidst Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to ascertain lecturers' acceptance and use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), for the sustenance of research supervision amidst Covid-19 pandemic in Anambra State. Two research questions gave direction to the study while two hypotheses were tested. Survey research design was utilized for the study. The sample for the study consisted of 450 lecturers obtained through accidental and stratified sampling techniques from two public Universities in Anambra state. Lecturers' Acceptance of ICT for Research Supervision amidst Covid-19 (LAICTRSC) and Lecturers' Use of ICT for Research Supervision amidst Covid-19 (LUICTRSC) were used as instruments for data collection after validation by three experts and reliability coefficients of 0.84 and 0.80 respectively, determined using Cronbach Alpha technique.

Keywords: supervision, e-research supervision, ict devices, covid-19.

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This study was carried out to ascertain lecturers' acceptance and use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), for the sustenance of research supervision amidst Covid-19 pandemic in Anambra State. Two research questions gave direction to the study while two hypotheses were tested. Survey research design was utilized for the study. The sample for the study consisted of 450 lecturers obtained through accidental and stratified sampling techniques from two public Universities in Anambra state. Lecturers' Acceptance of ICT for Research Supervision amidst Covid-19 (LAICTRSC) and Lecturers' Use of ICT for Research Supervision amidst Covid-19 (LUICTRSC) were used as instruments for data collection after validation by three experts and reliability coefficients of 0.84 and 0.80 respectively, determined using Cronbach Alpha technique. Data were analysed using mean,standard deviation and t-test. The findings revealed that much as lecturers have accepted ICT for research supervision, ICT devices were generally used to a low extent for research supervision amidst Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, the findings of the study showed that while a significant difference existed between the mean scores of arts/humanities and science lecturers' acceptance of ICT devices for the sustenance of research supervision in favour of the arts/humanities lecturers, no significant differences existed between them in terms of the utilization of the ICT devices. It was therefore recommended that university authorities should organize seminars and workshop for lecturers on the need and strategies for utilizing ICT devices adequately for effective supervision amidst Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: supervision, e-research supervision, ict devices, covid-19.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Corona virus (Covid-19) pandemic came with devastating effects which cannot be over-stressed. Its' effects cut across over 180 countries in the continents of Europe, Africa, Asia, North America, South America and Australia/Oceania (McIntosh, Hirsh & Bloom, 2020). Following the spread of the covid-19 pandemic around the world, the World Health Organization declared it a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. The emergence of the dreaded virus in no small measure, caused a disruption in the traditional activities of virtually all sectors, including educational activities. This disruption of educational activities manifested in governments efforts to shut down educational institutions at all levels as a precautionary measure towards curbing the spread of the virus. Such move by the government made the traditional face-to-face style of learning and assessment difficult. This was done in strict adherence to the World Health Organizations triple protocols of lock down, isolation and social distancing. Lockdown is one of the Covid-19 protocols adopted by government

to restrict movement with a view to preventing the spread of the virus. Full or partial lockdown was observed at different points by different countries to contain the spread of the virus. Social distancing entailed that people are either 1.5m or 2m away from each other to prevent possible spread of the virus. On the other hand, isolation is a Covid-19 protocol that ensures that people who are suspected to have contracted the virus do not mingle with others. Asif and Singh (2020) stated that it is one of the preventive measures for university libraries amidst Covid-19 pandemic. However, these protocols which were introduced abruptly came with severe economic and social consequences, which have presented unique challenges in the educational sector. One of the areas most affected by the pandemic was education which was halted or slowed dramatically by restrictive laws and the establishment of social distancing, (Hayat, A.A., Keshavarzi, M.H., Zare, S. *et al,* 2021). Donnelly, Patrinos, and Gresham (2021), stated that school closures due to COVID-19 introduced significant disruptions to education across Europe, giving rise to learning losses and increases in inequality. Nigeria is definitely not left out in the emanating challenges. In Nigeria, challenges encountered include : loss of academic session, poor learning, poor/unequal access to education opportunities, difficulties associated with homeschooling, poor/lack of technology for distance learning, urban-rural divides in resource distribution and access, poor knowledge/skills on the part of the teachers and parents among others (Eze , Sefotho , Onyishi , Eseadi; 2021) . It forced not just students but also teachers, school administrators, policy makers and service providers including the librarians to adapt and adopt technology as a viable and valuable option to ensure fulfillment of the educational needs of the stakeholders and in overcoming various hurdles in this pandemic time (Dadhe & Dubey, 2020).

The adherence to the protocols of Covid-19 as prescribed by the WHO meant that lecturers needed a behavioural and structural adjustment for the sustenance of some of their statutory obligations such as teaching, assessment and research supervision. Research supervision is an integral part of any research exercise undertaken between the supervisor and the supervisee with the aim of achieving a successful completion of the research exercise. Zaheer and Munir (2020), described supervision as a social interaction between two people having the same goal, but possibly diverging views. Prior to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, lecturers, principally used the traditional face to face model of research supervision to enhance supervisor-supervisee interaction in Anambra State. However, the effects of Covid-19 pandemic and an urgent bid to curtail its spread especially in tertiary institutions gave rise to the decision to consider the institutionalization of e- research supervision as a part of the innovative techniques of ensuring the sustenance of research supervision amidst the pandemic. This paper is therefore focused on Lecturers acceptance and use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for the sustenance of research supervision amidst Covid-19.

II. LECTURERS' USE OF ICT FOR RESEARCH SUPERVISION AMIDST COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

E-research supervision refers to the use of ICT devices for research supervision. E-research supervision can be seen as the art of stimulating, directing, improving, motivating and overseeing students' research writing with the use of ICT devices for successful supervisory process (Fasasi, Awodiji & Adewale, 2020). Going further, Fasasi, Awodiji and Adewale asserted that the ICT devices that can be adopted to enhance research supervision are e-mail, mobile phone, zoom as well as social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Whats App, IMO, Instagram, Viber; among others). According to Albar (2012), much as e-research supervision gives the lecturer (research supervisor) the opportunity of overseeing the supervisee at geographically distant areas, it necessitates the use of ICT. However, lecturers can only use ICT devices for research supervision if they have accepted them. In other words, an ICT device that has not been accepted by a lecturer

can hardly be used by the lecturer for research supervision.

This situation may be associated with the fact that not all lecturers (research supervisors) are technology-savvy because they are not digital natives like their research supervisees. Mettiainen (2015) noted that much as ICT creates new possibilities for supervision, its introduction challenges the teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes. It is rather worrisome that only few lecturers appear to be confident with the use of technology. Many have become so attuned to the face to face model of supervision that they appear not to be receptive to the use of ICT for research supervision even amidst the threat of the global pandemic. The use of social media platforms such as whatsApp, instagram, facebook among others is a means of achieving research supervision among students. This process of research supervision uses learning plans online to allow both the student and the supervisors to monitor the work being developed (Ayers, Kiley, Jones, McDermott & Hawkins, 2016). It is a strategy that, if used by lecturers, will, immeasurably help them in surmounting the difficulties encountered in using analogue means to monitor the progress of research work. However it may be possible that lecturers' willingness to accept and use ICT for research supervision is function of their academic disciplines. Lecturers have different areas of specializations which are streamlined under different academic disciplines like arts/humanities, natural sciences, applied sciences etc . Generally speaking,ICT is said to contribute to the provision of a good educational environment (Scientific world, 2020). Suduc, Bizoi, Gorghiu and Gorghiu (2011), posited that due to the abilty " to stimulate and interactively explore and test experiments which would be too expensive or too dangerous in real settings", the use of ICT is indispensable in science education (p. 1076). In fact ICT and science are inseparable, with technology being an application of science (Wood, 2021). To that effect, it may be expected that science lecturers will have more inclination towards e-research supervision than arts/humanities lecturers. Nevertheless , for lecturers of arts/humanities, their acceptance or use of ICT devices for research supervision would be based on the fact that their area of specialization is more theoretical than practical. Therefore using ICT would not be a daunting task for them. In comparison, actual research supervision for lecturers of science based courses should require a lot of experiments that ought to be carried out and supervised in the laboratory.

Some researchers have attempted to examine the acceptance and usage of ICT devices by lecturers. Oye, Aiahad and Ab.rahim (2010) assessed the awareness, adoption and acceptance of ICT innovation among 100 lecturers in higher education institutions in Jos Plateau state, Nigeria. 23-item questionnaire was used for data collection. The findings of the study revealed that there is awareness, acceptance and adoption of ICT innovation among lecturers. Ivwighreghweta and Oyeniran (2013) examined the level of usage and awareness of E-resources by 153 lecturers in Federal University, Otuoke and the Western Delta University, Oghara using survey research design. Questionnaire was employed for data collection. The findings of the study indicated that lecturers' usage of e-resources was high. Yunana (2011) explored the availability and extent of use of electronic resources and services in selected tertiary institutions in Kaduna state using survey research design. The findings of the study indicated that the following electronic services – E-mails, online references, electronic alerts were used by lecturers in the selected/ institutions. Agu and Odimegwu (2014) analyzed 310 'doctoral students' evaluations of research supervision models in a Federal University in South-Eastern part of Nigeria, using survey research design. A 35-item questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Findings of this study revealed that face-to-face interactive model was not only the most frequently used but also the most widely used while the ICT-based model (interactive and non-interactive) were almost never used. The findings of this study further revealed that students operating within the face-to-face interactive model express more satisfaction with their dissertation experience than those in the non-interactive model. Aziz (2014) carried out a study on e-supervision investigating graduate

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students' reactions using a qualitative approach in conducting the research using the online supervision. The findings were clear that the graduate students generally do welcome the use of the online component in a research methodology class. To them, it is not whether face-to-face or the online component but both. From the above review, it can be seen that there is an increased acceptance of ICT devices by lecturers in some areas of teaching and learning. However in the area of research supervision, the ICT-based form of research supervision is not yet popular. This study therefore is a further investigation to ascertain lecturer's acceptance and use of ICT in research supervision.

With the current global threat posed by Covid-19 pandemic, it is expected that lecturers will, as matter of urgency, accept and utilize ICT in line with global trend. Present challenges and technological trends place a demand for lecturers" acceptance of ICT for research supervision as should be evidenced in their modification of their traditional face-to-face method of research supervision. In the wake of Covid-19 lockdown, the Federal Government of Nigeria at a point, gave a directive that heads of tertiary institutions recommence their hitherto aborted academic sessions via online learning (ASUU-UI Publicity Committee, 2020). However, lecturers' acceptance and subsequent use of ICT for research supervision seem to be a matter of choice given the relative poor enforcement of the directive. In view of the foregoing, there is need to determine if lecturers have come to the acceptance and use of ICT for the sustenance of research supervision, which is the focus of the present study

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided this study:

- What are the ICT devices accepted by lecturers for the sustenance of research supervision amidst Covid-19 pandemic?
- To what extent do lecturers use ICT devices for the sustenance of research supervision amidst Covid-19 pandemic?

Hypotheses:

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- There is no significant difference between arts/humanities and science lecturers' acceptance of ICT devices for the sustenance of research supervision amidst Covid-19 pandemic.
- There is no significant difference between arts/humanities and science lecturers' use of ICT devices for the sustenance of research supervision amidst Covid-19 pandemic.

IV. METHOD

Survey research design was adopted for the study. Data were collected from 450 lecturers in public universities (274 Arts/humanities and 176 Science-inclined lecturers) (Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam) in Anambra State using stratified sampling and accidental sampling techniques. Two questionnaires, Lecturers' Acceptance of ICT for Research Supervision amidst Covid-19 (LAICTRSC) and Lecturers' Use of ICT for Research Supervision amidst Covid-19 (LUICTRSC) were used for data collection. The instruments were validated by three experts, in Educational Foundations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka and reliability coefficients of 0.84 and 0.80 respectively were determined using Cronbach Alpha. Both questionnaires consisted of 10 items each. The LAICTRSC was structured on a four-point rating scale of Very High Acceptance (VHA), High Acceptance (HA), Low Acceptance (LA) and Very Low Acceptance (VLA) while LUICTRSC was structured on a four point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE).

Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The cut-off point for accepting mean score was 2.50. The decision rule was that any weighted mean score from 2.50 and above was taken as high acceptance/high extent, while weighted mean scores below 2.50 was taken as low acceptance/low extent. The t-test was

adopted to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

V.   RESULTS

Table 1: ICT devices accepted by Arts/humanities and Science Lecturers for the sustenance of Research Supervision amidst Covid-19 Pandemic

The following ICT devices are used for Research Supervision	Art/Humanities			Science		
	Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
1. Email	2.61	.58	Accepted	2.73	.63	Accepted
2. Microsoft Teams	1.95	.23	Not Accepted	1.83	.38	Not Accepted
3. Mobile Phones	3.08	.72	Accepted	3.15	.62	Accepted
4. Zoom	2.59	.69	Accepted	2.95	.71	Accepted
5. Facebook	2.47	.58	Not Accepted	2.76	.60	Accepted
6. Twitter	2.58	.62	Accepted	2.85	.68	Accepted
7. Whatsapp	2.71	.59	Accepted	3.40	.60	Accepted
8. IMO	1.81	.39	Not Accepted	1.77	.42	Not Accepted
9. Instagram	2.58	.56	Accepted	2.76	.59	Not Accepted
10. Viber	1.88	.32	Not Accepted	1.89	.31	Not Accepted

Table 1 shows that Art/humanities lecturers accepted six and failed to accept four of the 10 ICT devices for research supervision amid covid-19. The ones they accepted include: Email, Mobile Phones, Zoom, Twitter, Whatsapp and instagram.

On the other hand, the science lecturers accepted Email, Mobile phones, Zoom, Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp for research supervision amid covid-19.

Table 2: Lecturers''Use of ICT for Research Supervision amidst Covid-19 Pandemic

I use the following ICT devices for Research Supervision	Art/Humanities			Science		
	Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
1. Email	2.56	.53	High Extent	2.74	.62	High Extent
2. Microsoft Teams	1.84	.36	Low Extent	1.83	.38	Low Extent
3. Mobile Phones	3.27	.72	High Extent	2.75	.69	High Extent
4. Zoom	2.03	.75	Low Extent	1.78	.86	Low Extent
5. Facebook	2.47	.58	Low Extent	2.76	.60	High Extent
6. Twitter	2.44	.63	Low Extent	2.35	.75	Low Extent
7. Whatsapp	2.63	.54	High Extent	3.31	.63	High Extent
8. IMO	1.82	.38	Low Extent	1.84	.37	Low Extent
9. Instagram	2.20	.65	Low Extent	2.31	.70	Low Extent
10. Viber	1.85	.35	Low Extent	1.72	.45	Low Extent
Cluster Mean	2.31	.55	Low Extent	2.34	.61	Low Extent

Table 2 shows the cluster mean and standard deviation scores of Art /Humanities lecturers to be 2.31 and .55 while that of sciences was 2.34 and .61 This shows that on the average, they use ICT devices for Research Supervision amidst Covid-19 Pandemic to a low extent. The item by item analysis shows that Art/humanities lecturers use the following ICT devices for research supervision amid covid-19 to a high extent. These are: Email, Mobile Phones and Whatsapp. The remaining items which include Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Facebook, Twitter, IMO, Instagram and Viber are used to a low extent. On the other hand, the mean ratings of science lecturers revealed that they use Email, Mobile Phones, Facebook, and Whatsapp to a high extent while Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Twitter, IMO, Instagram and Viber are used to a low extent.

Table 3: Test of Significance between Arts/Humanities and Science Lecturers' Acceptance of ICT Devices for the Sustenance of Research Supervision amidst Covid-19 Pandemic

Source of variation	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	*P*-value	Decision
Art/Humanities	276	2.42	.22	448	8.77	.000	Sig
Science	174	2.60	.20				

The results in table 3 shows that the mean score for Art/Humanities lecturers (*M*=2.42, *SD*=.22) was significantly less than that of science lecturers (*M*=2.60, *SD*=.20); *t* (448) =8.77, p=.000. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups was therefore rejected.

Table 4: Test of Significance between Arts/Humanities and Science Lecturers' Use of ICT Devices for the Sustenance of Research Supervision amidst Covid-19 Pandemic

Source of variation	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	*P*-value	Decision
Art/Humaniti es	276	2.31	.19	448	1.41	.158	Not-Sig
Science	174	2.33	.20				

The results in table 4 shows that the mean score for Art/Humanities lecturers (*M*=2.31, *SD*=.19) was not significantly less than that of science lecturers (*M*=2.33, *SD*=.20); *t* (448) =1.41, p=.158. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups was therefore not rejected.

VI. DISCUSSION

6.1 Lecturers' Acceptance of ICT for Research Supervision amidst Covid-19 Pandemic

The findings of this study revealed the acceptance of the ICT devices for' research supervision amidst Covid-19 pandemic by both lecturers of arts/humanities and science departments. Lecturers' acceptance of ICT devices for the sustenance of research supervision is

understandable to the extent that they are fast becoming digital natives in line with the global trend. More so, it portends the fact that the university system is gradually titling towards the digitalization of research supervisory process. Evidently, the devastating effect of Covid-19 makes physical contact of lecturers and their supervisees difficult. In the light of the foregoing, lecturers are compelled by the prevailing situation to accept the use of ICT devices in compliance with the World Health Organization twin protocols of social distancing and isolation. The finding of the study is in tandem with the postulation of Oye, Aiahad and Abrahim (2010) that there was wide acceptance of ICT innovation among lecturers.

The findings of the study further revealed that a significant difference existed between arts/humanities and science lecturers' acceptance of ICT for research supervision in favour of science lecturers. This finding agrees with the earlier expectation that science lecturers would have more inclinations towards e-research supervision due to the inseparable nature of ICT and science (Wood. 2021). Thus Science lecturers are more favourably disposed to technology. It disproved the expectation that arts/humanities lecturers would accept the use of ICT more, on the ground that they will find it easier due to the theoretical nature of most of their courses.

6.2 Lecturers' Use of ICT for Research Supervision amidst Covid-19 Pandemic

The revelation of the findings of the study is that ICT devices to a low extent are used by both lecturers of arts/humanities and science for research supervision amidst Covid-19 pandemic. This could be traceable to the fact that some of the lecturers across disciplines are not technology savvy. Poor lecturers' use of ICT devices for research supervision could further be linked to the high cost of bandwidth, inadequate infrastructural facilities and unsteady power supply. In addition, it could be that lecturers do not possess the requisite ICT self-efficacy to use ICT devices for research supervision amidst Covid-19 pandemic. Going further, the negative attitude of lecturers towards the use of ICT could be at the core of the

poor use of ICT devices for research supervision. This is to the extent that lecturers have become so accustomed to the traditional face to face model of research supervision that they appear not to be open to ICT innovation. More so, they tend to consider the use of ICT devices for research supervision as defective as it reduces physical contact with supervisees for effective supervision. The finding of the current study is consistent with the findings of Agu and Odimegwu (2014) that ICT-based model (interactive and non-interactive) were almost never used for research supervision in universities. Ivwighreghweta and Oyeniran (2013) had earlier established that lecturers' usage of e-resources was high. Yunana (2011) also stated that the following electronic services – E-mails, online references, electronic alerts were used by lecturers in the selected tertiary institutions. These usage were however in other areas of teaching and learning and not research supervision.

The findings of the study further revealed that no significant difference existed between arts/ humanities and science lecturers'use of ICT for research supervision.This is rather surprising given that science lecturers showed a higher level of acceptance and naturally have more inclinations to technology based on their subject areas. The situation may not be unconnected to the problems associated with the use of technology in developing countries such as cost of purchasing bandwidths, poor electricity supply, poor facilities, lack of skills, general apathy etc. These hinder the adoption of ICT in research supervision and calls for further research towards generating a lasting solution.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing, it can be concluded that lecturers accepted the use of ICT devices for research supervision purposes. The science lecturers were more favourably disposed to the use of ICT devices for research supervision. The extent of usage of the devices by both science and arts/humanities lecturers were however low.

Lecturers' Acceptance and use of ICT for the Sust enance of Research Supervision Amidst Covid-19 Pandemic

It is thus recommended that the Government should make adequate provision of ICT devices so that lecturers can use them for research supervision. University authorities should organize seminars and workshop for lecturers on the need and ways of utilizing ICT devices for effective supervision, The lecturers should exude ICT self-efficacy for effective research supervision. More so, government in collaboration with the non-governmental organizations should continually ensure adequate power supply to promote the use of ICT devices for research supervision amidst the pandemic.

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Women Writers' Imagining of Men: The Imaging and Representation of Men in West African Women's Writings, Narratives and Novels: Implications for the Formation of the Human Subject/Individual and Induction into the Symbolic Order: Redirecting the Gaze

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ABSTRACT

This work is an examination of women's writings, particularly of novels and narratives in West Africa, and what they structure for meaning in relation to men in the formation of the individual and their induction into the symbolic order of becoming human subjects. The paper supposes that women's writings imagine, image and typify men according to certain frameworks and practice consciously or unconsciously derived from some basic and yet indeterminate source. The study attempts to trace out the outlines of some of these representations of men, leading to the frameworks within which they are typified and cast using a specimen of four popular women's writings across West Africa. The significance of this study relates to the effect such imagination, imaging and typification have on the growth of young male children in West African societies. In other words, its goal is to understand the implications and effect of such representations and frameworks of imagination on the character of men and their empowerment for growth, maturity and productivity or otherwise.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of the creation of the human subject and their induction into the symbolic order towards transforming him/her from the grip of nature to culture in order to ensure that they become persons capable of productivity who appreciate the repression of the pleasure principle in order to consciously channel their energies into the production of civilization and direct themselves away from the likelihood of degeneration and mental ill-health in support of mental wellness and mental well-being cannot be overemphasized. The task of this paper is to investigate the effects of women's imaginative writings about men in the manner in which men are portrayed and imagined that can affect the process of the creation of the male human subject, and even of the female human subject, towards productivity if these prejudice the process of children's induction into the symbolic order.

II. THE PRESENT FOCUS OF WOMEN'S WRITINGS IN WEST AFRICA

In the effort to articulate and represent women's experiences of the realities of existence in a materialist existential fashion, women writers have taken resort to the notion of the power relations between men and women and have

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elaborated these through literary works, especially through narratives in several domains. Making power relations the centre of focus has crystallized their imaginations around certain representations of men, affecting how they conceptualize the relationships between men and women and their implications for women. Whereas this may inure to the benefit of the female kind in society in several ways, its effect upon the male child and their upbringing seems to be ignored, dismissed, or articulated to accommodate an indeterminate focus controlled by the imaging of the male gender and species which nonetheless still remains unexplored. The question is, how does the imagination about, and the imaging of men through the power relations prism by women writers affect the male child's secure development through the symbolic order? (Eagleton 1992; Adjoe 2020).The symbolic order, as depicted by Freud, is the basis of the formation of the individual human subject related to the triad of man, woman and offspring (Eagleton 1992; Adjoe 2020).

III. THE ISSUE ABOUT WOMEN'S WRITINGS IN WEST AFRICA THAT NEEDS EXPLORATION AND EXAMINATION

The purpose and future of male child upbringing towards productivity, maturity and mental health and well-being have not been subject to ceaseless debate yet in women's writing, which are focused mainly upon women's issues and struggles concerning gender, and therefore also on the girl-child education and protection, and the contestation of the treatment of women by men. This paper argues that by returning to a few basic questions about the symbolic order of the family a more productive focus could emerge for exploration – What should the preparation for a good human life be? What should its form or shape be? Where does it begin? And where is it achieved? What is the picture of human life in which a notion of development and well-being with this end and form fit? How can the development of the human subject and the individual be pursued and achieved? Is it possible, therefore, to refocus the debate on child

upbringing through the symbolic order and open new pathways and opportunities to develop a more meaningful system of mental well-being and productivity for youth? In the end, what should be the preparation for a good human life for the male child too? And ultimately, are the focus of women's writings in West Africa seeming 'to forge the world' in such a way that their effects might seem more detrimental to the well-being of individual, family, and the social entities at large than engendering positive and creative results? As expressed by John Lechte (1990: 22) in his examination of the writings of Julia Kristeva, "What is at stake is the analytic value of reading such thinkers, of working out what their texts are saying, and how they are saying it, even if there can be little consensus about the value of the content of the writing in question."

IV. WOMEN'S WRITINGS IN WEST AFRICA SEEMING 'TO FORGE THE WORLD' TOWARDS AN END

Much of the discourse about power relations between men and women is dominated, often for reasons of urgency, by a number of very complex questions. How, for instance, are we to protect and advance the girl-child and their education? How can women be allowed to be heard, protected, supported and allowed equal opportunities to make their own impact as much as they can? How can women take control of their own bodies? And how can women secure the freedom to vote, to be represented in high political office, to hold property, receive higher education and enter professions formerly reserved for men? (Aidoo 1970; Ba 1981; Finlayson 2019: 7). Such questions can be pivotal; but much depends on the answers we provide. Yet these questions are by no means the only questions necessary. On the other hand, how can the same advantages be provided for the male –child through the symbolic order? And how can the male-child not be prevented and excluded from the symbolic order and the reality principle, as similarly for the girl-child, to enable them mature towards the goal of productivity rather than mainly towards the pleasure principle? (Eagleton 1992, Adjoe 2020).

The presumption that writing functions simply as sites for prospecting and excavating resources from experiences for the sake of sustaining one species of the genders, and not as places where preparation for a good human life goes on for both the girl-child and the male-child raises some of the urgent questions we come up against that the paper sets out to raise.

What are at stake, therefore, are the questions themselves, and the orientation and objectives of the academy of women thinkers and writers which seem to relegate such consideration to the background. It seems enough that remembering the weight of these questions and coming to see their inter-relations could allow us to apprehend how many of our institutions, expectations, and models fail to grasp the constitution of the individual or the formation of the subject at its most fundamental and the integrating principles and processes which operate to achieve it.

Much as women's writings originate from their experiences mediated by consciousness, attitudinizing and action (Guttenplan 2000), the nature of consciousness, attitudinizing and action could be influenced by many factors that need to be excavated in the fashion adumbrated by James Lasdun (2020), and by Frankl (1992) which entail an archaeology of consciousness. As Bloor (1997: 9) cites Wittgenstein, "There are of course, descriptions and descriptions. A superficial description will surely not give us what we need. A revealing description will be one whose power to illuminate comes from an interesting theoretical perspective". In this light, Halliday (2004) also presents ample and meaningful examples of how language, located through consciousness, is used to reshape experience from generalization, abstraction to metaphorizing in the effort to construe meaning. By implication, meaning-making of experience cannot be absolute, as it may be necessary, but not sufficient as a resource for establishing truth. Lasdun's (2020: 8) review of Sabar's book, *Bats in the Ceiling*, in the *London Review of Books* indicates the specimen of what risks are involved and capable of occurring in women's writings if not fully critiqued despite the worthy project 'in service of a larger goal' and 'enlarging one's imaginative universe'. Lasdun makes the poignant point about the influence of attitudinizing and posture that could also apply almost without modification to West African Women's writings. His reflection pointed out:

"You could read this as the product of a lofty postmodern sensibility, unbound by crude categories of true and false. King's statements over the years certainly support that. 'History is not about truth but about power relations,' she wrote in one paper. Sticklers for the former were guilty of 'fact fundamentalism'. But such relativism, for her, was never an end in itself. It was always in service of a larger goal, and from the beginning of her career that goal was unabashedly religious. A committed Christian as well as a feminist, she has insisted that her academic work has always been about 'deepening one's understanding and deepening one's faith', just as it is about 'enlarging one's imaginative universe'. Its object as she put it at one stage (a little too aptly), is 'to forge the world'." (Lasdun 2020: 8).

The crucial question arising from such a possibility that needs to be asked and investigated about women's writings in West Africa lies in the angst that perhaps such writing, with emphasis on power relations, does not inadvertently venture disproportionately towards trying 'to forge the world' in the manner in which it images men and the relations between the two genders on the African continent. That is an important question that must be answered, and from the perspective of this paper, beginning at the centre by excavating women's writings from the manner in which men are imagined, imaged and represented in these writings.

In the end, the paper seeks to locate the understanding of the development of the human subject or the individual in the symbolic order to enable the focus on the valuation of reconstituting the family towards the formation of the human subject as the basic goal of writing, and the consequent social engineering, welfare engineering programmes, education and development directed towards an emphasis on a process conducive for the attainment of the human subject.

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Consequently, it seeks to focus the orientation of literary producers, especially of women writers, to re-examine their writings and the consequences of such writing within the framework of the stable formation of the individual or human subject rather than within the frameworks of the axis of power and sexuality, gender revolutions, and issues which negate the crucial process of the human subject's formation. It is thus necessary because the consequence of the focus on the axis of power and sexuality is that rather than achieving productivity and promoting mental wellness, in the long run, it promotes the disintegration of the human subject and their diversion from induction into the symbolic order as a result of the distortion of the process of growth through denigration, reductionism and outright negation and exclusion.

All in all, a critical understanding of the formation of the individual or human subject should concern writers so much as to discard concerns and orientations that do not promote its development in order to prioritize the things that inure to the development of the individual, the self, and the human subject beyond the discourses of blame, guilt, vengeance , exclusion, negation, and reductionisms which engender and drive the orientations towards disintegration and mental ill-health directly or indirectly in West African society.

V. APPROACHING THE SUBJECT

It is noticeable that in the effort to articulate and represent the realities of existence in the manner women perceive that they experience it, women writers in West Africa have mainly resorted to the notion of power relations between men and women, and consequently have made this framework the centre of focus to crystalize their imaginations around certain types of preferences and representation of men. The study will examine some of these imaging and representations, the structure and meaning of such representations, and their implications for understanding reality as a whole and their implications for the formation of the male individual in African society. It will further, and in particular, examine the effect of women's

preferred representations of men on the character, decisions and life-course of men, and particularly on the creation of the human subject, especially of the male child and the human subject in contemporary West African society and culture.

In examining the subject itself, the study follows the psychoanalytic methods of understanding the formation of the human subject proposed by Sigmund Freud and outlined by Terry Eagleton (Eagleton 1983; cited in Adjoe 2020), and the adaptation of Freud's psychoanalysis by George Frankl (1992) in his *Archaeology of the Mind,* who while countering the notion that "reality, as we experience it, has an objective existence independent of man", also expouses the outlook that "the reality we confront is made by man, that it is humanity which creates its own conditions and, what is more, does so largely unconsciously, and then depends on the conditions it has created" (Frankl 1992: viii). In effect, it should help us, like the archaeologist, to ask "what the material artefacts uncovered ...tell us about the myths and religious beliefs of early men, their concepts of the world, their work practices, their family relationships and social organization." (Frankl 1992: Back cover page). In this case, the method will enable us to understand the process of the formation of the human subject in the process of growth, and hence the implications of women's choice of representation of men and their effects on the growth process of the male child when choices are based on the constructs of meanings consciously or unconsciously forged through generalizing, abstraction and metaphorizing framed upon the specific construct and contestations in question. In this respect, the study poses questions regarding the choice of approach to subjects regarding male representation in society and the trajectory of attributions to male engagement with females in African society. The challenge hence is how to examine the different perspectives from which male interaction with females in African society can be generated that can tend towards the creation of stability of human relations and the maximization of the opportunities accruing towards the formation of human subjects. Such perspectives and interactions should be devoid of

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the elements and principles that pose a threat of degeneration and mental instability but rather promote the building of mental health for society without recourse to the domination of power relations as a necessary tool for disintegrating and undermining the growth and stability of the male child.

The analysis will take recourse to four main and popular women writers and writings as core references and imagery typification of contemporary women writers and their writings. The choice of this sample of women writers is based upon the frequency of use of these authors' writings as texts for school work and teaching and for other educational purposes; as popular public reading and referencing, and the respect, honour and fondness accorded and associated with them as cultural icons, especially when they are being used as textbooks for students or youth. These include: Ama Ata Aidoo 's short stories, *No Sweetness here*; Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*; Emecheta Buchi's *Second Class Citizen*; and Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi's *Purple Hibiscus*. Whereas references will be made to all texts, the core text will be Chimamanda Ngozie's *Purple Hibiscus*. This novel focuses and anchors the perspectives of this analysis and provides a distinct trajectory and pathway towards understanding the effects of the choice of women's representations of men in their writings. It provides, alongside the estimation of various trajectories, a distinguishing departure from other West African women's representations of men in their writings in spite of the fact that the same problems and issues preoccupy each one of them, and as they search for modes, and attitudes and postures for the valorization of their experiences. It provides similarly for them as they project, explore, and attempt to resolve the challenges accruing from women's experiences of interactions with their male counterparts in West African societies.

Making Sense of the Choice of Power Relations as a tool of interpretation of women's experiences: How writers' experiences are selected, theorized and grammatically represented to make meaning through literary language.

Halliday (2004: 4) observes that the reshaping of experience is accomplished over 'three successive waves of theoretical energy'. These he describes as follows: "generalization, i.e. from proper noun to common noun, making possible our commonsense theories of knowledge; abstractness, i.e. from concrete categories to abstract ones, making it possible to re-theorize in 'uncommonsense' terms; and metaphor, i.e. from congruent construals to metaphorical ones, allowing us to re-theorize over again, in the form of our technical and scientific theories of knowledge. Each wave takes us 'one step further away from ordinary experience', but at the same time each step may be thought of as having 'enlarged the meaning potential by adding a new dimension to the total model."

In consonance with this type of reasoning about meaning-making, the theoretical justification for women's posture in writing derives from African Literary thinking and direction from the 1980s on the challenges confronting literary theory, criticism and pedagogy in the African setting. The challenges confronting literary theory, criticism and pedagogy in this period was about how to relate experience to posture and the eventual product of writing and interpretation of writing. As Amuta (1998: 198) described the challenge and the directions of thinking on the subject, *"At the level of critical practice, the challenge is for a political criticism even though all criticism is somehow politically predicated. To the extent that the various works in African literature are fictional meditations of the contemporary African experience, critical explications of these texts must progress from the known to the relatively unknown. "*

Besides the approach, the content was contemplated as a product of the material conditions of life of the African people as:

"The need to historicize our explications and evaluations dictates that critical practice insists on the dialectical relationship between the context of the work and its specific content and form. This methodology ensures that there is a marriage between theory and practice, thus removing the halo of mystique that has continued

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to surround bourgeois criticism of African literature to date. In effect, we must insist that the experience and formal realization of literature is a knowable area, not one of metaphysical inscrutability that can only be commented on through timid statements. If, in referential terms, our literary and general social criticism derive from the same source (i.e. the material conditions of life of the African people), the way to ending the present alienation of our literary discourse from social discourse will have been opened." (Amuta 1989: 198).

Literary discourse and social discourse were to be united and rendered inseparable and indistinguishable. These approaches and postures were consequent to and driven by the experiencing of the material conditions of the populations under the now independent States governed by people mostly liberated from colonialism. Thus, a certain directedness was supposed to be necessary and emphasized for African literary endeavours and specifically relevant to experiencing and action – in this case, oppressive conditions. In effect, *"As unemployment queues lengthen and privileges accruing to fresh graduates contract, bourgeois pedagogy is becoming increasingly dysfunctional. An alternative pedagogy, a pedagogy of the oppressed, is urgently called for. Such a libertarian pedagogy would not only challenge the values that inform today's curricula of literary studies in Africa but will replace 'neutral' texts with those that present the African experience in its starkness and from a class-partisan perspective. " (*Amuta, 1989: 198).

Literary activity was to help in the search for solutions to the problems of the peoples of the newly independent Africa and the search for liberation for the remaining territories still under colonialism. The perspective in relation to this approach lies in the belief that *"The understanding of reality with a view to changing it should be the object of the new pedagogy of African literature. In addition, literary study must take into cognizance the literary productions of the peasants in the rural areas and the workers and unemployed in the urban slums and ghettos. "* (Amuta, 1989: 198). Literary

endeavor should be inclusive of all economic classes of people on the continent. Nevertheless, 'the understanding of reality' would need to be formulated somewhat for the goals of this project to be realized and operationalized, resulting in the effort to 'create, theorize on, criticize, enjoy and participate' in the project of literature on the African continent.

In effect, "Ultimately, the effort to create, theorize on, criticize, enjoy and participate in literature in Africa (as elsewhere) ought to be one and the same with the struggle to banish those conditions which dehumanize humankind and threaten the nobility of art itself. "(cf: Amuta, Chidi, 1989: 199).

The implications of all these orientations, arguments and approaches is that *"The business of literature ought to begin from the creation of the conditions necessary for economic and political freedom, for it is from these that cultural freedom flows. A literary culture that sets itself this vital task cannot but be defined in rigorous activist and radical political terms that go far beyond the bourgeois insistence on superstructural decolonization. To insist otherwise is to advance the cause of imperialism and deepen the exploitation and oppression of our peoples."* (Amuta 1989: 199).

However, it could be said that even before this crucial benchmarking and agenda-setting in the 1980s, women's writings in West Africa were already firmly oriented towards a posture of activism and the representation of women's issues and liberation, not mainly against imperialism as men writers were advocating, but against oppression by men in the African domain – cultural and political liberation as illustrated in Ama Ata Aidoo, Emecheta Buchi, and Mariama Ba in the 1970s and 1980s, as it were, a pedagogy of the oppressed (not primarily of economic conditions but of power and sexuality as centre).

Hence, it could be said that even before Soyinka's challenge in his pitch of 1980 cited by Amuta (1989: 12), which is regarded as the rallying point for refocusing of African literary endeavours and change, women were already focused on

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fashioning a trajectory of liberation from men's oppression seen to be contextualized in cultural practices and the cultural and political positioning of women.

Women writers, such as Ama Ata Aidoo, in her Short story writing titled, *No Sweetness Here*, was pre-occupied with issues of struggle against oppression, against men's exploitation of young vulnerable, poor, helpless girls, against multiple wives, girlfriends, and illicit affairs; against sexual abuse of young females, against polygamy, against women adopting non-African values and fashions, and also the debunking of master-slave relationships expressed in male domination and the creation of inferiority complex in women. In *Everything Counts*, the first story of the book, her narrator recounts her initial posture of cooperation with men as against her eventual re-orientation towards a revolutionary stance to launch into a revolution meant to recapture 'confidence in ourselves', depicted in a reversal of the situation she described as 'she would laugh with him', at first, when her lover tended to ridicule her thinking instead of taking her seriously when she expressed certain recurrent frustrations she had about certain persistent material circumstances. A similar reversal occurred as she changed her posture to take care of what she often described as 'the hatred of wounded lovers'. She wanted to take a stance to commit herself to achieving what she considered as 'the beauty of being oneself', to match talk with action:

"She used to look at their serious faces and laugh silently to herself. They meant what they were saying. The only thing was that … she also knew them. She knew them as intimately as the hems of her dresses. That it was so much easier for them to talk about the beauty of being oneself...." (Aidoo, 1970: 1).

She recounted issues that irked her:

"At other times, when her world was sweet like when she and Fiifi were together, the pictures that came into her mind were not so terrible. She would just think of the words of that crazy highlife song and laugh. The one about the people at home scrambling to pay exorbitant prices for

second-hand clothes from America … and then as a student of economics, she would also try to remember some other truths she knew about Africa. Second –rate experts giving first-class dangerous advice. Or expressing uselessly fifth-rate opinions.… And now, wigs – made from other people's unwanted hair. " (Aidoo, 1970:1).

"At this point, tough though she was, tears would come into her eyes. Perhaps her people had really missed the boat of original thinking after all? And if Fiifi asked her what was wrong, she explained, telling the same story every time. He always shook his head and laughed at her, which meant that in the end, she would laugh with him." (Aidoo, 1970:2)

As the persona encountered men and their concerns, she found them, in her opinion, quite frivolous. Men were concerned with issues such as the wearing of wigs when she was thinking about serious matters like the material conditions of people:

"At the beginning, she used to argue with them, earnestly. 'But what has wearing wigs got to do with the revolution?' 'A lot, sister,' they would say. 'How?' she would ask, struggling not to understand.

'Because it means that we have no confidence in ourselves.' Of course, she understood what they meant.

'But this is funny. Listen, my brothers, if we honestly tackled the problems facing us, we wouldn't have the time to worry about such trifles as wigs.' (Aidoo, 1970:2)

This set the stage for the separation of agenda-setting with the male counterparts of female writers. Not only did they not consider the men's agenda as tackling serious enough issues, but men's attitudes were repugnant when their orientation and projects were critiqued and rejected, especially when they could not respond convincingly enough to the interrogation and apparently superior perspectives of the 'beautiful and intelligent' female counterparts . In such defeat, men's attitudes had the semblance of what

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the persona described as 'the hatred of wounded lovers':

"She made them angry. Not with the mild displeasure of brothers, but with the hatred of wounded lovers. They looked terrible, their eyes changing, turning red and warning her that if she wasn't careful, they would destroy her. Ah, they frightened her a lot, quite often too. Especially when she thought of what filled them with that kind of hatred." (Aidoo, 1970:2).

In the perception of the persona, this attitude typified the contemporary generation of men, inviting what she referred to as 'a battle of the sexes'. After some time, she gave up arguing with them. But it was to think of an alternative response, culminating on the evocation of the 'battle of the sexes', and reversing the status quo ante in which 'she laughed with them' and when she used to think that 'in her society men and women had more important things to do than fight each other in the mind'. Hitherto, it had to be different because:

"This was something else. She had always known that in her society men and women had had more important things to do than fight each other in the mind. It was not in school that she had learnt this. Because you know, one did not really go to school to learn about Africa... As for this, what did the experts call it? War of the sexes? Yes, as for this war of the sexes, if there had been any at all in the old days among her people, they could not possibly have been on such a scale. These days, any little 'No' one says to a boy's 'Yes' means one is asking for a battle. O, there just are too many problems. " (Aidoo, 1970: 2-3)

On the other hand, one other way in which men's anger could have been kindled and pitched against women was described by Joe de Graft in his poem *'Akosua 'Nowa'* in the 1970s, a poem in which the male persona complains , *"I met Akosua 'Nowa this morning;/ I greeted:/ Akosua, how is your treasure?/ She looked me slowly up and down,/ She sneered:/ The man is not yet here who'll find it! / Akosua 'Nowa has touched my manhood;/"* (Soyinka, ed. 1975: 258)].

Men's anger may then have had their origins that are seldom explored and articulated in women's writings (beyond the wrongs perpetrated by men against women) such as the perceived disrespect or disregard for men manifested in probably taken for granted contemptuous attitudes and utterances exhibited by the opposite sex culminating in what could be considered a challenge to the manhood of men.

Winston (2002: 245) marks some of the most desirable features which instinct promotes in the mating process between males and females as: "Women, on the whole, prefer high-status ambitious males. How do these men show women their status? They display symbols of their financial and social superiority."

On the other hand: "Women also look for heroes; the unselfish and the altruistic. Showing off these qualities is a permanent feature of male courtship display: the gentleman is, traditionally, supposed to hold open the doors as well as reach for the bill when the time comes." (Winston 2002: 246).

However, women begin to reject the well-known codes of courtship and mating, either because they are not persuaded by the heroism of their male counterparts, by their altruism, social status or ambitious nature and agendas. What has changed? Where can the generators of these changes be located?

In *So Long a Letter*, Daouda Dieng, a suitor to Ramatoulaye, could be said to match all the desirable features which instinct promotes in the mating process in respect of males and females, yet all his efforts to woo her failed, ending only in the offer of friendship (Ba 1981: 61-72). Throughout their encounter, Ramatoulaye purported to be employing reason and logic in all her choices and interlocution, yet in the end, her treatment of the suitor left even Farmata, her long time attendant, shocked as Ramatoulaye seemed to have been playing a cruel game and a battle of wits with her suitor, which according to her own understanding, she won with distinction.

Although inexorably pleased by her own performance, choices and decision-making, the strong, idealistic, independent and self-sufficient

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women characters portrayed by the narratives end up becoming what Primo Levi describes as persons practicing the 'Darwinian vision of the survival of the hardest bargainer' (Angier 2002: 377).

In addition, men's proposals to initiate a revolution appeared to be looked down upon and evaluated as being unconstructive and trivial as well as their resolve and ability to commit to what it takes to achieve the visions they were setting for themselves. This type of rebuff is expressed by the narrator in Everything Counts:

'Would they please leave her alone? What was more, if they really wanted to see a revolution, why didn't they work constructively in other ways for it?

She shut them up. For they knew their own weaknesses too, that they themselves were neither prepared nor ready to face the realities and give up those aspects of their personal dream which stood between them and the meaningful actions they ought to take. Above all, she was really beautiful and intelligent. They loved and respected her " (Aidoo 1970: 3).

Emerging from it all, is the simultaneous downgrading of men's efforts and the effort at an articulation of an image of the African woman by the narrator tending towards the emphasis on her qualities as 'beautiful and intelligent' and who must be consequently 'loved and respected' in contrast to their male counterparts.

As African literature began to articulate itself firmly within a socio-historical definition and context, and articulate itself towards building the consciousness of class positions in writing, according to Amuta , inwards, 'in order to rediscover its real motivations, challenges and social relevance' (cf: Amuta 1989:12), the search for and redefinition of the realities of life were expected to be carried out by the different constituencies and composites of society, and inevitably by the privileged literary components from their privileged positions and perspectives fighting to be inserted into the class positions formation and the redefinition of where they wished to belong and how to be regarded, leading to and leaning towards various ideological positions and colourings.

Thus, "The crucial 'point of genesis' and ultimate conditioning factor of literary criticism is to be sought in the very heritage of society itself. The class position of the critic, his self-perception in and mode of insertion into the prevailing class formations of his society, influence, and even (orientation) determine the ideological colouring of his critical products. In this context, we conceive of ideology simply as 'a relatively formal and articulated system of meanings, values, and beliefs, of a kind that can be abstracted as a 'worldview or a class outlook." (Amuta 1989:14).

In effect, we begin to see an articulation of a system of meanings, values, beliefs, and class outlooks fashioned upon ideological worldviews. It accorded with the position that criticism and critical theory should always promote ways of dialoguing both with the specific literary works as well as with the issues that define the state of consciousness in the referent's social world.

Consequently, various approaches to doing literature were examined and discarded as unsuited for literary criticism in the African context. Foremost among the rejected approaches to literary criticism as a result of the avowed orientation was Colonialist criticism. Such criticism, supposedly so designated by Chinua Achebe and defined was the 'elaboration of the cardinal axiom of colonialist ideology into a tradition of criticism with specific application to the emergent literature of the erstwhile colonized – in this case, Africans'. It was supposed to be characterized by 'a supremacist arrogance predicated on racial prejudice...' (Amuta 1989: 18-19).

It was supposed that the African disciples of this mode of criticism operated from the same basic assumptions of supremacist arrogance and racial prejudice.

However, for women, the period may have resembled that of the contemporary experience of political explosion of anger and revolution, except that this was one carried out in the mind and expressed through writing by women. The

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experience may have paralleled the description of the contemporary events in America given by Shatz (2020) culminating in the belief that:

"They've been ridiculed for their sense of entitlement by those who've enjoyed far more prosperity and, for all the mainstream criticism of identity politics, they understand far better than previous generations that racism is a system, rather than a matter of individual hatred, prejudice or 'ignorance'; they know that it's embedded in institutions, and that unless it's rooted out, American democracy will remain an unequal and unsafe space for black and brown people." (Shatz 2020).

The similarity of sentiments cannot be missed as they evoke the period and conditions upon which African literary endeavours gained momentum in the 1960s and 70s, and the passion, power, and motifs and goals driving the movement of writings of the generation and others to follow, including the trajectory of women's liberation and its ancillary projects.

In his introduction to *So Long a Letter* in 2008, Kenneth W. Harrow recounts that: "Until this point in African literature, the portrayal of such women was primarily presented as that of women's 'plight', that is, as victims like those appearing in the fiction written by Senegalese men. ... The novels by other African women writers like Flora Nwopa, Buchi Emecheta and Ama Ata Aidoo also often emphasized the images of women abandoned by their husbands, maltreated by their fathers, or even, as in 'The Joys of Motherhood' (1979), ultimately ignored by their own grown children. Women were represented as disempowered or abused." (Ba 1981:ii).

However, Harrow continues specifically to outline the trajectory of Mariama Ba that made a difference and inspired new writers. Referring to the narrator, Ramatoulaye, he said that "At first, she is forced to confront a series of suitors, beginning with her husband's elder brother Tamsir, who expects to make her another one of his wives. As she responds forcefully to him, we hear the expression of a new passion, a new voice:

'My voice has known thirty years of silence, thirty years of harassment. It bursts out, violent, sometimes sarcastic, sometimes contemptuous'. She rejects both his offer and his arrogant assumption of male superiority, and she puts in their place the brother, the suitor and imam, along with all the former prerogatives of the patriarchal order that attempted to assert its control over her again." (Ba, 1980: v).

The question, nevertheless, is the basis upon which women's writings instituted a 'battle of the sexes' and the imagination and imaging of men upon which their consciousness and ideologies have been systematized and settled about men in African society. Harrow (1980) proposes the ideological perspective of women's orientation as the confrontation of a 'patriarchal order' (Ba, 1980: v). A sole mixed group of Level 100 students among ten other groups presenting a project and citing other sources renders it this way: "The common belief among most feminist critics of African literature today is that men are the worst enemies of women. These feminist scholars have denounced men, accusing them of being the major source of women's unhappiness particularly in the family. They claim that men oppress, mistreat and exploit women by inhibiting and restricting their self-realization. Women therefore suggest a complete rejection of patriarchy in all its guises in order to create a world without men, where they would be safe, sane and supportive of one another." However, the contest between the 'patriarchal order' and the 'matriarchal order' is of universal and ancient origin.

VI. THE LOGIC OF PRACTICE OF WOMEN'S WRITINGS

Frankl (1992) suggests through the research carried out by the Swiss historian, J. J. Bachofen and published as *Mother Right*, the possibility of the existence of an ancient matriarchal culture that was ultimately superseded by patriarchy and whose evidence could be somewhat derived from their representations in Greek culture and by the Greek playwrights, Aeschylus in *Oreisteia* and Sophocles in *Oedipus*. Frankl (1992: 13) citing Bachofen notes that: "The advance from the maternal conception of mankind to a paternal

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conception was the most important turning-point in history which brought with it fundamental changes in the psycho-social orientations of human beings."

Matriarchal cultures, being once governed by a gynocracy, that is, by the blood-bond between the members of a family group and their mothers, considers the father only as a friend, guest, helper, who holds no significant legal importance for a group's cohesion. It is characterized in such terse modern matricentric examples and slogans as 'Behind every successful man is a woman; behind every successful woman, is herself'; and in others such as 'A woman: without her, man is nothing'. In such slogans, man is not needed; man is only a friend, guest or helper, or a hopeless case that needs to be helped by woman to exist. The blood-bond symbolizes love between mother and her offspring, promoting a sense of sisterhood and equality whose governing principles are not characterized by fear or sacrifice but by love and compassion. The 'matricentric complex' created out of such a blood-bond, while characterized by a feeling of optimistic trust in mother's unconditional love and far fewer guilt feelings, stand in contrast to those shown by 'patricentric individuals'. Embedded in a weaker superego and lower threshold of repression as a result, the matricentric individual tends towards a greater capacity for pleasure and happiness. However, the seemingly good and benevolent mother goddess invariably quickly turns into a ruthless Fury or goddess if the law of blood is offended against, creating the rage of the mother against the transgressor of her laws. The result is the production of the principle of revenge, leading to the horrible aspect of matriarchy which entails a relentless cruelty characterized by endless cycles of violence and revenge that is complemented by the tendency towards illogical and inconsistent travesty of judgements based upon no clear principles and meaningful logic except on instinct.

Patriarchy emerged in reaction to the inconsistencies and inadequacies of the code of justice of the matricentric culture which was accused of being based upon the blind demands of instinct and the incapability of taking into consideration the complexities of individual cases.

The inevitable blood feuds constituted by matriarchy on account of its basic constitution led to a culture of vendetta in which progressive series of insoluble blood feuds and endless series of murders running into successive generations became the norm. By such nature, matriarchy provided neither a safe moral guide nor a secure means of fair justice for society as it was based primarily on instinct.

In this regard, the replacement of the matricentric code was in search of a higher code of law and morality governed by reason and persuasion, and hence by intellect, logic, meaning and order rather than by the blind forces of instinct. This new higher code is associated with the rule of the father, constituting an emergent code and culture, the patriarchal order.

A fight then against patriarchy suggests a contestation against intellect, logic, meaning, order, reason and persuasion, the individual and complexity, and a posture towards an advocacy for the return to the predominance of instinct in its manifestations as the pleasure principle of love, compassion, happiness, indulgence, worship of instinct and the principle of revenge and blood feuding, altering the psycho-social dynamic of society towards regression.

The search for a higher moral guide and a more secure code of justice meant that the traditional dominance of the mother under the gynocratic order had to be broken and the superior importance of the father in the family and the state unequivocally established. The claims of the father to a higher level of intellectuality and his capacity of reasoned persuasion had to be illustrated through a rational victory over the instinct-dominated demands for revenge as illustrated in the Greek playwrights. The new order was erected upon and represented not merely by a demonstration of power but by a demonstration of a higher level of rationality, meaning, judgement and persuasion. It was especially not based upon and represented by violence but by the employment of holy persuasion to assure victory and validate the new dispensation (Frankl 1992: 16).

In the light of this reasoning and understanding, one of the most crucial things evoked is the need to understand West African women's writings in their consciousness, attitude and posture to determine whether consciously or unconsciously, these textual productions are not a struggle towards the re-establishment and promotion of a gynocracy and the discredited system of a moral code, justice system and meaningfulness that could not bode well for society's goals of reason, intellect, logic, persuasion, and individuality. If it is so, can it explain to a large extent, the reason that the male child's induction into the symbolic order for growth and towards the reality principle and productivity, and the de-emphasis of the pleasure principle been hitherto seemingly downplayed, dismissed or ignored by writings with such orientations?

VII. CONSCIOUSNESS/MIND, ATTITUDE/ POSTURE, AND ACTION

In the choice of subject, content, and approach, women's writings in West African society follow a logic of practice of writing, and an ideology (Bourdieu 1992; Amuta 1992; Halliday 2004) which derives from both the material conditions of experience, literary selection and selectivity, and from a consciousness based on the processes of generalization, abstraction and metaphorizing of these selected scenes, characters, circumstances, and ideas. In *So Long a Letter*, for instance, the men do not have a voice. The reflection of the narrator is a long digestion and grinding of the wrongs of men against women and the triumph of women's strength and intelligence over that of the men in the story whose morals, loyalty, responsibility, intelligence, logic, strength, self-sufficiency, vision and goals are often disappointing and either confused or non-existent. In reading the story, students of both genders (youth) invariably cast a judgement against men, portraying men as wicked, selfish, insatiable in their sexual desires, irresponsible and inconsiderate, in their responses and critiques of the novel. Surprisingly, out of a total of 104 students, the majority of male students tended to be even more critical of the men in the narrative than the female students did. Some of

their observations include the following contrasts: "Despite their unconditional devotion and loyalty, both Ramatoulaye and Aissatou are sadistically rewarded with deception and dupery by their unfaithful and fickle husbands who take new and much younger wives." In *Second Class Citizen,* a similar depiction of men is evoked as Ada became too intelligent for her friend turned husband who could not make use of all the glaring opportunities designed for him by Ada herself to study abroad in preparation for a life together. Ada's husband was also fully X-Rayed and presented as an imbecile, keen only on sexual predation, pederasty, pleasure, and abuse, and yet having an aversion for hard work in full contrast to Ada and her resourcefulness and extraordinary intelligence. The young man was not given any voice to explain anything about his own philosophy, principles, struggles and toils, and worldviews except to be portrayed as the author purported. In *Purple Hibiscus*, however, a different approach is adopted towards the male characters. The father's voice is clear, the son's voice is clear, and it is possible to reason along to understand their reasoning, logic, vision, direction, and goals or otherwise whether one agreed with them or not. It is, therefore, easier in *Purple Hibiscus*, to make a judgement about the actions of male characters as well as for female characters and to be persuaded to agree or disagree with their thoughts, attitudes and actions.

VIII. WOMEN'S WIGS AND HAIRSTYLES

What women writers considered as trifles and the lack of seriousness about African men in setting an agenda of revolution to fight imperialism and neo-colonialism by identifying even women's wigs and hairstyles or fashion as a reference item to struggle over might have been generated from an oblivion of the origins of women's focus on fashion and lifestyle matters rather than on productivity and the concern for the individual's psycho-social growth and orientation through the symbolic order, which itself is the result of a colonial production and consequence.

The *Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, under an article contributed by Peter Hinchliff on Africa, in tracing and describing the penetration

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and practice of Christianity in Africa from its inception through to the colonial times, and describing European exploitation of the African continent includes a cartoon that it described as "a savage Dutch cartoon of 1897". It is a cartoon in which 'The French corrupt the natives with useless frivolity, the English – greater hypocrites – sell rum and rifles with the Bible'. (Hinchcliff 1992: 473).

In this cartoon, a strong stoutly built African female figure of presence is being dressed up by a Frenchman with a top plumed hat, an open brace vest revealing most of the upper front part of her body from the cleavage of the breast and embracing a v-shaped waist; below the vest, a mini-skirt ending close to the upper thigh of the woman, and wearing stockings from the feet to just above the knees. The lady-in-the- making is facing the Frenchman who was holding a mirror to her to view herself like a Narcissus. The woman, with her back firmly turned to the man and oblivious of him, with a confused smile, albeit in a narcissistic style, raises her right hand in admiration with her left hand straightening her mini-skirt with a powerful hand and her little finger sticking out in excitement. Her male counterpart, separated from her by a British colonialist, was standing to the left of the female - a hulky and powerful man, almost naked with a covering only to the front of his waist in animal skin, the rest of him unclad, standing bewildered with the British colonist holding a huge bottle of rum to his mouth with the right hand while in his left hand the colonist was also ironically sticking a Bible into his hand; meanwhile, the colonist had already suspended a gun on his wrist of the hand receiving the Bible. The history of women's separation from men in African society and their focus on fashion and the frivolities associated with fashion in West African society cannot be divorced from this kind of reality. Neither can their separation from each other as depicted in the painting, both taken far apart from each other as they were being separated through different orientations and agendas and no longer governed by the aspirations and agendas of the African society itself, be taken for granted. The French separated women from men, and the agenda in

their mind was a separation through the process of re-orienting them towards fashion and narcissism, while the men were separated by the British colonialists by equipping them with aggression, drunkenness, and paradoxically, also with a Bible. The halo effect created by the logic of practice of this consciousness cannot be discounted, and the agenda of male and female writers perhaps ought to tend towards an archaeology of the mind that can discover the myths planted through colonialism in respect of the harmonious co-existence and cooperation of male and female for African society rather than continuing to build a system of values consistent with the effects of the separation of male and female initiated through colonialist adventures and advanced through the battle of the sexes.

Whereas men may have noticed the separation of their women from themselves by the diversion of their attention from the kind of values and things that once attracted them towards cooperation, co-existence and harmony in traditional society, women, on the other hand, because of the halo effect created through the narcissistic fashion objects they were endowed with by French ruse, could not realize the shift from their own native values and where it was generated from. Instead, the orientation seems to warrant a defense of the separation to the hilt through a battle of the sexes like a natural property that cannot be tampered with, and that needs to be fought for with 'a battle of the sexes'. Ironically, it is the 'battle of the sexes' that men had tried to prevent as they began to deconstruct the situation and recognized that the distraction of women from their productive roles in society had been compromised by the newly-found and colonially-cultivated focus of fashion, lifestyle and its associated frivolities. Ironically, women's logic of practice had entrenched them to view fashion and lifestyle choices and their associated frivolities as essential to their being, although the end result of these colonially-cultivated values were, in fact, initiating African women towards the commercialization of the body and the employment of sex as an expression of power.

Men, on the other hand, plied with rum and the gun, and devoting themselves to a confused melee

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of colonially-cultivated values and agendas seemed to be sobering up and attempting to re-articulate their goals and a new agenda for which they must struggle. Nonetheless, the position of women and their agenda-setting was tending towards a battle of the sexes that perceived any reference to the colonially-cultivated values of narcissism implanted through the cultivation in fashion and lifestyle pursuits as trivial and irrelevant.

Thus, already, colonial exploits had cultivated a division between women and men in African society. It separated women from men's agendas. The attempt by men writers to re-articulate men and women's agendas and the resistance to the threat of the loss of the colonially-cultivated values of fashion and lifestyle, when challenged, was labeled as the 'hatred of wounded lovers', ironically generating the determination of women to undertake the battle of the sexes. The decision to pursue a 'battle of the sexes in the mind' culminates in the focus on women's writings on power relations.

Is it, therefore, possible that if women writers' efforts had focused on discovering the myths that governed their relationships with men in African society as they were fashioned primarily by colonialism, they could be rediscovering new grounds by which to emerge closer to men and their agendas in order to regenerate cooperation and understanding rather than assuming a posture of the battle of the sexes in the mind from which the negative imagining, imaging and metaphorization of men issues, and thereby alienating them from the upbringing of male children into the symbolic order towards the reality principle and productivity and away from the pleasure principle.

IX. LABOUR AND STRUGGLE VERSUS SEXUALITY AND POWER

In their *Psychology of Existence*, Kirk J.Schneider and Rollo May (1995) argue for the recognition of the historical perspective of an existential psychology with three essential thematic elements. These include the realization that human experience is characterized by human

freedom and by limitation; the dread of either freedom or limitation that promotes extreme or dysfunctional counter-reactions or banal timidity; and the desire and effort towards a confrontation with or integration of the polarities to produce psycho-physiological resilience.

Within this framework, they define and recognize myths as possessing healing power through bringing into awareness the repressed, unconscious, archaic urges, longings, dreads, and other psychic content in an individual. In this regard, myths engender in themselves a revelation of new goals, new ethical insights, and new possibilities by providing breakthrough meanings which were not available before. In this progressive regard, myths provide a higher level of working out a problem and leading towards a higher level of integration. Consequently, myths are a means of discovery and a progressive means of reaching the structures in relation to nature and our own existence. In effect, myths are educative. *"By drawing out inner reality, they enable the person to experience greater reality in the outside world. ... They are roads to universals beyond one's concrete experience. It is only on the basis of such a faith that the individual can genuinely accept and overcome earlier infantile deprivations without continuing to harbor resentment all through one's life. In this sense myth helps us accept our past, and we then find it opens before us our future."* (Schneider 7 May, 1995: 18).

Perhaps the myth of the utter separation between male and female in African society ought to be debunked. Much as it is still repressed and made invisible, the benefits can be liberating if a search begins to unveil the myths structuring, holding and sponsoring the supposed separation between men and women in West African society.

According to Schneider and May (1995), during the industrial revolution, a radical separation between product and workers was made. This separation created an alienation of labour or product from the worker and between workers themselves. Thus, personhood was lost. Similarly, "With the growth of industry and the bourgeoisie, sex becomes separated from persons; one's sexual

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responses are bought and sold, as is the product of one's hands" (Schneider and May 1995:35), creating a curious relationship between society's attitude towards power on one hand and sexuality on the other. Within this period also, the values of hard work and effort were established, depicted in such works as Goethe's *Faust*. These values consisted in "action, striving , effort". In this sense, it was established that the active deed takes supremacy over other forms of human existence, promoting an eternal struggle, effort and restlessness as a definition of hard work – an extolling of the practical and creative over the intellectual, reflection and reasoning. In the West African women's writings, the practical, creative and passionate and constant striving efforts of women are evoked and extolled as the basis of man's life, culminating in the listing of all the household chores and family engagements that women carry out and the constant strivings involved in them as the crux of work, rendering men's activities and efforts invisible. *Purple Hibiscus*, on the other hand, makes visible the strivings and efforts and struggles of man (Achike), visible together with his complete outlook on life no matter how flawed, and illustrating him as an industrial age man exhibiting all the values of hard work. Separated from men in African society and invested with a commercial outlook and its power, are women writers' framework perhaps being overly-influenced by the values of the industrial revolution to define their male counterparts in African society?

X. CONCLUSION: THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE LOGIC OF PRACTICE OF WOMEN'S WRITINGS

The consequences of the battle of the sexes is the departure from the symbolic order essential for the maintenance and building of family life and a stable production of the individual in society which depend upon the triad of mother, father and child and the symbolic order it creates to set the individual towards growth towards a realization of either the positive goal of induction into the reality principle and productivity or, unfortunately, towards the negative pursuit of the

pleasure principle and the ultimate proximity to mental health issues and instability.

West African Women's writings, like all other literary writings, are striving towards an effort to examine the human condition in one form or the other. In this case, however, they seem to be premised more upon the 'battle of the sexes' engineered upon an ideology of selection, posture and typification of men and their gender that is seemingly influenced by the consequence of a colonially engineered value system based upon the separation of men from women in African society, rendering the society without the essential symbolic order for raising viable offspring undergirded by the reality principle and the stability needed to become productive members of society.

On the other hand, women's writings in West African society could be regarded as the settings for the excavation of myths in the sense of the methods advocated by the psychologists of existence who perceive the possibilities of an integrative process of a discovery. In this case, these writings could serve as an excavation of the progressive revelation of the structure of our relation to nature and our own existence as human beings rather than as a battle of sexes between men and women in society.

Consequently, the essential question that remains is, when writers begin to explore their world, with what aims should they craft their imaginations and endeavours? "Given that we live in a shared world, in which our actions impact and involve others, how should we want an inhabitant of this world to be educated?"

Answering this question means first looking towards two other questions: How does writing fit into this life, singular, and shared, whose ends give it its ends? And what are the ends of this life?"

The importance of the creation of the human subject and their induction into the symbolic order towards transforming him or her from the grip of nature to culture to ensure that they become persons capable of flowering in productivity who appreciate the need for the

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repression of the pleasure principle and being focused towards the appreciation of the reality principle in order to consciously channel their energies into the production of civilization and direct themselves away from the likelihood of mental ill-health toward mental wellness and mental well-being is a pursuit that needs to be given inevitable consideration by every well-meaning human being.

In Purple Hibiscus, which this paper considers as essential to illustrating the consequences of the destruction of the symbolic order of the family and society, the father, Achike is killed through the arrangement of the mother, denying and destroying the structure of the symbolic order. After getting rid of the father, the mother sought to claim authority over both the male and the female siblings, attempting to advance a taken-for-granted notion that the children intrinsically understood the matricentric order which was being claimed for them. The presumption did not work; it created the destruction of a whole family – the father killed, the son exhibiting mental problems after recognizing that he may have, after all, not benefitted from the events and the new order as he thought they might benefit them. The only positive character promising a future after a progressive re-examination of the mythical structure in which they had existed was the daughter who had from infancy adhered to the expectations of the symbolic order by which the daughter was attached to the father until the natural bonds separated them and oriented her towards her mother. The son, on the other hand, who, tacitly and patently at times, was encouraged by the mother to defy the father, failed to enter into the symbolic order and develop as an individual oriented towards the reality principle and productivity. The matricentric values he adopted encouraged him towards seeking the pleasure principle that destroyed his development and his ability to make choices and decisions according to reason, justice, persuasion and order. He failed to understand the order of persuasion.

The understanding of this orientation involving the symbolic order should enable the refocus on the valuation of reconstituting the African social imagination towards the formation of the human subject so that any social engineering, welfare programming, and especially writing and educational endeavours should be directed towards an emphasis on a process conducive for the attainment of the successful enabling of the processes of the formation of the human subject and their successful achievement. To achieve this, women's textual productions will have to rediscover collaboration with men rather than a focus on X-raying men or their male counterparts.

It is also suggested to draw attention to the focus and orientation of literary producers, especially of women writers, to re-examine their writings and the consequences of their writings within the framework of the formation of the individual and the human subject rather than within the frameworks of power, resistance, and gender issues, which rather than achieving productivity and promoting mental wellness tend towards promoting their disintegration and diversion from induction into the symbolic order and the reality principle. Child protection, for instance, should be inclusive of male-child protection and not synonymous with girl-child protection. The psycho-social dynamic of society may thus tend towards balancing itself for the common good.

It should consequently lead to discarding the frameworks and orientations that don't inure to the induction into the symbolic order and prioritize the frameworks and orientations that inure to the development of the individual, the self, and the formation of the human subject, rising beyond the discourses of blame, guilt, vengeance, and the reductive imaginations which engender the orientations towards nursing, nurturing and shaping the disintegration of the self and the mental health and stability of the individual and the human subject.

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