



Embedded Existentialism and Contemporary African Political Thoughts: Comparative Assessment of Nigeria and Ghana In Relation to Jean-Paul Sartre Ideologies

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Abstract

This study discusses the relative importance of embedded existentialism and its applicability to Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist philosophy in contemporary political situation in Nigeria and Ghana. Based on critical analysis of Sartre's philosophy of freedom, responsibility, bad faith, and authenticity; this study examines the relative social impacts of indirect practice of existentialism and how it can be used to confront the political challenges, neglected growth opportunities and contradictions in these two African countries. The study used a qualitative approach by analyzing political discourse from authors of literary and philosophical works and political leaders in Nigeria and Ghana. The study finds that Sartre's theoretical ideologies on freedom and responsibility reflects in the participation and political agency of stakeholders. Further, the study found that the manifestation of Sartre's 'bad faith' is evident in the denial of responsibility by political leaders, who possess the tendency for bulk passing and blaming of external factors for internal problems that they may have created. The research evinces that authenticity is lacking in African political leadership, where leaders are known to prioritize their personal interests and objectives over the well-being of their citizens. This study contributes to the research gap which has generated the debate on the relevance of existentialism in contemporary political discourse, especially in the African context. Thus, an application of Sartre's existentialist theory to the political situations in Nigeria and Ghana, provides new insights into the complexities of political agency, freedom of political choices, leadership, and accountability. As could be observed, the findings of the study have significant impacts and implications for promoting good governance, responsible leadership, and active citizen participation in politics, in Nigeria, Ghana, and other African countries.

Keywords: ideological framework, existentialism, emancipatory political thoughts, Sartre's postulations, African awareness, political freedom, democratic culture, authenticity, bad faith, freedom of choice.

1.0 Introduction

Embedded existentialism denotes a philosophical and literary theory where existentialist ideologies and connotations are integrated into political or administrative narratives, in subtly manners, without explicit philosophical considerations or declarations. In other words, it implies that, ideals of the existentialism thoughts have been embedded within the narrative, policy, storyline, character and plot, rather than being clearly or directly stated. As has been observed, existentialism, in general, explores fundamental questions about human existence and survival which philosophically relates to issues such as; meaning and purpose of life, unlimited freedom and choice, personal responsibility and accountability to self and others, the absurdity and uncertainty of life, individuality and authenticity of self.

An understanding of how embedded existentialism is achieved in practical terms could be seen from how realities are woven or integrated into the fabrics of political and administrative narratives, in situations such as: public policy stipulations in terms of character development which reflect existential crises or struggling with the human conditions; events that highlight nature's uncertainty and ambiguities confronting human lives; objects, settings, or events that represent existential concepts; underlying messages or implications that invite readers to ponder existential questions. In view of the foregoing, the ideological framework that drives the human theory of existentialism as propounded by Jean-Paul Sartre is founded on the basis that humans are imbued with freedom to make choices that enables them create or ascribe a meaning to life; this naturally endowed freedom empowers man with a tremendous and terrifying responsibility to accept the ultimate results of the alternatives choices made available to him by his unlimited ingenuity. The practical implication of this notion is that life has no naturally conferred meaning or purpose that can be ascribed to it, thus pre-supposing that man is designed to create his own ambitions, values and goals. This is the basis of this extended application referred to as *embedded existentialism*.

Given this position, human beings according to Sartre are “condemned to be free” moral agents for themselves; implying that they have the freedom of choice which comes with an inalienable rights and responsibility to accept the consequences or outcomes of their freely exercised choices. Thus, the concept of “bad faith” in human existence is only a hoax designed to “deny or escape” from the natural freedom of choice, which is achieved by psychedelic or hallucinogenic adoption of fixated identifies or beliefs projected by an externally imposed system of thoughts- that authenticity is deliberate acceptance of man’s freedom and the responsibility that comes with his choices, hence resulting an existence that encapsulate his self-awareness, integrity and honesty of purpose.

Finally, in Sartre’s existentialism theory, individual subjectivity and vagaries or nuances of personal understanding and experiences of freedom takes precedence over and above objective propensities of truths or external authorities. This embedded ideology presupposes that man is solely responsible for the environment he finds himself or that which by his intensions and design are created by him, he is also responsible for finding meaning and purpose for his existence in addition to an inseparable responsibility to accept the outcome or consequences for his choices, actions and inactions.

Given the above foundation and in respect of what existentialism theory represent in terms of Africa’s political awareness and evolving political structures, this paper speaks to a myriad of issues which are deeply rooted in the consciousness of Africans, to be truly free from the shackles of ignorance and bad leadership that is founded on the negative interpretations of Sartre’s existentialism theory. Accordingly, it has been observed that existentialism became an intellectual movement that was fueled by the World War II, where the Nazi concentration death camps and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki triggered a situation of global awareness referred to as “the existentialist movement” (Crowell, 2022, p.1 citing, Baert, 2015). This movement produced the human boldness to ask pertinent questions that bordered on the real meaning of life, having faced the miseries of callous killings and deaths, deprivations and grave disastrous destructions, arising from the Second World War.

Further, although existentialism had previously been developed by scholars like Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, it became more popular when Jean-Paul Sartre and his compatriots like Albert Camus, Gabriel Marcel and Maurice Merleau-Ponty produced brain storming philosophical arguments that applied the theory to real life situations, thus emboldening mankind to think inwardly with the intent of making life more meaningful; thus resulting the global literature fireworks on the subject including the works of Norman Mailer the self-acclaimed “American existentialist” (Cotkin, 2003, p.185).

Additionally, (Crowell, 2022, p.1) advanced this viewpoint, when he opined that the existentialism movement have transcended the literacy and academic worlds by forming the ideation base that have supported may forms of new knowledge and human struggles for self-recreation as in the radicalizing and emancipatory political thoughts of *Martin Luther Jr.* and the freedom laced works of *Black Intellectuals* in the persons of Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison in addition to the growing application of these philosophies as an integrated framework of public policy orchestrated practices.

The impact of existentialism as expounded by Jean-Paul Sarte also influenced theological thoughts and debates in relation with the nexus between faith and human freedom and the role that God plays in defining the course of human existence given His in comprehensible nature. This point was the basis of the writings of Paul Tillich, Karl Barth, and Martin Bieber; accordingly, there is no limit to the impact and application of this theory as more researchers have limitlessly applied same in diverse fields of knowledge and this paper is one such effort. In the rationale for this study, the impact and application of Sartre’s existentialism philosophy to African political culture, experience and development is the basis for this study; that is to say, how has the theory of existentialism enhanced Africa’s political development?

Thus, the thoughts of freedom as fundamental to human consciousness would be applied in this study to specific areas of Jean-Paul Sartre’s prognostication; which in the view of the study is significantly aligned to the seeming African political contexts and complexities in terms of socio-political agency, definable demographic delineations that are tainted by westernized ideologies, imported democratic governance and western exploitative style of social justice, to mention but few.

In the foregoing vein, the paper shall address how Sartre’s philosophy can be used as a lens to see through the political development of Nigeria and Ghana in such a manner that Sartre’s views are indirectly couched in the forms of public policy instruments. These countries were carefully selected on the basis of their Anglophone colonial heritage which has become the basis of their national struggles towards self-actualizations in terms of overcoming corruption, inequalities, and social injustices, some of which were inherited from the colonial pasts of these nations. Consequently, this paper shall contribute to fill the research gap that has occasioned the ongoing debate of how the ideological framework and support structures of existentialism has energized Africa towards

political freedom in an indirect or embedded manner of application of the earlier French society model as exemplified in Sartre's works.

Further, the study is also about the creation of "meaning" within Sartre's existentialist philosophy in relation to compelling framework for the analysis of various settings given the political dynamics of the post-colonial conditions of these States. For instance, in Nigeria the existentialist framework for political freedom is still tainted with lack of economic freedom in the face of attempts towards democratic consolidation and social justice in opposition to the dictates of colonial overloads and civil conflicts that has kept the nation on its toes. On a flip side of the coin, South Africa's abandonment of apartheid for a democratically governed society is also well founded on the notions of existentialism, namely; liberation and freedom, political identity and the drive for authentic existence.

1.1 Contextual Postulations of the Study

The contextual underpinning of the study holds relevance for the essence of the views of Sartre in modern day African society such as Nigeria and Ghana. Thus, given the geographical and cultural distance between France (where these thoughts were expounded), and these named African countries, Sartre's views offered a contextual and prophetic insight into how these African societies have through the struggle for freedom in the face of political challenges and externally inflicted contradictions weathered the storm to make progress towards self-awareness and self-rule.

Further, relying on Sartre's philosophies and contextual postulations on freedom, responsibility and bad faith, this study can safely posit that Nigeria and Ghana has made significant progress towards democratic governance and self-rule. Contextually, this study opines that the philosophical foundations of Sartre's postulations have formed the basis of African awareness towards its political freedom, growth and advancement in democratic culture.

1.2 Problem Statement

The study's main issue for determination is whether Sartre's existentialism theory can be applied in African societies as to understand the extent of success in the development of its political culture and its attendant benefit of democratic governance and stability. To this end, exploring this possibility within the context of contemporary African politics as found in Nigeria and Ghana, pose political realities that offers a categorized challenge, traditional views of governance, identity and freedom. Consequently, the extent to which Sartrean styled existentialism has impacted on political processes and practices, and how it has brought about the needed motivation in civic engagement in Africa remains an area for deeper intellectual investigation.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

While the problem statement set agenda for deeper reflection, the purpose of the study concerns this study's intension to explore the range of possible applications of Sartre's existentialist ideology in the development of political landscape of African politics, with a major focus on Nigeria and Ghana.

1.4 Significance of the Study

An understanding of the impact of existentialism on political culture, thought process and democratization could unveil new horizons of participation in political processes and better perspectives towards the resolution of endemic political challenges in Africa. Thus, the significance that this study holds is its ability to advance the discussions of the greater impacts of existentialism that are possible in Africa given its historical colonial pasts.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- i) To analyze the relevance of Sartre's existentialism ideology of 'agency', while using it to understand contemporary political issues in Nigeria and Ghana.
- ii) To explore how Sartre's concepts of human freedom, personal responsibility and bad faith can illuminate on the political challenges in Nigeria and Ghana.
- iii) To analyze the application of Sartre's existentialism in contemporary African politics.

1.6 Research questions

Sequel to the objectives of this study, solutions to the identified objectives are further presented as research questions, which are stated as follows:

- i) How does Sartre's views on freedom and responsibility relate to political agency in Nigeria and Ghana?
- ii) In what observed ways do political leaders in Nigeria and Ghana exhibit bad faith and what are the relative implications of this situation to democratic governance?
- iii) How does Sartre's existentialism philosophy relate to contemporary political issues in Nigeria and Ghana?

1.7 Research Gap and Study Limitations

There are myriads of problems in Africa that can only be solved by initiation and implementation of the right public policies. These policies are only achievable by way of activating politically stable purposes and programs. The research gap that was identified for which the study is intended to fill is the possibility of deployment of Sartre's philosophical reasoning in providing solutions to political questions in Africa.

These Sartrean philosophies are embedded in theories on bad faith, human freedom, personal responsibility, political agency and authentic self. The study is to utilize these components of Sartre's existentialism philosophy to provide solutions to the different political problems in Africa with Nigeria and Ghana as the focal point. Based on the foregoing disposition, the study is limited to the possible range of applications of the identified components of Sartre's theories on contemporary political processes and governance landscape of Africa, using Nigeria and Ghana as springboard.

1.8 Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical framework for Sartre's existentialism philosophy boarder on his concepts of human freedom, personal responsibility, political agency, authentic self and bad faith. Hence, the study relates to these components of Sartre's existentialist theory and their analysis for practical applications within African democratic governance processes. It also projects the political exigencies that reverberate of liberation and democratic governance within post-colonial contexts, especially the ideology of 'bad faith' that resonate with how individuals reject or deny their own agency for freedom and taking personal responsibility for the betterment of their lives.

In addition, it borders on how this political behavior has undermined real democratic growth while promoting complacency and corruption in contemporary civilian regimes in Africa. Consequently, the theoretical framework for this study is fixated on Sartre's understanding of existentialism which concerns man and the things and circumstances around him (Atiyah, 2022, p.129); and the existence of those things around man are the product of his implicit choices (Flynn, 2006, p.12), which gives him the essence of existence.

2.0 Literature Review

This existentialism theory has maintained a center stage in philosophical pundits with diverse application in virtually all aspects of human endeavor, including political ideologies (Kaufmann, 2006, p.121). Within the African context, scholars have utilized the existential theory to argue or offer extensive criticism to colonial rule and the quest for identify that is built on self-realization. However, as observed, the world is faced with the advent of "The Invisible Government" which is an organized system of forces of neo-colonialism. The interest of this shadow government is to specifically promote pseudo freedom while exporting the western product of neo-colonial control called 'democracy' (Nkrumah, 1965, p.187-188). In the words of Nkrumah, "the general objective has been mentioned: to achieve colonialism in fact while preaching independence" (p.187).

The foregoing position of Nkrumah thus transcend all other aspects of the African lives, as it delves into foreign aids for third world countries which provides economic co-operation and the pressures to remove or lower trade barriers through donor activities and the impact of "invisible trade". In the arguments projected by Nkrumah, these actions of Western monopolies directly imply that the sole purpose of independence for African states is to indirectly maintain a grip on their core essence and existential resources by surreptitiously penetrating and invading their rights to freedom under the guise of "bad faith" which makes them doubt their own capability to sustain themselves. They thus deny their existential essence by believing in the superiority of Western ideas, products and dictates. How is this achieved? Nkruma (at p.192) pointed again that, "dating from the end of 1961, the US has actively developed a huge ideological plan for invading the so-called third World, utilizing all its facilities from press and radio to Peace Corps".

In support of the foregoing views (Fanon, 1963, p.148) opined that "for a very long time the native devoted his energies to ending certain definite abuses: forced labour, corporal punishment, inequality of salaries, limitation of political rights, etc. This fight for democracy against the oppression of mankind will slowly have the confusion of neo-liberal universalism to emerge, sometimes laboriously, as a claim to nationhood" The foregoing points that while African States indicate their dissatisfactions and take steps towards their freedom as have been argued by Sartre and his cohorts, the colonialists will certainly change their tactics, which today Africans are experiencing

in various forms as prophetically canvassed by Nkrumah. Further, as argued by Fanon (at p.148) “it so happens that the unpreparedness of the educated class, the lack of practical links between them and the mass of the people, their laziness and let it be said, their cowardice at the decisive moment of the struggle will give rise to tragic mishaps.”

The foregoing draw inference from the historical facts that over the period of colonial rule Sartre’s ‘bad faith’ theory have crystalized and on the Africans so much so that there was practical disconnect between the knowledgeable and the mass of the people who were too lazy to assert their political rights as evidence of their ability to make choices and stand by the consequences as a way to exhibiting their responsibility as agents of themselves.

In the understanding of (Onwubiko, 1991, p.4 in Okpalike (2017) ed.) on this subject matter, “... African ideas of life, man and the universe are also dependent on practical experiences through the ages of communities ... African ideology must be understood in terms of the African experience, because the realities of life must be understood in terms of existential postulates and explained in specific normative African concepts”. Thus, in supporting the views of Onwubiko, it was opined that existentialism even under European consideration is in consonance with the pattern of molding or carving out concepts from concrete or verifiable experiences (Okpalike, 2017, p.50).

Accordingly, Sartre’s main argument points that existence is the vehicle for the achievement of essence (Atiyah, 2022, p.130); thus implying that the adventure inherent in existence is to be free to exercise choices and pursue personal directions and goals. Consequently, this drive for essence according to Sartre is a continuous move towards an unachievable self-realization and hence affirming that “It places the human being at the centre of its attention and the apex of its value hierarchy” (Sartre, 1948, p.28). This view thus affirms that for man to achieve this essence, his freedom of choice is of extreme importance (Flynn, 2006, p.47 and Atiyah, 2022, p.131).

Further, taking a hint from Sartre’s position that “man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does. It is up to you to give (life) a meaning”. (Sartre, 1948, p.295); this study agree that man does not have a restricted or confined existence (Atiyah p.131), thus presupposing that although democratic rule is a Western invention but its adoption by Africans is a choice that can be made with a well-articulated modification to suit the African circumstances since Africans are free to do so. This is the essence and endpoint of this application of Sartre’s philosophy on the freedom of political choice, as a component of the existentialism theory.

3.0 Research Methodology

The study employed a qualitative approach which utilizes subject matter textual analysis and observations of renown and well-articulated scholars. The defined views of these scholars is representative of the consensus of many other writers within the framework of existing literature in the subject matter of Sartre’s existentialism theory. On the basis of the postulations that one’s views of life is significantly dependent on practical experiences that he or she has. This means that African ideology must be understood in terms of African experience (Onwubiko, 1991, p.4). Who else can understand African ideology beside African philosophical writers who have daily experiences of their nations political developments? None else except the Africans.

Thus, this method for assessing the impacts of Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialism philosophy on the political situations of African states is the product of the researcher’s opinion that a writer or philosopher’s environment or circumstances influences or impacts on his views of life and subsequently, his intellectual output; this is because the experiences from these avenues are the major suppliers of inspiration. Thus, based on this position of this study, Sartre’s philosophy on these issues is likely to have been influenced by the unequal circumstances observable in France, his native country in comparison with what obtains elsewhere. Flowing from this, the method adopted here considers the opinions of mainly African based authors whose major works are centered on Sartre’s philosophy of freedom of choice, bad faith, personal responsibility, essence and authenticity in relation to their practical African experiences.

In addition, the choice of Anglophone countries in Africa for this qualitative research analysis was intended to show the universal application of this theory although its proponents did so from Europe. Secondly, in order to demonstrate the theory’s potentials to revive and reinvent the consciousness of the peoples of all races and cultural divides. The relevance and implication of this method is the study of the major issues by way of resolving the research questions which are also incidental to the study’s objectives, on the basis of comparative analysis of Nigeria and Ghana’s political experiences.

Further, it should be noted that within the context of the fact that the realities of life can only be understood in terms of existential postulations, they can also be explained within the confines of specific normative African concepts. As is usual in the use of qualitative analysis in studies of this nature, this paper only considered direct observation and content analysis as its components of research. Further this approach is designed to respond to the study objectives and research questions as detailed in the submissions below:

3.1 Resolving The Research Objectives and Questions Through Relative Assessments

In the sections below, the study's research objectives and questions shall be tested on the Sartre philosophical measuring scale in line with contemporary political exigencies in Africa.

3.1.1 Scale 1-Research Objective 1: To analyze the relevance of Sartre's existentialism ideology of 'agency', while using it to understand contemporary political issues in Nigeria and Ghana.

Under this qualitative analysis method, the research objective is resolved by providing answer to Research Question 1: *How do Sartre's views on freedom and responsibility relate to political agency in Nigeria and Ghana?*

Sartre's philosophy on freedom and responsibility can be related to *political agency* in Nigeria and Ghana by understanding how Sartre defined individual freedom and responsibility. Sartre believes that humans are totally free and responsible for their choices (Sartre, 1948, p.52-53) and supported by (Emekwulu and Onwuatuegwu, 2020, p. 50). In the context of Nigeria and Ghana, this means that citizens have the inalienable freedom to make political choices and hold their leaders accountable for their actions (Ifeakor, 2023, p. 38). Consequently, Ifeakor averred that in elucidating his views, Sartre maintained his motto: "you can always make something out of what you've been made into", thus signifying that man has inherent freedom to make his choices, including political choices but can also abandon that freedom due to 'bad faith'.

However, it should be noted that Sartre's idea of total or absolute freedom has been disparaged for being too narrow and radical (Emekwulu and Onwuatuegwu, 2020, p. 50-51). On this point, some scholars have argued that there are limitations to freedom, such as social and political restrictions (Orji and Egberongbe, 2024, p.5). In Nigeria and Ghana, these restrictions have been identified by scholars to include corruption, poverty, and lack of education (Okpara, Ekeh, Aloysius, and Nwankwo, 2024, p.144), which can reduce or significantly limit citizens' ability to exercise their freedom as free moral agents for themselves and also hold their leaders to account for their stewardship in the distribution of public resources.

In view of the foregoing challenges, Sartre's philosophy of individual freedom tending towards political agency for himself and his community can be indirectly applied to the philosophy of political agency in Nigeria and Ghana. For instance, an understanding of the purport of freedom and the concept of responsibility can endow citizens with the needed impetus to demand for their inalienable rights and thus hold their leaders accountable for their actions and inactions. In this regard, it can be asserted that Sartre's philosophy has compelled political leaders to take responsibility for their actions. Particular instances exist in Nigeria and Ghana where leaders have openly taken responsibilities for their failure and apologized to their citizens; thus improving on their service rendering which has resulted a better society for all citizens, especially in Ghana.

Further, Sartre's ideological postulations on freedom and responsibility can be specifically related to *political agency* in Nigeria and Ghana by comprehending his definition of freedom and the responsibility that comes with it within the political framework of these countries. In this vein, absolute or complete freedom should result absolute responsibility for the outcome of the choices created by the freedom (Orji and Egberongbe, 2024, p.5). Based on this position, these concepts can be effectively applied to the political agency context of Nigeria and Ghana.

3.1.2 Scale 2- Research Objective 2: To explore how Sartre's concepts of human freedom, personal responsibility and bad faith can illuminate on the political challenges in Nigeria and Ghana.

Under this qualitative analysis method, the research objective is resolved by providing answer to Research Question 2: *In what observed ways do political leaders in Nigeria and Ghana exhibit bad faith and what are the relative implication of this situation to democratic governance?*

As pointed earlier, and although seemingly elitist in nature, Sartre's core existentialist philosophy on freedom and responsibility accentuates certain concepts that are also applicable to African states in respect of the demonstration of bad faith, in not taking deliberate steps towards the improvement of their society. Thus, Sartre argues that humans are fundamentally free and must take responsibility for their actions, which defines and shape their essence and the environment they find themselves.

Sartre's philosophy of freedom as can be applied to Africa's political freedom is founded on the philosophical notion that humans are 'condemned to be free', meaning that they must navigate their existence without

predetermined essence, making choices, which necessarily define their being (Sartre, 1946, p. 52). As argued by Sartre, at p. 5, "...condemned, because he did not create himself, yet is nevertheless at liberty, and from the moment that he is thrown into this world he is responsible for everything he does, his freedom comes with the burden of responsibility, as individuals must own the consequences of their actions...". It should be thus stated that in the African political realm, this view deciphers to the idea that political agents in the forms of political leaders and citizens must actively engage in shaping their own political destinies and landscape (Achebe, 1983, p.51). Thus, anything short of this basic requirement could be seen through Sartre's lens as 'bad faith'.

This view of Achebe in the lens of Sartre's philosophical reasoning, means African communities taking individual responsibility for the outcomes of their collective political decisions. Further, at p, 52 of his cited work, Achebe believed that functional education should form the basis of African consciousness towards the realization of their political and economic freedom. Thus, Achebe ingrained these soul searching words, "... I am not sure what the magic was or should be for making education really important-it is not merely to acquire the ability to read and write but to move to the next stage-of humane and progressive awareness of what makes a civilized society work". What makes society work in the view of this paper is the knowledge of the inherent rights of a person to assert his inalienable right to freedom of thought, conscience and action.

3.1.1 Scale 3- Research Objective 3: To analyze the application of Sartre's existentialism philosophy in contemporary African politics.

Under this qualitative analysis method, the research objective is resolved by providing answer to Research Question 3: *How does Sartre's existentialism philosophy relate to contemporary political issues in Nigeria and Ghana?*

The study found that Sartre's existentialism philosophy emphasizes individual freedom and choice. It relates to contemporary political issues in Nigeria and Ghana in several ways including the fact that although African states can seek for help from other countries in tackling their political, economic and developmental issues, the ultimate means of political and economic development lies with African states (Akinola, 2023, p.108). Based on the following foundation:

- i. Sartre's theory of *freedom and responsibility* can be applied in the area of citizens' political participation in Nigeria and Ghana. It is important to note that citizens of Nigeria and Ghana have the freedom to make political choices and as well as take responsibility for holding their leaders accountable for their actions and inactions.
- ii. The study notes that Sartre's philosophy of *bad faith* can be demonstrated in the political environments of Nigeria and Ghana by considering that 'bad faith' refers to the human tendency to deny or escape from issues that are defined as an individual's inherent freedom of choice, by adopting externally imposed or fixed notions or essential identities or belief systems that do not support his exercise of free conscience, as bad faith means; "...when the individual refuses to activate his freedom, take hold of his destiny and exhaust all his phenomenal aspects. The individual must not limit himself to one option as there are many alternatives that can be considered" (Akinola, 2023, p.103). Thus, in practical terms, this can be demonstrated as political leaders denying their responsibility or seeking for excuses in the place of providing solutions to the country's problems or blaming external factors for their own failures, incompetence or inability.
- iii. Sartre's philosophy of *authenticity* as an embedded ideology, can be applied to political leadership in Nigeria and Ghana. Authenticity under this application imply the unpretentious acceptance of freedom and responsibility and taking of deliberate, transparent and honest steps towards improvement; the reality of the issue in this regard is that African political leaders should develop the capacity to take ownership of their actions and employ transparency in their decision-making processes and policy implementations. This is authentic governance, looking through Sartre's lens.

4.0 Findings and Discussions

We have seen in this study that in Nigeria and Ghana, the application of Sartre's existentialists theories can be analyzed through the attributes of cultural heritage and context and within the exercise of rights, political histories and current acceptable practices. It is notable to point that both countries under survey experienced British colonial rule, military coups and military styled leaderships at various times. However, they eventual transitioned to democratic governance which has been defined and shaped by their political agency to themselves. Consequently, this exercise of their inherent freedom to take their destiny into their hands came with responsibility for their choices towards freedom as opined by Sartre. In the following sections, the paper shall briefly discuss the experiences of these African countries in respect of the core concerns of the existentialism theory:

4.1 Nigeria Experience

As could be observed, the political landscape in Nigeria has been defined or marked by periods of authoritarian military rule and democratic transitions that has not significantly resulted any meaningful political and economic progress. In this way, Sartre's philosophy suggests that Nigerian political agents must acknowledge their role in both perpetuating and challenging oppressive regimes; and Achebe affirmed this, by stating that this can be achieved through education (Achebe, 1983, p. 52-52), while (Nkrumah, 1965, p.192) insisted that such political development should be based on increased African productivity of the goods they consume and the heightening of their interest in information gathering and dissemination.

In the foregoing regard, Sartre's philosophy of responsibility when applied to African states like Nigeria demonstrate that it lies in fostering a political culture that prioritizes individual and collective community freedom which according to Sartre comes with a responsibility for accepting the outcomes of their choices and a sense of accountability to posterity. Accordingly, this political culture of individual freedom ensures that the stakeholders, namely, leaders and citizens of African communities are made active participants in the democratic development process of their countries (Achebe, 1983, p.49).

4.2 Ghana Experience

As the case with Nigeria, it can be observed that Ghana's political journey, particularly its national transition from colonial rule and British styled political administration to a stable democracy in Africa, reflects Sartre's philosophical ideas of freedom and responsibility. These views posit well with Lamola (2018, p.31), who argued on the basis of contextual philosophy of existence and freedom; and went further to opine that: "The radical nature of the proposed intervention emerging out of this appropriation, leads us to a key proposition of an Africanist paradigm, which is a qualitative emphasis on a philosophical praxis that is deliberately for the cause of Africa's freedom, as opposed to merely being in Africa".

In support of this notion and in respect to Ghana's experience, leadership figures of the likes of Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana exemplifies the benefits of the exercise of political freedom in the pursuit of national responsibility for political and economic independence and overall development. Thus, fixating Ghana's experience in Sartre's framework would both suggest or argue that Ghanaians must continue to accept and embrace their political freedom responsibly, irrespective of their challenges. At the same time Ghana is to ensure that their democratic institutions continue to coast on political robustness and inclusivity in negation of the hidden western intensions for neocolonialist activities which (Nkrumah, 1964, p,186) referred to as "tentacles of Wall Street octopus" under the phenomenon of "The Invisible Government".

More specifically, Nkrumah (1965, p. 34) pointed that "During the European Renaissance, when man gained an in-creased appreciation of his personal and individual dignity and freedom, philosophy responded with disquisitions on the nature of natural rights and connected ideas". The import of Nkrumah's position is that philosophy has always been at the foundation for the realization of inherent human freedom and the determination of natural rights and these are developed on the basis of articulated philosophical ideas which are applicable in Europe as well as Africa.

4.3 Comparative Analysis: Nigeria and Ghana

Comparing Nigeria and Ghana through Sartre's philosophical lens reveals both similarities and differences in their political experiences. While both countries have struggled with the legacies of colonialism and authoritarianism, their paths to democracy highlight different aspects of Sartre's philosophy. Nigeria's ongoing challenges with corruption and political instability underscore the need for greater responsibility in exercising political freedom. In contrast, Ghana's relatively stable democracy illustrates the potential for Sartre's principles to foster a more accountable and participatory political culture.

Consequently, a gaze through Sartre's prism, will indicate that Nigeria and Ghana's political experiences are significantly comparable and can help to find both parallels and contrasting features. Thus, despite the fact that both nations have contended or pursued a national struggle with the effects of authoritarianism and colonialism in their past histories, Sartre's theory is applicable in different ways following their individual paths to democratic governance.

Conversely, it should be noted that while Ghana seems to have achieved significant mileage in their match towards Sartre's *responsible freedom*, Nigeria's case tends to be in alliance with issues of political instability, insecurity and deep seated corruption in the entire governance structure. Given this obdurate situation, there is need for exercising political freedom with increased responsibility for accepting its outcome. Consequently, Sartre's ideas if properly applied, has the ability or capacity to stimulate and advance a more responsible and inclusive political

culture, in both countries. In view of this comparison, Ghana could be seen as more compliant with Sartrean philosophical solution incidental to responsibility based political freedom thus making Ghana a more stable democracy between the two countries.

5.0 Summary and Conclusion

The study has demonstrated the application of Sartre's existentialism theory to contemporary African political developments as relatable to Nigeria and Ghana and this can be summarized with the following words: the study has affirmed that Sartre's concept of freedom and responsibility has been used to analyze stakeholders' political participations in Nigeria and Ghana. In both countries, as was observed, citizens have the inherent and unfettered freedom to make political choices and hold their leaders accountable for their actions. This view is in line with Sartre's existentialism theory. However, as the study found, this freedom also brings commensurate responsibility for acceptance of the outcomes of individual choices. Consequently, it was found that citizens must play an active role in not only participating in good governance but making frantic effort as part of the responsibility to demand good governance by holding their leaders accountable.

In addition, Sartre's bad faith philosophy has been demonstrated in the study to be applicable to the Nigerian and Ghanaian political landscape. Thus, bad faith refers to the deliberate tendency to deny or escape from freedom or any aspect of life that relates to liberty of thought, conscience and reasonable action. The study affirms that bad faith is orchestrated when an individual adopts a fixed, essential identities or beliefs that are externally imposed on him or accepted by him in negation of his personal rights to free human enterprise. In political context, the study has shown that this can manifest as citizens' refusal to hold their leaders to account for their stewardship or political leaders denying their responsibility to confront the country's problems or adopting the tactics of blaming external factors for their own incompetence and failures.

Further, the study has also affirmed that Sartre's concept of authenticity can be specifically applied to political leadership in Nigeria and Ghana. The study notes that 'authenticity' refers to the genuine acceptance of one's freedom and responsibility on issues that affect him or others. Under political considerations and context, authenticity means that leaders must take ownership of their actions without passing the bulk. This also mean that leaders are to remain transparent in the decision-making processes, most especially on issues that are incidental to their roles as public policy makers or executors.

In conclusion, therefore, Sartre's existentialism theory has relevant ramifications and implications for contemporary political situation in Nigeria and Ghana. In this regard, his concepts of freedom, responsibility, bad faith, and authenticity can be applied to issues of political participation, leadership, and accountability; and can also help to promote good governance, citizen's participation and responsible leadership in both countries.

In view of the forgoing, the study further concludes by indicating the relative outcomes of the study on the basis of the central issue of application of Sartre's existentialism philosophy on contemporary political situations in Nigeria and Ghana. These includes:

- i) *Freedom and Responsibility*: It is the inherent rights of citizens in Nigeria and Ghana to have the freedom for making political choices and to hold their leaders accountable for their actions and inactions, but this freedom also brings commensurate responsibility to demand good governance and also take steps to be good citizens.
- ii) *Bad Faith*: While they are expected to stand up to their responsibilities, African political leaders and particularly those in Nigeria and Ghana have shown evidence of denial of their responsibility for providing solutions to the country's problems. This bad faith insignia also makes them pass the bulk on opposition political parties, citizens, foreign interests, or blame external factors. These are acts that manifest the presence of Sartre's bad faith ideology of existentialism.
- iii) *Authenticity and Political Agency*: The study further concludes that political leaders should take complete ownership of their actions and inactions by becoming change agents to themselves and their nations at large. They are to remain transparent in all decision-making processes in respect of public issues. By this way, political leaders can be demonstrating Sartre styled 'authenticity and political agency'.

6.0 Recommendations

The study has demonstrated that by applying Sartre's existentialism theory to contemporary African political issues, public governance systems and political landscape, we can gain profound insights and understanding of the political processes and situations in Nigeria and Ghana. Further, by these insights we can develop and ingrain

positive change in the leaders and citizens of Africa. In view of this expected outcome of this study the following recommendations are appropriate for this study:

1. It is recommended that there should be more exploration of the implications of Sartre's philosophy of "bad faith" in the political leadership of Nigeria and Ghana, as this could further provide other directions for understanding, that are indicative of how political and opinion leaders in both countries deploy 'bad faith' to deny the responsibility imposed on them by reason of the offices they occupy. On the basis of this recommendation, political leaders in Africa could be compelled to take responsibility for their actions and not to blame external factors for the internal problems they may have created by themselves.
2. As societies and political systems evolve in Africa, there has to be a constant analysis of the role of existentialist freedom in citizen political participation in Nigeria and Ghana. This constant analysis could be the basis of further studies that could examine future political participation of citizens in both countries and can also indicate the extent to which the citizens exercise their freedom to make political choices and hold their leaders accountable.
3. There is need for further investigation of the relationship between Sartre's notion of authenticity, political agency and stakeholder participation in leadership issues in Nigeria and Ghana. This proposed study could examine how political leaders in both countries epitomize or lack authenticity and agency in their actions, inaction and decision-making processes.
4. There should be an examination of the relevance of Sartre's existentialism in addressing corruption issues in Nigeria and Ghana with the intent to explore how Sartre's ideas on freedom, responsibility, agency and authenticity can be applied to address corruption issues in both countries.
5. It is recommended that this study could be advanced into more areas of analysis in respect of the similarities and differences inherent in Sartre's philosophy and how they are manifested in the political contexts of both countries. To this end, the political implications of Sartre's existentialism in Nigeria and Ghana could be further studied, compared and contrasted in order to deepen the knowledge of more areas of application of the theory.
6. The study advocate for the exploration of the potentials of Sartre's existentialism in the promotion of active citizenship and political engagement in Nigeria and Ghana. The potentials discovered could thus be applied to understand how Sartre's philosophy can be deployed to empower citizens in both countries in the playing of active roles in demanding the benefits of good governance and holding leaders accountable.

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