

**A Theory of Reciprocal Desire and Relational Value in Social Exchange Systems****Rev. Albert Ulutorti Green PhD**Department of Special Education, St. Paul's Theological college Awka  
[green.albert@sptcawka.com.ng](mailto:green.albert@sptcawka.com.ng) <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3641-3948>CrossRef DOI: [10.66694/siar.gjah2026005](https://doi.org/10.66694/siar.gjah2026005)**Abstract**

This study develops the Albert Ulutorti Green Theory of Reciprocal Desire and Relational Value to explain human valuing and decision-making. The study begins with the observation that people often pass up opportunities, goods, and situations others value. The study argues that these patterns reflect a deeper structure where worth is neither intrinsic nor globally consistent but emerges from relational contexts influenced by restrictions, expectations, and comparative reference points. Through conceptual clarification, formal propositions, and structural principles, the study demonstrates that human valuation is essentially relational and that mobility across circumstances is redistributive in nature rather than strictly progressive. The analysis shows that individuals make contextually consistent decisions within their environments, even when such decisions appear irrational. The theory explains divergent preferences for the same object or event through the interaction of these components. The theory is illustrated as empirically relevant using examples from migratory patterns, economic behavior, labour mobility, and daily life. It demonstrates that what one individual or group discards often retains or gains value elsewhere, generating cycles of aspiration and reevaluation. The study engages with issues of relativism, structural inequality, and predictive limitations, and shows that the theory remains analytically robust when its scope is clearly defined. The findings indicate that absolute or universal measures of value cannot adequately explain human desire and evaluation. Rather, they arise from relational positioning within diverse social, economic, and cultural contexts. Human behavior is better understood through the Albert Ulutorti Green Theory of Reciprocal Desire and Relational Value, which applies to choice, mobility, and social interaction.

**Keywords:** Albert Ulutorti Green, Theory, Reciprocal Desire, Relational Value**Introduction**

Humans constantly change locales, interests, relationships, jobs, and social statuses. People and groups constantly seek better conditions, leaving insufficient, unwanted, or restrictive ones. A careful study of human behaviour shows a consistent pattern: the conditions, locations, or goods abandoned by one person typically become the goal or objective of another. This dichotomy of rejection and attraction raises questions about value, desire, and human decision-making in different contexts (Burton et al., 2023).

In many countries, including Nigeria, rural people move to cities for better jobs, education, and social opportunities. Some people voluntarily leave cities for rural areas for cost, simplicity, or relief from metropolitan pressures. In economic behaviour, one group's inferior or unattractive

goods or services may be highly valued to another group given different limitations. Food that one person rejects due to preference or surplus may be desperately sought by another due to scarcity or different preferences. These patterns are part of a larger framework for human evaluation and decision-making.

Despite its prevalence, much contemporary discourse views human choice as either a journey towards objectively greater conditions or a representation of individual preference, neglecting the reciprocal and relational nature of desire. Established perspectives have addressed comparison, scarcity, and rational choice, but they often fail to explain the bidirectional and overlapping dynamics that turn one person's leaving predicament into another's entry desire. Thus, understanding how value is picked and transferred among individuals and contexts remains conceptually empty.

This paper proposes the Albert Ulutorti Green Theory of Reciprocal Desire and Relational Value to explain this occurrence. The theory states that relationship factors, contextual limits, and comparative judgements affect value. It also claims that human movement, whether physical, economic, or social, does not eliminate dissatisfaction or create a hierarchy of improved conditions, but rather reallocates desire and dissatisfaction among agents within different frameworks of expectation and constraint.

This theoretical formulation can change development, success, and rationality concepts. The method emphasises contextual decision-making, challenging simplistic notions that characterise options as essentially superior or inferior. It helps explain migration patterns, purchasing habits, and social mobility in environments of inequality, diverse cultural values, and unequal resource access.

This technique helps policymakers, social analysts, and scholars understand human movement and preference evolution. Understanding that people evaluate decisions based on their circumstances rather than a universal value scale improves urban planning, economic development, and social intervention tactics. It helps people comprehend how life experiences shape their desires and goals.

This study clarifies, improves, and defends the Albert Ulutorti Green Theory of Reciprocal Desire and Relational Value. It outlines its conceptual foundation, analytical parameters, and practical applications. This illuminates the interpersonal dynamics that drive human desire and social value redistribution.

### **Conceptual Clarification and Theoretical Foundations**

To adequately understand the Albert Ulutorti Green Theory of Reciprocal Desire and Relational Value, its key concepts and theoretical foundations must be explained. Without such conceptual clarity, the theory may be misinterpreted as a mere descriptive observation of everyday contradiction rather than a systematic explanation of predictable human action. This section defines key terms, situates the theory within relevant intellectual traditions, and establishes analytical parameters that ensure coherence and robustness.

The theoretical framework revolves around desire, value, and relational context. Rather than being purely impulsive or emotional, desire is a structured inclination driven by options, expectations, and constraints. Individuals desire options in relation to available alternatives. Desire is comparative and dynamic, shifting with changing circumstances and reference points.

Albert Ulutorti Green, an academic, employs distinctive theoretical frameworks to study human behaviour, decision-making, and social dynamics. He was born on November 30, 1981. He integrates sociology, theology, religious studies, education, mental health, and psychology to explain everyday wants, values, and behavior. He developed this theory after publishing Accessism with Dr. Ike Vincent Ezenwa in March 2026, The Compensatory Behavioural Adaptation Theory of Deaf Social Response (CBATDSR) and Communicative Reciprocity Theory of Behaviour (CRT-B). The Theory of Reciprocal Desire and Relational Value reflects

his commitment to reconciling abstract ideas with observable reality, offering new insights into how people make decisions, pursue goals, and interact with others.

Value, closely related to want, is ascribed importance by an individual's evaluative framework. The sense of value depends on necessity, exposure, social conditioning, economic capabilities, and experience (Kovalenko, 2022). This explains why one person may find a job, location, or lifestyle undesirable while another loves it. The idea recognises that certain settings may have objective advantages, but these advantages may not provide consistent value among players. Third, relational context links desire and value. It includes social context, economic restrictions, cultural norms, and available knowledge that affect decision-making. We establish and articulate want and worth in this relational setting. Because their settings yield different evaluative results, two people facing the same option may reach different conclusions.

Based on these conceptual concepts, the theory draws implicit support from acknowledged intellectual traditions while retaining its unique contribution. In economic theory, subjective value reflects the idea that people value things based on their utility rather than their fundamental qualities. However, the present approach emphasises the reciprocal aspect, arguing that assessment is not only subjective but also circulated among participants, resulting in simultaneous acceptance and rejection of the same option.

Comparative evaluation has been used in sociology to evaluate unhappiness and aspiration, especially in unequal societies. Comparing oneself to others can lead to feelings of inadequacy or a desire to change (Buunk & Schaufeli, 2018). The present framework incorporates this perspective while extending it by highlighting bidirectional movement.

Cognitive limitations and information asymmetries often constrain decision-making behavior (Padilla et al., 2018). Individuals rely on heuristics and bounded information to evaluate options. This supports the notion of localized rationality rather than universal optimization in decision-making. Given the decision-maker's informational and contextual restrictions, an imprudent external choice may be sensible.

Despite these similarities, the Theory distinguishes itself by integrating these parts into a coherent theory of value reallocation between individuals. It states that people value objects differently and explains why these differences often lead to exchange, mobility, and preference reversal. This illustrates a structural component of human interaction often overlooked: different judgements of the same object or condition (Hutchins, 2020).

Define what the theory does not say to achieve analytical rigour. It neither negates objectively beneficial or damaging situations nor argues that all wishes have equal validity regarding results. Instead, it argues that value and decision-making are context-dependent and relationally structured. This difference prevents the theory from becoming an unbounded relativism that undermines its explanatory power.

Transitions between circumstances do not guarantee contentment or improvement, according to the notion. As new settings create new comparisons and expectations, unhappiness may persist after transition (Elder & Johnson, 2018). This shows that human aspiration is always shaped by changing relational situations.

Though linked with contemporary perspectives on subjective worth, comparative assessment, and human decision-making, the theory is integrative and reciprocal. This theory links valuation to bidirectional movement and redistribution, unlike paradigms that see valuation as subjective or socially comparative. It posits that people value objects differently and explains how these differences' structure concurrent acceptance and rejection. The theory is a unified framework with its own explanatory emphasis due to this reciprocal dimension's distinctive analytical process.

### **Core Propositions and Structural Principles of the Theory**

After establishing the conceptual and theoretical foundations, it is essential to delineate the Theory of Reciprocal Desire and Relational Value in exact structural terms. This part delineates the

fundamental ideas and organising principles that characterise the theory, ensuring its progression from mere descriptive insight to a distinctly articulated explanatory model. The idea posits that human valuation is relational and that human movement is redistributive rather than solely progressive. This dual emphasis constitutes the foundation of the framework and differentiates it from methodologies that perceive decision-making as a linear progression towards universally optimal results. The idea posits that what constitutes progress for one individual may concurrently signify regression or inadequacy for another, contingent upon their distinct evaluative settings.

### **Primary Proposition**

The primary assertion of the theory can be articulated as follows: Human agents, functioning under varying restrictions, expectations, and information, attribute value to options based on their relationships rather than their inherent qualities. Thus, the rejection of a specific option by one agent signifies a context-dependent optimisation and does not preclude the potential that the same option may be regarded as a preferred or aspirational choice by another agent within an alternative evaluative framework.

This proposition is intentionally limited. It does not claim that all abandoned possibilities are appealing to others; instead, it posits that the framework of human valuing allows for and often generates such reciprocal patterns under specific conditions.

To maintain analytical accuracy and prevent overreach, the theory functions in well delineated conditions when its assertions are most relevant.

*First, the theory assumes the existence of multiple agents with differentiated preferences and constraints. Reciprocal desire cannot emerge in a homogeneous environment where all actors share identical needs, values, and access to resources.*

*Second, it presupposes the presence of alternative options, even if unevenly distributed. Where no meaningful alternatives exist such as in conditions of extreme deprivation or coercion the dynamics of reciprocal valuation are significantly constrained.*

*Third, the theory operates under conditions of imperfect or asymmetrical information. Individuals make decisions based on limited knowledge, which shapes their perception of what is desirable or undesirable.*

*Fourth, it assumes contextual variability, including differences in socio-economic status, cultural background, and personal experience. These variations are necessary for generating divergent evaluative frameworks.*

By establishing these boundaries, the theory avoids universal generalization and maintains its explanatory focus within realistic and observable human conditions.

### **Supporting Structural Principles**

To operationalize the central proposition, the theory is organized around four interdependent principles:

#### ***The Principle of Relational Valuation***

This notion posits that worth is not intrinsic to objects, locations, or circumstances, but rather arises through comparative analysis within a specific context. Individuals assess options in relation to the alternatives accessible to them, as well as their expectations and previous

experiences. Consequently, the identical circumstance may assume several positions within disparate evaluative hierarchies. This principle elucidates why a position deemed low-status in one setting may be viewed as a valuable opportunity in another, or why a place perceived as confining by one person may be regarded as stable and appealing by another (Pedersen & Gram, 2018).

### ***The Principle of Contextual Rationality***

The theory posits that decision-making is internally reasonable within its contextual framework. Individuals behave in accordance with their perceived interests, considering their knowledge, limitations, and objectives. External assessments of irrationality frequently stem from disregarding the decision-maker's particular circumstances.

This principle protects against reductive interpretations of human behaviour and emphasises the necessity of analysing decisions within the frameworks that generate them. It also establishes a foundation for comprehending why individuals may gravitate into circumstances that others are actively abandoning (Stibbe, 2025).

### ***The Principle of Reciprocal Reallocation***

This concept encapsulates the dynamic feature of the idea. It asserts that human movement, whether through migration, consumerism, or social status, operates as a process of value redistribution rather than value destruction. When individuals depart from a situation, they do not diminish its worth (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2020); rather, they facilitate opportunities for others who may ascribe it a distinct meaning. This idea is most apparent in patterns of population migration, labour markets, and evolving societal roles, when vacancies created by certain individuals are occupied by others with differing evaluative frameworks.

### ***The Principle of Asymmetric Desire***

The theory acknowledges that desire varies among individuals. Even when actors possess the same array of possibilities, their preferences may markedly differ due to variations in requirements, aspirations, and restrictions. This asymmetry facilitates the coexistence of conflicting perspectives towards the same item or condition. This notion elucidates why reciprocal patterns of attraction and rejection are not only feasible but prevalent. It emphasises that human desire is influenced by both material circumstances and personal perceptions (Harbera, 2025).

## **Secondary Implications**

From these principles, several implications logically follow:

First, movement does not ensure satisfaction (Zhang et al., 2020). Valuation is relational; thus, entering a new condition frequently engenders new comparisons, potentially resulting in novel forms of discontent. Consequently, the cycle of ambition and reevaluation persists. Secondly, no condition possesses a generally immutable position as either favourable or unfavourable. The perceived value varies based on the evaluator and the context. Third, patterns of transaction are perpetual rather than finite. There is no ultimate point at which all individuals converge on a singular, universally favoured condition. Value is perpetually reallocated across contexts.

## **Analytical Strength of the Framework**

The robustness of this theoretical framework resides in its equilibrium between generality and constraint. It is sufficiently broad to elucidate a diverse array of human behaviours while being adequately constrained to prevent the risks of overextension. The theory preserves explanatory depth and empirical credibility by concentrating on the mechanics of valuation and movement instead of asserting absolute outcomes.

Furthermore, the amalgamation of relational value with reciprocal mobility offers a unified elucidation for phenomena frequently addressed in isolation. It indicates that variations in preference are not only coincidental but are fundamentally connected to patterns of transaction and transition within social and economic realms.

The theoretical structure may be represented as a cyclical relationship between **context** → **valuation** → **decision** → **movement** → **new context**, illustrating how desire and value are continuously reshaped through interaction with changing conditions.

### **Practical Applications and Real-Life Illustrations**

The efficacy of any theoretical framework depends on its internal consistency and its ability to elucidate observed phenomena. The Theory of Reciprocal Desire and Relational Value is pertinent to the daily experiences of individuals and communities, where patterns of movement, choice, and valuation expose its fundamental logic. This section illustrates the application of the theory across several areas, focusing specifically on social, economic, and cultural situations.

At this point, it is important to restate the core theoretical claim in a concise and emphatic form:

*Human valuation and movement across choices, places, and conditions are governed by context-dependent and relationally structured preferences, such that an option relinquished by one actor as inadequate relative to available alternatives may simultaneously constitute a preferred or aspirational choice for another actor operating under a different configuration of constraints, expectations, and comparative reference frameworks; thus, divergence in desirability reflects not contradiction but variation in evaluative context.*

**Thus:**

*Under conditions of unequal information, differentiated needs, and varying opportunity structures, individuals and groups assign value relationally rather than absolutely. Consequently, the abandonment of a given option by one agent does not imply its intrinsic lack of worth, but reflects a localized optimization decision, which may inversely position that same option as desirable to another agent whose evaluative framework differs.*

The theory posits that value is not static or universally hierarchized but arises from relational and contextual assessment. Consequently, human mobility and decision-making do not signify a definitive advancement towards universally superior states, but rather a constant reallocation among variably valued circumstances influenced by diverse restrictions and expectations. This formulation captures the essence of the theory and serves as a guiding lens for the illustrations that follow.

### **1. Migration and Spatial Movement**

Migration patterns show reciprocal desire (Collins, 2020; Phillimore et al., 2018). In Nigeria, as elsewhere, rural people move to cities like Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt. Jobs, education, and higher living standards are often found in these cities. Many migrants leave rural areas due to limited economic possibilities and the desire for upward mobility.

This movement has no unidirectional value. Some people move from cities to rural or semi-urban areas for cheaper living costs, less congestion, and social stability. Newcomers from less developed places may see urban pressure and struggle as opportunity and growth. Thus, the same sight might indicate unhappiness or aspiration, depending on the viewer. This shows that migration is a reallocation of people between environments with different values,

not just a move to better conditions. Each decision is contextually sensible, therefore the theory explains this without inconsistency.

## **2. Economic Choices and Consumption Patterns**

The marketplace offers an opportunity to analyse reciprocal desire. For example, second-hand clothing, known as "okrika" in Nigeria, may be rejected by some people who prefer newly manufactured items as a status symbol or for personal satisfaction; concurrently, these items are valued by others who perceive them as economical, resilient, or fashionable. The rejection by one group does not diminish the value for another; rather, it redistributes resources within a network of differing valuations (Martin et al., 2024). This illustrates how economic value is maintained despite obvious inconsistencies in desirability.

## **3. Employment and Occupational Mobility**

Employment markets show mutual desire dynamics (Fahn, 2023). Employees who left due to low compensation, stress, or limited growth may rapidly find new employers who value those roles as income or transitional possibilities.

A professional leaving a job to advance may regard it as restricting, whereas an underemployed or unemployed person may see it as an opportunity. The job is the same, but the evaluation mechanism has changed. This underlines that value is situational, not intrinsic. This pattern helps economic systems survive. Without reciprocal value, many functions would be unfilled, causing systemic inefficiencies (Muniz, 2025). The concept reveals an underappreciated labour dynamics stabiliser.

## **4. Social Status and Lifestyle Preferences**

Social, lifestyle, spatial, and economic choices show mutual desire. People often try to climb the social ladder, adopt new cultures, or change lifestyles. People often go the other way or love what they're giving up (Bhardwaj, 2023).

Some prefer fast-paced, tech-heavy urban lifestyles, while others choose less urbanised locations with less stress, simplicity, and community togetherness. Some people keep or revive traditional practices they abandoned for modernisation because they find value and identity in them. These trends illustrate that societal value changes and is not commonly accepted. It is constantly negotiated and redistributed among social groups.

## **5. Everyday Human Experience**

The idea appears in everyday situations. Food flavours are compelling examples. A person may reject a meal due to flavour, familiarity, or availability, whereas another may crave it due to hunger, cultural preference, or limited options. Valuation differences are not contradictions but rather indicators of different conditions (Harvey, 2020). Mutual desire can affect personal belongings, living conditions, and social interactions. What one person gives up may represent security, comfort, or aspiration for another. These micro-level interactions improve theory-based patterns.

Its ability to link individual decision-making to society trends is a major asset. On the micro level, people make context-specific decisions using their own evaluation frameworks. However, these decisions reveal macro-level phenomena like migratory patterns, labour reallocation, and consumption trends when pooled across populations. What starts as a personal goal becomes a social movement. It shows how shared desire works at both levels by linking individual thinking to communal results.

## Synthesis of Applications

In various fields, a consistent pattern arises: human decisions do not function on a singular, universal continuum of superior and inferior. Rather, they signify a multifaceted interaction of context, comparison, and limitation. An identical object, location, or state might simultaneously occupy many positions under distinct evaluative frameworks.

The Theory offers a cohesive explanation for these trends by highlighting that value is relational and that movement redistributes rather than reconciles discrepancies in perception (Larin, 2020). It demonstrates that what may seem contradictory at first glance is, in reality, a systematic and foreseeable aspect of human behaviour.

## Critical Evaluation, Limitations, and Theoretical Robustness

The idea may be challenged for implying that all relative values are equal. If carried too far, the framework could reject objectively better or worse situations, leading to unbounded relativism. This perspective distorts the theory. The approach accepts that better healthcare, security, and economic stability may have objective advantages. It explicitly focuses on how individuals allocate value and make decisions, not ultimate advantages. The idea states that the valuing process is constrained, therefore even objectively advantageous conditions may not be appreciated due to differences in surrounds, expectations, and limits.

Critics say the approach downplays structural variables including institutional hurdles, poverty, and inequality. Critics say contextually reasonable human judgements may neglect necessity or coercion because people often have little alternatives.

This concern is valid and exposes a serious problem in the idea. The framework specifically requires limited variability. Instead of assuming all actors are flexible, it highlights that different constraints lead to different valuations. Extreme need may limit possibilities, reducing reciprocal desire. Therefore, the theory works best when there are several possibilities, even if they are unevenly distributed. Instead, then replacing structural analysis, it explains how people move within those boundaries.

Another criticism of the theory is that it is susceptible to circular reasoning, arguing that people value things differently because of their differences (Williamson, 2018). The theory addresses this critique by emphasizing relational context and comparative judgement. The idea states that information accessibility, social context, economic capabilities, and prior experience influence valuing inequalities. People evaluate their selections using these elements. Thus, the theory explains methodically rather than tautologically. It describes reciprocal desire and provides techniques for empirical study. The theory may explain patterns but not forecast them, according to others. It may be hard to foresee who will value a scenario or when reciprocation will occur. Many complicated human activity systems have this shortcoming. The theory attempts to uncover probability patterns rather than forecast outcomes. It predicts reciprocal valuation under limits and wants. This level of prediction cannot identify specific results, but it is sufficient for evaluating migration, market, and social conduct trends. Despite these criticisms, the theory has several basic benefits that strengthen it: First, it distinguishes its core elements, desire, value, and relational context from broader philosophical arguments about morality or truth to maintain conceptual clarity. Second, it reaches analytical equilibrium by avoiding rigidity and breadth. It provides organised explanations of observed events without deterministic claims.

Third, its concepts are applied to migration, consumer behaviour, and social mobility. Fourth, it relates to behavioural sciences, sociology, and economics principles without a paradigm, demonstrating theoretical coherence. It can function as an integrative paradigm instead of a rival doctrine.

While the theory is structurally sound, several areas invite further exploration:

- **Quantitative Validation:** Future work could attempt to measure the extent of reciprocal valuation in specific contexts, such as labor markets or migration flows.
- **Cultural Variations:** The role of cultural norms in shaping relational valuation could be examined more deeply, particularly in diverse societies.
- **Temporal Dynamics:** Longitudinal studies may reveal how preferences evolve over time as individuals transition between different contexts.

These areas do not indicate weakness but rather demonstrate the theory's openness to refinement and expansion.

## Conclusion

This study explains human desire and valuation using the Albert Ulutorti Green Theory of Reciprocal Desire and Relational Value. The study began with the observation that people often avoid circumstances others eagerly seek, probing deeper to find the core structure. It showed that relational circumstances, comparative evaluations, and other limits influence human decision-making more than universal values.

This piece reimagines ambition and motion. The idea is that migration, economic decisions, and societal changes are redistributive rather than linear towards better conditions. People go from inferior to superior settings and enter a dynamic value landscape that may offer opportunities and restrictions. This discovery undermines progress beliefs and demands a deeper understanding of human behaviour.

The study also found that contextual rationality arranges conflicting desires. Despite disagreements, people choose according to their environment. Underscoring this point clarifies trends and corrects the inclination to label others' decisions as unreasonable. It shows that experience, accessibility, and ambition affect desire.

Migratory patterns, employment dynamics, spending habits, and daily life demonstrate the theory's empirical applicability. These sectors emphasise value redistribution among people and surroundings. By avoiding attachment to good or bad situations, this reallocation maintains social and economic flexibility.

The study acknowledged the theory's flaws. It accepts objective benefits and systemic inequities but not universal relevance. Instead, it defines value and decision-making under real-world constraints. Scope limiting improves analytical credibility and reduces overgeneralization. In conclusion, the Albert Ulutorti Green Theory of Reciprocal Desire and Relational Value explains rational and relational behaviour. It shows that desire is a systematic response to environment and that value comes from comparison and circumstance. By understanding human striving as reciprocal, the theory offers cognitively difficult and practically relevant insights into decision-making, mobility, and social interaction.

## Recommendations

1. A transformation in the interpretation of success, advancement, and life choices by individuals and societies is necessary. Instead than evaluating success only by progress towards widely sought outcomes, it is imperative to prioritise comprehension of the contextual foundations of actions. Acknowledging that an advancement for one individual may lack significance for another helps alleviate unwarranted social pressure, misinterpretation, and detrimental comparison.
2. Policymakers and development planners must recognise that value is relational when formulating social and economic initiatives. Initiatives designed to enhance living

standards, employment, or urban growth must recognise that populations do not react equally to opportunities.

3. Educational systems and intellectual discourse ought to prioritise contextual rationality as a framework for understanding human behaviour. Instructing folks to evaluate judgements within their contextual framework will cultivate enhanced critical thinking and diminish oversimplified judgements regarding correct and incorrect choices.
4. At a personal level, individuals should develop a reflective understanding of how their wants are influenced by comparison and context. Recognising that discontent frequently stems from changing reference points instead of actual inadequacy can aid in expectation management and facilitate more intentional decision-making.

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