Institutional Approaches to Career Longevity of Visual Artist:

The Role of Cultural Organizations in Shaping Career Pathways for Emerging Visual Artists in Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to examine the existing initiatives put in place by cultural organizations in facilitating the effective transition and sustenance of progressive career pathways for emerging visual artists within the creative industry. Specifically, it explores how cultural organizations interact with these emerging artists and the crucial role they play in enabling access to the art market. The study also considers the challenges that emerging visual artists face in maintaining a successful and progressive career trajectory. The central research question guiding this study is: "What role do cultural organizations play in supporting emerging visual artists within Nigeria's art market?" To address this question, the thesis analyzes how cultural organizations are perceived, their roles as gatekeepers, the challenges often encountered by emerging visual artists, and the support and guidance available for navigating the evolving West African art market. While academic research provides ample evidence of the importance of relationships between cultural organizations and visual artists in creative industries globally, there is limited explanation of how these relationships function within the Nigerian context, particularly for emerging visual artists. Therefore, this study adopts an exploratory approach to investigate the outcomes of such interactions. To achieve this, thirteen interviews were conducted with gallery owners, curators, managers, directors and art professionals. The findings reveal that most galleries in Lagos, key cultural organizations in the Nigerian art scene, primarily focus on showcasing and representing established and veteran artists. Their limited engagement with emerging artists is largely driven by the need to safeguard their own sustainability, especially in light of the country's challenging economic climate. However, over the past decade, some galleries have slowly shifted focus by integrating programs aimed at increasing inclusivity for emerging visual artists. Despite these efforts, the challenges remain substantial. The increasing number of young artists entering the industry poses financial burdens, with limited return on investment compared to the profitability of established artists. Participants also noted that collectors tend to prioritize key components of quality in artworks, which many emerging artists fall short of. Furthermore, the advent of social

media has contributed to a culture where many young artists pursue quick sales at the expense of developing essential professional and management skills. Although some galleries have confirmed the existence of initiatives aimed at supporting emerging visual artists, these efforts are insufficient to meet the demands of the rapidly growing artist population. Ultimately, while the thesis presents evidence of interactions between galleries and emerging artists, these relationships are not always advantageous to the latter. Nevertheless, this study offers valuable academic insights that can inform future, more detailed research into the West African art market and its evolving institutional dynamics.

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has witnessed a significant rise in the number of creatives, particularly visual artists. With the growth of international partnerships, there has been considerable investment in art galleries, the establishment of art hubs, and the creation of art residencies and fellowships, all contributing to the sector's vitality ("Positioning the Nigerian Virtual Artists for 'Glocal' Relevance," 2022). Despite the increasing global demand for Nigerian art (Durand-Ruel & Zarobell, 2023), young artists continue to face challenges such as limited market access, issues with branding and valuation, and the lack of proper gallery representation (Pan-Atlantic University & Ogedi-Alakwe, 2024). These barriers hinder their ability to fully capitalize on the economic opportunities within the expanding art market.

This research critically examines the structural and systemic challenges that hinders the career longevity of young visual artists' within Nigeria's emerging art ecosystem. Grounded in the lived experiences of the researcher as a practicing artist, the study highlights persistent barriers such as limited representation, market accessibility, valuation system and career stability, despite participation in residencies and exhibitions. By analyzing these challenges, the research aims to uncover strategic approach that can enhance career sustainability for young artists, contributing to broader discussions on cultural institution support and professional development within the Nigerian creative industry.

Emerging visual artists worldwide face common challenges in building their careers. They often struggle with limited market access, unstable income, and a lack of institutional support (Fillis et al., 2022). Compared to older artists, young artists bring fresh and innovative ideas but lack strong professional networks and financial stability (Cukierkorn, 2008; Galenson, 2004). In contrast, older artists benefit from experience, established reputations, and industry connections, which gives them more career stability (Lindauer et al., 1997). Additionally, biases in how creativity is judged persist. Emerging artists are often seen as more groundbreaking, while older artists may receive less recognition despite their contributions (Langdon, 2018). These differences highlight the need for strong institutional support to help artists at different stages of their careers in other to understand the art market space activity and remove unclear standards that might limit and frustrate career longevity of these emerging visual artist.

In Nigeria, these challenges are even more difficult due to weaknesses in the creative sector. Young Nigerian visual artists face major barriers such as poor gallery representation, poor branding and valuation systems, and an unstable economy that limits their professional growth (Nzoiwu, 2018). In other parts of the world, cultural institutions provide mentorship, funding, and exhibition opportunities to support young artists (Fillis et al., 2022). However, Nigeria's creative infrastructure is underdeveloped, making it harder for emerging artists to sustain long-term careers. The lack of institutional support does not only affect individual artists but also weakens Nigeria's creative industry, reducing its ability to compete globally (Nzoiwu, 2018) .

Cultural institutions including art galleries, museums, and artist residencies, play a key role in supporting artists by providing visibility, career development programs, and financial resources (Fillis et al., 2022). However, it is unclear how effective Nigerian cultural institutions are supporting young visual artists. While these institutions have the potential to improve market access, mentorship, and funding, their impact, accessibility, and effectiveness need further examination. Hence the need to get an insight into how this cultural organization interact with these artist addressing this gap in the West African sub Saharan region with focus on the Lagos Nigeria art market. This study focuses on the role of Nigerian cultural institutions in shaping the careers of young visual artists. It explores the strategies these institutions use, assess their effectiveness, and understand how young artists perceive their influence by probing the engagement of this cultural organization with these emerging artist through direct field observation and interviews from cultural organization representatives. This study's goal is to find out how cultural institutions can better help new artists make the transition into the Nigerian art scene and build a successful career that would make them more competitive on the world stage.

In this context, creating a sustainable long-term career for young visual artists in Lagos, Nigeria, involves navigating a complex landscape of socio-economic challenges and opportunities. The Nigerian art scene is marked by significant hurdles, including limited access to resources and societal recognition, which can hinder artists' growth (Nzoiwu, 2018). However, visual arts are increasingly recognized as a strategic tool for reducing youth unemployment and aided economic development, suggesting that artists can generate livelihoods and even become employers themselves (Ukwa, 2014). The Universal Studios of Art, and initiatives like the Lagos State Government's beautification projects "Lagos at 50", involved sponsoring murals and

environmental sculptures to enhance the city's aesthetics. This significantly integrated visual artist into urban development, engaging them in creating public artworks that celebrated the city's heritage while enhancing its streetscapes (Iyase-Odozi, 2018) (Oyinloye et al., 2020). Additionally, events such as ART X Lagos and the Lagos Biennial have emerged as pivotal platforms to position young artist (KENNEDY, n.d.). These developments indicate a growing infrastructure that supports artistic endeavors, essential for nurturing a vibrant art community capable of sustaining young artists' careers in the long-term.

To remain relevant, this dynamic environment underscores the need to prioritize quality job determinants such as favorable work conditions and professional dignity; which are essential for sustaining careers in the arts (Adeosun & Adegbite, 2024). Lagos known for its rapidly emerging art market in West Africa which can be equated to other art market in the global art hub, is driven by a growing infrastructure that supports artistic endeavors, including emergence of galleries, art fairs, and educational institutions (Castellote & Okwuosa, 2020). To ensure the long-term success of young visual artists and their contribution to the local economy, strategic initiatives must be implemented to empower and support them.

There has been a lot of research on how visual artists connect with the people who run the art market. However, the emergence of digital marketing has changed things, causing many new artists to go over some cultural organizations like commercial art galleries (Cheng, 2024). This visual artist use social platforms to sell their work, irrespective of problems such as expensive commissions and the need for improved intellectual property protection. ("Digital Platforms and Art Practice: Innovative Paradigm Shift for Nigerian Visual Artists", 2024). Also cultural organizations significantly influence the production and dissemination of visual art within the art ecosystem by acting as facilitators of creative exchange and platforms for diverse artistic expressions. They navigate the complexities of contemporary art practices, which are increasingly shaped by digital culture and networked environments, as highlighted by the shift in power dynamics where traditional institutions like museums and galleries no longer hold exclusive control over artistic discourse. Cultural organizations can put artistic creative process at the center of cultural management to change how visual art is made and shared (Schrag, 2022).

Examining this interaction in other international art ecosystem, this interaction with cultural organization needs to be examined in the West African art ecosystem. Lagos has become a thriving center for the arts, characterized by a growing community of local collectors, art fairs that support artistic development (Castellote & Okwuosa, 2020). Institutions like the Universal Studios of Art play a pivotal role in training artists, providing essential skills and fostering creativity, which are vital for professional success (Bardi, 2015)(Bardi, 2017). However, artists still face socio-economic challenges that hinder their growth, requiring structural adjustments to enhance their access to markets and working conditions (Nzoiwu, 2018).

Purpose of the Study

This thesis aims to better assess the role of cultural organizations in supporting emerging (young) visual artists in Nigeria and to identify effective strategies used by these cultural organization for enhancing their long-term career sustainability within the creative industry. The purpose of this research is to get a better knowledge of how cultural organizations operate and interact with visual artists, who are the primary producers of cultural creative commodities in the art ecosystem. Furthermore, it is critical to grasp the dynamics of this interaction in this industry and how they might benefit emerging visual artists. This study is exploratory in nature and employs qualitative research to examine the potential relationships between cultural organizations and emerging visual artists in Nigeria. Rather than aiming to provide definitive evidence of the impact these organizations may have, the research aims to learn more about how these dynamics work and why the existing sustainable initiatives are in place. It also point out possible effects along the way.

Based on this, a literature review for this cultural organization career longevity approach for emerging artist is developed, which explores other similar research done on this in other region of the world. This gives a clear understanding of the concepts, which helps build a strong foundation. It is then supported, checked, and improved through detailed interviews with gallery managers and curators, as explained in the methodology.

Therefore, the following research question is formulated:

What role do cultural organizations play in supporting emerging visual artists within the art market?

This question is broken down into three sub-questions (SQ):

SQ1.What strategies do cultural organizations use to support the professional growth of young visual artists?

SQ2.What are the key challenges young Nigerian visual artists face in building sustainable long-term careers?

SQ3. How do cultural organizations influence young visual artists' perceptions of their long-term success?

Objectives

1. To examine how cultural organizations (galleries), support the professional growth and market access of emerging visual artists in Nigeria.

2. To identify the main challenges Nigerian emerging visual artists face in establishing long-term careers.

3. To examine the strategies cultural organizations use to help young visual artists develop professionally.

4 .To understand how young visual artists' perceive the role of cultural organizations in shaping their career success and future opportunities.

This question seeks to explore both the benefits and challenges of these interactions, while also evaluating how accessible these institutions or organizations are and how they are perceived by the public. By addressing these sub-questions, the research will be better positioned to comprehensively answer the main research question

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines **factors influencing career development and longevity of emerging visual artist, cultural organizations as Intermediaries, and gatekeepers.** It is organized thematically into three main sub-headings, beginning with factors influencing career development of emerging visual artist, cultural organizations as intermediaries and lastly cultural organization as gatekeepers, then narrowing its focus to the Lagos art market in Nigeria. The review draws on various sources, including reports, books, journal articles, and select web publications. Its primary objective is to assess the scope of academic scholarship within the research focus and identify potential gaps that justify the need for further investigation in different region. The contribution of cultural organization interventions in early career development of emerging visual artists is substantial. Institutional relationships, particularly through exhibitions, are important for exposure and networking opportunities (Fillis et al., 2022). Artist-run spaces acts as career incubators, providing organizational and financial support, though their long-term sustainability varies (Puletti et al., 2024). Meaning that art institutions, market agents, and intermediate entities all have their own roles to play in the career trajectory of the artist. Online presence has become more crucial, where artists need to take care of their branding, communicate with their audience, and network to maintain a successful online presence (Petrides & Vila de Brito, 2024). However, physical world interactions remain essential for career advancement (Petrides & Vila de Brito, 2024). The physical Interactions with cultural organizations contribute to artists' professional sustainability by providing exposure, support, and opportunities within the multifaceted art ecosystem. This study reviews existing scholarly literature, highlighting specific themes through subheadings to focus on cultural organizations as a key players in the art market and their mutual relationships with visual artists. The literature review further explores the role of these cultural organizations in the international art market, emphasizing their function, position and importance in art market activities across different regions. This provides a basis for evaluating, comparing, and identifying possible shortcomings within the Nigerian (Lagos) art market.

Factors Influencing the Career Development of Emerging Artist

In some literature reviews, such as Petrides and Fernandes (2020), relevant material is analyzed to provide a framework for supporting artists with their career growth. This requires commercial and marketing experience, as well as the ability to form relationships with art industry gatekeepers, develop branding strategies, and manage reputation. Often time, emerging visual artists frequently have to navigate a complicated professional environment that is shaped by their interactions, the way the market works, and how people see cultural value. For example, institutions like the Royal Scottish Academy are very important because they give artists high-profile platforms that help them get more exposure and make connections that are important for their careers (Fillis et al., 2015) (Fillis et al., 2022). Also, the changing art market means that artists have to deal with complicated connections with galleries, art fairs, and other people in the art world, as well as with schools that assist them get to know other artists (National Research University Higher School of Economics & Gorobets, 2024). Furthermore, local contexts, such as Cairns, demonstrate that, while opportunities exist, there is an urgent need for clearer professional development pathways customized to the unique peculiarities of the local arts community (Williams, 2016). Overall, the interaction of these factors could influence the career paths of emerging artists positively or negatively in today's contemporary settings.

The engagement of young visual artists in the creative industry is increasingly recognized as essential for nurturing artistic development and shaping long-term career pathways. By participating in structured programs, mentorship initiatives, and exhibition opportunities, emerging artists gain the necessary skills, exposure, and confidence to navigate the complexities of the art world. However, this engagement also comes with challenges, including socio-economic barriers and limited access to professional networks. Understanding how emerging artists are supported is essential for creating effective, lasting strategies that help them grow creatively and succeed professionally (Tinner, 2024).

Furthermore, In Lee, Fraser, and Fillis (2018) analysis, the potential and challenges facing aspiring contemporary visual artists, highlights the difficult environment faced by recent art college graduates as they begin working for themselves. Many of these artists focus on non-monetary benefits or psychic income (Menger, 2006), in a push for recognition. Showing little interest in understanding of the commercialization of their work, and are instead intrinsically

motivated (Amabile, 1993). According to research by Røyseng, Mangset, and Borgen (2007), young art students showed a great deal of uncertainty regarding the financial elements of their future employment. Other art students, however, actively start interacting with the market.

To achieve career longevity in the creative industry involve multiple factors, balancing both individual goals and larger social and cultural influences. These pathways are essential for long-term career stability, ensuring that artists and creators can thrive despite the often unpredictable nature of the industry (Bridgstock, 2011). By rethinking artistic and cultural traditions, creative professionals can carve out meaningful careers while aiding social transformation (Mittner et al., 2023) . In some specific niche of visual arts, particularly digital production, digital platforms have become stepping stones for career growth. Many visual artist involved in digital creation have successfully transitioned to larger media industries, particularly television. Research indicates that around 75% of digital visual artist have experienced significant career advancements, demonstrating that digital content creation can serve as a viable and sustainable career pathway (McIntyre et al., 2023) (Ryan et al., 2022).

The concept of dual careers, also influences alternative professional paths while continuing their artistic pursuits. Because creative careers are inherently unstable, having several employment possibilities offers a safety net that helps artists better handle both financial and professional obstacles (Mizera-Pęczek et al., 2024). Furthermore, from the East African context, in Tanzania, integrating traditional knowledge into educational programs has proven to be a powerful tool for empowering young people in the creative sector. This approach highlights the importance of collaboration between different government ministries to develop policies that enhance employment opportunities for youth in the arts. By incorporating indigenous knowledge systems into creative education, young artists are influenced, gaining valuable skills that align with both cultural heritage and modern industry demands (Enock Mulimba Ruyembe, 2024).

Education plays a fundamental role in influencing and preparing creative professionals for industry demands. The European Union emphasizes the need for educational programs to align with market expectations, particularly in response to technological advancements and the digital landscape (Navarra, 2022). This shift highlights the importance of integrating both formal education; such as university degrees and specialized training programs; and informal learning

opportunities, including workshops, online courses, and mentorship. Strategic partnerships between the cultural organization and educational institutions can foster skill development and influence career longevity. Initiatives such as Creative Professional Development programs in educational settings demonstrate the potential for cultural engagement to enhance learning outcomes. By integrating artistic practices into education, these programs help build confidence, encourage creative expression, and provide students with practical industry knowledge (Thomas, 2022). Collaboration between educational institutions and industry professionals working in cultural organization can also bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, ensuring that emerging creatives are better equipped for the challenges of the professional landscape. This collaboration between educational institutions and industry professionals highlight the influence of a dynamic learning environment that supports both aspiring and established professionals in the creative sector (Thomas, 2022). Hence the need to understand the influence cultural organization (galleries) as intermediaries have on art market activities.

Cultural Organization as Intermediaries.

Cultural organization are intermediaries who play an important role in the creative economy. These organizations like art galleries, help artists get noticed, build a reputation, and succeed in the market. While they may not create art themselves, they often play a key part in getting creative work out into the world (ECoNoMy, n.d.) (ECoNoMy, I. C. CULTURAL INTERMEDIARIES AND ThEIR RoLE. Cultural Studies Appendix. Special Edition–English Issue 2019/2.). The cultural organization are characterized by the production of artistic and symbolic goods, distinguishing them from conventional industries (Judice & Furtado, 2014). As the art market continue to grow in importance within the global economy, understanding these industry-specific key player becomes increasingly crucial. This intermediaries do more than just connect sellers with buyers, they also help shape the overall value of the products. Specifically, they influence the cultural value, which includes things like the product's meaning and symbolism, its beauty, artistic quality, historical significance, and how authentic it feels (Thorsby, 2011). These organizations blend artistic creativity with business activities, making them an important part of the art market (Wang et al., 2020). They exist in different fields, such as; Design Organizations comprising of fashion brands, graphic design studios, focusing on

visual creativity and innovation and Heritage Organizations like museums, libraries, and historical sites that helps preserve and promote cultural heritage, making it accessible to the public (Flew, 2013) (Flew, 2017).

Cultural organizations play a crucial role in both economic development and the preservation of cultural identity. They contribute to local economies by attracting tourism, creating jobs, and supporting related industries. At the same time, they help preserve traditions, history, and artistic expression by providing spaces where creativity can be showcased and appreciated. Despite their importance, cultural organizations face several challenges. One of the biggest obstacles is securing funding to sustain their work. Many rely on government support, private donations, or ticket sales, which are often unpredictable. Additionally, the rapid growth of digital technology requires these organizations to continuously innovate, as audiences are increasingly engaging with cultural content online (Frey, 2019). The creative economy in which these organizations operate often has high barriers to entry. Establishing and maintaining a cultural organization can be costly, and success depends on having skilled and knowledgeable professionals. Therefore, fostering a supportive work environment that encourages creativity and innovation is essential for long-term sustainability (Dennett, 2022; Frey, 2019).

For the purpose of this study, the primary focus is on arts organizations, specifically art galleries in Lagos, Nigeria. Art galleries play a vital role in the creative sector by providing platforms for artists to showcase their work, gain recognition, and connect with collectors, curators, and art enthusiasts. Lagos, known as the cultural and economic hub of Nigeria, has a growing and dynamic art scene. The city is home to numerous galleries that support both emerging and established artists, contributing to the local and international art market (J. Adeyemi, 2022). These galleries help preserve Nigeria's rich artistic heritage while also providing economic opportunities for artists and other creative professionals. However, art galleries in Lagos face unique challenges, including financial constraints, limited infrastructure, and the need to adapt to digital transformation (F. Adeyemi, 2023). Many galleries struggle with funding, relying on art sales, sponsorships, and grants to sustain their operations (J. Adeyemi, 2024). Additionally, the increasing role of digital platforms in the art world has shift power balance, requiring galleries who determines market activities as gate keepers to develop online strategies to reach a broader audience and stay competitive.

Cultural Organization (Galleries) As Gatekeepers.

To better serve its function as pivotal entry into the art market, art galleries as cultural gatekeepers, have an important curatorial function in the art market activity. These institutions not only display and sell artwork, but also promote artists and influence market trends therebye assuming the role of gatekeepers into the art market (Ginsburgh et al., 2019b). Di Caro et al. (2020) define art market intermediaries as those who connect buyers and sellers, specifically collectors and artists. Cultural gatekeepers play an essential role in the creative economy by determining which creative products are made available to the public. From an economic standpoint, they help lower the transaction costs involved in assessing the quality and value of these products. Gatekeepers also help minimize risk and uncertainty throughout different stages of the value chain by evaluating the commercial potential of specific ideas or projects (UNDP/UNCTAD 2010: 85). In the visual arts sector, for example, a gatekeeper might be an art gallery manager representing the gallery, who chooses which artists' work to showcase.

The role of galleries in supporting emerging visual artists is multifaceted and pivotal within the creative industry. Galleries serve as platforms for exposure and professional development, and community building, enabling artists to navigate the often-challenging landscape of the art market. This response explores the various ways galleries contribute to the growth and sustainability of emerging artists, drawing on insights from research papers that examine the dynamics of galleries, artist-run spaces, and their impact on the creative ecosystem. This intermediaries enforce authenticity and boundaries of cultural genres (Glynn & Lounsbury, 2005; Jones, et al., 2012)

According to Currid-Halkett, gatekeepers generate what is known as "local buzz", the spread of gossip and informal information that helps shape an artist's media image. This idea is also supported by Gina Neff, Elizabeth Wissinger, and Sarah Zukin (2005). Galleries employ a variety of strategies to support emerging artists, ranging from exhibition opportunities to professional development programs. These strategies are pivotal and critical for helping artists navigate the challenges of the art market and attain career longevity. Galleries support and interact with emerging artists directly through exhibitions. Whether through solo shows, group exhibitions, or open calls, these platforms allow artists to gain visibility and build their

reputations. Galleries relates with artist, often curating exhibitions that highlight the work of these emerging artists, and helping them reach new audiences and attract critical attention (Rubião, 2018) (Luther, 2018). Many galleries offer professional development programs tailored to emerging artists. These programs may include workshops on business skills, marketing, and portfolio development. Some galleries also provide mentorship opportunities, pairing emerging artists with established professionals who can offer guidance and industry insights (Tipton, 2014) (Puletti et al., 2024).Also in help in networking and community building, these galleries play a crucial role in fostering a sense of community among artists. By hosting events, talks, and workshops, galleries create opportunities for emerging artists to connect with peers, curators, and collectors. These networks are essential for artists looking to collaborate, share resources, and gain support in their careers (Detterer & Nannucci, 2012) (Blessi et al., 2011). Some galleries provide financial support to emerging artists through grants, residencies, or commissioning opportunities. This financial backing allows artists to focus on their creative work without the immediate pressure of commercial success. Galleries may also help artists secure funding from external sources, such as government grants or private foundations (Puletti et al., 2024) (Tremblay & Pilati, 2007). In recent years, these galleries have increasingly embraced digital platforms to support emerging artists. Online exhibitions, virtual reality experiences, and social media campaigns are just a few examples of how galleries are leveraging technology to expand the reach of emerging artists' work. These digital strategies are particularly important in the context of positioning artist in the global art market, where physical location can be a barrier to visibility (Capssa, 2020) (Shih & Liu, 2016).

Galleries have an impact on the creative business that goes beyond just supporting individual artists. They play an important role in molding the larger cultural and economic landscape. Encouraging creativity and experimentation: Galleries often provide opportunity for rising artists to push limits and explore new ideas. This nurturing of creativity is vital for the ongoing evolution of the art world and the emergence of new artistic movements (Detterer & Nannucci, 2012) (Luther, 2018). Galleries also build cultural capital in their communities by displaying work from emerging artists. This enriches the local culture, helps people better understand and appreciate contemporary art, and can also bring economic benefits by attracting visitors and investors (Tremblay & Pilati, 2007) (Ionita, 2024).

The Interaction of Cultural Organizations (Galleries) With Emerging Visual Artists in the Art Market.

The challenges faced by this galleries in supporting emerging artists despite their critical role, highlights the need for innovative solutions and collaboration within the art ecosystem. The high costs of running a gallery, along with the fact that art sales are hard to anticipate, make it hard for many galleries, especially smaller and independent ones, to stay financially stable. This limits the resources available to help new artists. This financial instability often forces galleries to balance their commitment to emerging artists with the need to attract more established, commercially viable artists (Tipton, 2014) (Blessi et al., 2011). Also with a large number of galleries vying for the attention of collectors and curators, competition and market saturation makes the art market highly competitive. This competition makes it difficult for emerging artists to stand out and gain the support they need. Additionally, the proliferation of galleries in certain areas can lead to market saturation, further intensifying the challenges faced by both galleries and artists (Rubião, 2018) (Zhang, 2020). The need to balance commercial and artistic goals make this galleries face a tension between their commercial and artistic goals. While they may want to support emerging artists, they also need to generate revenue to sustain their operations. This balancing act can sometimes lead to compromises, where galleries prioritize more established artists or commercially appealing works over innovative but less proven emerging artists (Tipton, 2014) (Luther, 2018). Also, smaller galleries and artist-run spaces often lack access to the resources needed to effectively support emerging artists. This includes everything from funding and marketing expertise to networks and industry connections. These resource constraints can limit the impact of their efforts and create disparities in the level of support available to artists (Detterer & Nannucci, 2012) (Blessi et al., 2011). Furthermore, while navigating the digital shift the increasing importance of digital platforms presents both opportunities and challenges for galleries. While these platforms expand the reach of emerging artists' work, they also require significant investment in technology and digital marketing. Many galleries, particularly smaller ones, may struggle to keep up with the rapid pace of technological change and effectively leverage these tools to support emerging artists (Capssa, 2020) (Shih & Liu, 2016).

Professional development opportunities in creative industry

Professional development in the creative industry is shaped by multiple factors, including geographical location, education, and evolving skill requirements. These elements collectively impact the career trajectories of artists and creative professionals, determining their access to resources, opportunities, and industry recognition. Also play a role in promoting social engagement and inclusion. By providing accessible spaces for exhibitions, talks, and workshops, they help to democratize access to art and foster a sense of community. This is particularly important for emerging artists who may otherwise struggle to connect with audiences and gain recognition (Detterer & Nannucci, 2012) (Blessi et al., 2011).The Future of Galleries in Supporting Emerging Artists The future of galleries in supporting emerging artists will depend on their ability to adapt to changing conditions and embrace new opportunities. This includes leveraging digital technologies, fostering collaboration, and advocating for greater support for the arts.Embracing Digital Innovation The integration of digital technologies will be key to the future success of galleries in supporting emerging artists. From virtual exhibitions to online platforms for networking and collaboration, galleries must continue to innovate and find new ways to engage with artists and audiences alike (Capssa, 2020) (Shih & Liu, 2016).

Building Collaborative Networks Collaboration will be essential for galleries to effectively support emerging artists in the future. This includes partnerships with other galleries, museums, and cultural organizations, as well as with artists themselves. By working together, galleries can pool resources, share knowledge, and create more opportunities for emerging artists (Detterer & Nannucci, 2012) (Blessi et al., 2011). Advocating for Arts Funding and Policy Support Galleries must also advocate for greater funding and policy support for the arts. This includes lobbying for government grants, tax incentives, and other forms of support that can help sustain galleries and the artists they support. Strong advocacy will be crucial for ensuring that galleries continue to play a vital role in the creative industry (Tipton, 2014) (Tremblay & Pilati, 2007).

Fostering Diversity and Inclusion Finally, galleries commit to fostering diversity and inclusion in the art world. This includes actively seeking out and supporting artists from underrepresented backgrounds, as well as creating inclusive spaces for audiences of all kinds. By promoting

diversity and inclusion, galleries can help to ensure that the art world remains vibrant, dynamic, and representative of the broader community (Detterer & Nannucci, 2012) (Blessi et al., 2011)

Some regions offer a thriving environment with access to art galleries, experienced mentors, and industry networks that support professional growth. In contrast, other areas may have fewer resources, making it difficult for creative individuals to advance in their careers. The lack of specialized professionals and limited exposure can create barriers for those working outside major artistic hubs, reducing their chances of competing on an international level (Daniel et al., 2017).

On the other hand, creatives based in well-known artistic centers often experience greater career mobility and industry recognition. The reputation of certain locations can enhance an artist's credibility, helping them secure funding, build connections with influential professionals, and gain access to exhibition spaces that might not be available elsewhere (Noonan, 2015). This means that where an artist lives and works can significantly impact their ability to establish and maintain a successful career in the creative industry.

The location of creative professionals influences the concentration of talent, availability of resources, and overall career opportunities. Studies suggest that creative businesses tend to thrive in areas with a strong presence of knowledge-based activities and educational institutions, as these environments encourage innovation and collaboration between different industries (Cruz & Teixeira, 2014; Cruz & Teixeira, 2023). Moreover, creative professionals are often drawn to regions that promote diversity and openness, as such environments foster new ideas, networking opportunities, and career growth (Zhao et al., 2020).

Additionally, the distribution of creative talent is uneven across different regions. Areas with historically high levels of creative employment tend to experience faster growth, while regions with fewer creative professionals often struggle to keep up, even when there is potential for growth through spillover effects (Kerimoglu & Karahasan, 2012). The success of creative industries is also closely tied to local social relationships and the exchange of knowledge, which play a crucial role in entrepreneurship and innovation (Scott, 2006).

In conclusion, location has a significant impact on career development in the creative sector. Living in a region with a strong creative ecosystem provides better access to opportunities, while those in less developed areas may face challenges in gaining recognition and advancing professionally.

The engagement of visual artists in the art ecosystem.

The engagement of visual artists is often prominent in programs that use co-production methods like residencies and workshop. Here emerging artists are directly involved in shaping the creative process, interacting with contemporaries, which help them express their ideas, focus on what matters to them, and tackle issues they care about. This is especially important in the art market, where they often feel overlooked. (Tinner, 2024).

These workshops not only help artist develop their skill, but also encourage self-confidence and critical engagement in art market activities, reinforcing the role of young artists as active contributors to cultural discourse. By involving youth in the planning and execution of artistic initiatives, such programs create an inclusive environment where their creativity is valued and amplified. This participatory approach not only enhances their technical abilities but also strengthens their confidence in pursuing a career in the creative industry. Youth as Agents of Social Change in the Creative Industry The perception of youth within the creative industry is often dual-faceted, they are seen both as a challenge due to their inexperience and as a source of potential social transformation. Campbell (2019, 2020) emphasizes the need for creative industry incubators that provide young artists with guidance, professional development resources, and structured career support.

These creative organization sometimes serves as incubators helping bridge the gap between artistic passion and professional sustainability, equipping emerging artists with business acumen, marketing strategies, and networking opportunities. By viewing young artists as catalysts for innovation, these programs encourage experimentation and risk-taking, which are essential for artistic evolution. Creative industry incubators also facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations, allowing young artists to engage with designers, filmmakers, and digital media professionals, thereby expanding their creative scope and professional adaptability. The Impact

of Early Recognition on Career Commitment Longitudinal research underscores the importance of early recognition in shaping the career aspirations of young visual artists. Alter's (2016) study reveals that receiving validation and exposure in the early stages of artistic development significantly influences young artists' commitment to pursuing a long-term creative career, despite the socio-economic challenges they may face. Early recognition, whether through awards, mentorship, or exhibition opportunities, serves as a motivational factor that reinforces an artist's belief in their potential. It also provides a sense of legitimacy within the creative industry, making it easier for young artists to access further opportunities, such as grants, residencies, and professional commissions.

However, the accessibility of such recognition remains uneven, often favoring individuals with stronger financial backing or connections within the industry. Addressing these disparities is crucial to ensuring that artistic talent, rather than socio-economic privilege, determines success. The Importance of Exhibition Platforms for Emerging Artists Exhibition opportunities play a vital role in providing young artists with public visibility and professional validation. Ștefănescu (2024) highlights the significance of curated exhibition projects that allow emerging artists to experiment, receive critical feedback, and connect with audiences. These platforms not only help artists refine their creative voice but also serve as stepping stones toward professional recognition. Furthermore, exhibitions create networking opportunities, enabling young artists to engage with curators, collectors, and fellow artists. The exposure gained through these platforms can lead to further collaborations, commissions, and career advancements. However, ensuring that these opportunities are accessible to a diverse range of artists, regardless of background or financial means, is essential for fostering an equitable and inclusive art industry.

Table 1

Description of Sustainability and Emerging Artist

Concept	Description	Authors
Sustainability	The adjective 'sustainable' is used in a variety of contexts in economics to describe anything from a government's monetary policy to levels of third world debt. Most often, however, it is linked to the word 'development' sustainable development marries the ideas of sustainable economic development, meaning development that will not slow down or wither away but will be in some sense self-perpetuating. This concept shifts focus from traditional economic growth, measured by per capita GDP to a broader idea of human development, emphasizing individuals as both agents and beneficiaries of progress, assessed through quality of life and living standards beyond just material gains.	Throsby, D. (2003). 22 Cultural sustainability (Vol. 183). Zottery, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.
	Sustainability, as a concept of economic viability, refers to creating business models that meet current market and societal needs without compromising future generations, ensuring economic success while minimizing negative social and environmental impacts, thus achieving a complementary relationship with economic viability.	(Carvalho et al., 2015)
Emerging Artist	Emerging artists are those who are in the early stages of their careers, often characterized by their innovative approaches and contributions to the art market.	(Teikmane, 2022)

METHODOLOGY

For the current study on how cultural groups support young visual artists' careers, a qualitative research approach is used to better explore and understand how cultural organizations, such as galleries, help emerging visual artists maintain a sustainable long-term career path. To answer the question, *what role do cultural organizations play in supporting emerging visual artists within Nigeria's art market? And the sub questions 1) what strategies do cultural organizations use to support the professional growth of young visual artists? 2) What are the key challenges young Nigerian visual artists face in building sustainable long-term careers? 3) How do cultural organizations influence young visual artists' perceptions of their long-term success?* To research this, a method is needed that allows gathering rich insights into the decisions and perspectives of these cultural organizations, qualitative research could offer these insights (Bryman, 2012).

Qualitative research focuses on understanding behaviors and experiences and is vital for identifying underlying dynamics and difficulties (Fossey et al., 2002; Seers, 2012). In the context of cultural organization interactions with emerging visual artists, qualitative research can assist in determining how these relationships work, how effective they are in contributing to long-term career sustainability, and what challenges they face in these relationships and interactions. Primary data is gathered through semi-structured interviews with professionals in the Nigerian cultural sector with focus on those working in galleries which includes commercial and non-profit organization, that have a direct contact and experience interacting with visual artist in the art market operationalization. These interviews facilitate in-depth conversations that allow for discussion of the strategies implored, experiences, challenges and perceptions of these professionals.

Operationalization of Main Concepts

The semi-structured interviews were structured based on the main concepts of the research:
Cultural organizations approach to career longevity, and interaction with emerging visual artist. Based on the relevant concepts (sustainability and emerging artist) of the literature review, as displayed in Table 1, an operationalization of sustainability of long term career for emerging visual artist was developed, as described.

In asking the question of sustainability initiatives adopted by this cultural organization, long term career was referred to in the interviews. Although it is contextualized based off individual perception and understanding of it, it is a relatively known and well understood concept that could help clarify the extent to which galleries operates in their relationship with visual artist.

Based on the theoretical framework, different types of challenges were identified. Also studies in other region showed similarities in this challenges navigating the art market. And possible adopted solution were highlighted, based on this operationalization, pointers in form of indicators gave a trajectory to key issues to look out for in this research area.

Sample and Units of Analysis

While selecting the sample group, careful consideration was given to the types of galleries represented by the interviewees. Different types of galleries can cultivate distinct combinations of experience and knowledge. Broadly, two main types of art galleries were identified, those driven primarily by commercial goals, and those focused on contemporary art with cultural or ideological aims (Milano, 2020) . While both types contribute to the art world by exhibiting artists, their differing objectives can sometimes create tension within the field. No participant were excluded from this research based on the type of gallery they work for, so far the gallery interacts with practicing visual artist. The type of gallery was identified for clarity on their approach of operation.

Participants have to be either the gallery's top administrator or the proprietors themselves. Participants included curators, gallery owners, gallery managers, and project/program directors having a solid background in running the gallery's business operations and interacting with visual artists. The research sample is displayed in Table 2, together with the participants' roles and the gallery they are associated with. All participants gave their express assent for this information to be included in the consent form that was provided to them (see Appendix B).

Table 2.

Research Sample

GALLERY	ROLE OF PARTICIPANT	ORGANISATION CHARACTERISTIC
African Artist Foundation	Curator	Non-profit
AMG Project	Project Director	Foundation
CCA Lagos	Curator	Foundation
Hour Glass Gallery	Gallery Manager	Commercial gallery
Kokopelli	Gallery Owner	Commercial gallery
Mydrim	Curator	Commercial gallery
Q. Gallery	Gallery Manager	Commercial gallery
Sach Gallery	Gallery Owner	Commercial gallery
Thought Pyramid	Gallery National Director	Commercial gallery
Tim & Carol	Gallery Manager	Commercial gallery
Tiwani	Curator	Commercial gallery
Windor	Curator	Commercial gallery

Convenience sampling was used to choose the study's sample group, meaning that people were chosen according to their accessibility and availability (Emerson, 2015). Because they were the most accessible for the focus group and other practical barriers like market focus and time availability, only participants connected to Lagos galleries in Nigeria were questioned. This limitation in generalization is not a major concern because the main aim of this thesis is to evaluate the findings, not to generalize them (Emerson, 2015).

However, this type of sampling may result in selection or sample biases, such as the possibility of under coverage. To reduce these biases and their impact on the validity and reliability of the research, attempts were taken to cover a wide range of gallery sizes and types in Lagos. In addition, individuals from various roles were interviewed to gain a diverse perspective. Furthermore, the interview guide was used to assure the data's reliability and comparability. As shown in table 2, commercial and non-profit galleries are represented in the sample, which

suggests that the findings of this study may be more representative of those types of galleries in Lagos, Nigeria.

The findings, nonetheless, offer valuable insights into the operations and interactions between galleries and emerging visual artists within the sample. They highlight key processes and challenges that may inform the practical experiences of other galleries.

Data Collection

A total of 13 interviews were conducted over a five-week period, from April 10 to May 15, 2025. Participants were contacted directly via email, with initial communication facilitated by the galleries, which helped connect the researcher to appropriate candidates. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, culminating in approximately 8 hours and 36 minutes of recorded material. Conducted in English, the participants' national language. The interviews aimed to promote authenticity and encourage more nuanced and balanced responses. This was intended to generate more insightful and comprehensible answers.

The interview questions were clear and straightforward, with follow-up questions formulated spontaneously during the sessions to clarify responses. This ensured that all core questions were addressed while allowing additional questions to deepen understanding. Such an approach was employed to enhance the internal validity, reproducibility, and replicability of the study (Bryman, 2012; Sedgwick, 2013).

Although in-person interviews are generally considered to foster a more dynamic exchange of ideas by creating an optimal environment for participants, the chosen format was designed to maintain a high standard of engagement and data quality (Opdenakker, 2006). All interviews were conducted via Zoom, which provided the necessary flexibility to accommodate the demanding schedules of the participants. With participants' permission (see appendix), all interviews were recorded. These recordings served as the basis for verbatim transcription of each interview. This approach is believed to enhance the analytical process by potentially uncovering themes the researcher may not have previously considered. Moreover, it is regarded as the most suitable method for studies involving small sample sizes, as is the case in this thesis (Gilbert,

2008). Transcriptions were initially generated using Turbo Scribe's automatic transcription software and subsequently reviewed for accuracy by the researcher.

The interview data was processed with care, employing secure and appropriate data management tools. Participants were informed of any potential risks associated with their involvement. Although the subject matter was generally low in sensitivity, the possibility of exposure was acknowledged. Therefore, all participants were explicitly asked to provide consent for their gallery to be mentioned. They were made aware that this could result in indirect identification. Despite their consent, pseudonyms are used throughout the thesis. Additionally, specific details about the projects discussed have been intentionally kept vague to protect participant anonymity. However, it is recognized that readers with in-depth knowledge of the Nigerian gallery sector might still be able to identify certain individuals or organizations based on the information provided. These privacy measures have made it more challenging to discuss the distinctions between various types of galleries, as such categorization could also risk revealing identities.

Data Analysis

To analyze the collected data and address the research questions, a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted using the software Atlas.ti (Muhr, 1991). This method is particularly effective for breaking down interview data into smaller, more manageable segments, which enhances both comprehension and interpretation (Bailey, 2007). Thematic analysis offers methodological flexibility and enables the extraction of detailed insights, which is crucial for understanding the complexities of the relationship between the cultural organization and the artist.

A hybrid coding approach was employed during the thematic analysis. This approach involved primarily inductive coding, where codes were developed throughout the data analysis process (Babbie, 2015). However, to maintain consistency and ensure transparency in data interpretation, an initial codebook was developed beforehand (Yadav, 2022). This codebook included a priori themes derived from concepts discussed in the literature and outlined which answers the research question.

The hybrid coding process was iterative, allowing for the introduction of new codes, as well as the refinement or removal of existing ones in response to insights gained from the data. The codes were cross-checked with the established themes using visual tools, such as color coding, to aid validation (Boeije, 2010).

Atlas.ti and Ailyze facilitated the organization of data and codes, supporting the identification of patterns through analysis of similarities, differences, frequencies, and correspondences. This comprehensive approach ensured a deeper understanding of the outcomes and partnerships related to digital transformation. The finalized codebook served as a framework for interpreting the interview data in a systematic way, aligning with the research questions and core concepts from the literature. Accordingly, the next chapter dedicated to the discussion of results, follows the same thematic structure as the codebook, reflecting the key themes identified.

Result and Discussion

Three main linked themes were identified from the analysis. Based on the literature and thematic analysis of the interviews with gallery professionals, themes were developed that will help determine the role of cultural organizations in shaping career longevity of emerging visual artists in Nigeria. However, to allow for a more comprehensive understanding of galleries operational landscape in the art market, it is important to understand the participant's standpoint of galleries, prior to reporting on the themes.

The cultural landscape surrounding emerging visual artists in Nigeria is characterized by a complex interplay of supportive practices, challenges, and evolving perceptions of success shaped by cultural organizations and the broader art ecosystem. The cultural patterns and practices observed within various galleries as cultural organizations, analyzes how these entities help professional growth, navigate challenges, and influence artist's career longevity Campbell (2019, 2020). With this notion, a gallery manager noted that residencies, mentorship, exhibitions, remains a key way to interact actively with visual artist and influence their creative process. He did, however stated that many young artists create based on perceived market

demands, notably citing the saturation of "black figuration" theme during the black live matter trend.

Challenges Facing Nigerian Visual Artists

The interview's suggests that overall, Nigerian visual artists face a multifaceted array of challenges that hinder their professional growth and creative sustainability. Market-driven direction and pressure to conform to prevailing trends undermine originality and authentic expression, while intense competition and a saturated market complicates artists' efforts to stand out. *"Imitating veteran artists rather than cultivating unique styles."* On the other hand, systemic institutional biases favoring multicultural artists (Liu, 2022), curator for Soto gallery stated.

"*Pressure local artists to conform to externally influenced aesthetics, thus stifling authentic expression"*.

Insufficient self-education and research among artists, resulting in repetitive and uninspired work. Windsor gallery emphasized how rapid globalization encourages premature high pricing without adequate artistic development, reflecting market-driven motivations over creative mastery.

"The need for genuine support platforms rather than exploitative commercial ones, often push artists toward market conformity".

Succinctly points out the challenge of artists pursuing trends over developing identity (Ross, 2001). Galleries prioritize often profit over artist development, further enforcing market conformity. The interview reveals artists adopting Western-centric narratives disconnected from local context, compromising cultural authenticity (*Identity and Authenticity in Global-Local Hybrid Cultural Products: Focusing on African Wax Prints*, 2023). Also identifying that artists overextend themselves into multiple roles, which negatively impacts pricing and market perception. Collectively, these sources illustrate how market demands, institutional pressures, and insufficient education aids trend-following and imitation, limiting originality and authentic artistic development among Nigerian visual artists.

The Nigerian visual art market is characterized by intense competition and saturation due to a large and growing number of artists. Q gallery mentioned:

"The lack of industry regulation and economic challenges contributes to a chaotic and highly competitive environment".

The saturation caused by artists following similar market trends like Black figuration and Western-centric themes, which limits differentiation. On the other hand, Tim & carol describes deficits in self-presentation that intensify difficulties in standing out among many peers. Classism and favoritism towards mixed-race or multicultural artists, intensifying competition for local Nigerian artists. This pressures artists to price works prematurely, complicating market acceptance in a crowded field. Thought pyramid gallery national director, underscores career uncertainty amid fierce competition in Lagos, Nigeria's art capital. While Mydrim gallery and Amg project interview emphasize the overwhelming numbers of artists and trend-chasing behavior that dilute individual identity and heighten competition. Notably, both agreeing on same point of view, CCA lagos and Hour glass gallery said:

"*Limited institutional support and economic desperation that further challenge young artists' ability to break into the market successfully. These perspectives depict a saturated, fiercely competitive Nigerian art scene where artists must distinguish themselves artistically and professionally amid economic and structural obstacles"*.

Another key problem is limited funding, resources, and studio access constituting significant challenges facing Nigerian visual artists. Q gallery emphasizes the need for supportive environments that address psychological wellbeing, which is closely linked to artists' ability to create effectively. Tim& carol highlights not only the scarcity of funding but also the difficulty artists face in investing limited resources wisely in essentials like studio space and materials. And Tiwani gallery explicitly identifies the lack of studio spaces as a critical infrastructural limitation affecting many emerging artists. The high costs of producing quality art and the struggle to secure capital for studios, materials, and support teams. CCA lagos points out

"The lack of meaningful institutional support, forcing artists to self-manage their financial and material needs."

Further drawing attention to the near absence of governmental support, with financial barriers limiting artists' access to residencies, mentorship, and career advancement opportunities. Financial constraints impact pricing and the ability to invest in resources necessary for sustainable practice. Together, these insights reveal that Nigerian visual artists face acute economic and infrastructural barriers that hinder their capacity to develop and sustain their artistic careers.

Institutional, governmental, and mentorship support is a pervasive challenge facing Nigerian visual artists. As seen in the interview with Q gallery, she emphasizes the need for holistic support addressing psychological and personal challenges impacting creativity. Also in the interview with Soto gallery and Tim& carol reveal a lack of understanding, mentorship, and guidance, with artists often lacking clarity on career navigation and financial management. African artist foundation critiques systemic classism and external market focus that marginalizes local artists. Windsor gallery highlighted key deficiencies in formal art education, with insufficient theoretical grounding and inadequate encouragement for experimentation and contextualization. Stresses the scarcity of genuine platforms and artist representation, while galleries prioritize profit over artist development, forcing artists to self-manage. Sach gallery also points to the absence of government support, limiting access to residencies, mentorship, and international promotion.

Lastly, Hour glass gallery Interview identifies artists' role confusion due to lack of professional support systems. Collectively, these sources demonstrate that Nigerian visual artists face systemic gaps in mentorship, education, institutional backing, and governmental support, which hinder their professional growth, creative innovation, and sustainable practice. Inadequate art education and professional development opportunities significantly challenge Nigerian visual artists.

Nigerian visual artists face significant challenges related to pricing, market acceptance, and self-promotion. Psychological wellbeing affecting artists' creativity and career navigation, indirectly influencing pricing and self-promotion efforts is another major problem highlighted.

Psychological wellbeing and career uncertainty are critical challenges for Nigerian visual artists. Q gallery stresses the importance of supportive relationships that address artists' personal and mental health, recognizing that mental clutter hampers creativity. In the Interview with Tim& carol, she highlight:

"*Lack of career clarity and self-awareness about challenges lead to uncertainty and difficulty managing professional growth*".

African artist foundation, reveals mentorship gaps and exploitation that exacerbate stress, especially for young artists in Lagos. Tiwani gallery and Windsor gallery identify infrastructural and educational deficiencies that contribute to insecurity about career advancement. In addition to this, Thought pyramid gallery explicitly discusses career insecurity intensified by fierce competition in Lagos. It reflect struggles with artistic identity and authenticity, which further contribute to psychological stress and uncertainty. Overall, these factors create a challenging mental and professional environment that undermines Nigerian artists' creative sustainability and confidence in their long-term careers.

Geographical barriers and limited market access outside Lagos also presented a significant challenge for Nigerian visual artists. In the Interview with Soto gallery, Lagos as the central art capital and market hub in Nigeria, concentrates opportunities, knowledge, and interactions necessary for career advancement. Artists based outside Lagos experience reduced engagement with the market, diminished exposure, and fewer chances to navigate the professional art ecosystem effectively. This centralization creates a structural disadvantage that limits artists' ability to grow, gain visibility, and access essential resources, thereby constraining sustainable artistic careers for those outside the major hub.

Frequency Analysis
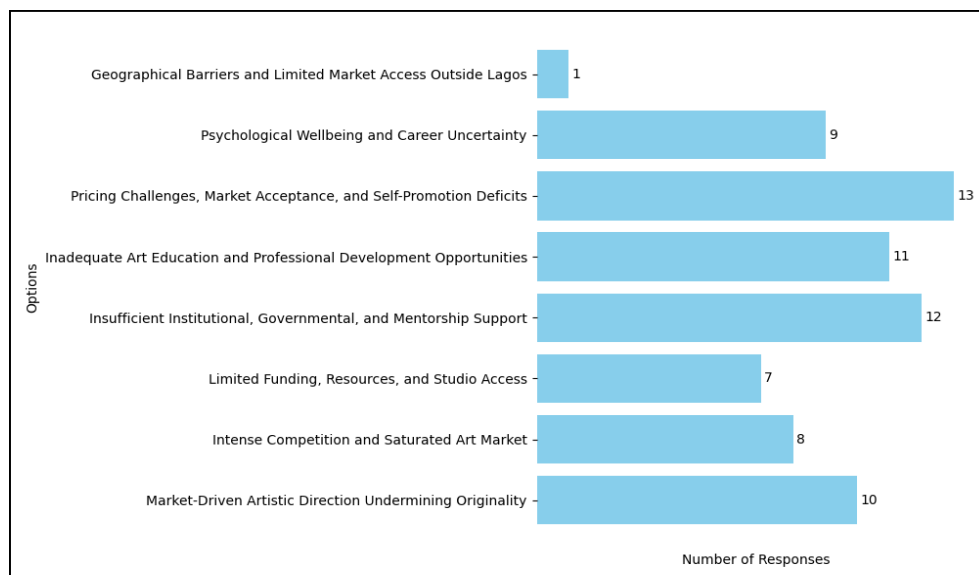
Sustainable Approach to Career Longevity

While accessing approach, the interviews suggest that galleries realize that overall, sustainable career longevity in the Nigerian contemporary art scene is supported by multifaceted strategies that encompass direct exposure opportunities such as art fairs, strategic use of social media, and structured long-term planning with clear milestones. Central to these approaches is the fostering of intentional, trust-based artist-gallery relationships that provide ongoing mentorship, emotional support, and professional guidance. Holistic support systems including residencies, mental well-being initiatives, and financial stability strategies like supplementary income or business education further underpin artists' capacity to maintain enduring careers. Unique perspectives reveal nuanced challenges such as balancing creative pressures with financial security and embracing artist autonomy through flexible gallery agreements. Collectively, these shared and unique viewpoints illustrate a comprehensive framework where exposure, education, trust, and holistic care converge to sustain artists' careers in a dynamic and evolving art ecosystem. Organizing art fairs specifically for emerging artists is a pivotal sustainable approach to career longevity. For instance, in the Interview with Soto gallery, she said that:

"the Plus 234 Art Fair as an event that bypasses galleries and works directly with emerging artists through an open call and selection process, providing them with vital exposure opportunities."

Similarly, Tiwani gallery outlines plans to create an affordable art fair aimed at integrating young artists into the market by showcasing their work to collectors and critics. These initiatives create accessible platforms that encourage inclusivity and early career visibility, essential for sustaining artistic careers. By enabling direct market access and repeated exhibition opportunities, such fairs help artists build professional networks and momentum critical for long-term success. This strategy complements other support mechanisms like mentorship and residencies, forming a comprehensive framework for career sustainability.

Leveraging social media platforms is a critical modern strategy to enhance artist visibility and support sustainable career longevity by broadening reach and fostering resilience in an evolving art market.

Structured long-term career planning with clear milestones is essential for sustainable career longevity. AMG Projects exemplifies this approach by mapping out three to five year plans with defined goals for artists and aggressively pursuing them, ensuring deliberate and sustained career progression as noted. In the Amg project interview and Kokopelli interview, it underscores the necessity of intentionality and formal agreements like memoranda of understanding to establish exclusivity and justify investment, which supports focused, long-term development. Additionally, mentorship, prudent pricing strategies, and gradual career growth as vital components of sustainable planning. Together, these perspectives reflects a comprehensive, milestone-driven framework that guides artists through stages of development, market positioning, and professional maturation, thus encouraging enduring careers.

Long-term trust and intentional artist-gallery relationships are fundamental to sustainable career longevity. Windsor gallery describes ongoing collaborations where artists become part of a gallery 'family,' reflecting deep, trust-based engagement. Sach gallery also mentioned decades-long artist retention built on mutual trust without formal contracts, which helps in nurturing environment that supports sustained growth.

Holistic support encompassing mentorship, residencies, and mental well-being is vital for sustainable career longevity. Tiwani gallery outlines a multifaceted support system including

mentorship, grants, residencies, and sales promotion, addressing creative, financial, and professional needs. The African Artists Foundation, emphasizes mentorship and culturally relevant support grounded in community engagement, nurturing artists within their cultural context. Mental clarity and emotional support as essential for sustaining creativity and career momentum. Additionally, Amg project interview indicates that global exposure and networking through international art fairs complement these supports by providing artists with critical opportunities for growth. This integrated approach addresses diverse artist needs holistically, fostering resilience and sustained creative productivity over time.

Enhancing artists' business education and ensuring financial stability are crucial strategies for sustainable career longevity. The need for workshops educating artists about contracts and gallery representation to improve their professional acumen. Tim & Carol Gallery, advocates maintaining a day job or supplementary income to provide financial security, enabling sustained studio practice without immediate financial pressures.

An important unique perspective addressed in the interview is the balance between creative pressure and financial security as a factor in sustainable career longevity. CCA lagos provides a candid reflection on how having financial stability enables an artist to create more meaningful work without the fragility induced by economic stress.

"*The artist acknowledges that while financial security allows creative freedom, it also introduces a different kind of pressure to produce work of significance*".

This insight highlights that sustainability is not solely about financial support but also involves managing psychological and creative dynamics, which galleries and institutions might not always explicitly address. This perspective adds depth to understanding sustainability by incorporating the artist's lived experience and the interplay between economic and creative well-being.

A distinctive approach to sustainable career longevity is maintaining artist autonomy through non-exclusive gallery relationships. As noted in Sach gallery, the gallery owner chooses not to bind artists with formal contracts, instead relying on mutual trust and guidance while allowing artists freedom to collaborate with other galleries. This approach creates a flexible, supportive environment where artists retain control over their careers, which can enhance sustainability by reducing constraints and encouraging diverse opportunities. While this model

contrasts with the exclusivity emphasized elsewhere, it illustrates an alternative path to career longevity based on trust, respect, and artist independence rather than formalized exclusivity agreements.

Frequency Analysis
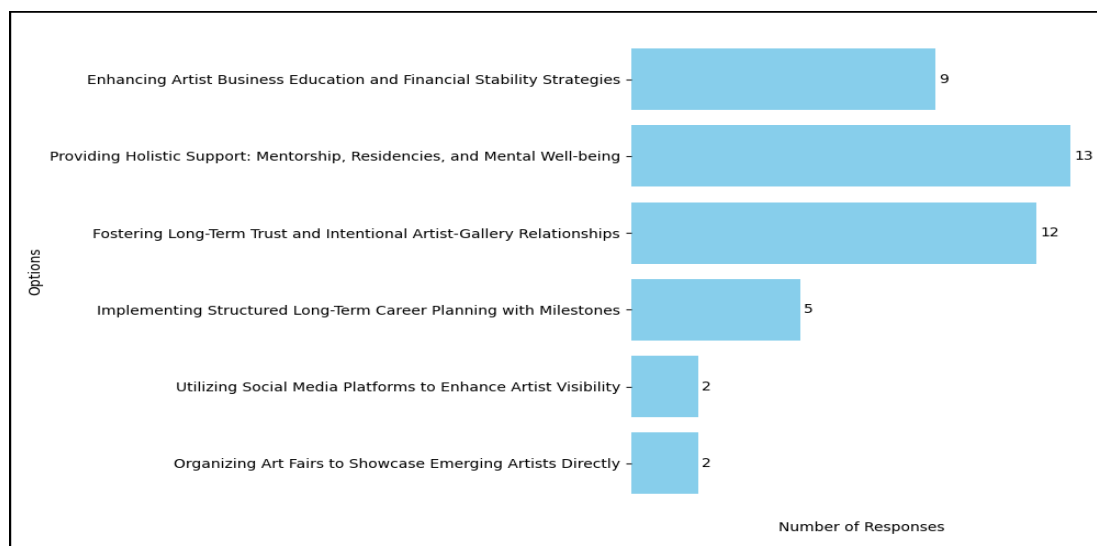
Supports Provided by Galleries

Overall, galleries in Nigeria provide multifaceted support to artists encompassing facilitation of residencies, exhibitions, and participation in art fairs that enhance exposure and career development. They actively engage in marketing, promotion, and social media strategies to increase artist visibility and market reach. Advisory, mentorship, and educational workshops are critical components of gallery support, helping artists navigate the art industry and develop professionally. Financial and material assistance, including stipends, grants, purchases, and self-funding of exhibitions, underpin these developmental efforts despite resource constraints. Galleries also promotes collaborations, cross-cultural exchanges, and community building that sustain artists' growth and integration into broader networks (Kester, 2004). Structured contracts

and intentional artist-gallery relationships enable tailored and sustained support, although trust-based informal arrangements also play important roles. Unique perspectives highlight that galleries operate within commercial frameworks and face capacity limits, underscoring that artists must often rely on self-initiative amid limited opportunities. These interview illustrate a complex ecosystem where galleries provide essential but varied supports, balancing commercial realities with developmental commitments to nurture artists' careers.

A prominent form of support galleries provide is, facilitating residencies, exhibitions, and participation in art fairs for emerging and established artists. Soto Gallery said that:

"By securing residencies and organizing both local and international art fairs, sometimes even flying artists to participate, which significantly enhances artist exposure and networking opportunities".

Galleries actively organize exhibitions, fairs, and mentorship programs that sustain artists' careers long-term with repeated exposure and material support. Kokopelli Gallery supports artists through showcasing, purchasing works, and developing in-house residency programs.

Marketing, promotion, and social media exposure constitute critical supports galleries provide to artists. Soto Gallery not only facilitates residencies and exhibitions but also drives institutional marketing and aggressively pushes artists through social media platforms such as Instagram and Tik Tok to maximize success. Tiwani Gallery promotes emerging artists to collectors and educates them about commercial gallery operations, enhancing market readiness. While Windsor Gallery employs rigorous promotional efforts including catalogues, PR firms, social media, advertising, and collaborations to extend artists' reach beyond gallery walls, also supporting participation in art fairs like FNB Johannesburg. Also Thought Pyramid Gallery supports artists through mentorship and educational seminars that indirectly bolster promotion and visibility. Amg project on its end explicitly offers marketing and publicity assistance to increase artists' sales and exposure. Sach Gallery hosts regular exhibitions and networking events to raise artist profiles, while Kokopelli Gallery facilitates collector introductions and residency opportunities contributing to promotion. Hour Glass Gallery highlights the importance of tailored marketing strategies to place artists on international platforms. Together, these galleries demonstrate a multifaceted approach to marketing and promotion, leveraging both

traditional and digital channels to elevate artists' careers.

Advisory, mentorship, and educational workshops form a vital pillar of support galleries provide to artists for career development. Tim & Carol Gallery offers advisory roles guiding artists on adapting techniques. The African Artist Foundation provides advice on funding opportunities and project collaborations, supporting artists' sustainability. Tiwani Gallery mentors emerging artists by educating them on commercial gallery operations and offering grants and residencies. Windsor Gallery offers free advisory services, rigorous promotion, and mentorship for younger artists. Thought Pyramid Gallery pioneered mentoring initiatives including seminars and knowledge-sharing by art professionals to empower artists. Mydrim Gallery acknowledges the role of galleries in organizing art talks and seminars to groom artists. Amg project provides mentorship by connecting artists to understudies and learning resources alongside marketing and residencies. CCA Lagos supports emerging artists through an open-door policy with developmental feedback and ongoing engagement. From the dynamic approach of these galleries, they essentially nature through mentorship, advisory, and educational support in artist careers.

Thought Pyramid Gallery said he:

"We *distributes art supplies and sustains artists through repeated exhibitions, largely funded by our founders. We self-funds exhibitions and manages promotional costs while working on commission-based sales"*.

Lagos provides long-term exposure and international market access, often without profiting, enabling artists to sustain careers. Galleries actively engage in long-term artist development by monitoring progress and assessing impact through various metrics. Soto Gallery tracks artist success by evaluating sales, exhibition participation, and involvement in prestigious projects like the Venice Biennale, indicating progression from local to international recognition. The African Artist Foundation maintains ongoing communication with artists to monitor creative progress over time, acknowledging diverse artistic processes. Tiwani Gallery assesses impact primarily through sales and raising public visibility of emerging artists. Long-term development provides repeated exhibition opportunities, distributing art supplies, and prioritizing past featured artists for future shows to sustain their careers. CCA Lagos sustains support through continuous engagement and monitoring to ensure artists remain active in practice. These galleries

demonstrate commitment to ongoing mentorship and impact assessment as integral to artist career sustainability and growth.

Galleries provide vital support by fostering collaborations, cross-cultural exchanges, and community building that enrich the artist ecosystem. Soto Gallery's facilitation of residencies, exhibitions, and art fairs enables artists to build relationships and grow professionally. African Artist Foundation emphasizes community engagement through residencies and partnerships with international organizations, offering grants and collaborative projects. Tiwani Gallery nurtures community via portfolio reviews, 'Artists Get Together' hangouts, and residencies that provide resources and creative space. Windsor Gallery self-funds collaborations with local businesses, extending artists' reach beyond traditional galleries. Thought Pyramid Gallery pioneers mentoring moments, bringing master and emerging artists together, and sustains artists' careers through repeated exhibitions, youth programs, and supportive WhatsApp communities. Mydrim Gallery promotes community through group exhibitions and relationship-building. Amg project encourage financial empowerment and network access, enhancing community growth. CCA Lagos encourages cross-cultural exchanges via collaborations with international institutions and ongoing artist engagement. Sach Gallery builds familiar trust with artists, hosting exhibitions and collector meetings that strengthen professional networks. Kokopelli Gallery emphasizes intentional and exclusive agreements fostering sustained support and community. Hour Glass Gallery supports community inclusion through regular exhibitions, market feedback from collectors, donation of artworks and space, and inclusion of younger artists. Collectively, these galleries demonstrate how collaborations, cross-cultural exchanges, and community building are pivotal supports that sustain artists' development and integration into broader artistic networks. Structured contracts and intentional artist-gallery relationships are crucial for effective support and sustained career development.

A contrasting viewpoint is that galleries primarily operate with commercial objectives rather than as direct support systems for artists. The curator from CCA Lagos explicitly states that galleries exist to make money and that the burden of career advancement largely falls on the artist. This perspective indicates the limited role galleries may play in artist development beyond commercial transactions. It underscores the necessity for artists to be self-reliant and proactive in managing their careers, suggesting that gallery support might be supplemental rather than foundational. This viewpoint contrasts with others that emphasize extensive gallery support,

illuminating the diversity of gallery roles in different contexts.

Another unique perspective is the recognition of limited capacity among galleries to support all artists due to financial and infrastructural constraints. The Project Director from Amg project stated the imbalance between the number of world-class galleries and the vast population of working artists, noting that only a fraction of artists can be exhibited and supported annually (Rogowsky, 1990). This reveals an inherent limitation in the reach of gallery support, emphasizing that many artists remain without opportunities despite the existence of galleries. This insight contextualizes the scope of gallery support and suggests that while galleries provide critical assistance, their capacity is finite and cannot meet the entire demand of the artistic community.

Frequency Analysis
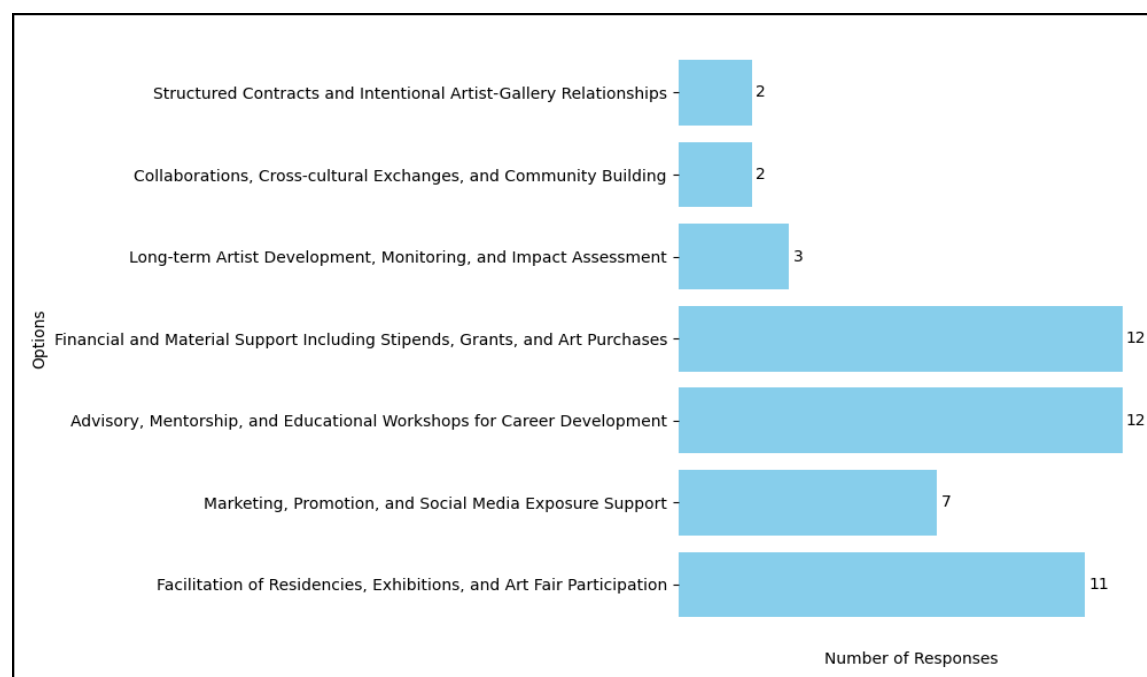
Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to better assess the role of cultural organizations in supporting emerging visual artists in Nigeria and to identify effective strategies used by these cultural organization for enhancing their long-term career sustainability within the creative industry. In the Literature review, an in-depth review of literature was examined on how cultural organizations interact and influenced career development of emerging visual artist, sustainability within the broader creative industry. Through interviews with Lagos, Nigerian industry professionals, the current challenges and perception was discussed, and potential solution was proposed. Upon analysis of the results, the theme was adjusted. Based on this adjusted themes, the research question can be answered:

What role do cultural organizations play in supporting emerging visual artists within Nigerian artmarket?

To address this, an analysis of the necessary challenges and types of supports provided by galleries was provided in the results and discussion which helps answering the sub questions. *SQ1.What strategies do cultural organizations use to support the professional growth of young visual artists?* These components should thus be kept in mind that residencies are valued as critical spaces where artists gain time, materials, and creative freedom to develop their work. Emphasizing that residencies offer artists "the space, the resources and the time for them to create more of their works," emphasizing the potential of their networks and visibility. As art fairs are space to connect with collectors, critics, and peers, in turn expanding networking opportunities. These residencies and fairs function as cultural rituals that mark stages of professional development, embedding artists within a shared ecosystem that values of visibility and market integration. By examining the current challenges, *SQ2* can be answered*: What are the key challenges young Nigerian visual artists face in building sustainable long-term careers?* The analysis suggested that financial constraints are a recurrent theme, with artists lacking studio space, quality materials, and capital necessary for practice. Describing funding as "a language you have to learn," emphasizing its inaccessibility. Geographic centralization in Lagos restricts opportunities for artists outside the city, limiting market interaction and exposure. Market saturation and intense competition compel many artists to replicate popular styles, such as Black figuration, undermining originality and distinctiveness. This trend-chasing behavior is driven by

financial necessity but results in diminished artistic identity. Furthermore, insufficient mentorship and professional support leave artists to navigate complex industry dynamics largely on their own. Lastly, from the analysis, *SQ3. How do cultural organizations influence young visual artists' perceptions of their long-term success?* This can be answered, evidently, that through exhibitions, residencies, and international collaborations, organizations broaden artists' understanding of success beyond immediate sales to include sustained growth, global recognition, and artistic development. Mentorship programs and educational initiatives aided confidence and encourage authenticity, discouraging trend-following and promoting personal artistic narratives. And community-building efforts create supportive networks that provide emotional sustenance and a sense of belonging.

To conclude, the adopted themes help to contextualize and critically examine the research question, expanded insights on other foundational challenges from educational institutions that as snowballed into some of the major challenges this emerging artist are experiencing. At this time, it is thus up to the educational institutions to incorporate and adopt updated and relevant skill set into art education to better equip these emerging artist in navigating the current and fast evolving art world .

Practical Implications

Future research and impact assessments are essential to gaining a deeper understanding of how artists and cultural organizations or institutions can interact in a more structured and mutually beneficial manner. This is particularly important in light of the increasing number of emerging artists and the limited number of galleries available to support their needs. This thesis has examined the potential benefits and challenges of such interactions.

Furthermore, the study has identified significant obstacles within these relationships. If these challenges persist, stakeholders may face difficulties in effectively coordinating market activities in the region. Therefore, addressing these issues is critical to creating a more cohesive and supportive ecosystem for the creative industry.

Limitations and Future Research

As this thesis was exploratory in nature, it raised new questions outside its original scope. There are still significant concerns about how best galleries can create symbiotic relationship with this emerging visual artists. While this study sought to map out potential strategies for galleries to interact with emerging artists, it did not include feedback from the artists themselves. Including their perspectives would provide a more nuanced insight of the interaction between cultural organizations and this emerging visual artist. Future study may focus on documenting the viewpoints and experiences of these emerging visual artists in order to enrich this conversation.

This study's relatively small sample size, 13 out of about 50 galleries in Lagos is a significant limitation. As a result, the findings may not be representative of the entire gallery sector. The primary goal of this thesis was to investigate the relationships between significant key players in the regional art ecosystem and emerging artists.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide:

1. Introduction

- Briefly introduce yourself and the purpose of the study.
- Obtain consent to record.
- Confirm the participant's role in the gallery.

2. Organizational Profile

- Can you tell me a bit about your gallery and its mission?
- When was it established, and how has it evolved over time?

3. Engagement with Young Artists

- Does your gallery work with emerging or young visual artists?
- How do you usually discover or select these artists?
- What kind of support do you provide to them beyond showcasing their work?

4. Sustainability and Long-Term Initiatives

- Are there any formal or informal programs aimed at long-term career development for young artists?
- Can you share how these initiatives are structured and funded?
- Are there any success stories or outcomes you'd like to highlight?

5. Collaborations and Outreach

- Who are your typical partners or collaborators in artist support initiatives?
- How do you engage with the wider arts or creative community in Lagos?

6. Challenges and Opportunities

- What are the most significant challenges you observe facing young visual artists in Nigeria today?
- What do you believe galleries like yours can do better to support more sustainable artistic careers?

7. Reflections and Future Outlook

- How does your gallery measure its impact on the careers of the artists it supports?
- Looking ahead, are there any new initiatives or visions your gallery has for artist development?

- Is there anything else you'd like to add or think is important for this research?
- Would you be open to follow-up questions if needed?

Appendix B

CONSENT REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, CONTACT:

[Student's name: Essien Itoro-Abasi Okon, EUR student

Mail address:744891ie@eur.nl]

DESCRIPTION

you are invited to participate in a research about ["Institutional Approaches to Career longevity of Visual artist: Examining the Role of Cultural Organizations in Shaping Career Pathways for Young Visual Artists in Nigeria,"]. The purpose of the

study is to understand [It aims to understand the role that galleries as cultural organization, play in fostering career longevity for emerging visual artists in Nigeria].

Your acceptance to participate in this study means that you accept to [participate in a survey / participate in an experiment / be interviewed / be part of a focus group / be observed while you X]. In general terms

- [in the case of survey/interview/focus group] my questions will be related to gallery operations and interactions with visual artist

- [in the case of experiment] your participation in the experiment will be related to academic research review

- [in the case of participant observation] my observations will focus on art market accessibility and participation.

 I will make an audio recording of the interview / focus group.

I will use the material from the interviews and my observation exclusively for academic work, such as further research, academic meetings and publications.

RISKS AND BENEFITS [alternatives A and B are presented below, but there may be further variations]

A. As far as I can tell, there are no risks associated with participating in this research. I will not use your name in the study.

To participants in the study will only be referred to with pseudonyms, and in terms of general characteristics such as type of gallery.

B. I am aware that the possibility of identifying the people who participate in this study may involve risks for ... [Explain potential risks for the participant's reputation, help, social relations, etc.]. For that reason unless you prefer to be identified fully (first name, last name, occupation, etc.) I will not keep any information that may lead to the identification of those involved in the study. I will only pseudonyms to identify participants.

You are always free not to answer any particular question, and/or stop participating at any point.

TIME INVOLVEMENT

Your participation in this study will take [40-60 min]. You may interrupt your participation at any time.

PAYMENTS: There will be no monetary compensation for your participation.

Appendix C

Codebook and Code Relationships