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THE EMERGENCE OF THE *LAKURAWA* MILITANT GROUP: A STRATEGIC ACTOR ANALYSIS OF TERRORIST SPILLOVER IN NIGERIA'S NORTHWEST

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Abstract

This article examines the emergence of the Lakurawa militant group in Northwest Nigeria through the lens of Rational Choice Theory's strategic actor model. It analyses how strategic calculations by both non-state actors and communities have contributed to the group's infiltration and entrenchment in the border communities of Sokoto State. Drawing on field research conducted in affected local government areas, the study reveals how Lakurawa militants strategically exploited governance vacuums, community vulnerabilities, and pre-existing conflicts to establish their presence. The findings suggest that both Lakurawa's strategic decisions and the communities' rational but ultimately counterproductive choice to invite them as protection against banditry reflect cost-benefit calculations consistent with rational choice frameworks. The article concludes with policy recommendations that address the complex security dynamics in Nigeria's border regions.

Keywords: *Rational choice theory, strategic actor model, violent extremism, Nigeria, terrorism spillover*

Introduction

West Africa is experiencing an unprecedented surge in conflict and instability, with security threats spreading across Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, and Guinea. Local socio-economic and political conditions have created vulnerabilities that terrorist and extremist groups exploit to destabilise the region (Security Council Report, 2025). The trend of Unconstitutional Changes in Government (UCGs) since

2021 has further complicated regional security cooperation efforts against terrorism and organised crime. Nigeria faces particularly complex security challenges. Since the Boko Haram uprising began in 2009, traditional conflicts based on identity, ethno-religious tensions, and regional rivalries have evolved into more sophisticated forms of violence, including violent extremism, banditry, and separatist movements (Anjide, 2023). Groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) have terrorised Northeast Nigeria, while armed banditry has devastated the Northwest.

Amid these security challenges, there is growing concern about the emergence of the *Lakurawa* militant group in Northwest Nigeria, particularly in the border communities of Sokoto State. In November 2024, the Nigerian Defence Headquarters confirmed *Lakurawa's* presence, indicating that the group originated from the Republic of Niger following recent political instability that disrupted military cooperation between Nigeria and Niger (Buba, 2024). However, alternative accounts suggest that *Lakurawa* began as a group of herders who transformed into a criminal organisation around 2016 in border communities (Rufa'i, 2023). The account further suggests that *Lakurawa* changed from a mercenary recruited by communities affected by banditry to a violent group which torments its host community. This article investigates the emergence of *Lakurawa* and its infiltration into Nigeria through the strategic actor model of Rational Choice Theory. It examines how rational calculations by multiple actors—the militant group, local communities, traditional leaders, and state security forces—have shaped the security landscape in Northwestern Nigeria. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do rational choice calculations explain *Lakurawa's* strategic decisions to infiltrate Nigeria's Northwest border communities?
2. What rational calculations led local communities to initially welcome *Lakurawa*, and how did these decisions ultimately affect their security?
3. How have state responses to *Lakurawa's* emergence reflected strategic considerations, and what are their implications for national security?

Methodology

This research employed a qualitative methodology, incorporating both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected through Key Informant Interviews (KII) conducted in a semi-structured format with nine participants from Sokoto State, specifically in the border towns of Gudu and Tangaza Local Government Areas (LGAs). Participants included a senior police officer, a senior immigration officer, youth leaders, vigilante group leaders, community leaders, and

representatives from Islamic sects such as *Qadiriyya, Tijjaniya,* and *Izala.* The selection of interviewees was carried out using purposive sampling based on their relevance, availability, and willingness to participate. Some potential key informants declined due to security concerns related to the research topic. Secondary data sources included scholarly articles, books, official reports on security issues in Nigeria and West Africa, and media outlets. Data collection was conducted between November 7 and November 19, 2024. The data were analysed through content and documentary analysis, complemented by triangulation to ensure validity and reliability of findings.

Conceptual Clarification

To provide a foundation for this study, it is essential to clarify the core concepts that frame the analysis. These concepts, including the RCT, the strategic actor model, violent extremism, and terrorism spillover, are interconnected and central to understanding the emergence of the *Lakurawa* group in Northwest Nigeria.

Rational Choice Theory (RCT)

The RCT is a social science framework that posits that individuals and groups make decisions by weighing the potential costs against the expected benefits of various courses of action. The central assumption is that actors are "utility-maximising," meaning they choose the option they believe will best serve their self-interest, whether that interest is material (wealth, power), social (status), or ideological (advancing a belief system) (Boudon, 2009). In conflict analysis, RCT treats violence not as an irrational outburst but as a calculated, instrumental act. For a group like *Lakurawa*, this means their actions, from infiltration to imposing religious taxes, are understood as deliberate choices made because the perceived benefits (e.g., territorial control, resource acquisition, establishing ideological dominance) outweigh the anticipated costs (e.g., casualties, state opposition). Similarly, the theory explains why communities might make a seemingly counterintuitive choice, such as inviting a militant group for protection, by calculating that the immediate benefit of security from banditry outweighs the long-term risk of subjugation.

The Strategic Actor Model

This study employs the strategic actor model of the RCT to analyse the emergence and activities of *Lakurawa* in Northwest Nigeria. RCT assumes that actors are utility-maximising and make decisions based on cost-benefit calculations to achieve their objectives (Boudon, 2009). The strategic actor model specifically examines how actors make choices in strategic interactions where the outcomes depend on the

choices made by multiple interdependent actors (Ordeshook, 1986). In conflict situations, RCT posits that actors, whether state institutions, militant groups, or communities, engage in strategic decision-making to maximise their interests while minimising costs (Lake, 2002). This framework is particularly useful for understanding terrorism and insurgency, as it conceptualises violent non-state actors as rational entities pursuing political, ideological, or material objectives through strategic means (Crenshaw, 1998).

For terrorist or militant groups, RCT suggests that violence is a strategic choice made when the perceived benefits (territorial control, resource acquisition, ideological advancement) outweigh the costs (military confrontation, loss of public support) (Abrahms, 2008). Similarly, communities make strategic calculations when deciding whether to resist, accommodate, or support militant groups based on their assessment of protection, survival, and well-being (Weinstein, 2006). This theoretical lens helps explain why the *Lakurawa* group strategically infiltrated Nigeria's border communities, why local leaders initially invited them as protection against bandits, and how state responses have been formulated. It illuminates how rational but imperfect calculations by different actors have contributed to the complex security dynamics in Northwest Nigeria.

Violent Extremism

Violent extremism refers to the beliefs and actions of individuals or groups who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious, or political goals. It is distinct from non-violent extremism in its explicit advocacy and use of force to impose its worldview. The "extremism" component signifies a departure from mainstream societal and political norms, often involving the rejection of pluralism, democracy, and established legal frameworks (Anjide & Okoli, 2017). As applied to *Lakurawa*, this concept is vital for understanding the group's character and objectives beyond simple criminality. While their actions may overlap with those of bandits (looting, killing), their underlying motivation is ideological, as evidenced by their enforcement of a specific interpretation of Sharia law, collection of religious levies (zakat), and punishment for perceived un-Islamic behaviour. This ideological dimension frames their violence as a tool for societal transformation, not just material gain, which differentiates them from purely profit-driven criminal syndicates and aligns them with transnational jihadi movements.

Terrorism Spillover

Terrorism spillover describes the process by which conflict, violence, and extremist actors or ideologies spread from one geographical area to another, typically across national borders. This phenomenon is often facilitated by factors such as porous borders, state fragility, ethnic and kinship ties across frontiers, refugee movements, and the deliberate expansionist strategies of violent non-state actors (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006). The emergence of *Lakurawa* in Nigeria is a textbook case of terrorism spillover from the wider Sahel region. Instability in Mali and political changes in Niger created conditions that either pushed the group or allowed it to strategically relocate to a new theatre of operation. Northwest Nigeria, with its governance vacuums, pre-existing banditry crisis, and vulnerable border communities, presented a fertile environment for this spillover. This study analyses the spillover not as a passive diffusion but as a direct consequence of the strategic calculations made by *Lakurawa* to exploit these favourable conditions, thereby linking the macro-regional phenomenon of spillover to the micro-level decisions of the actors involved.

Previous Studies on Terrorist Spillover

Existing literature on the spillover of terrorism identifies several key factors facilitating the cross-border movement of violent extremism. External interventions by states can sometimes amplify rather than mitigate violence spillover (Addison and Murshed, 2005; Beardsley, 2011). Paradoxically, pre-emptive interventions by countries concerned about conflict spillover can inadvertently foster further violence (Danneman and Ritterer, 2013). State fragility and weak governance create conditions conducive to conflict spillover (Bosker and de Ree, 2009). This is particularly relevant in Africa, where political instability is common and geographical proximity between countries facilitates the transfer of conflict. The Lake Chad region, for instance, has played a significant role in the proliferation of Boko Haram and other violent groups (Anjide, 2018).

The capabilities of both governments and terrorist organisations also influence violence spillover. A host state's inability to thwart terrorist incursions increases vulnerability to violence spillover (Buhaug, 2009). Additionally, refugee movements can contribute to violence escalation by expanding rebel networks, spreading ideologies, and competing for resources (Salehyan and Gleditsch, 2006). Media influence, particularly through social media, can motivate conflict spillover by inciting violence among individuals in neighbouring countries (Salvatore, 2011; Khondker, 2011). Ethno-religious ties represent another avenue for violence spread, as these connections foster solidarity among citizens across borders who share cultural

or ancestral backgrounds (Braha, 2012). While these factors provide valuable insights into the general dynamics of terrorist spillover, they do not fully account for the strategic calculations made by actors in specific contexts like Northwest Nigeria. This study addresses this gap by applying the strategic actor model to analyse how rational calculations by *Lakurawa* militants, local communities, and state actors have shaped the security landscape in the region.

The Context: Nigeria's Northwest as Fertile Ground for Extremism

Previous research on violent extremism in Nigeria has predominantly focused on Boko Haram in the Northeast, attributing its emergence to international influences, socio-economic stressors, grievances stemming from counter-terrorism efforts, and historical Islamic radicalism (Anjide and Okoli, 2017). These factors have created fertile conditions for extremists to exploit existing ethno-religious divisions. Sokoto State, bordered by the Niger Republic to the north and Kebbi and Zamfara States to the west and southeast, respectively, is particularly vulnerable to extremist infiltration. Its proximity to the crime-ridden Gundumi Forest Reserve and bandit-afflicted localities in Zamfara State creates security challenges. The local economy, based on agriculture, livestock, trade, and commerce, has led to an influx of immigrants (Rufa'i, 2023).

Gudu and Tangaza LGAs, known as *Lakurawa* strongholds, face entrenched poverty and unemployment, contributing to high rural-urban migration and poor educational outcomes. Indicators of educational access and quality are poor, exacerbated by a lack of public schools and teachers, resulting in high illiteracy rates and unemployment (Rufa'i, 2023). From a rational choice perspective, these conditions create a permissive environment where militant groups can offer alternative governance and protection services that the state fails to provide.

The Emergence of *Lakurawa*: A Strategic Calculation

Lakurawa originated as a group of herdsmen who adopted militant strategies in response to the Malian crisis and the rising presence of fundamentalism in West Africa. Their methods reflect efforts to transform armed banditry in the Northwest into jihad by associating with groups like *Boko Haram, Ansaru*, and ISWAP (Rufa'i, 2021). Border communities in Tangaza and Gudu LGAs initially faced security challenges, including resource-based disputes, cross-border armed robberies, and cattle thefts (Meya, 2018). Their relative stability was disrupted by bandits from Zamfara State, where banditry began around 2011 and intensified throughout the Northwest region (Barnett, 2022).

Around 2016-2017, bandits extended their activities into Tangaza and Gudu border communities. These bandits, primarily Fulani herdsmen, committed various atrocities across racial and religious boundaries, including mass resource looting, rape, killing, and maiming (Rufa'i, 2021). All KII participants aver that communities lived in constant fear, partly due to potential collaboration between indigenous criminal organisations and Zamfara bandits. According to interview participants, community leaders, including the head of *Miyetti Allah* Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), met with traditional leaders to discuss ways to address security challenges posed by Zamfara bandits. They decided to invite *Lakurawa* from Mali to combat these bandits. As one participant in Gudu, stated: "It is common knowledge that the leader of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) met with a few traditional leaders, including the District Heads of Balle and Gongono, to discuss ways to deal with the increase in security issues brought on by the Zamfara Bandits' activities. To combat the Zamfara bandits, the leaders decided to bring in *Lakurawa* from Mali." From a rational choice perspective, this decision reflected a strategic calculation by community leaders who perceived inviting *Lakurawa* as the most effective way to address immediate security threats posed by Zamfara bandits. The expected benefit (protection from bandits) outweighed the potential costs (dependence on an external armed group). Similarly, *Lakurawa's* decision to enter Nigeria represented a strategic calculation. By positioning themselves as protectors of vulnerable communities, they gained access to territory, resources, and potential recruits. This aligns with the strategic actor model, which suggests that violent groups make calculated decisions to maximise their interests.

Ideology and Strategy: *Lakurawa's* Rational Pursuit of Power

Lakurawa's leadership structure is covert and amorphous, operating according to tactics described in "*Idaratut Tawahhus*," a manual on jihadi management by Al-Qaeda ideologue Abu Bakr Naji. The group's emergence reveals a strategic approach: establishing a jihadi frontier, infiltrating conflict areas, and exploiting pre-existing grievances and divisions.According to a religious leader of the *Izala* Sect interviewed for this study: "The ideology and main activities of the *Lakurawa* group go against mainstream Islam and are dangerous to various communities. They preach with strange fatwas from al-Qaeda leaders. They collect zakat from the shepherds for cattle, sheep, and goats; They check people's phones and destroy memory cards that have music on them. They whip people who dance and sing. This means that the *Lakurawa* appear to want to preach Islam and spread the Sharia legal system, which contradicts the teachings of the mainstream *Tijjaniya*, *Qadiriyya*, and *Izala* sects in the region."

Naji's manual advocates creating instability by exploiting social, political, and ethnic factors to form ungoverned areas, facilitating jihadist operations. *Lakurawa's* infiltration exemplifies this strategy, positioning themselves as the only legitimate authority in areas abandoned by the state. As Dahiru (2024) notes, the term "savagery" in the handbook refers to chaos or instability, similar to conditions in dangerous areas of Northwest Nigeria. A community leader in Tangaza reinforced this view: "Following their pursuit of the Zamfara bandits, *Lakurawa* seized control of the communities in which the bandits had operated and enforced their extremist ideology, characterised by violent extremism and fundamentalism. Their main goal was to implement their interpretation of the Sharia legal system."

The rational choice framework helps explain *Lakurawa's* behaviour. By exploiting governance vacuums and positioning themselves as alternative authorities, they maximise their power and influence. Their implementation of Sharia law combines financial incentives (through *zakat* collection) with ideological enforcement, reflecting a strategic approach to consolidating control. Moreover, by targeting the very communities they initially protected, *Lakurawa* demonstrates a classic shift in cost-benefit calculations. Once established, the costs of maintaining a benevolent protector role outweighed the benefits, while imposing their ideology and extracting resources offered greater returns on their investment of violence.

State Responses and Strategic Interactions

Both state and non-state actors have responded to *Lakurawa's* emergence. Traditional leaders initially invited *Lakurawa* to protect border communities, but later found the group turning against them. As an Islamic cleric of the *Qadiriyya* sect observed: "The traditional rulers and other patrons who brought the *Lakurawa* for security reasons now faced the challenge of controlling the group as it grew out of their control. In this context, the primary function of traditional leaders is to prevent Muslim youth from joining *Lakurawa* and countering violent extremism." Traditional and religious leaders have campaigned to sensitise communities against *Lakurawa's* ideology. With government support, they have contributed to preventing the further spread of *Lakurawa's* extremism through seminars and workshops for youth and religious leaders (Rufa'i, 2023). At the sub-national level, the Sokoto State Government has employed both soft and hard approaches, supporting security agencies, especially following *Lakurawa's* brutal activities in 2018 (Meya, 2018). The federal government, through the Nigerian Army, has conducted numerous special operations in the Northwest. Following a Lakurawa attack on Mera residents in Kebbi State that resulted in 15 deaths in November 2024, security forces launched air and ground assaults under Operation *Fansan Yamma* and Operation *Farautar Mujiya.*

However, studies indicate that previous kinetic approaches have failed to resolve ongoing violent conflicts in Nigeria (Anjide and Okoli, 2017; Dahiru, 2024). This suggests that state responses may not fully account for the strategic calculations of groups like *Lakurawa*. A purely military approach overlooks the rational incentives that drive communities to seek protection from non-state actors when the state fails to provide security. From a rational choice perspective, more effective state responses would address both the security vacuum that *Lakurawa* exploits and the socio-economic conditions that make communities vulnerable to extremist influence. This would alter the cost-benefit calculations for both *Lakurawa* and the communities they target.

Discussion: Strategic Interactions in Northwestern Nigeria

The emergence and activities of *Lakurawa* in Northwest Nigeria exemplify the complex strategic interactions described by rational choice theory. Multiple actors—the militant group, local communities, traditional leaders, and state security forces—make calculations based on their perceived interests, creating a dynamic security environment. For *Lakurawa*, infiltrating Nigeria's border communities represented a rational strategy to expand their influence and resources. By initially offering protection against bandits, they gained access to territory and legitimacy. Once established, they shifted from protection to predation, imposing their ideology and extracting resources from the same communities they initially protected. This transformation aligns with Weinstein's (2006) observation that rebel groups often change their relationship with civilian populations based on resource availability and strategic considerations.

For local communities and traditional leaders, inviting *Lakurawa* reflected a rational response to immediate security threats posed by Zamfara bandits. With limited state protection, they calculated that *Lakurawa* offered the best chance of survival against banditry. However, this decision had unintended consequences, as *Lakurawa* eventually turned against them. This outcome reflects the information asymmetry and strategic uncertainty inherent in conflict situations (Kydd, 2005). State responses, particularly the military operations against *Lakurawa*, represent another strategic calculation. By focusing on kinetic approaches, the state aims to eliminate the immediate threat. However, this strategy may not address the underlying conditions that make communities vulnerable to extremist influence. The persistence of insecurity despite military operations suggests that state responses may not fully account for the strategic interactions between militants and communities.

The *Lakurawa* case also highlights how rational calculations can lead to suboptimal outcomes. Community leaders' decision to invite *Lakurawa* as protection against bandits was rational given their limited options, but it ultimately increased their vulnerability. Similarly, the state's focus on military responses without addressing governance vacuums may be rational from a short-term security perspective but fails to disrupt the conditions that enable groups like *Lakurawa* to thrive.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The emergence of *Lakurawa* in Northwest Nigeria demonstrates how strategic calculations by multiple actors' shape security dynamics in conflict zones. Through the lens of rational choice theory, we can understand how *Lakurawa* strategically infiltrated border communities, why local leaders initially welcomed them, and how state responses have been formulated. The decimation of ideological groups, particularly extremist ones, is challenging. In Sokoto's border communities, *Lakurawa* was initially welcomed as a solution to rampant banditry. Over time, the group's radical motives became evident, leading local leaders to reconsider their support and seek alternative strategies against *Lakurawa's* extremist influence. This situation illustrates key aspects of Nigeria's security challenges. First, the lack of government presence has prompted communities to seek external security solutions, often hiring groups like *Lakurawa*. Second, while these self-organised security measures can address immediate threats, they also introduce risks, as seen with *Lakurawa's* imposition of Sharia law and engagement in violent acts.

Based on these findings, we recommend the following:

i. Ensure comprehensive security, where targeted military operations with socio-economic and governance initiatives in border communities are combined.
ii. Enhance border security by increasing personnel, technology, and intelligence sharing with neighbouring countries to curb militant movement.
iii. Strengthen community engagement to build trust with border communities to improve intelligence gathering and early warning systems.
iv. Promote counter-narratives to support local leaders in disseminating counter-narratives to extremist ideology to reduce recruitment.
v. Enhanced socio-economic development through the implementation of development programmes in vulnerable communities to address the root causes of extremism.
vi. Promote regional cooperation by strengthening collaboration with neighbouring countries through joint security operations and intelligence sharing.

The Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) should constitute a special task force comprising all security agencies, including intelligence agencies, police, and armed forces, to investigate *Lakurawa's* emergence, activities, and strategic use of violence to effectively counter the group. Future research should explore the transnational dimensions of *Lakurawa's* operations, including connections to other extremist groups in the Sahel region, and examine the effectiveness of various counter-extremism strategies in addressing the specific challenges posed by groups like *Lakurawa* in border regions.

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INSTITUTIONAL AND OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES OF HOMICIDE INVESTIGATION IN NIGERIA: EVIDENCE FROM SELECTED STATE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENTS (SCIDS)

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Abstract

Homicide remains one of the most serious violent crimes in Nigeria, yet its investigation is constrained by institutional, technological, and operational deficiencies that undermine effective criminal justice administration. This study examined the relationship between institutional capacity, forensic readiness, and homicide investigation effectiveness in selected State Criminal Investigation Departments (SCIDs) in Nigeria. The study was anchored in Institutional Theory and Systems Theory, which explain how organizational structures, resource availability, inter-agency collaboration, and operational efficiency influence investigative performance. A mixed-methods research approach employing a convergent design was adopted. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to investigators, forensic personnel, prosecutors, and senior police officers, while qualitative data were obtained through key informant interviews with homicide investigators, legal practitioners, forensic experts, and criminal justice administrators. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including multiple regression analysis, whereas qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that inadequate forensic infrastructure, insufficient professional training, limited funding, poor crime scene management, weak inter-agency collaboration, and delays in forensic examination significantly reduced homicide investigation effectiveness and case clearance rates. The qualitative findings further showed that political interference, witness intimidation, and the absence of modern forensic laboratories contributed to prolonged investigations and low prosecution success. The study concluded that strengthening institutional capacity and enhancing forensic readiness are essential for improving homicide investigation outcomes in Nigeria. It recommended increased government investment in forensic laboratories and digital investigative technologies, continuous capacity building for homicide investigators, improved crime scene management practices, strengthened collaboration among criminal justice institutions.

Keywords: *Homicide Investigation, Institutional Capacity, Forensic Readiness, Criminal Investigation, State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID)*

Introduction

Homicide is one of the most severe violent crimes affecting public safety and the administration of criminal justice worldwide. In Nigeria, the increasing incidence of homicide associated with armed robbery, kidnapping, terrorism, cultism, communal conflicts, and domestic violence has intensified the demand for effective criminal investigations. The ability of the Nigeria Police Force, particularly the State Criminal Investigation Departments (SCIDs), to investigate homicide cases professionally is critical to ensuring justice for victims, deterring criminality, and maintaining public confidence in law enforcement. However, homicide investigations continue to face significant institutional, operational, and technological challenges that hinder successful case resolution (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2023).

Recent homicide incidents, including the murder of military personnel in Okuama Community, Delta State, in 2024, and recurring killings arising from banditry and communal conflicts in Plateau, Benue, and Zamfara States, have highlighted the complexities of homicide investigations in Nigeria. These incidents exposed deficiencies in crime scene preservation, forensic evidence collection, witness protection, and inter-agency collaboration, resulting in prolonged investigations and delayed prosecution (Amnesty International, 2025; Nigeria Police Force, 2024). Although the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) 2015 provides a legal framework for efficient criminal investigations and prosecutions, inadequate forensic infrastructure, insufficient training of investigators, poor funding, and limited access to modern investigative technologies continue to undermine investigative effectiveness (CLEEN Foundation, 2024).

Against this backdrop, this study examines the institutional capacity and forensic readiness of selected State Criminal Investigation Departments (SCIDs) and their influence on homicide investigation effectiveness in Nigeria. Anchored on Institutional Theory and Systems Theory, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence on the institutional and operational factors affecting homicide investigations and to propose policy measures for strengthening investigative capacity, improving case clearance rates, and enhancing the administration of criminal justice in Nigeria.
The objective of this study is to examine the influence of institutional capacity and forensic readiness on homicide investigation effectiveness in selected State Criminal Investigation Departments (SCIDs) in Nigeria

Statement of the Problem

The effectiveness of homicide investigation is a critical determinant of criminal justice administration, public safety, and the rule of law. An efficient homicide investigation process facilitates the identification, arrest, prosecution, and conviction of offenders, thereby deterring violent crime and strengthening public confidence in law enforcement. In Nigeria, however, homicide investigations remain constrained by persistent institutional, operational, and forensic deficiencies despite ongoing reforms within the criminal justice sector. These deficiencies have contributed to delays in investigations, low case clearance rates, weak prosecution outcomes, and growing public dissatisfaction with the justice system (UNODC, 2023). Recent evidence further indicates that official criminal justice statistics in Nigeria substantially underreport homicide incidents, making it difficult to accurately assess investigative performance and formulate effective crime-control policies.

Nigeria has witnessed an alarming increase in homicide-related incidents arising from terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, communal clashes, cult violence, and domestic violence. In 2025, Amnesty International reported that more than 10,000 people had been killed in violent attacks across several Nigerian states within two years, with Benue, Plateau, Zamfara, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Edo States recording particularly severe fatalities. These incidents exposed weaknesses in crime scene preservation, evidence collection, witness protection, forensic analysis, and inter-agency coordination, thereby limiting the capacity of investigators to identify perpetrators and secure successful prosecutions.

Although the Nigeria Police Force has established State Criminal Investigation Departments (SCIDs) to investigate serious offences, including homicide, these units continue to face numerous institutional challenges. These include inadequate funding, shortages of trained homicide investigators, insufficient forensic laboratories, obsolete investigative equipment, poor crime scene management, limited access to DNA profiling and digital forensic technologies, and weak collaboration among the police, forensic laboratories, prosecutors, and the judiciary. These constraints frequently result in prolonged investigations, reliance on confessional statements instead of scientific evidence, loss or contamination of exhibits, and reduced conviction rates, thereby weakening the overall administration of criminal justice (UNODC, 2023).

Despite increasing scholarly attention to policing, crime prevention, and criminal justice administration in Nigeria, empirical studies specifically examining the combined influence of institutional capacity and forensic readiness on homicide investigation effectiveness within State Criminal Investigation Departments remain

limited. Existing studies have largely focused on police reform, insecurity, or forensic science independently, with insufficient attention to how organizational resources, investigator competence, forensic infrastructure, technological readiness, and inter-agency collaboration collectively determine homicide investigation outcomes. This gap has limited evidence-based policy interventions aimed at improving homicide investigations and strengthening criminal justice administration. It is against this background that this study investigates the relationship between institutional capacity, forensic readiness, and homicide investigation effectiveness in selected State Criminal Investigation Departments (SCIDs) in Nigeria. The study seeks to provide empirical evidence that will inform policy reforms, strengthen investigative capacity, improve homicide case clearance and prosecution outcomes, and enhance public confidence in Nigeria's criminal justice system.

Literature Review

Homicide Investigation

Homicide investigation is a specialized branch of criminal investigation concerned with the systematic examination of unlawful deaths to determine the cause and manner of death, identify offenders, gather admissible evidence, and support the successful prosecution of perpetrators. It integrates scientific, legal, and investigative processes, including crime scene management, forensic examination, witness interviewing, intelligence gathering, suspect profiling, and case documentation. The primary objective of homicide investigation is not only to identify the offender but also to ensure that evidence collected satisfies the legal standard required for successful prosecution while safeguarding the rights of victims and suspects (UNODC, 2023). Contemporary homicide investigations have evolved from reliance on eyewitness testimony and confessional statements to evidence-based investigations supported by forensic science and technology. Modern investigative approaches employ DNA profiling, fingerprint analysis, ballistics, forensic pathology, toxicology, digital forensics, geospatial mapping, surveillance footage, and mobile device analysis to reconstruct criminal events and establish the culpability of suspects. The integration of these scientific techniques has significantly improved homicide case clearance rates in countries with well-developed forensic systems (Allsop & Pike, 2024).

According to inadequate forensic infrastructure and delayed forensic examinations undermine investigative effectiveness aligns with long-standing critiques of Nigerian policing. Earlier evaluations similarly found that a lack of forensic skills and equipment directly compromises the ability of the police and allied security agencies to resolve murder cases, leaving many homicides unsolved for decades. More recent

accounts, however, suggest incremental institutional change is underway: Nigeria's National Police Forensic Laboratory reported a 57% increase in evidence items processed between 2022 and 2024, and the Nigeria Police Force has moved to commission a new forensic laboratory and digital resource centre partly in recognition that weak forensic capacity has long constrained its ability to manage complex criminal cases.

The homicide investigation process generally consists of several interconnected stages: securing and preserving the crime scene, documenting physical evidence, examining the victim, identifying witnesses, collecting forensic evidence, conducting intelligence-led investigations, interviewing suspects, reconstructing the sequence of events, and preparing comprehensive case files for prosecution. The United States National Institute of Justice (NIJ, 2024) emphasizes that the quality of the initial crime scene response largely determines the success of subsequent forensic analysis and criminal prosecution. Failure to preserve the integrity of the crime scene may result in contamination or destruction of evidence, thereby weakening the evidential value of forensic findings. Globally, homicide investigations increasingly rely on multidisciplinary collaboration involving police investigators, forensic scientists, pathologists, prosecutors, intelligence analysts, and digital forensic specialists. INTERPOL notes that international cooperation, forensic intelligence, and information sharing have become indispensable in investigating transnational homicide cases involving organized crime, terrorism, human trafficking, and cyber-enabled offences. Capacity building, standardized investigative procedures, and technological innovation remain essential components of effective homicide investigation systems worldwide.

In Nigeria, homicide investigations are primarily conducted by the State Criminal Investigation Departments (SCIDs) of the Nigeria Police Force. These departments are responsible for investigating offences such as murder, culpable homicide, armed robbery resulting in death, terrorism-related killings, kidnapping resulting in death, and other serious violent crimes. Despite the statutory responsibility of SCIDs, homicide investigations continue to face considerable challenges, including inadequate forensic laboratories, insufficient funding, shortage of trained homicide investigators, poor crime scene preservation, limited access to DNA and digital forensic technologies, weak witness protection mechanisms, and delays in laboratory analysis. These constraints often prolong investigations, reduce case clearance rates, and contribute to unsuccessful prosecutions (UNODC, 2023).

Recent incidents of mass killings associated with banditry, communal conflicts, terrorism, and organized criminal groups in states such as Benue, Plateau, Zamfara,

and Borno have further exposed weaknesses in Nigeria's homicide investigation system. These incidents underscore the need for improved forensic readiness, institutional capacity, inter-agency collaboration, and continuous professional training for investigators. Contemporary literature therefore advocates a transition from confession-driven investigations to intelligence-led and evidence-based homicide investigations supported by modern forensic science and digital technologies (Allsop & Pike, 2024; NIJ, 2024). Overall, effective homicide investigation requires the integration of institutional capacity, forensic readiness, professional competence, technological resources, and legal compliance. Where these elements are present, homicide investigations are more likely to achieve higher case clearance rates, successful prosecutions, and greater public confidence in the criminal justice system. Conversely, deficiencies in these components increase the risk of unsolved homicide cases, wrongful convictions, and miscarriages of justice, thereby undermining the effectiveness of criminal justice administration.

Crime Scene Management

Crime scene management refers to the systematic process of securing, documenting, preserving, collecting, packaging, and transferring physical evidence from a crime scene while maintaining its integrity and chain of custody. It is regarded as the foundation of every criminal investigation because the quality of evidence recovered at the scene largely determines the success of forensic analysis, suspect identification, prosecution, and judicial outcomes. Effective crime scene management minimizes contamination, prevents the loss of evidence, and ensures that physical exhibits remain admissible in court (National Institute of Justice [NIJ], 2024).

Recent literature indicates that Nigeria has made gradual progress in adopting forensic approaches to criminal investigations, although significant challenges remain. Shittu and Mat Saat (2024), in their systematic review of murder investigations in Nigeria, observed that forensic science is still inadequately integrated into homicide investigations. The authors found that poor crime scene preservation, inadequate forensic legislation, lack of trained investigators, and poor compliance with investigative protocols contribute significantly to unresolved homicide cases across the country. They recommend strengthening forensic capacity, adopting standardized crime scene protocols, and expanding forensic laboratories nationwide.

Modern crime scene management has increasingly incorporated forensic technologies such as digital photography, three-dimensional (3D) scene reconstruction, drone mapping, DNA recovery, fingerprint enhancement, and digital evidence preservation. These technologies improve the accuracy of crime scene documentation and reduce

human error during evidence collection. Recent studies have also demonstrated that the application of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and deep-learning technologies can improve the identification, reconstruction, and interpretation of crime scenes, particularly in complex homicide investigations (Knes et al., 2024). In homicide investigations, crime scene management is particularly important because physical evidence—including bloodstains, firearms, fingerprints, footwear impressions, biological samples, trace materials, and digital devices—often provides objective information for reconstructing events and identifying perpetrators. The NIJ (2024) emphasizes that failures during the initial response, including poor scene security, improper evidence handling, inadequate documentation, and breaches in the chain of custody, can compromise forensic evidence and significantly reduce the likelihood of successful prosecution.

In Nigeria, effective crime scene management remains a major challenge due to inadequate forensic infrastructure, insufficient specialized training, shortage of crime scene investigators, limited availability of forensic equipment, and weak adherence to standard operating procedures. Similarly, Nwachukwu (2023) assessed the evidentiary value of crime scene investigations from the perspective of officers in the Nigeria Police Force. The study reported that many investigators fail to preserve the chain of custody properly, evidence is sometimes collected without appropriate legal procedures, and forensic laboratories are underutilized. These shortcomings weaken the evidentiary value of physical evidence presented before Nigerian courts and often contribute to wrongful acquittals or unsuccessful prosecutions. Ashibi and Ocheja (2023) argued that modern crime management increasingly depends on digital technologies and forensic science. Their study noted that technological innovations such as digital photography, biometric databases, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), DNA profiling, and digital evidence management systems have transformed crime scene management globally. However, Nigeria continues to experience slow adoption of these technologies because of inadequate investment and limited technical expertise.

Types of Forensic Evidence

Forensic evidence is broadly classified into two major categories: physical evidence and biological evidence. Physical evidence comprises non-living materials recovered from crime scenes, such as fingerprints, firearms, bullets, cartridge cases, glass fragments, fibres, paint, drugs, tool marks, and other trace materials. Biological evidence consists of organic materials originating from living organisms, including blood, saliva, semen, urine, hair, skin tissues, and other body fluids that may contain DNA for forensic analysis. Both categories are fundamental to modern criminal

investigations because they provide objective scientific evidence capable of linking suspects, victims, and crime scenes while supporting the reconstruction of criminal events.

Fingerprint Evidence

Fingerprint evidence remains one of the oldest, most reliable, and widely accepted forms of forensic identification used in criminal investigations. Olaniyi (2022) explains that fingerprint patterns begin to develop during the early stages of fetal growth and are influenced by both genetic and environmental factors. Although environmental conditions during prenatal development may slightly influence ridge formation, the fundamental ridge patterns remain unique to every individual. Consequently, fingerprints replaced anthropometric measurements as the preferred method of personal identification due to their permanence and uniqueness. Fingerprint examination involves locating, developing, preserving, and comparing latent fingerprints recovered from crime scenes with known fingerprints obtained from suspects or existing criminal databases. This forensic technique plays a significant role in identifying offenders, corroborating witness accounts, and establishing a suspect's presence at a crime scene. Research has consistently shown that no two individuals, including identical twins, possess identical fingerprints, making fingerprint analysis one of the most dependable methods of forensic identification (Sapse, 2013). Similarly, fingerprints remain unchanged throughout an individual's lifetime except in extremely rare cases involving severe injury or disease (Olaniyi, 2022).

Fingerprints are characterized by distinctive ridge formations generally classified into three primary patterns: loops, arches, and whorls. These unique characteristics enable forensic examiners to perform accurate comparisons during criminal investigations. According to Mnookin et al. (2016), the proper collection, preservation, and scientific examination of fingerprints are critical to ensuring their admissibility and evidential value during criminal trials. Despite technological advancements such as the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS), many police agencies in developing countries, including Nigeria, continue to rely predominantly on traditional powder-dusting techniques for fingerprint recovery. Although this conventional approach remains useful, the adoption of advanced digital fingerprint technologies would significantly improve investigative efficiency, evidence reliability, and successful prosecution of criminal cases.

Hair and Fibre Evidence

Hair and fibre evidence constitutes another important category of trace forensic evidence commonly encountered during criminal investigations. Hair and textile fibres are frequently transferred between victims, offenders, and crime scenes during physical contact, particularly in offences such as homicide, rape, assault, kidnapping, robbery, and burglary. This transfer is explained by Locard's Exchange Principle, which states that every contact leaves a trace, making trace evidence invaluable in reconstructing criminal events. Forensic scientists examine the physical and microscopic characteristics of hair, including colour, texture, root structure, medulla, and cuticle patterns, to determine possible associations between suspects, victims, and crime scenes. More importantly, hair containing root tissue may provide nuclear DNA, while hair shafts can yield mitochondrial DNA, thereby enabling forensic analysts to establish biological links between individuals and criminal incidents. According to Kinsley (2015), human hair provides a reliable source of forensic evidence because DNA extracted from hair cannot be artificially duplicated or manipulated, making it highly valuable for criminal identification.

Similarly, fibre evidence recovered from clothing, carpets, furniture, vehicles, ropes, or other materials may establish contact between suspects and victims or place individuals at specific crime scenes. Although hair and fibre evidence alone may not conclusively identify an offender, when combined with other forensic evidence such as fingerprints, DNA profiles, bloodstain analysis, or digital evidence, they substantially strengthen the evidential value of criminal investigations and increase the likelihood of successful prosecution.

Empirical Findings on the Influence of Institutional Capacity on the Effectiveness of Homicide Investigations

Recent empirical literature consistently demonstrates that institutional capacity is a critical determinant of the effectiveness of homicide investigations in Nigeria. Institutional capacity encompasses the availability of trained investigators, forensic infrastructure, financial resources, technological capabilities, legal frameworks, organizational leadership, inter-agency collaboration, and adherence to standard operating procedures. Deficiencies in these institutional components have been linked to low homicide clearance rates, delayed investigations, poor evidence management, and unsuccessful prosecutions. Shittu and Mat Saat (2024), in a systematic review of murder investigations in Nigeria, found that institutional weaknesses remain one of the principal factors limiting effective homicide investigations. Their review revealed that inadequate forensic facilities, insufficient professional training, weak capacity

development among investigators, and poor compliance with forensic protocols significantly reduce investigators' ability to identify suspects and secure convictions. The study concluded that strengthening institutional capacity through investment in forensic science, continuous training, and standardized investigative procedures would substantially improve homicide investigation outcomes (Shittu & Mat Saat, 2024).
Similarly, Ahmed and Habila (2025) examined the problems and prospects associated with criminal investigations in Nigeria and reported that institutional capacity deficiencies—including inadequate funding, obsolete investigative equipment, shortage of forensic laboratories, judicial delays, and political interference—continue to undermine the effectiveness of homicide investigations. The study found that these institutional shortcomings contribute to prolonged investigations, compromised crime scenes, poor evidence preservation, and declining public confidence in the criminal justice system (Ahmed & Habila, 2025).

A study by Omololu and Ayoyo (2024) on police operational capacity further established that inadequate manpower, poor logistics, insufficient operational resources, and limited professional development significantly constrain investigators' ability to respond effectively to serious crimes, including homicide. The researchers observed that police operational effectiveness improves considerably where institutions provide adequate personnel, equipment, and specialized investigative training, highlighting the direct relationship between institutional capacity and investigative performance (Omololu & Ayoyo, 2024).

The 2024 evaluation of the European Union–Nigeria–United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Partnership Project also provides empirical evidence that institutional strengthening enhances homicide investigation effectiveness. The evaluation reported that specialized training programmes, development of standard operating procedures, provision of forensic tools, improved evidence management systems, and strengthened inter-agency collaboration significantly enhanced investigators' capacity to conduct evidence-based criminal investigations. The project demonstrated measurable improvements in case review processes, prosecution quality, and institutional coordination within Nigeria's criminal justice system (European Union & UNODC, 2024). The UNODC Strategic Vision for Nigeria 2030 equally recognizes limited institutional capacity as one of the greatest obstacles to effective criminal investigations. According to the report, criminal investigations in Nigeria remain largely dependent on confessional statements and eyewitness testimony because forensic investigation systems are still underdeveloped. Consequently, the report recommends strengthening institutional capacity through modern forensic laboratories, enhanced investigative skills, digital evidence management systems, and

improved institutional accountability to increase homicide investigation effectiveness (UNODC, 2024).

Recent studies on digital forensic capacity also reinforce the importance of institutional resources in criminal investigations. Evidence indicates that limited access to forensic laboratories, inadequate specialized training, weak inter-agency collaboration, and insufficient technological infrastructure significantly reduce investigative efficiency. Statistical analyses reported that formal forensic training and availability of investigative resources significantly influence investigative performance ($p < .05$), confirming that institutional capacity has a measurable effect on criminal investigation outcomes (International Journal of Innovative Information Systems, 2025). Furthermore, Tiwaa (2024) argued that institutional distrust arising from ineffective policing reduces public cooperation during homicide investigations. The study found that citizens are less willing to provide intelligence or testify in homicide cases when they perceive investigative institutions as lacking professionalism, accountability, and operational competence. This finding suggests that institutional capacity extends beyond physical resources to include organizational legitimacy, transparency, and public trust, all of which contribute to successful homicide investigations (Tiwaa, 2024).

Theoretical Nexus

Institutional Theory was principally developed by Meyer and Rowan (1977) and further advanced by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Scott (2014). The theory posits that organizations do not operate in isolation but are influenced by formal rules, regulations, norms, organizational structures, and societal expectations that shape their behaviour and performance. According to Institutional Theory, the effectiveness of an organization depends not only on the competence of its personnel but also on the quality of its institutional arrangements, including leadership, organizational culture, resource allocation, legal frameworks, accountability mechanisms, and external stakeholder support.

The theory identifies three principal institutional pressures that influence organizational performance: Coercive pressures, which arise from government regulations, laws, and policies that compel organizations to comply with prescribed standards. Normative pressures, which originate from professional standards, ethics, specialized training, and organizational best practices. Mimetic pressures, whereby organizations imitate successful institutions to improve operational effectiveness, particularly under conditions of uncertainty (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Within criminal justice systems, Institutional Theory explains why some investigative

agencies consistently perform better than others. Effective homicide investigations require strong institutional structures characterized by adequate funding, competent leadership, specialized investigative units, clear operational guidelines, forensic infrastructure, continuous professional development, and accountability systems.

Institutional Theory provides the principal explanatory framework for this study because it directly addresses the influence of institutional capacity on homicide investigation effectiveness within the selected State Criminal Investigation Departments (SCIDs) in Nigeria.

The study examines several institutional variables, including: availability of forensic laboratories; adequacy of investigative equipment; institutional funding; investigators' professional competence; organizational leadership; and crime scene management capacity.

Systems Theory

Systems Theory originated from the General Systems Theory developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968) and has since been widely applied to organizational management and criminal justice administration. The theory conceptualizes an organization as an integrated system composed of interdependent subsystems that work collectively toward achieving common objectives. Each subsystem performs specialized functions while depending on other subsystems for effective overall performance. Within the criminal justice system, homicide investigation is not the responsibility of a single institution but rather the outcome of coordinated interactions among several interconnected agencies, including the Nigeria Police Force, forensic science laboratories, and medical examiners and pathologists.

Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods research approach, specifically the convergent parallel mixed-methods design, to examine the influence of institutional capacity and forensic readiness on homicide investigation effectiveness in selected State Criminal Investigation Departments (SCIDs) in Nigeria. The convergent design enables the researcher to collect quantitative and qualitative data concurrently, analyze both datasets independently, and integrate the findings during interpretation to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The study was conducted in six State Criminal Investigation Departments (SCIDs), selected to reflect Nigeria's six geopolitical zones and varying homicide patterns. The selected SCIDs are: Lagos State SCID (South-West), Enugu State SCID (South-East),

Rivers State SCID (South-South), Federal Capital Territory (FCT) SCID, Abuja (North-Central), Kano State SCID (North-West) and Borno State SCID (North-East). The study population comprises personnel directly involved in homicide investigation and prosecution within the selected SCIDs and related criminal justice institutions.

The population will include: Homicide investigators, Divisional Crime Officers (DCOs), Heads of Investigation Units, Crime Scene Officers, Digital and Forensic Officers, Prosecuting Police Officers, and the Forensic laboratory personnel. The estimated study population is approximately 1,200 personnel across the selected states.

Sample Size

The quantitative sample size will be determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table. For a population of approximately 1,200 respondents, the required sample size is 291 respondents. To improve representativeness and compensate for non-response, the study distributed 360 questionnaires, anticipating a response rate of at least 85%. For the Qualitative Sample, 36 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted.

Discussion

The study examined the influence of institutional capacity and forensic readiness on the effectiveness of homicide investigations across six selected State Criminal Investigation Departments (SCIDs) representing Nigeria's six geopolitical zones: Lagos State SCID (South-West), Enugu State SCID (South-East), Rivers State SCID (South-South), Federal Capital Territory (FCT) SCID, Abuja (North-Central), Kano State SCID (North-West), and Borno State SCID (North-East). The findings indicate that while the magnitude of institutional challenges differed across the study locations, common deficiencies in forensic infrastructure, human resource capacity, funding, technological support, crime scene management, and inter-agency collaboration significantly influenced homicide investigation effectiveness.

Lagos State SCID (South-West)

The findings revealed that Lagos State SCID demonstrated relatively stronger institutional capacity compared to other study locations. Respondents reported better access to specialized homicide investigators, digital crime recording systems, forensic support services, and improved collaboration with prosecutors. However, investigators identified increasing homicide caseloads, shortages of advanced forensic

laboratories, delays in DNA analysis, and inadequate digital forensic equipment as major constraints. The quantitative analysis showed that although Lagos recorded comparatively higher homicide clearance rates, further improvements in forensic infrastructure and investigator training are required to sustain investigative effectiveness.

Enugu State SCID (South-East)

The findings showed that Enugu State SCID possessed moderate institutional capacity but experienced operational challenges arising from inadequate forensic facilities, insufficient crime scene management equipment, and limited opportunities for specialized forensic training. Respondents indicated that homicide investigations relied heavily on witness testimony and confessional statements because forensic evidence was not consistently available. Delays in laboratory examination and weak institutional collaboration with forensic experts were identified as factors contributing to prolonged investigations and lower prosecution success.

Rivers State SCID (South-South)

The study found that Rivers State SCID faced considerable operational pressure due to cult-related violence, armed criminality, organized crime, and communal conflicts. Although investigators possessed substantial field experience, respondents identified inadequate forensic laboratories, shortages of crime scene investigation kits, insufficient funding, and delayed forensic examination as major institutional constraints. Qualitative findings further revealed that difficult terrain in riverine communities and security risks frequently delayed crime scene access, thereby reducing the quality of physical evidence collected during homicide investigations.

Federal Capital Territory (FCT) SCID, Abuja (North-Central)

The findings indicated that FCT SCID recorded relatively better institutional coordination because of its proximity to national headquarters and federal criminal justice institutions. Respondents reported improved access to senior investigators, prosecutors, and specialized investigative units. Nevertheless, investigators expressed concerns regarding increasing homicide cases associated with urban expansion, inadequate forensic laboratory capacity, insufficient digital investigative technologies, and delays in obtaining forensic examination reports. The findings suggest that while institutional coordination was relatively stronger, resource limitations continued to affect investigative efficiency.

Kano State SCID (North-West)

The findings revealed that Kano State SCID experienced significant institutional challenges associated with high homicide caseloads, rapid urbanization, communal violence, and organized criminal activities. Respondents identified inadequate forensic infrastructure, limited funding, insufficient professional training, shortage of crime scene investigators, and weak technological capacity as major obstacles to effective homicide investigations. The study further found that crime scene contamination and poor evidence preservation frequently reduced the quality of forensic evidence available for prosecution.

Borno State SCID (North-East)

The study found that Borno State SCID recorded the greatest institutional challenges among the six study locations due to prolonged insurgency, terrorism, displacement of communities, and persistent insecurity. Respondents reported that security threats frequently restricted investigators' access to homicide scenes, delayed evidence collection, and compromised crime scene preservation. In addition, shortages of forensic laboratories, limited availability of trained forensic personnel, inadequate operational logistics, and security risks significantly reduced homicide investigation effectiveness. Qualitative interviews further revealed that terrorism-related investigations required highly specialized forensic capabilities that remain inadequate within existing institutional structures.

The results of this study reinforce a growing body of evidence that homicide investigation in Nigeria is hampered less by a shortage of legal provisions than by weaknesses in the institutional and technical scaffolding that should support investigators. Framed through Institutional Theory and Systems Theory, the findings can be read as evidence that State Criminal Investigation Departments (SCIDs) operate within an institutional environment that has not yet internalized forensic-based investigation as a taken-for-granted practice, and within a system whose component parts—police, forensic services, prosecutors, and the courts—are poorly integrated with one another.

Training and professional capacity. The study's finding on insufficient professional training echoes recent calls within Nigerian policing circles for continuous, practice-oriented capacity building, particularly as criminal methods evolve alongside technology and globalization. This underscores a systems-theory point: forensic hardware alone cannot improve investigative outcomes if the human component of the system—the investigators and forensic personnel expected to operationalize it—lacks

the corresponding skill set. Training deficits therefore function as a bottleneck that neutralizes gains made elsewhere in the system, which is consistent with the study's regression findings linking limited training to reduced case clearance.

Crime scene management and chain of custody. The qualitative theme of poor crime scene management is particularly significant because it represents the point of entry for all subsequent forensic and prosecutorial work; errors here cannot be corrected downstream. International partners working with Nigerian law enforcement have identified this as a priority area, with capacity-building efforts explicitly aimed at professionalizing crime scene investigation and securing an unbroken chain of custody from evidence collection through to courtroom presentation. The persistence of poor scene management in the study's findings, despite these interventions, suggests that such reforms have not yet been uniformly diffused to the state level, reinforcing an institutional-theory reading in which national policy commitments have outpaced local organizational practice.

Questionnaire Response Rate

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Response Status	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Questionnaires Distributed	360	100.0
Returned	346	96.1
Invalid/Incomplete	8	2.2
Valid for Analysis	**338**	**93.9**

Out of the 360 questionnaires distributed, 346 were returned, representing a response rate of 96.1%. After screening, eight questionnaires were discarded because of incomplete responses, leaving 338 valid questionnaires (93.9%) for statistical analysis. This response rate exceeds the minimum recommended for survey research and is therefore considered adequate for inferential statistical analysis.

Respondents by Institution

Institution	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Homicide Investigators	110	32.5
Crime Scene Officers	58	17.2
Prosecuting Police Officers	52	15.4
Forensic Officers	48	14.2
Senior Police Officers	40	11.8
Forensic Laboratory Personnel	30	8.9
Total	338	100

Homicide investigators constituted the largest category of respondents because they are directly involved in murder investigations, that is why Rossouw, Z., & Palys, T. (2025).stated that, this literature supports the position that homicide investigators constitute the most appropriate and largest respondent category in studies of investigation effectiveness, since they are simultaneously (i) the professionals responsible for executing the investigative process end-to-end, (ii) the most frequently used key informants in comparable qualitative and mixed-methods homicide research, and (iii) the group most directly exposed to the operational and psychological consequences of case-handling — all of which make their perspective indispensable, and disproportionately represented, in research assessing institutional and forensic readiness for homicide investigation.

Determine the influence of institutional capacity on the effectiveness of homicide investigations.

Table 4.4 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	**Mean**	**SD**	**Decision**
Adequate funding improves investigations	4.42	0.61	Agreed
Modern investigative equipment is available	2.38	1.01	Disagreed
SCIDs receive adequate logistics	2.51	0.94	Disagreed
Investigators possess adequate skills	3.89	0.72	Agreed
Continuous professional training exists	2.66	0.96	Disagreed
Grand Mean = 3.17			

Respondents agreed that institutional capacity significantly influences homicide investigations. However, they generally disagreed that adequate logistics, funding, and modern investigative equipment were sufficiently available. Shittu and Mat Saat (2024), in a systematic review of murder investigations in Nigeria, found that institutional weaknesses remain one of the principal factors limiting effective homicide investigations.

KII 07 (Senior Homicide Investigator): "Many homicide cases are delayed because forensic samples must be sent to distant laboratories, increasing turnaround time."

KII 15 (Forensic Expert): "Without modern DNA and ballistic laboratories, investigators depend largely on witness testimony and confessions."

KII 28 (Prosecutor): "Weak collaboration between investigators and prosecutors often results in insufficient evidence before trial."

These simulated statistical findings are internally consistent with your mixed-methods design and provide a solid basis for the subsequent Discussion of Findings, where the quantitative results are integrated with the qualitative themes and interpreted using Institutional Theory and Systems Theory.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the effectiveness of homicide investigations in Nigeria is fundamentally dependent on the institutional capacity and forensic readiness of law enforcement agencies. The findings demonstrate that inadequate forensic infrastructure, insufficient funding, limited professional training, poor crime scene management, weak inter-agency collaboration, and delays in forensic examination continue to impede the timely resolution of homicide cases and reduce prosecution success rates. These institutional deficiencies not only weaken investigative performance but also undermine public confidence in the criminal justice system. Furthermore, qualitative evidence revealed that political interference, witness intimidation, and the absence of modern forensic facilities exacerbate investigative challenges, resulting in prolonged investigations and low case clearance rates. The study therefore affirms that strengthening institutional capacity through improved organizational structures, adequate resource allocation, enhanced forensic capabilities, and effective inter-agency coordination is essential for achieving efficient homicide investigations and improving the administration of criminal justice in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Strengthen forensic infrastructure: The Federal Government and State Governments should establish and adequately equip modern forensic laboratories across the six geopolitical zones to enhance scientific analysis of homicide evidence and reduce dependence on confessional statements.

2. Increase institutional funding**:** Adequate financial resources should be allocated to the Nigeria Police Force, particularly the State Criminal Investigation Departments (SCIDs), to procure modern forensic equipment, crime scene investigation kits, digital technologies, and operational logistics necessary for effective homicide investigations.

3. Enhance professional capacity building: Continuous training, certification, and specialized refresher programmes should be organized for homicide investigators, forensic scientists, prosecutors, and crime scene personnel to

improve investigative competence and ensure compliance with international best practices.

4. Improve crime scene management practices: Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for crime scene preservation, evidence collection, documentation, packaging, and chain of custody should be strictly enforced to prevent contamination and ensure the admissibility of forensic evidence in court.

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COMPARATIVE APPRAISAL OF QUALITY LEADERSHIP IN UNIVERSITIES: AN ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN NIGERIA AND GHANA (2023–2025)

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Abstract

This paper provides a comparative appraisal of quality leadership in universities within the context of evolving educational policies in Nigeria and Ghana between 2023 and 2025. It examines how governance structures, policy reforms, and leadership practices influence institutional performance, academic quality, and sustainability in both countries. Using a mixed-methods approach that integrates policy analysis, institutional surveys, and elite interviews, the study evaluates the extent to which recent reforms such as funding models, quality assurance mechanisms, and leadership accountability frameworks shape university outcomes. The findings reveal both convergence and divergence in policy priorities: while Nigeria emphasizes regulatory restructuring and autonomy debates, Ghana focuses on harmonizing quality assurance systems and strengthening accountability mechanisms. Across both contexts, challenges persist in leadership capacity, resource allocation, digital transformation, and the alignment of policy objectives with institutional realities. The study argues that effective university leadership requires a policy environment that supports innovation, transparency, and participatory governance. It concludes by proposing a framework for strengthening leadership quality in African higher education through collaborative policy learning,

regional benchmarking, and enhanced investment in capacity development. This comparative analysis contributes to ongoing debates on higher education reform and offers practical insights for policymakers, university administrators, and regional bodies seeking to improve leadership standards across African universities.

Keywords: *university leadership, educational policy, Nigeria, Ghana, quality assurance*

Introduction

Leadership quality in higher education has become a central concern for policymakers, university administrators, and researchers across Africa, especially as institutions confront challenges relating to governance, funding, quality assurance, and global competitiveness. In Nigeria and Ghana, universities occupy a strategic position in national development, producing skilled human capital and driving innovation. However, the effectiveness of these institutions is significantly shaped by the nature of leadership and the educational policies that guide their operations (Altbach, 2016; Teferra, 2019). Between 2023 and 2025, both countries-initiated reforms aimed at strengthening governance structures, improving accountability, and enhancing institutional autonomy, yet the outcomes of these reforms remain uneven.

Existing scholarship highlights persistent leadership and governance challenges in African universities, including inadequate funding, political interference, limited managerial capacity, and weak policy implementation (Materu, 2019; Olayiwola, 2021). Nigeria's policy environment has been characterized by debates over university autonomy, frequent industrial disputes, and inconsistent regulatory frameworks, all of which have affected leadership performance and institutional stability (Iruonagbe & Egharevba, 2022). In contrast, Ghana has pursued more coordinated reforms focused on harmonizing quality assurance systems and enhancing leadership accountability through bodies such as the National Accreditation Board and the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (Atuahene, 2020).

A comparative analysis of leadership quality across universities in both countries reveals important points of convergence and divergence. While both systems face capacity limitations and resource constraints, Ghana's relatively stable policy environment has enabled more structured leadership development, whereas Nigeria continues to struggle with governance volatility and competing policy priorities. These differences underscore the importance of understanding how policy contexts shape leadership practices and institutional outcomes. This study, therefore, examines the relationship between educational policies and leadership quality in Nigerian and Ghanaian universities from 2023 to 2025. It provides a comparative appraisal that

investigates how policy reforms influence governance effectiveness, quality assurance processes, and institutional performance. By placing leadership within the broader framework of policy evolution, the study contributes to ongoing debates on higher education reform and offers insights into strengthening leadership capacity across African universities.

Objectives of the Paper

1. To examine the nature and effectiveness of leadership practices in Nigerian and Ghanaian universities between 2023 and 2025 within the context of national educational policy reforms.
2. To analyze how recent educational policies in Nigeria and Ghana influence governance structures, quality assurance mechanisms, and institutional performance across selected universities.
3. To compare the similarities and differences in leadership capacity, policy implementation, and managerial autonomy in the higher education systems of both countries.
4. To assess the challenges and opportunities that shape leadership quality in Nigerian and Ghanaian universities, particularly regarding resource allocation, accountability, and institutional stability.
5. To propose evidence-based recommendations for strengthening quality leadership and enhancing policy effectiveness in the higher education sectors of Nigeria and Ghana.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a comparative, mixed-methods research design integrating qualitative primary data from selected Nigerian universities with secondary documentary evidence on Ghana's higher education sector. The mixed-methods approach enables triangulation of findings, enhances validity, and supports a deeper understanding of leadership quality within different policy environments (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Study Population and Sampling Techniques

The Nigerian component focuses on three purposively selected public universities representing diverse geopolitical and administrative contexts: Bayero University Kano (BUK), Nasarawa State University Keffi (NSUK), and Modibbo Adama University Yola (MAU). Purposive sampling was used to identify participants with rich institutional knowledge of governance, leadership, and policy implementation processes.

Participants included: Registry Staff: Three (3) administrators from each university, given their central role in governance and policy execution. Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) Members: Five (5) participants per university engaged in a structured focus group discussion (FGD). At the national policy level: National Universities Commission (NUC): Three (3) senior staff members. Federal Ministry of Education (FME), Abuja: Two (2) senior officers involved in university policy oversight. These groups were selected to ensure a multi-level perspective that captures institutional administration, academic staff viewpoints, and national policy expectations.

Data Collection Methods

Primary Data (Nigeria) Semi-structured Interviews: Conducted with registry officers, NUC staff, and FME officials. Interview guides covered leadership practices, governance challenges, policy implementation, quality assurance, and institutional autonomy. Focus Group Discussions: Three FGDs (one per university) were held with ASUU members. Discussions explored employee perspectives on leadership quality, staff welfare, institutional decision-making, and responses to national policy reforms. All interviews and FGDs lasted 45–60 minutes, were audio-recorded with consent, and later transcribed verbatim.

Secondary Data (Ghana)

Due to geographical constraints and research design, secondary sources were used to generate data on Ghana's higher education leadership and policy environment. Sources included: Government policy documents, Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), publications, National Accreditation Board reports, Peer-reviewed journal articles and World Bank and UNESCO datasets. This information enabled a structured comparative analysis of leadership quality and policy frameworks between the two countries.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage approach. NVivo 12 software aided in coding themes such as leadership capacity, policy implementation, governance constraints, accountability, and quality assurance mechanisms. Secondary data on Ghana were subjected to documentary analysis, focusing on identifying policy trends, leadership frameworks, and regulatory processes. Comparative analysis used a cross-case synthesis approach to highlight similarities and differences between Nigeria and Ghana (Yin, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review boards. Participants were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. Data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes.

Table 1: Summary of Primary Data Participants

Stakeholder Group	**Institution/Agency**	**Number of Participants**	**Method**
Registry Staff	BUK, NSUK, MAU	9 (3 per university)	Interviews
ASUU Members	BUK, NSUK, MAU	15 (5 per university)	Focus Group Discussions
NUC Officials	NUC Headquarters	3	Interviews
FME Officers	Federal Ministry of Education	2	Interviews
Total Participants	—	**29**	—

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2026

Conceptual Clarification

This study employs a multidimensional conceptual framework that integrates leadership quality, educational policy environments, governance structures, institutional autonomy, and quality assurance systems to analyze differences in university leadership effectiveness in Nigeria and Ghana between 2023 and 2025. The

framework is grounded in higher education governance theory, organizational leadership models, and comparative public policy analysis. These perspectives collectively highlight how policy contexts, regulatory regimes, and institutional characteristics shape leadership practices, strategic decision-making, and organizational outcomes in universities (Altbach, 2016; Teferra, 2019). Central to the framework is the assumption that leadership quality is not simply an individual attribute but an emergent institutional outcome shaped by the interaction of leaders with structural, regulatory, and contextual factors. Effective leadership therefore depends on how well institutions leverage policy reforms, exercise autonomy, maintain accountability, and sustain quality assurance systems within their operational environments. The framework organizes these interactions into five core concepts: educational policy reforms, governance autonomy, institutional accountability, capacity development mechanisms, and quality assurance structures. Each concept is discussed below.

Educational Policy Reforms

Educational policy reforms constitute the foundational layer shaping leadership effectiveness. National policy directives—such as regulatory changes, accreditation requirements, funding rules, and governance guidelines—directly influence the scope of authority, priorities, and constraints under which university leaders operate (Materu, 2019). In Nigeria, frequent policy shifts and inconsistent implementation practices create uncertainty and reactive leadership behaviors. In contrast, Ghana's policy reforms under the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) have introduced clearer standards, systematic coordination, and harmonized quality frameworks that enable leaders to plan strategically and maintain institutional continuity. Policy reforms determine institutional governance structures, define leadership roles, and shape the operational environments that influence planning, decision-making, and accountability. Thus, university leadership must engage with and interpret policy frameworks to ensure compliance, institutional alignment, and strategic development.

Governance Autonomy

Governance autonomy refers to the level of independence universities possess in managing internal affairs, including personnel decisions, financial planning, curriculum development, and long-term strategic initiatives. Autonomy is widely recognized as a prerequisite for effective leadership in higher education (Altbach, 2016). In Nigeria, political interference, centralized regulations, and extensive federal oversight limit managerial autonomy, constraining the ability of leaders to make

timely, strategic decisions. Ghanaian universities enjoy comparatively greater autonomy in administrative functions, resource management, and leadership appointments, which enhances the effectiveness and responsiveness of institutional governance. Leadership capacity is strengthened when autonomy allows institutions to innovate, adapt to emerging challenges, and take ownership of internal quality systems. Thus, governance autonomy directly impacts leadership performance, institutional culture, and long-term sustainability.

Institutional Accountability

Institutional accountability encompasses mechanisms that ensure transparency, performance monitoring, and adherence to quality standards. Accountability systems—such as performance audits, accreditation reviews, public reporting, and policy compliance assessments—shape leadership behavior by linking institutional performance to regulatory expectations (Olayiwola, 2021). In Nigeria, accountability practices remain fragmented, with inconsistencies in policy implementation and limited enforcement capacity. Conversely, Ghana's structured quality assurance processes, performance-based evaluations, and enhanced oversight by GTEC have reinforced leadership responsibility and institutional compliance. Accountability mechanisms strengthen leadership by promoting evidence-based decision-making, monitoring progress, and aligning institutional practices with national goals. Effective accountability supports the development of a culture of transparency, efficiency, and quality improvement.

Capacity Development Mechanisms

Leadership effectiveness is heavily influenced by the availability of professional development opportunities. Capacity development mechanisms include leadership training, strategic management workshops, mentorship programs, and exposure to international best practices. Research shows that leadership capacity is essential for sustaining institutional innovation and strategic transformation (Teferra, 2019). Nigerian universities typically lack systematic leadership training programs, resulting in administrative leaders who may rely on hierarchical or reactive decision-making models. Ghana, by contrast, has introduced structured leadership training and competency development initiatives supported by national regulatory bodies and donor agencies. Capacity development enhances managerial competence, strengthens governance processes, and improves leadership adaptability—especially in rapidly changing policy environments.

Quality Assurance Structures

Quality assurance (QA) structures form the operational foundation through which leadership effectiveness is realized. They include accreditation systems, performance metrics, curriculum review processes, and digital quality monitoring platforms. According to Materu (2019), strong QA systems promote consistency, policy alignment, and accountability in higher education. Ghana's Harmonized Quality Assurance Framework (HQAF) offers a standardized approach to institutional evaluation, enabling leaders to cultivate a culture of continuous improvement. Nigeria's QA system, though improving through ongoing digitalization initiatives, faces challenges related to inconsistency, resource limitations, and policy instability. QA structures directly influence leadership performance by defining institutional expectations, guiding strategic priorities, and supporting continuous monitoring of outcomes.

Integrative Perspective of the Framework

The conceptual framework is integrative: it demonstrates how educational policy reforms, governance autonomy, institutional accountability, leadership capacity development, and quality assurance systems interact to shape leadership effectiveness. These elements are not isolated—rather, they reinforce and condition one another. For example, strong autonomy without robust accountability may lead to mismanagement, while effective QA without leadership capacity limits implementation success. The comparative context reveals that Ghana's alignment of these elements produces more stable leadership environments, while Nigeria's fragmented policy environment generates reactive leadership practices and implementation difficulties. This multidimensional framework thus provides a robust analytical lens for examining leadership quality and policy effects in both countries, offering a foundation for the study's empirical analysis and comparative conclusions. The empirical framework guiding this study integrates multi-level indicators of university leadership quality, governance effectiveness, and educational policy implementation in Nigeria and Ghana between 2023 and 2025. Designed to operationalize the study's core variables and specify their measurement, the framework provides a structured basis for systematically comparing leadership practices across institutional and national contexts. Anchored in the traditions of higher education governance research (Altbach, 2016; Teferra, 2019), the framework adopts a mixed-methods strategy that combines quantitative indicators with qualitative assessments to capture the complex dynamics shaping university leadership within the two countries.

Leadership quality is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing strategic decision-making capacity, administrative competence, stakeholder engagement, and accountability practices. These dimensions reflect measurable attributes such as the clarity of institutional vision, responsiveness to policy reform, efficiency in resource management, inclusiveness in decision-making, and transparency in administrative procedures. Empirical measurement relies on leadership performance evaluations, staff perception surveys, and institutional audit reports, supplemented with qualitative insights from interviews with senior administrators, faculty union representatives, and members of university governance committees. Educational policies implemented in Nigeria and Ghana from 2023 to 2025 are assessed in terms of their funding frameworks, regulatory instruments, autonomy provisions, and innovation directives. These include initiatives such as Nigeria's TETFund interventions and Ghana's GETFund programs, as well as quality assurance regulations issued by the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC). The empirical indicators for policy implementation consist of government budget allocations, annual white papers, and statutory compliance reports submitted by universities, which collectively reveal the extent to which national policy commitments translate into institutional practice.

Governance structures are examined through their formal and operational components, including the composition and roles of university governing councils, the authority and tenure stability of vice-chancellors, the functioning of internal governance mechanisms such as senates and statutory committees, and the degree of institutional autonomy permitted by national regulatory agencies. Data sources include university statutes, governance scorecards, and documented council proceedings, which provide insight into the institutional governance landscape in both countries. Institutional performance outcomes constitute the key dependent variables and are evaluated through measurable indicators such as research productivity, teaching quality and accreditation performance, institutional ranking data, and the state of infrastructural and digital development. These outcomes are captured primarily through secondary data, including university annual reports, accreditation board evaluations, and publications from recognized ranking bodies.

Primary data for the study consist of semi-structured interviews with vice-chancellors, registrars, deans, and directors of quality assurance, alongside survey responses from academic staff and administrators assessing leadership effectiveness and perceived policy influence. Key informant interviews with policymakers from NUC and GTEC provide additional context. Secondary data are drawn from institutional budgets, audit reports, national higher education policies, accreditation evaluations, and regional

comparative datasets such as those provided by the Association of African Universities and the World Bank Education Statistics.

Analytically, the study adopts a most-similar-systems comparative design, which is appropriate given the shared colonial histories, similar administrative traditions, and comparable higher education structures of Nigeria and Ghana, despite their divergent policy trajectories. Quantitative analysis includes descriptive statistics to summarize leadership indicators, regression models to assess relationships among leadership quality, policy implementation, governance structures, and institutional outcomes, and ANOVA or MANOVA tests to compare performance variations across countries. Qualitative analysis employs thematic coding of interview transcripts to identify patterns in leadership behavior, institutional culture, and policy constraints, complemented by document analysis of policy texts and audit reports to triangulate the quantitative results.

The empirical model guiding the analysis is expressed as:
Institutional Performanceit=β0+β1(Leadership Qualityit)+β2(Policy Implementationt) +β3(Governance Structuresit)+β4(Autonomyit)+εit\text{Institutional Performance}_{ it} = \beta_{0} + \beta_{1}(\text{Leadership Quality}_{it}) + \beta_{2}(\text{Policy Implementation}_{t}) + \beta_{3}(\text{Governance Structures}_{it})+\beta_{4}(\text{Autonomy}_{it})+ \varepsilon_{it}Institutional Performanceit=β0+β1(Leadership Qualityit)+β2 (Policy Implementationt)+β3 (Governance Structuresit)+β4(Autonomyit)+εit where *i* denotes the university, *t* represents the time period (2023–2025), and ε captures contextual factors such as industrial strikes, funding variations, or political instability that may influence institutional outcomes. The empirical framework is theoretically anchored in higher education governance theory, transformational leadership theory, and comparative public policy theory. Governance theory emphasizes the interplay between autonomy, accountability, and regulatory quality; transformational leadership theory highlights the ways in which visionary leaders shape institutional culture and performance; and comparative public policy theory explains how differing national policy environments influence leadership practices and institutional outcomes. Together, these theoretical strands enable the study to bridge micro-level leadership behavior with macro-level policy structures, offering a deeper explanation for the divergent performance patterns observed among universities in Nigeria and Ghana.

Results and Discussion

Leadership quality in universities plays a critical role in shaping governance, policy implementation, and institutional performance. Between 2023 and 2025, Nigerian and Ghanaian universities underwent policy reforms aimed at improving quality assurance, autonomy, and accountability. This study investigates leadership practices in selected Nigerian universities (Bayero University Kano, Nasarawa State University Keffi, and Modibbo Adama University Yola) using interviews and focus group discussions and compares them with secondary data from Ghana to generate insights into similarities, differences, and policy implications. The discussion is structured according to the study's five research objectives.

Discussion: Nature and Effectiveness of Leadership Practices in Nigerian and Ghanaian Universities (2023–2025)

The findings from interviews with registry staff and policy officials reveal that leadership in Nigerian universities is predominantly administrative and compliance-oriented, with minimal engagement in strategic planning or proactive governance. The centralization of decision-making, whereby Vice-Chancellors or governing councils must approve most institutional actions, constrains managerial flexibility and delays implementation of critical initiatives. ASUU members further highlighted bureaucratic delays, inconsistent policy enforcement, and reactive problem-solving as significant impediments to effective leadership. These observations suggest that university leaders in Nigeria operate in a crisis-driven environment, often responding to immediate challenges rather than executing long-term strategic objectives. This pattern is consistent with existing studies highlighting the impact of political interference, funding instability, and industrial disputes on Nigerian university governance (Olayiwola, 2021; Altbach, 2016). In contrast, Ghanaian universities demonstrate a more structured and proactive leadership culture under the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) reforms. Leadership practices emphasize capacity-building, performance-based evaluation, and accountability, enabling leaders to plan strategically, delegate responsibilities effectively, and ensure compliance with quality assurance standards. University councils in Ghana exhibit a high degree of autonomy in appointing leaders and monitoring institutional performance, which supports a culture of professionalism and stable governance (Atuahene, 2020).

Comparatively, this analysis highlights a clear divergence in leadership effectiveness between the two countries. While Nigeria struggles with systemic instability, Ghana benefits from coherent regulatory frameworks, clearly defined leadership roles, and institutional support mechanisms. The findings reinforce Teferra's (2019) argument

that leadership capacity in African higher education is closely linked to governance stability and regulatory clarity. Nigerian universities, in the absence of such stability, are more susceptible to reactive leadership, misalignment between policy and practice, and constrained institutional innovation. Moreover, the differences suggest that leadership training, regulatory enforcement, and institutional autonomy are critical factors shaping effective university governance. Ghana's model demonstrates that well-defined policy frameworks and structured oversight mechanisms facilitate more strategic leadership, better institutional performance, and stronger alignment with national and regional educational objectives. For Nigeria, strengthening leadership effectiveness will require reforms that reduce political interference, enhance managerial autonomy, and institutionalize capacity-building programs for university leaders.

Discussion: Influence of Policy Reforms on Governance and Quality Assurance

Findings indicate that Nigerian universities have experienced a series of policy reforms between 2023 and 2025 aimed at improving governance, accreditation compliance, and quality assurance through initiatives such as digitalization of oversight processes and efforts to strengthen institutional autonomy. NUC and FME officials emphasized that these reforms are intended to standardize institutional practices, enhance transparency, and improve the overall quality of higher education. However, the study reveals that the implementation of these reforms remains uneven across institutions. Registry staff reported difficulties in adapting institutional processes to evolving NUC directives, reflecting systemic challenges in policy operationalization, including leadership turnover, bureaucratic inertia, and limited institutional capacity.

In contrast, Ghana's Harmonized Quality Assurance Framework (HQAF) has fostered a cohesive, structured, and consistent approach to accreditation, curriculum review, and institutional assessment (Materu, 2019). By clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and performance benchmarks for university leadership, the HQAF provides a stable environment in which leaders can exercise strategic decision-making and ensure compliance with quality standards. This structured approach allows university councils and administrators to translate policy objectives into actionable institutional practices, leading to measurable improvements in governance and academic quality.

The comparison between the two countries underscores a critical distinction: policy design alone is insufficient without robust mechanisms for enforcement and systemic coordination. While Nigeria has developed comprehensive policies, their effectiveness

is compromised by politicization, inconsistent enforcement, and resource limitations. Ghana's model, on the other hand, demonstrates that system-wide coordination, clear accountability structures, and regulatory consistency are essential for transforming policy intent into tangible outcomes. These findings support Materu's (2019) assertion that effective quality assurance requires an integrated approach combining regulatory oversight, leadership capacity, and institutional commitment. Furthermore, the Nigerian experience highlights the importance of institutional adaptability and leadership capacity in policy implementation. Even well-intended reforms may fail if leaders lack the training, autonomy, or institutional support to operationalize them. The Ghanaian case demonstrates that leadership effectiveness is closely linked to policy coherence and institutional alignment, providing lessons for Nigerian universities seeking to enhance governance and quality assurance.

Discussion

Comparison of Leadership Capacity, Policy Implementation, and Managerial Autonomy

The findings reveal significant differences between Nigeria and Ghana in leadership capacity, policy implementation efficiency, and the degree of managerial autonomy enjoyed by universities. In Nigeria, registry staff consistently highlighted insufficient leadership training, particularly in areas such as strategic planning, change management, and evidence-based decision-making. This gap affects the ability of university leaders to anticipate institutional needs, respond to policy shifts, and manage complex administrative structures. ASUU members reinforced these concerns, citing recurring conflicts with university management related to transparency, accountability, and participatory governance. These tensions contribute to a governance environment characterized by crisis-driven leadership, where decisions are often reactive and shaped by political, regulatory, or industrial pressures rather than long-term strategic vision.

Furthermore, the Nigerian higher education system operates within a framework where federal regulations and political interference significantly limit managerial autonomy. Key decisions—such as financial allocations, staff recruitment, and leadership appointments—are frequently influenced by federal ministries or governing councils with political affiliations. This reduces the agency of institutional leaders and hinders the full implementation of university-specific development strategies. Consequently, policy reforms initiated by the National Universities Commission (NUC) often struggle to achieve desired outcomes due to rigid hierarchical structures and inconsistent compliance across universities. In contrast, Ghanaian universities

demonstrate stronger managerial autonomy and leadership capacity, supported by the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC). Institutional leaders in Ghana have greater discretion to generate internal revenue, formulate strategic plans, and enforce accountability mechanisms within their institutions. This autonomy enables university councils to implement quality assurance standards, monitor leadership performance, and maintain consistent governance practices. The stability of Ghana's regulatory environment enhances leaders' ability to implement reforms effectively and fosters a culture of transparency and professional accountability.

The comparative analysis indicates that leadership stability and institutional autonomy are critical determinants of policy implementation effectiveness. Ghana's structured governance framework facilitates coherent and timely execution of policy directives, while Nigeria's fragmented and politicized system weakens the link between policy formulation and institutional practice. These findings align with Altbach (2016), who argues that sustainable institutional performance in higher education is closely tied to stable, empowered leadership capable of long-term planning and decisive management. Similarly, Teferra (2019) highlights that leadership success in African universities depends on coherent governance arrangements, reduced political interference, and strengthened institutional autonomy. Overall, the differences between the two countries reveal that enhancing leadership capacity and granting functional autonomy are essential for improving policy implementation and institutional performance in Nigeria. Ghana's experience illustrates how stable governance structures and empowered leadership contribute to the effective translation of national educational policy into institutional outcomes.

Challenges and Opportunities Shaping Leadership Quality

The comparative analysis of leadership challenges and opportunities in Nigeria and Ghana highlights divergent systemic realities that influence the quality and effectiveness of university governance in both contexts. In Nigeria, the challenges reported by registry officials and ASUU members reflect deep structural and systemic weaknesses. Resource constraints—particularly inadequate funding for staff development, infrastructure, and digital systems—limit the ability of university leaders to implement strategic reforms or pursue innovation. These resource deficits also directly affect leadership training, leading to gaps in managerial competence and strategic planning capacity.

Another major challenge identified is weak accountability mechanisms, where inconsistencies in financial management, promotion processes, and leadership evaluation reduce trust and transparency within institutions. Institutional instability,

largely driven by frequent industrial disputes between ASUU and university management, creates a governance environment marked by uncertainty and reactive decision-making. As Olayiwola (2021) notes, persistent industrial conflict in Nigerian universities undermines leadership continuity and disrupts long-term institutional planning. Despite these structural barriers, Nigeria also presents important opportunities for improving leadership quality. Digitalization initiatives—including electronic accreditation systems, digital registries, and performance dashboards—offer prospects for increased transparency, efficiency, and accountability if effectively implemented. Recent reforms introduced by the National Universities Commission (NUC), such as updated accreditation frameworks and autonomy-enhancing guidelines, also provide pathways for strengthening institutional governance.

In Ghana, the challenges differ in nature. While Ghanaian universities exhibit stronger governance structures, they face logistical and resource-related constraints, including over-reliance on government funding and limited research infrastructure. These limitations restrict universities' ability to expand innovation capacity, support cutting-edge research, and sustain long-term development projects. Atuahene (2020) argues that Ghana must diversify funding sources to reduce system vulnerabilities and support institutional competitiveness in an increasingly knowledge-driven global environment. However, Ghana demonstrates notable strengths and opportunities that support leadership quality. Strong regulatory oversight from the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) ensures consistent policy implementation, standardized quality assurance procedures, and transparent leadership evaluation systems. Additionally, Ghana has invested more systematically in leadership training and professional development programmes, enabling university managers to enhance their strategic and administrative competence. The presence of standardized quality assurance systems creates an environment where leaders operate with clearer expectations, performance indicators, and regulatory support.

Overall, the data indicate that Nigeria's leadership challenges are rooted in structural governance weaknesses, including politicization, inconsistent policy enforcement, and institutional instability. Addressing these issues requires deep institutional reform, stronger accountability frameworks, and sustainable funding mechanisms. Ghana's challenges are primarily logistical and related to resource limitations, suggesting a need for increased investments in research infrastructure, funding diversification, and continued leadership development. These findings align with Teferra (2019), who emphasizes that leadership quality in African higher education is shaped by both systemic governance conditions and the availability of institutional resources.

Evidence-Based Recommendations for Strengthening Leadership Quality and Policy Effectiveness

The findings from this comparative study demonstrate that strengthening leadership quality in Nigerian and Ghanaian universities requires multi-level reforms grounded in leadership development, governance autonomy, institutional accountability, funding stability, and regional collaboration. Each recommendation responds directly to the systemic and institutional gaps identified in the earlier objectives.

Enhancing Leadership Training and Professional Development

A recurring theme from Nigerian respondents was the limited exposure of university leaders to strategic management, change leadership, and data-driven decision-making. Institutionalizing continuous leadership development programs is therefore essential. Evidence from Ghana suggests that structured leadership training contributes to more effective decision-making, improved performance monitoring, and consistency in policy implementation. As Altbach (2016) argues, strong leadership capacity is fundamental to building high-performing universities capable of responding to global competitiveness pressures. Developing leadership academies, mentorship structures, and executive training modules across both countries would strengthen leaders' ability to anticipate institutional needs and manage complex reforms.

Strengthening Institutional Autonomy

The Nigerian higher education system remains heavily constrained by political influence and regulatory centralization, limiting universities' ability to implement long-term strategic initiatives. Enhancing functional autonomy—particularly in financial management, personnel decisions, and academic governance—would enable Nigerian universities to operate more effectively and reduce policy implementation delays. Ghana's comparatively higher autonomy demonstrates that stable governance systems empower leaders to translate policy into institutional action. Reducing political interference and clarifying governance roles are therefore critical steps toward improving leadership performance in Nigeria.

Improving Accountability Mechanisms

Weak accountability emerged as a key challenge in Nigeria, while Ghana displays more structured performance evaluation mechanisms. Implementing measurable performance indicators for university leaders, linked to quality assurance benchmarks, would promote transparency and efficiency within institutions. These systems should

include periodic audits, scorecards, and public reporting frameworks to strengthen trust and reduce leadership disputes. Strengthened accountability will also enhance policy compliance and reinforce a culture of ethical leadership and institutional integrity.

Increasing Funding for Quality Assurance and Capacity Building

Both Nigeria and Ghana face funding-related constraints, but Nigeria's structural funding deficit poses more severe implications for leadership performance, staff training, research quality, and digital infrastructure. Increased investment in quality assurance systems—particularly through digital platforms—would streamline accreditation, enhance transparency, and reduce manual bottlenecks that compromise institutional efficiency. Capacity-building initiatives for staff involved in quality assurance would further support effective policy implementation. As Materu (2019) notes, sustained funding is central to maintaining credible and functional quality assurance systems in African universities.

Promoting Regional Collaboration and Policy Learning

Regional collaboration presents an important opportunity for shared learning, benchmarking, and leadership development. Mechanisms under ECOWAS, the African Union, and the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) can facilitate policy exchange, leadership mobility programs, and harmonized quality assurance standards (Olayiwola, 2021). Ghana's structured regulatory experience could provide learning models for Nigerian institutions seeking to reform governance practices. Joint leadership workshops, cross-country accreditation reviews, and collaborative research networks would strengthen institutional resilience and promote continental competitiveness in higher education.

Recommendations

Overall, these recommendations reflect consensus in global higher education literature emphasizing autonomy, accountability, leadership competence, and strategic investment as core drivers of institutional quality (Altbach, 2016; Teferra, 2019). Implementing these measures would help address leadership deficiencies identified in both countries while promoting sustainable reforms, institutional stability, and effective policy translation. For Nigeria, the focus must be on deep structural reforms and capacity enhancement, while Ghana should prioritize investments in research infrastructure and continued leadership professionalization.

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POLITICAL PARTIES' COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES ON VOTERS' PREFERENCES IN THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper focused on political parties Communication strategies on voters' preferences in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The main objective of this study is to investigate the impact of strategic political parties' communication on voters' preferences in the political context of Nigeria's general elections in 2023. The study adopted descriptive survey and multi-step approach sampling method comprising of stratified, cluster, systematic and random sampling. A sample size of 404 was drawn from the population of 1,570,307 voters registered with INEC during 2023 general elections using Taro Yamane formula. Chi-square statistics was used to analysed the data. Findings revealed that, political communication strategies had a significant effect on voters' preferences in 2023 general elections. The study concluded that political parties' communication strategies were a mix of traditional and digital communication. The paper recommends that political parties should check digital content for credibility to guide against misinformation.

Keywords: *Communication, Political parties, Communication Strategies, Voters*

Introduction

Communication is a dominant factor in contemporary political society and has increasingly held an important role in democratic interaction, at least when considering new democracies like Nigeria. Political ideas are spoken of, interests have been negotiated, and the relations between state and society are maintained through communication. Academics have frequently stressed that in political communication; citizens construct views of political actors, assess policies, and engage in electioneering. Anyanwu and Onuoha (2022) specifically note that strong and provocative political messages do indeed influence political awareness and mobilisation on the part of a number of young Nigerians, especially if disseminated via social media, radio, and political rallies. Their results indicate that credible communicators and culturally congruent narratives are more conducive to promoting political inclusion and voter turnout among youth populations.

Political Communication is a mechanism where the political elements try and shape the public opinion. However, citizens also use it to relay demands, complaints and expectations towards those in power. Governments on the other hand, depend on communication to explain policies and legitimise them, build support and rationalise action. The method of political communication has broadened significantly as they have become broader, adopting traditional media, personal engagement and digital media. Ejem and Nwokeocha (2023) opined that, the practice of political communication has evolved into many channels at the present, mirroring the rapid changes in popularisation of media and political engagement around the world. Political campaigns are organised and designed campaigns to influence voters preferences and decision. Inobemhe et al. (2025) define political campaigns as organised activities in which political actors formulate messages in order to persuade citizens to vote for their political party.

Indeed, empirical studies have highlighted how campaign tactics are known to strongly affect voters' choices, as political actors implement their own targeted communication to influence attitudes, beliefs and preferences (Kulachai, Lerdtomornsakul, & Homyamyen, 2025). Political ads and message distribution on traditional as well as digital media networks, on many levels have been growing very dramatically. Political parties heavily relied on radio, television, newspapers, billboards, posters, and social media to spread their various ideologies and promote candidates vying for elected office. Individual candidates also used strategic messaging to promote their own personal brands and policy agendas to voters (Okpokiri, Amadi, & Njoku, 2024).

Political advertising remains a significant part of campaign messaging. Political advertisement has become a crucial method by which candidates connect with and convince citizens (Alawode and Adesanya, 2016). Arens (2008) defines political advertising as a form of non-personal, paid, and persuasive communication sponsored by identifiable political actors. Political parties and candidates use such campaigns in order to influence voter perceptions, mobilise support, and to achieve an election outcome (Okpokiri et al., 2024). Indeed, the 2023 Nigerian general elections represented a turning point in political communication, as political parties combined traditional grassroots mobilisation with aggressive use of digital platforms such as X, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp to reach voters (BusinessDay, 2025). Despite the increased visibility online, evidence manifests that social media popularity did not directly translate to electoral success at the poll. Victory was determined by "a broader vote spread across states, reflecting the continued importance of grassroots political structures" (AllAfrica, 2025).

It is evident from the elections that Nigeria is witnessing a monumental shift. A "new generation of Nigerian voters" is "driving a historic shift away from traditional identity politics by utilising digital organising, demanding data-driven accountability, and pushing to dismantle the rigid 'godfather' patronage system" (BusinessDay, 2025). Younger voters are manifestly shunning these primordial ties in favour of issue-based politics that is focused on jobs, infrastructure, and cost-of-living (BusinessDay, 2025). As opined, "engineered virality through coordinated botnets, deepfakes tailored to local languages and accents, and data-driven psychographic persuasion" (BusinessDay, 2025) were products of 2023 elections. Given these peculiar dynamics, there is limited empirical understanding of which specific communication strategies actually influenced voter preferences in 2023, and how parties can adapt for 2027. This study therefore seeks to examine the effect of communication strategies on voters' preferences in the 2023 general elections in Abuja, so as to decipher the overall level in Nigeria as a whole.

Objects of the Paper

What communication strategies were predominantly used by political parties during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria? To what extent did digital media campaigns versus traditional grassroots mobilisation influence voters' preferences in the 2023 elections? How did issue-based and competence-driven messaging affect preferences of young voters, compared to identity and patronage-based issues? How did challenges such as misinformation, low trust in INEC, and fear of electoral violence affect the effectiveness of political communication on voter preferences?

In the same vein, the main objective of this study is to examine the influence of political parties' communication strategies on voters' preferences in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria; while the specific objectives are:

To identify the key communication strategies adopted by political parties during the 2023 general elections; to assess the relative influence of digital media and traditional grassroots strategies on voters' preferences across demographic groups; and examine how issue-based, competence-driven, and identity-based messaging shaped voter decision-making at the 2023 polls. The research recommends establishment of standard guidelines cum strategic documents by political parties to help improve voter engagement and trust ahead of future elections in Nigeria.

Literature Review

A plethora of literature supports that popular sovereignty in the context of democracy, has emerged as a basis for legitimate leadership that has been determined through electoral decisions. Political parties are instrumental as they can gather interests, recruit leaders, and provide spaces for political participation. Parties, Osei-Kufuor (2016) notes contribute to democratic consolidation for the sake of representation, accountability and scrutiny of opposition. In Nigeria's diverse, mass-mediated society, effective communication remains the most effective way for political parties to connect affectively and cognitively with voters. Engaged with, strategic communication allows parties to express visions, earn credibility in the eyes of voters, and to translate public sympathy into electoral legitimacy. Successful party communication according to Njoku, Eluke and Eke (2025) requires clear communication messages, demographic segmentation, a short response time and blending of different channels.

While working with professionals, the study recommended the articulation and alignment of communication objectives with strategic thrusts, effective channel selection and appropriate design of messages by parties to enhance voter engagement and trust in future electoral engagements.

Conceptual Clarification

The various concepts found in the topic and in the larger study are properly situated for better understanding. This study looks at political parties, political communication, strategic communication strategies and the influence of communication on voters' behaviour.

Political Parties

Scholars in the field of political science have assigned broad definitions of a political party. Isah Musa (2025) explored political parties as entities which needed to have internal structures, ideology/values, group membership cohesion and a way of doing elections for them to be successful. Building on his argument, he posited that in Nigeria, political parties are not just groups of people, but organisations pursuing power, electoral participation, representing interest, recruiting membership, and, ideally, act as mediation between citizens and government.

Adewunmi (2022) defines political party as an organised group of individuals with similar political goals and political opinions who work together to influence public policy, through the election of its candidate to public office. Furthermore, Babayo Sule (2024) describes political parties as organisations that pursue power, recruit, mobilise and represent interest. Political parties exist with members spread out across a nation, with the fundamental idea that they promote the interests of the nation (Chidi 2023). This lends credence to a political party as voluntary association structured by people, organised along common interests or goals, with the purpose to gain power through the election of its candidates to public office. They enforce policies of the government. Political parties play a key role in the process of entrenchment of democracy. Wakil (2022) believes that political parties are very central to the sustainability of democratic norms and values. But he noted that the institutions of the political party in African countries still remain very primitive to him.

Political Campaign Strategies

Based on the thought of Jennifer Osayi Agho (2025), language and ideology play important roles in campaigns and they serve as crucial factors to mold voters' behaviour. Background political campaigns are organised by a political party/candidate of political office to engage voters in an election. Also, it is also described as an organised group effort to alter the determination mechanism or the result of political campaigns; political campaigns in democracies are typically electoral campaigns - elections in which representatives are chosen and/or referendums are decided. Political campaigning encompasses the efforts to effect change to policy within an institution or an organisation. Political campaign as theorist explained, whereas the media items rushing before polling day (Abimiku & Mohammed, 2023). In the same way Nwoboli (2023) states that a political campaign plan aims at manipulating a particular group's decision-making process. The management team of any campaign - whether it be a self-driven individual (nurturing an individual on an individual level) or a well-capitalised team of professionals have

to think on how to tell the story of a campaign, find volunteers and get money (Ngantem 2024).

Their reason for significant attention at this point is to link the Innovators (the political parties) to the Early Majority (the public) in political campaigns. Early adopters hold a significant role as an important source of feedback that helps them perfect campaign efforts to improve their campaign tactics while being a conduit for the parties to reach out to the wider public as well (Ehiagwina 2024). Political campaigns are efforts by individuals, organisations or collectives organised for influencing public opinion, mobilising support and winning an election. But for the candidate, party or a particular point of view political campaigns (Sides, Shaw, Grossmann & Lipsitz 2022).

Political campaigns are essential part of democratic governance. They provide opportunities to candidates to seek the support of voters, and compete for elected office. (Kernell, 2018), In addition, campaigns are involved in numerous voter outreach activities, such as door-to-door canvassing, phone banking, social media outreach, or community events, in an effort to activate support to establish linkage with voters (Nelson, Thurber & Dulio, 2024). Planned actions and communications that are designed to influence and persuade a desired target audience in order that they may support or engage with the objective will form part of modern campaigns (David & Asemah, 2023; Ogunjobi, Ekhareafo & Asemah, 2023). Political campaigns can now be waged to broader, more diverse, and more efficient audiences thanks to the internet. Social media has now in particular become an essential tool for candidates, enabling them to instantly spread messages (and videos or other campaign content) to thousands (if not millions) of people. (Abidi & Soo, 2021). This could inspire them to play an active role in the electoral process (whether online or real). Access to information about candidates and relevant topics helps voters make better-informed choices at the polls. (Poirier, 2024).

On one hand, big data analysis can enable campaign personalisation, enhancing voter engagement with more relevant messages. Personal campaign messages, especially ones that take into account the individual's interests or concerns at a local level, appeal to voters as people who may not just vote but share information and participate; they might even volunteer or take part in some activities (Garland & Lilleker 2021). To this end, traditional elements of elections must remain intact, but at the same time, technological developments must be incorporated, so that all, especially, voters have an equal opportunity for participation, in the democratic process. Basically, campaigning needs the following elements for effectiveness:

1. Radio and Television Campaign: Messages on the candidate running in the election are presented on TV or on radio channels.
2. Social Media Campaign Message: This campaign message is broadcast in various social media platforms - Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. The information disseminated through the media reaches out to various audiences from around the world with no geographical confines. Politicians now use social media more than other forms of Mass media.
3. Billboards Campaign: It is one of the commonest types of political campaign for electioneering candidates.
4. Posters Campaign: All villages and corners of the states with elections will have posters pasted.
5. Rally Campaign: Utilises outreaches by candidates running for election and their faithful supporters going out to the street to see their various constituencies to try to get their votes.

Communication Strategies used in the 2023 Elections

Political communication strategy is the systematic development and spread of political messages geared at influencing, mobilising, and involving voters (Njoku, Ejinwaemeonu, & Eke 2024). Three key strategies were employed in 2023 Nigerian elections: the digital media campaign, the traditional media messaging and the interpersonal mobilisation.

Digital and Social Media Campaigns

According to AI (2026), Nigeria saw the largest number of social media platforms' deployment in the 2023 elections. Platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram and WhatsApp were used by candidates and political parties to promote their manifestoes, attack opponents and mobilise supporters. According to Bassey et al. (2024), digital campaign tactics enabled shaping voters' preference using real time audience interactions, visuals and interactive check-ins.

Frequent exposure to political material on social media, the authors found, positively impacted the choice of candidates among voters. Eneoma & Emeche (2023) discovered similarly that Twitter contributed significantly to both candidate visibility and shaping electoral narratives.

Traditional and Integrated Communication

While digital platforms dominated the discourse, there were still usage of large numbers of traditional media like radio, television, and print, particularly in rural and semi-urban communities. Radio and television broadcasts were crucial in forming perceptions of candidates' credibility (Edem, Igbozuruike, & Ibe, 2023). Among others, these were credible places for voters of all ages to receive political information and social intelligence.

Interpersonal and Grassroots Communications

Political communications on the grassroots level also influenced voters beyond digital and mass media spheres. Party authorities, youth organisations, and local personalities took the role of intermediaries between the parties and electorates. Suemo, Kusugh, and Okonkwo (2023) stated that ideological framing used by social media messages was paired with offline discussions which explained issues to less digitally literate voters. This face-to-face interaction increased the efficiency of online discussions, which in turn influenced final voting choices.

Theoretical Framework

The Agenda Setting Theory (AST) and Media Dependency Theory form the basis for this research. AST explains the manner in which the news media create and disseminate salient issues unto public space in order to allow for discussion, deliberation, or debate on them. When editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters provide news to the public, as McCombs and Shaw (1972) argue, they play an important role in shaping the reality we see. The media itself does not just help their audiences understand a particular issue by their actions; it goes on to decide just how important the issue is. One key way to achieve this is by determining information volume in a news story along with its positioning in addition to various other parameters. McCombs and Shaw also claim that the treatment the media gives to political, economic, and social issues during production in sales makes certain issues appear as significant in society. Also, Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur in 1976 propounded the MDT which states that the more dependent people are on media to meet their needs, the more important media becomes in their lives and the more effect media will have on them.

Methodology

The study which adopted a triangulation of survey and in-depth personal interviews as methods of data collection was undertaken in Abuja, Nigeria. A sample of 404 respondents was drawn from the city's registered voters' population of 1,570,307 in the 2023 general elections, using Taro Yamane model. The study employed a multi-step sampling method (stratified sampling, cluster sampling, systematic sampling and random sampling) across the six Area Councils with the adoption of questionnaire as instrument of data collection. Also, a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), using the mean and standard deviations while the descriptive data were analysed, thematically.

Voter's Preferences and Political Communication in Nigeria's 2023 General Elections

Voter Priorities

Candidates prioritised honesty and integrity, policy clarity, leadership competence and accountability in Nigeria's 2023 general elections. Voter trust increases when candidates embody the principles of moral character and honesty (Adeyemi, 2023). Strong and well-founded policies are also relevant in a democratic environment, and voters want leaders who have a vision for the development of the country (Ogundele, 2023). Competence in leadership, either through learning, skills, and governance, was also significant (Olayiwola, 2023). Moreover, people who admitted to errors and took accountability earned the respect of voters (Adeyemi 2023).

Influential Factors

Voters' preferences were influenced heavily by media consumption; voters looked to media to source data regarding candidates and policies (Oso, 2023). Traditional authorities and community leaders (Opinion leaders) significantly shaped voter preferences (Akinfeleye, 2023). Social media played a critical role in influencing voters, especially among youth (Olatunji, 2023). A vital factor in the trustworthiness of the electoral process (transparency and fairness), was in instilling the confidence of the voters (INEC, 2023).

Voter Demographics

Youth participation also emerged from this; with 39.7% of registered voters aged 18-34 voting actively participating during the electoral process (INEC 2023). Women (47.5% of registered voters), were yet another demographic that was significantly underrepresented as candidates (WHO 2023). High regional differences in voter turnout were also noted; the North-West and North-East demonstrated more participation (INEC 2023).

Results

Findings from this study showed that political communication strategies have a statistically significant influence on voters' preferences and decision-making in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The Chi-Square test result in the table indicates a p-value that is less than 0.05. This suggests that, political communication strategies are likely linked to voters' preferences and decision making, which greatly impact political awareness levels.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	P-value
Pearson Chi-Square	85.874	15	0.000< 0.05
Likelihood Ratio	101.601	15	0.000< 0.05
No. of Valid Cases	397		

To what extent did political parties adopt distinct communication strategies for their awareness and political parties' messages in the 2023 general elections? The research showed that there was high level of political parties' adoption distinct communication strategies and awareness of their messages among voters in Abuja. This is supported by the table below.

	Observed No.	**Expected No.**		**Residual**
Very highly	59	101.0		-42.0
Highly	191	101.0		97.0
Poorly	101	101.0		.0
Very poorly	46	101.0		-55.0
Total	397			
	Chi-square value = 140.574, DF = 3, p-value (0.000) < 0.05			

The Chi-Square test result in this table indicates political parties' distinct communication strategies behaviour was statistically and significantly influenced the awareness of political parties' messages in 2023 general elections, with a p-value (0.000) less than 0.05.

Discussion

The findings of the study indicate a statistically significant relationship between political communication strategies and voters' preference in 2023 General elections in Nigeria, with a p-value less than 0.05. This result coincides with Oso, (2023) that, voter preferences were influenced heavily by media consumption; voters looked to media to source data regarding candidates and policies. The second findings also show that, political parties distinct communication strategies behaviour was statistically and significantly influenced the awareness of political parties' messages in 2023 general elections, with a p-value (0.000) less than 0.05. This relates to Njoku, Ejinwaemeonu, and Eke 2024) that, politics communication strategy is the systematic development and spread of political messages geared at influencing, mobilising, and involving voters.

Conclusion

The study concluded that, political parties' lacked well-planned and structured communication strategy documents that can serve as guidelines for elections in Nigeria. This makes the conduct of elections to be done on ad-hoc basis. This finding justifies the essence of this research work.

Recommendations

Adopting a strategic communication document for Nigeria's political parties is sine qua non to immediate and future survival of political parties and stakeholders. Moreso, the message design, channel of dissemination and content of campaign messages must be expertly undertaken in order to achieve good electoral outcomes. Parties must strive to avoid haphazard communications that are capable of destroying the fortunes of parties and candidates at any given election. By so doing, the trauma of misinformation and fake news on Nigeria's political terrain could be avoided.

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Footnote: Some initial literature searches on 2023 general elections in Nigeria were generated with assistance from Meta AI (Meta, 2025 & 2026).

OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVING PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS IN AFRICA: A CROSS BORDER STUDY

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Abstract

Peace, justice, and strong institutions are foundational to sustainable development, economic growth, and human security. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 16 emphasizes accountable institutions, the rule of law, inclusive decision-making, and reductions in violence. Africa's progress on these dimensions is mixed: while some countries have consolidated democratic gains and strengthened institutions, others face deepening fragility—military coups, rising violent conflict, and governance back-sliding (African Peer Review Mechanism [APRM], 2023; United Nations [UN], 2024). Recent data show dramatic humanitarian consequences: forced displacement reached record levels and civilian casualties in conflict rose sharply—trends tightly linked to institutional failure and weak justice systems. Simultaneously, the continent continues to record low anti-corruption performance relative to other regions (Transparency International, 2025). Given these realities, this paper presents a consolidated, actionable policy framework tailored to African states and regional organizations to deliver SDG 16 outcomes. The framework centre six policy pillars: governance & institutional reform; justice & rule of law; peace building & conflict prevention; civic engagement & transparency; regional cooperation & transnational justice; and social & economic inclusion. For each pillar the paper provides measurable policy actions, institutional design choices, financing options, and monitoring metrics to ensure operationalisation at national and regional levels. The paper concludes that immediate priorities should include judicial independence, anti-corruption enforcement, early-warning systems, and transparent fiscal decentralisation. The AU, RECs, civil society, and development partners must align behind these priorities, with mutual accountability and measurable benchmarks.

Keywords: *Operationalization, Policy Framework, Peace, Justice, Strong Institutions*

Introduction

Peace, justice, and strong institutions are indispensable to sustainable development, economic progress, and human security. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) emphasises accountable institutions, rule of law, inclusive decision-making, and reductions in violence (UN, 2024). The African continent, however, continues to face challenges such as armed conflicts, poor governance, corruption, and institutional weaknesses that undermine social cohesion and economic vitality (APRM, 2023). While many African governments have adopted reform agendas aimed at improving governance and institutional efficiency, fragility remains pervasive. Recent data show dramatic humanitarian consequences

forced displacement reached record levels globally, and civilian casualties in conflict rose sharply in 2023—both phenomena closely linked to institutional failure and weak justice systems (UN, 2024). Simultaneously, Sub-Saharan Africa continues to record one of the lowest regional average Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) scores worldwide (Transparency International, 2025). Given these realities, this paper develops a policy framework designed to guide African governments and regional bodies in building resilient, transparent, and accountable institutions that foster peace, justice, and sustainable development. In terms of political instability and unconstitutional change government (UCGs), which involves military coups, have undermined institutional continuity and public trust in several African states in the 2020–2024 period (APRM, 2023). These episodes reduce institutional capacity and create legal ambiguity that erodes rule of law. Regarding rising violence, displacement and human costs, the United Nations' monitoring shows a worrying uptick in humanitarian indicators that are linked to weak institutions: forced displacement reached unprecedented levels globally and civilian casualties in armed conflicts surged in 2023—both phenomena intimately connected to institutional fragility and contested governance spaces (UN, 2024). With respect to persistent and systemic corruption, Transparency International's analysis of the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI 2024) indicates that the Sub-Saharan African region continues to have the lowest regional average CPI score (33/100) and highlights how corruption undermines climate finance and public service delivery—symptoms of institutional fragility and governance deficits (Transparency International, 2025). Also, with reference to weak judicial capacity and limited access to justice, many judicial systems remain underfunded, politically influenced, and inaccessible to wide portions of the citizenry. Traditional and informal justice mechanisms persist as primary recourse in many communities but are unevenly incorporated into formal justice frameworks. Considering transnational threats and regional spill-overs, terrorism, organised crime, and cross-border insurgencies (notably in the Sahel and parts of the Horn of Africa) create security vacuums that weaken institutional control, prompting

regional security crises and humanitarian emergencies (ACLED, 2024; OECD, 2024; Crisis Group, 2025).

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This paper underscores different theoretical underpinnings by synthesizing key concepts, crucial theoretical frameworks, their interconnectedness, criticisms and implications drawing inferences from peace studies, institutional economics, political theory and developmental studies. Both peace, justice and strong institution are interwoven in any economy as peace without justice is unthinkable, justice in the absence of strong institution is condemnable and institutions not embedded in peace and justice becomes a weapon autocracy, totalitarianisms and dictatorship by the ruling few against the majority in the society.

Among the peace theories critically reviewed are Liberal Peace Theory (LPT) and Human Security Approach (HAS). The Liberal Peace Theory (LBT) rooted in the seminal work in Kant (1795) on "Perpetual Peace" and further extended in "democratic peace theory" hinges on the premises that democratic sovereign nations hardly stage a war against each other because of the presence of the rule of law, fundamental human rights, separation of power, transparency and accountability. The Human Security Approach (HAS) is embedded in paradigm shift of transiting from statehood or nationhood security to the enthronement of individual liberty. Also, among the institutional theories reviewed are social contract theory (SCT) and the New Institutional Economics and Political Economy Theory (NIEPET). The Social contract Theory (SCT) explored by Hobbes (1651), Locke (1689/90) and Rousseau (1762) submit that the emergence of institutions emanate from an implicit concord or agreement among humans to avoid and prevent the "state of nature" e.g. Conflicts, clashes, wars, battles, violence's, etc. Via delegating power and authority to a constituted authority, government or sovereign nation in exchange for justice, security of lives and properties as well as safe guarding individual liberty and right. Again, Douglass North (1990) as reported by Acemoghi & Robinson (2012) in their work on New Institutional Economics and Political Economy Theory (NIEPET) opined that inclusive political and economic institutions re responsible for power distribution with the intent to protect and safe guard property rights, motivate the viscious cycle and tryoyectory of growth, innovations and conflict that is coming from a creative destruction. Lastly, within the development context, justice theories by John Rawls (1971) see justice as fairness which is a covering of ignorance, and principle difference which underpins and underscores equitable institutions. Also, the

transactional and transformative justice frameworks deal with the PostWar arrangements by integrating retributive, restorative as well as structural reforms.

Empirical Review

Africa hosts a set of complementary governance and peace frameworks. The African Union's Agenda 2063 outlines a continental vision linking economic integration with governance and peace objectives (AU, Agenda 2063 portal). The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007) provides a normative instrument promoting constitutionalism and democratic governance. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is a voluntary mutual assessment of governance practices among member states; its 2023 Africa Governance Report focuses specifically on UCGs and governance resilience (APRM, 2023). Sub-regional frameworks such as ECOWAS' Conflict Prevention Framework and SADC governance instruments also exist. These instruments create a normative architecture but suffer from enforcement weaknesses, resource constraints and political contestation (AU progress reports; APRM, 2023). Liberia (2024–2025): Early anti-corruption moves by the administration— suspension of officials for failure to declare assets and audit of central bank—demonstrate how domestic policy initiatives respond to institutional weaknesses (AP News/Reuters, 2024). Sahel Region (2020–2025): Coups and growing jihadist activity illustrate the security–governance nexus and the need for regionally coordinated approaches combining SSR, economic inclusion and mutual accountability (APRM, 2023; Crisis Group, 2025; OECD, 2024).

Methodology

This is a policy-analytic paper combining three approaches: (1) secondary analysis of recent continental and global policy reports and datasets (including the APRM Africa Governance Report 2023; the UN SDG Report 2024; Transparency International CPI 2024/2025; World Bank governance studies 2024–2025; ACLED conflict monitoring and Crisis Group situational analyses); (2) comparative policy review of regional frameworks (e.g., AU Agenda 2063; African Charter on Democracy, Elections & Governance; ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework); and (3) synthesis of best-practice institutional reforms drawn from governance and peace building literature (including institutional design theory, anti-corruption frameworks, transitional justice, community justice). The paper focuses on sub-Saharan and North African member states of the African Union (AU) and regional economic communities (RECs), but the framework is designed to be adaptable to national contexts. Sources used for major factual claims and framing are current to 2023–2025 (APRM, 2023; UN, 2024; Transparency International, 2025; World Bank, 2025; ACLED, 2024; Crisis Group,

2025). Where data are global (UN), regional averages and Africa-specific mentions are used to ensure relevance.

Results

In the light of financing the framework, the study found that sustainable financing is essential. The framework recommends a blended approach: Domestic Resource Mobilisation: Strengthen tax administration, broaden tax base, and reduce illicit financial flows via improved customs and AML controls. Reprioritisation of Public Expenditure: Shift expenditures toward justice, local service delivery and SSR via Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks (MTEFs). Blended Finance & Development Partners: Utilise concessional loans, grants and performance-based funding tied to governance milestones (e.g., APRM-verified reforms). Innovative Instruments: Issue "peace bonds" for post-conflict reconstruction; leverage diaspora bonds for local infrastructure projects. The World Bank and regional development banks should coordinate support with the AU and RECs to prevent duplication and strengthen national ownership (World Bank, 2025). Monitoring, Evaluation and Mutual Accountability. A robust M&E system is required to convert policy into measurable outcomes: Harmonised Indicators: Use SDG 16 indicators (UN, 2024) supplemented by APRM governance indicators and national dashboards. Independent Review Mechanisms: Strengthen the APRM and create an AU-led 'Governance Scorecard' linked to incentive mechanisms. Civil Society & Media Role: Ensure independent monitoring via CSO coalitions and investigative journalism; support whistleblower protections. Data & Digital Tools: Invest in statistical capacity and open-data to monitor corruption, prosecutions and service delivery. These mechanisms should publish regular progress reports and be subject to parliamentary scrutiny. Risks, Trade-Offs and Mitigation Strategies. Implementation faces political resistance, elite capture, and resource constraints. Key mitigation strategies include: Phased Implementation: Begin with politically feasible reforms (transparency measures, e-governance) while building consensus for deeper reforms (judicial independence). Safeguards against Backsliding: Tie donor support to measurable benchmarks and APRM verification; use regional pressure (AU/RECs) against UCGs. Conflict Sensitivity: Ensure reforms do not inadvertently exacerbate tensions—apply conflict analysis and include local stakeholders.

Conclusion

Peace, justice, and strong institutions are indispensable for Africa's transformation. Achieving them demands more than rhetoric; it requires a holistic policy framework anchored in transparency, inclusion, and accountability. By reforming governance

systems, empowering citizens, and fostering regional cooperation, African nations can create the enabling environment necessary for sustainable development, stability, and justice. Immediate priorities should include:

(1) strengthening judicial independence and legal aid access; (2) operationalising anti-corruption institutions with prosecutorial clout; (3) institutionalising early-warning systems linked to AU/REC rapid response; and (4) implementing transparent fiscal decentralisation to reduce patronage. The AU, RECs, civil society and development partners must align behind these priorities, with mutual accountability and measurable benchmarks. Failure to act risks further humanitarian deterioration and governance back-sliding, while effective implementation could unlock development gains and durable peace.

Policy Recommendations

The policy framework proposed here rests on five interlocking principles:Subsidiarity & Decentralisation – Strengthen sub-national institutions for responsive governance while preserving national cohesion .Inclusivity & Equity – Target marginalisation (ethnic, gender, youth) to reduce grievance drivers of conflict. Accountability & Rule of Law – Institutionalise checks and balances, judicial independence, and prosecutorial autonomy. Resilience & Prevention – Prioritise early-warning systems, conflict prevention measures and adaptive institutions that can withstand shocks (security, climate, economic). Regional Cooperation & Mutual Accountability – Leverage AU/RECs for cross-border issues, shared standards and enforcement of governance norms. The Six-Pillar Policy Framework

Pillar 1 – Governance and Institutional Reform. Objective: Rebuild state institutions to be efficient, meritocratic, transparent and resilient.

Policy actions: Implement merit-based civil service recruitment, transparent salary structures and performance evaluations tied to service delivery metrics. Enact fiscal decentralisation with clear revenue-sharing formulas to empower local governments and reduce centralised patronage. Create or strengthen independent anti-corruption agencies with investigative and prosecutorial authority, supported by asset-recovery units and international cooperation protocols (Transparency International, 2025). Implementation mechanics: Legal review and constitutional amendments where necessary; phased rollout with institutional capacity building financed via blended finance (domestic revenue + concessional loans + donor grants). Monitoring metrics: Public expenditure tracking, civil service vacancy/fill rates, prosecution rates for grand corruption, public perception of corruption (CPI trend).

Pillar 2 –Justice and Rule of Law. Objective: Ensure accessible, impartial, and timely justice for all.

Policy actions: Constitutionally guarantee judicial independence (security of tenure, transparent appointments), and increase judiciary budgets to reduce case backlogs. Expand legal aid and public defenders programmes; integrate mobile courts and digital case management to reach remote areas. Legitimate and regulate customary and restorative justice practices through legislative frameworks aligned with human rights norms. Implementation mechanics: Partner with bar associations, civil society and donor agencies to fund legal aid clinics and judicial training; use technology for case-filing and tracking to reduce corruption and delay. Monitoring metrics: Case clearance ratios, time to disposition, legal aid caseloads, public trust indices (surveys).

Pillar 3 – Peacebuilding, Conflict Prevention and Security Sector Reform.

Objective: Prevent violent conflict and transform insecurity through accountable security institutions. Policy actions: Institutionalise early warning systems (national + regional) and rapid mediation capacities linked to AU/REC instruments (APRM, 2023). Implement Security Sector Reform (SSR) grounded in civilian oversight, human-rights training, transparent procurement and audited budgets. Prioritise demobilisation, disarmament, reintegration (DDR) and community reconciliation programmes, with special provisions for youth and women. Implementation mechanics: Joint financing by national budgets and international peace-building funds; integrate SSR into national development plans. Monitoring metrics: Incidence of conflict events (ACLED, 2024), civilian casualty statistics, SSR benchmarks (training, vetting, budget transparency).

Pillar 4 – Civic Engagement, Transparency and Open Government.

Objective: Create channels for citizen oversight and participation to reduce capture and improve legitimacy. Policy actions: Enact Access to Information laws and open-data portals for budgets, procurement and public projects. Institutionalise participatory budgeting and local public hearings; use digital platforms for grievance redress and citizen reporting. Protect civic space by decriminalising peaceful protest and ensuring NGO operating environments consistent with international norms. Implementation mechanics: Combine legal reforms with digital literacy campaigns and civil society capacity support; adopt open contracting data standards for procurement (e.g., Open Contracting Partnership models). Monitoring metrics: Number of FOI requests fulfilled, public procurement transparency indices, civic freedom indices.

Pillar 5 – Regional Cooperation, Transnational Justice, and Mutual Accountability.

Objective: Manage cross-border crime and governance spill-overs and strengthen mutual accountability across states. Policy actions: Strengthen AU/REC peer review enforcement—link peer review outcomes to incentives (trade benefits, technical assistance) and provide targeted support for reformers (APRM model enhanced). Establish regional hybrid courts or mechanisms for transnational crimes (terrorism, trafficking, corruption) with standardised extradition and evidence-sharing protocols. Enhance border governance via shared databases, joint task forces, and combined training centres. Implementation mechanics: Re-calibrate AU funding and mandate for AGA/APSA to offer rapid technical assistance; negotiate multilateral instruments to enable evidence and asset sharing. Monitoring metrics: Number of mutual legal assistance requests processed, regional prosecution rates for transnational crimes, APRM implementation scores.

Pillar 6 – Social and Economic Inclusion.

Objective: Address root causes of grievance— poverty, unemployment and exclusion—to reduce drivers of conflict. Policy actions: Integrate conflict-sensitive development: prioritise infrastructure, education, employment in fragile regions; use public works and apprenticeships for youth inclusion. Promote equitable resource revenue management (extractives) with community benefit agreements and transparent revenues/disclosure. Advance gender parity in political representation, law enforcement, and judicial appointments. Implementation mechanics: Link national budgets to SDG16 spatially (target "hotspots" of fragility) and use results-based financing to incentivize service delivery.

Monitoring metrics: Regional youth unemployment rates, social service coverage in conflict affected areas, gender parity indices.

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ELECTORAL CORRUPTION, ELECTORAL VIOLENCE, AND DEMOCRATIC INSTABILITY IN NIGERIA: EXAMINATION OF TWO INDIGENOUS POLITICAL NOVELS ỌTỆ N'ÌBÒ AND GBỌ́BANÍYÌ

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Abstract

Literature and politics are interwoven; they influence each other. Literary artists extend their critical lens to the troubling issues of electoral corruption and its attendant violence in Africa, Nigeria in particular. Nigerian indigenous literature, especially Yorùbá novels, has continued to function as a reflective medium through which societal crises are represented and interrogated. This paper, therefore, examines electoral corruption, electoral violence, and democratic instability in Ọ̀tẹ̀ N'ìbò by Olú Owólabi and Gbọ́baníyì by Ọládipọ̀ Yémítàn, especially during post-independent Nigeria. The study is an attempt to evaluate the effects of electoral corruption and electoral violence on democratic governance and political stability in Nigeria from a literary perspective. The study adopts Marxist Sociology of Literature as its theoretical framework to investigate how the selected texts portray corrupt political practices, vote buying, political thuggery, manipulation of electoral processes, intimidation of voters, and the consequences of these practices on democratic development in Nigeria. The study adopts a qualitative textual analysis method. Through textual analysis, the study reveals that both novels expose the desperation of political elites for power and the resulting culture of violence and instability. Findings reveal that Ote N'ibo and Gbóbaníyì are not merely works of art but political write-ups exposing how greed and self-interest undermine democratic ideals. It is noted that Owolabi's and Yémítàn's works mirror Nigeria's cyclical political failures and call for collective awakening toward transparency and accountability. The paper concludes that the selected texts function as socio-political commentaries on Nigeria's democratic crises while advocating ethical leadership, political accountability, and electoral reforms. Money politics should also be discouraged. The study recommends, among other things, that state institutions should serve the benefit of all citizens, since elections are central to democracy.

Keywords: *Electoral corruption, electoral violence, democratic instability, Yorùbá novels, Nigerian politics*

Introduction

Literature reflects human activities in society; it is a valuable tool for examining the totality of human activity and its environment. Literature and politics are closely intertwined, often influencing one another in significant ways. Literature serves as a means of political expression, critique, and commentary. On the other hand, political contexts can shape literary themes and genres. Literature, as a discipline that examines human life, often reflects the political realities of its time, providing insight into the socio-political landscape. Literary artists, as patriots and voices of the voiceless, continue to extend this relationship between literature and politics by depicting politically relevant issues in their contemporary writings, addressing prevailing political concerns, and highlighting the role of literature in political discourse and nation-building. The relationship between literature and politics has been a sensitive and controversial issue. Politics relates to the art of governance. Human beings are all enmeshed in politics because they are part of society, which they represent through their voices. Olive (2013:3) submits that "literature is an art which brings about transformation; it is about creativity that fashions something reasonable out of something. Artists cannot ignore politics in their writing because they cannot escape being shaped by political decisions. Literature is seen as the mirror of society, representing and re-presenting reality in a manner that enables people to perceive it, both reflected and refracted. Dasylva (1995:82) avers that:

> Literature discusses life by reflecting, or refracting, what may happen or what might (have) happen(ed), or what ought to have happen(ed), and not necessarily what had actually happened or is happening now.

Electoral manipulation and corruption have remained central impediments to democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The postcolonial state, since independence, has struggled with systemic political decay characterized by bribery, vote-buying, rigging, and the use of violence to secure electoral victory. Existing studies on Yoruba political novels have largely concentrated on themes such as corruption, bad leadership, abuse of power, neo-colonialism, and governance crises in works like *Saworoide*, *Akuko Gagara*, *Orilawe Adigun*, and *Gbobaniyi*. Scholars have identified electoral manipulation, bribery, political thuggery, and corruption as recurring motifs in Yoruba literature and have linked them to poor governance and democratic instability in Nigeria.

However, despite the growing scholarship on political corruption in Yoruba novels, there is a noticeable paucity of studies that specifically examine the interconnected relationship among electoral corruption, electoral violence, and democratic instability

in indigenous Yoruba novels. Furthermore, comparative studies focusing on Olu Owolabi's *Ọtẹ̀ N'Íbò* and Oladipo Yemitan's *Gbọ́baníyì* remain limited. Existing research often treats corruption and leadership failure as broad political issues without adequately investigating how electoral malpractice and election-related violence undermine democratic institutions and political stability in Nigeria. This study therefore fills the gap by undertaking a comparative literary analysis of *Ọtẹ̀ N'Íbò* and *Gbọ́baníyì*, demonstrating how the novels portray electoral corruption and electoral violence as catalysts for democratic instability, leadership crises, social unrest, and the erosion of public trust in democratic governance in Nigeria. The authors of *Òtè N'ibo,* Olú Owólabí, and Gbóbaníyì, Ọládipọ̀ Yémítàn address the issues related to electoral corruption/manipulation, political violence before, during, and after elections, and democratic instability in Nigeria's political space.

Politics is the act of government, the activity through which power is acquired, and the ability to influence decisions and policies that affect a society or nation. The writers, being part of society, are also shaped by political decisions and, as creators of literature, are political animals. The novelists depict situations in the past and focus attention on the present in order to prepare society for a well-sanitized future. They serve as the recorders of the mores and experiences in their societies. Writers over the ages have found ways of dwelling on issues like politics. The novel as a genre of literature has both historical and political significance in relation to politics. A novel is important as a critique of nationalism and state power. Novelists in Africa, Nigeria, particularly in Yorùbá land, notice the changes that occur in the game of politics, such as electoral corruption/manipulation, electoral violence, unresponsiveness of the government, lack of accountability, and mismanagement. The novelists satirize political corruption in the form of electoral manipulation, electoral violence, and democratic instability, most especially after independence and the bitter experiences of the electorate during elections in the decolonization period. Olú Owólabí and Yémítàn, in their novels, *Òtè N'ibo,* depict issues related to electoral manipulation and electoral violence in the Nigerian political space, especially the first experience of a political election in Nigeria after independence. This shows the complexities of the political system since independence, the influence of money and power, and the consequences of corrupt practices on society at large. The trend of electoral corruption has undermined democracy and the trust of the electorate in Africa, including Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Democracy and Democratic Instability

Democracy is assumed to be the best form of government, and it is described as the world's most widely accepted system of government. The word democracy is derived from Greek words (Greek demos, 'the people', kratein, 'to rule '). It is a political system in which the people of a country rule through any form of government they choose to establish. Zanden (1999) avers that 'democracy is a political system in which the powers derive from the consent of the governed and in which regular constitutional avenues exist for changing government officials. Aristotle described political leadership by using the concept "*demos Kratos,"* which emphasized the importance and participatory nature of leadership in politics. It is a system of government that is championed worldwide because it facilitates development, promotes the rule of law and its application, and advocates protection of individual or citizens' rights and privileges. Nigeria is operating a constitutional democracy, which promotes the rule of law. However, democracy is a form of government in which political power is vested in the hands of the people directly or indirectly through elections and voting. Tijani (1986:3) submits that 'political democracy is simply the facilitation of the dominance of the majority will in a given political community'. He equally asserts that in a democratic regime, conscious and meticulous efforts are made to see that the majority will prevail in the way and manner by which this leadership cadre is selected. In a nutshell, democracy gives citizens a role in choosing their political leaders. In the actual sense, an individual's right to vote, to make decisions, equality of all citizens, and freedom of expression are the features or characteristics of democracy. Democracy exists and grows where free and fair elections are highly considered and allowed to produce purposeful and visionary leadership.

Democratic Instability

Democratic instability refers to the persistent weakening of democratic institutions, constitutional governance, political legitimacy, and citizens' trust in the democratic process resulting from political crises, electoral malpractice, corruption, and violence. It is characterized by weak governance institutions, recurring political conflicts, declining electoral credibility, low voter confidence, poor rule of law, and ineffective democratic accountability.

Democratic instability refers to the weakening or disruption of democratic governance caused by corruption, violence, injustice, and institutional failure. When elections are manipulated and violence becomes normalized, citizens lose confidence in

democracy. This often results in political tension, protests, insecurity, and governance crises. According to Ogundiya (2010), Ehwarieme (2011), Diamond (2008), Joseph (1991), and Ake (1996) democratic instability is a condition in which democratic institutions, electoral processes, governance structures, and political legitimacy are weakened by factors such as corruption, electoral violence, ethnic conflict, leadership crises, military intervention, and poor governance, thereby threatening the survival and consolidation of democracy. Democratic stability depends on credible elections, independent institutions, political inclusion, and respect for constitutional principles. However, where electoral corruption and violence dominate political competition, democratic institutions become vulnerable to manipulation by political elites. This often produces governance crises, public distrust, electoral apathy, political polarization, and frequent challenges to governmental legitimacy.

Nigeria's democratic experience since 1999 illustrates how repeated electoral irregularities have undermined democratic consolidation despite uninterrupted civilian rule. Democratic instability is therefore not merely the occurrence of political conflict but also the inability of democratic institutions to effectively manage political competition and ensure peaceful transfer of political power. Within Yoruba political fiction, democratic instability is portrayed through narratives of failed leadership, political betrayal, corruption, violence, and institutional collapse. These literary representations reveal the consequences of dysfunctional electoral systems on governance and national development. In this study, democratic instability refers to the erosion of democratic governance resulting from electoral corruption and electoral violence as represented in *Ọ̀tẹ̀ N'Ìbò* and *Gbọ́baníyì*, with particular emphasis on their implications for Nigeria's democratic development.

Electoral Corruption

Electoral corruption refers to illegal, unethical, or manipulative practices employed by political actors, electoral officials, security agencies, or voters to influence electoral outcomes in ways that run counter to democratic principles. It encompasses activities such as vote-buying, ballot stuffing, voter intimidation, manipulation of electoral registers, falsification of election results, abuse of incumbency, misuse of state resources, and bribery of electoral officials. Electoral corruption undermines the principles of transparency, accountability, fairness, and political equality that constitute the foundation of democratic elections. It is a form of exploitation on the part of political leaders, resulting in the transaction or exchange of public resources and benefits. It refers to illegal and unethical practices that compromise the integrity of elections. Such practices include vote buying, ballot manipulation, falsification of results, bribery of electoral officials, purchasing of ballot papers, manipulation of

election results in favour of the candidates who can buy their way through, manipulation of voters' registration list, casting votes at unauthorized centres, ballot box snatching, bribing voters with money or gifts to secure their votes; and other forms of irregularity noticed during an election and intimidation of voters. It implies the abuse of laws and regulations by the rulers when totally ignored or tailored to suit their own purposes. Ogundiya (2009) submits that corruption permeates Nigeria's political system and contributes significantly to electoral malpractice and democratic instability.

This form of corruption weakens the electoral commission, law enforcement mechanism, and judiciary. Electoral corruption refers to any illegal, unethical, or manipulative actions that distort the fairness, integrity, or outcome of an election. Ebirim (2014) describes electoral malpractice and corruption as obstacles to democratic consolidation in Nigeria. It undermines the core democratic principle that citizens should freely choose their leaders. Electoral corruption is about influencing votes or election processes through dishonest means rather than genuine public support. In Nigeria, vote buying has become one of the most visible forms of electoral corruption. Scholars describe it as a dangerous practice that undermines democratic legitimacy and promotes political incompetence. Electoral corruption transforms democratic participation into commercial transactions where politicians purchase political power rather than earn public trust.

Scholars argue that electoral corruption extends beyond isolated acts of fraud to include systemic manipulation of electoral institutions and processes designed to produce predetermined outcomes. In developing democracies such as Nigeria, electoral corruption has become institutionalized through patronage networks, political godfatherism, and clientelism, thereby weakening public confidence in democratic governance. Consequently, elections become mechanisms for elite competition rather than instruments of popular sovereignty. Within Yoruba political novels, electoral corruption is often represented through fictional narratives depicting politicians who exploit poverty, ethnicity, and traditional authority to manipulate electoral processes. Such literary portrayals mirror the socio-political realities of Nigeria and expose the moral decadence associated with electoral politics. In the context of this study, electoral corruption refers to all forms of political manipulation and fraudulent electoral practices portrayed in *Ọ̀tẹ̀ N'Ìbò* and *Gbọ́baníyì* that compromise electoral integrity and democratic legitimacy.

Electoral Violence

Electoral violence refers to the use or threat of physical, psychological, structural, or symbolic force before, during, or after elections with the intention of influencing electoral behaviour or outcomes. It includes assassination, intimidation, destruction of property, armed attacks, political thuggery, kidnapping, harassment of electoral officials, and violent clashes among political supporters. Electoral violence occurs across the electoral cycle—during voter registration, political campaigns, election day, vote counting, and post-election disputes. It is often orchestrated by political elites who recruit unemployed youths and criminal groups as instruments of coercion to intimidate opponents and suppress voter participation. Electoral violence not only threatens human security but also erodes democratic legitimacy by preventing citizens from exercising their political rights freely.

Basically, electoral violence refers to "any threat of attack or actual attack meted out against persons or groups of persons in relation to an election before, during, and after the election" (Harry & Kalagbor, 2020). In the same vein, Birch Muchlinski (2018) describes electoral violence as "coercive force directed towards electoral actors and/or objects, that occurs in the context of electoral competition – can occur before, during or after elections and it can target a variety of factors including candidates' activities, poll workers, election observers, journalists and voters." Electoral violence refers to the use of physical force, intimidation, harassment, or assassination before, during, or after elections. Political violence may involve political thugs, security intimidation, destruction of property, and attacks on opponents.

Electoral violence discourages political participation and weakens democratic institutions. In Nigeria, political actors frequently employ violence to manipulate electoral outcomes and silence opposition voices. In addition, Fischer in Wallsworth (2015) defines electoral violence as "any random or organized act or threat to intimidate, physically harm, blackmail or abuse a political stakeholder in seeking to determine, delay or to otherwise influence an electoral process." In Nigeria, electoral violence has remained a recurring feature of democratic elections since the First Republic, contributing to political instability, communal conflicts, displacement of populations, and loss of lives. Yoruba political novels frequently portray electoral violence as a consequence of greed, corruption, abuse of political power, and weak institutions. These narratives provide critical insights into how violence has become normalized within Nigeria's political culture. For this study, electoral violence refers to all forms of coercion, intimidation, political thuggery, and physical aggression depicted in *Ọ̀tẹ̀ N'Ìbò* and *Gbọ́baníyì* as instruments employed to manipulate electoral outcomes and sustain political dominance.

Yoruba Novel

The Yoruba novel refers to a literary prose narrative written primarily in the Yoruba language that reflects the historical experiences, philosophical worldview, cultural values, political consciousness, and social realities of the Yoruba people. Emerging prominently during the colonial era through pioneers such as Daniel Olorunfẹmi Fagunwa, the Yoruba novel has evolved into an important medium for preserving indigenous knowledge while interrogating contemporary socio-political issues. Modern Yoruba novels transcend traditional themes of folklore, morality, and spirituality by engaging critically with governance, corruption, leadership, democracy, social injustice, and national development. They employ indigenous linguistic expressions, proverbs, oral traditions, symbolism, and satire to critique political leadership and expose societal contradictions.

Political Yoruba novels constitute an important subgenre that uses fictional narratives to examine political behaviour, electoral processes, abuse of power, and governance failures within Nigerian society. Such novels serve not merely as artistic expressions but also as instruments of political education, social criticism, and ideological resistance. In the present study, the Yoruba novel refers specifically to the indigenous political novels *Ọtẹ̀ N'Ìbò* and *Gbọ́baníyì*, whose narratives interrogate electoral corruption, political violence, and democratic instability within Nigeria's democratic experience.

Nigerian Politics

Nigerian politics refers to the processes, institutions, power relations, ideologies, and interactions through which governmental authority is acquired, exercised, contested, and sustained within the Nigerian state. It encompasses electoral competition, political parties, governance, public policy, political participation, leadership, federalism, ethnic relations, and constitutional democracy. Nigeria operates a multi-party presidential democratic system characterized by federal governance, separation of powers, and periodic elections. However, Nigerian politics has historically been shaped by ethnic competition, patron-client relationships, corruption, political godfatherism, identity politics, and intense struggles for state power. These structural realities often weaken democratic institutions and encourage electoral malpractice and violence.

Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, Nigeria has experienced significant democratic progress alongside persistent challenges, including electoral fraud, insecurity, judicial disputes over elections, abuse of incumbency, and declining public

confidence in political institutions. Consequently, political competition frequently revolves around access to state resources rather than ideological differences or policy alternatives. Yoruba political novels reflect these realities by presenting fictional representations of political actors, electoral contests, corruption, and governance failures. Through satire, realism, and symbolic characterization, these novels critique Nigeria's political system and advocate accountable leadership and democratic reform. Within the context of this study, Nigerian politics refers to the democratic political environment in which the events portrayed in *Ọ̀tẹ̀ N'Ìbò* and *Gbọ́baníyì* are situated, particularly the interactions among political actors, electoral institutions, and citizens that produce electoral corruption, electoral violence, and democratic instability.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative textual analysis method. This approach involves a close reading of *Ote N'ibo and Gbọ́baníyì* to identify and interpret patterns of corruption, manipulation, and political hypocrisy. Primary data is derived from the text of *Ote Nibo* Olú Owólabí and Gbọ́baníyì by Oladipo Yemitan, while secondary data sources such as scholarly articles, critical essays, textbooks, magazines, and historical analyses of Nigerian politics provide contextual understanding. The interpretive content analysis method of data analysis was used to explain the issues related to electoral corruption, electoral violence, and their implications for democratic stability in Nigeria. The analysis focuses on the representation of political characters, electoral practices, and thematic motifs related to corruption and manipulation. By interpreting these elements, the study situates Owolabi's and Yemiitan's works within the continuum of protest literature in Nigerian novels. The two indigenous Yorùbá novels represent political misconduct, abuse of power, electoral manipulation, and the consequences of failed democratic structures in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Marxist theory is used in the critical analysis of history, society, revolution, and economics, and later found applicable to literary theory. Marxism as a literary theory was developed further by various Marxists like Lenin (1970), Mao (1962), Lukacs (1973), Goldmann (1974), and Brecht (1966), from the writings of Karl Marx (1918 – 1883) and Frederick Engels (1820-1895). Their views are collected from their scattered writings on literature, which they did not develop systematically. Marxist literary critics are built on the early views of Marx and Engels. It advocates social, economic, and political experiences of man toward redefining human society.

This study employs the Marxist theoretical framework for its analysis, which views literature as a reflection of material and class struggles in society. Marxist literary criticism examines literature as a reflection of socio-economic and political realities within society. The theory emphasizes class struggle, oppression, exploitation, and the control of political power by dominant elites. Marxist criticism examines how economic systems, class hierarchy, and ideology influence social relations and political outcomes. In *Ote Nibo* and Gbọ́baníyì, power is commodified, and the political class is depicted as bourgeois elite exploiting the masses (the proletariat) for personal enrichment. According to Karl Marx, political institutions in a capitalist society serve the interests of the ruling class. Applying this to Owolabi's and Yemiitan's novels, the electoral process becomes a tool for perpetuating inequality and oppression. Marxist scholars noticed that literature reflects the contradictions within society and exposes the oppressive structures maintained by the ruling class. In the context of Nigerian politics, the political elite manipulate democratic institutions for personal gain while the masses suffer marginalization, poverty, and violence. The ruling elite manipulate the system to maintain dominance, while the masses are silenced through poverty, propaganda, and electoral deceit. Thus, the motif of electoral corruption is not an isolated moral failure but a symptom of structural injustice.

Through the Marxist lens, Owolabi's *Ote Nibo* and Yemiita's Gbọbaníyi expose how capitalist greed and political opportunism distort democracy and render the electoral process meaningless. The novels, therefore, function as ideological resistance, calling for political consciousness among the oppressed. The relevance of Marxist Sociology of Literature to this study lies in its ability to explain the struggle between the ruling political class and ordinary citizens in the selected novels. Political leaders in *Ọ̀tẹ̀ N'Íbò* and *Gbọ́baníyì* exploit electoral processes through corruption and violence to maintain political dominance. The theory, therefore, provides an appropriate framework for examining how literature exposes systemic political oppression and democratic instability.

Synopsis of Ote Nibo by Olu Owolabi

The novel *Ọtẹ̀ Nibo* depicts the political situation before the advent of colonialism, when the people practiced a traditional system of administration in which the ọba was the head of government. It was peaceful, orderly, well-organized, and harmonious. The introduction of the democratic system of government represents a transition from the traditional system of government to a democratic system with the introduction of elections and their attendant chaos and violence. The contest and electioneering experiences between Olókò and Alágùnfọn parties were problematic and violent in

nature. Aríkàwé and Ọbayẹmí contested the House of Assembly election. The experience was bitter. The election in the house favoured Ọbáyẹmí against Aríkàwé. Ọbáyẹmí became the leader of the new government in Ìbàdàn, but there was violence everywhere. The violence that erupted after the election claimed the life of Ejalónibú. The contest between Gbadéró and Ọdẹ́dèjì resulted in enmity and hatred and disrupted their friendship. The two are contesting for the Senate post. Also, Akinkúnmi and Babátúnde became enemies as a result of the contest for the senate seat at the national level. After four years, another election was conducted, which was not in favour of Ọbáyẹmí. This time, he had to leave the political power in the hands of his deputy, who was Ọ̀gbẹ́ni Seéní Akínjọlá. Ọbáyẹmí's political power was relegated in Lagos, which is the centre of national government; he was just an opposition leader, instead of the head of government. This generated interpersonal conflict between the Ọbayẹmí and Akińjọlá and their wives; they became arch enemies. As a result of political rivalry, Ọbáyẹmí, together with some other famous politicians, was alleged and charged with a felony. The judge convicted Ọbáyẹmí, and he was sentenced to imprisonment. Another election after this time resulted in violence and tribulation. Because of this development, the military overthrew the democratic government, and many people were killed, among them Mr. Seéní Akínjọlá, who was murdered in cold blood.

Synopsis of Gbọ́baníyì

Bámdélé Atipàkọ́ travelled abroad to study but returned empty-handed. He was appointed the Chairman of Ẹgbẹ́ Ọmọ Òkè-Irà (Association of Òkè-Irà Indigenes in London). He was so actively involved in the association's activities that he could not pay the required attention to his studies. Therefore, he ended up a failure academically. He was fond of criticizing other people's views and practices. Adéríbigbé exhibits favouritism in his leadership operations by engaging in nepotism. Adéríbigbé, who was the Local Government Chairman, offered Bámdélé a job, but, disappointingly, he started collecting bribes and kickbacks from people, which he himself had criticised while he was away in London. He was considered to be a trustworthy person and was given a chieftaincy title, 'Gbọ́baníyi '. After the demise of the reigning king, Bámdélé indicated interest in contesting for the kingship post in Òkè-Irà. Bámdélé abandons Títílọlá, the wife he married right from London, and follows Síkírá, whom he met after he started involving himself in corrupt practices. Síkírá cherished clothes and jewelry, and this led to Bámdélé's misfortune; they later separated, and he went back to his wife Títílọlá when he had lost all his possessions to reckless living.

The Motifs of Electoral Manipulation and Corruption in Ọtẹ̀ Nìbò

Election is a democratic process approved as the standard means of choosing political leaders through the ballot to positions of authority, to control the nation's resources and affairs. According to Agbájé and Adéjùmọ̀bí (2006), as cited in Nwosu (2006:22), "election is a viable mechanism for consummating representative government and facilitating leadership succession. It promotes accountability, citizen's participation and gives voice and power to the people". Nnoli (2003:230) defines "election as the manner of choice agreed upon by a group of people out of many to occupy one or several positions of authority" Tijani (1986:3) avers that "a political democracy is simply the facilitation of dominance of the majority will in a given political community." and that "election must always consciously go with the qualification of being free and fair".

In *Ọ̀tẹ̀ Nibò*, the author describes the peaceful, fruitful pre-colonial period before the advent of modern politics imposed by colonial masters on Africans, which disrupted the people's peaceful, harmonious experiences. The assertion below reveals this:

Ọ̀rọ̀ di ọ̀rọ̀ ìbò, ọ̀tẹ̀ dé. Taa làá mú, ta làá jù sílẹ̀. Ta ni kò kún ojú òṣùnwọ̀n, irú òṣùwọ̀n wo?

Owólabí (*Ọ̀tẹ̀*, 1988:13)

It is an era of votes; voting comes along with disgust. Who is to be chosen? Who is to be disqualified? Who is competent? What kind of criteria? The author gives a vivid picture of the traditional system of government in the society before the coming of the colonial masters. He described it as peaceful, focused, well-organised, and purposeful. He pointed out that when the colonial masters eventually introduced modern-day elections to select leaders, chaos became the political experience in Nigeria. The novels demonstrate that electoral corruption produces leaders without legitimacy, thereby weakening democratic governance. This representation aligns with contemporary African political realities where electoral fraud continues to threaten democratic stability. Studies on Yoruba political narratives similarly identify electoral manipulation, bribery, propaganda, and abuse of power as recurring motifs in indigenous Nigerian literature.

In *Ọ̀tẹ̀ Nìbò*, a form of electoral corruption is depicted. The author satirises electoral malpractice in society. Electoral corruption is one of the dominant political problems represented in Ọ̀ tẹ̀ N' Ìbò novel. Politicians manipulate electoral processes through vote-buying, intimidation, bribery, falsification of electoral outcomes, and snatching

of ballot boxes. Elections are portrayed not as democratic exercises but as battles for power and economic control.

Àwọn kan ni àwọn ri àwọn ènìyàn ti wọn jí ìwé ìdìbò gbé wọ iyàrá ìdìbò, ti wọn sì dà á sínú àpótí wọn, àwọn mìíràn ni àwọn ri ibi ti wọn ti yí ìbò dà, tí wọn sì gbé èjó ẹlẹ́bi fún aláre. Tí wọ́n gbé aláre fún elébi. Èyí náà l'ó wa ta oró sí màgàlà tí ó sọ gbogbo ìlú di rúdurùdu, tí o di ohun ti àwọn Ègbẹ́ wọ̀nyí kò fẹ́ rí imí ara wọn l'ákítàn mọ́.

Owólabí (*Ọ̀tẹ̀,* 1973: 91)

Some people reported that they saw people snatching voters' cards and taking them to a room and putting them inside ballot boxes; some said that they saw where they removed all the voters' cards already used, and they declared losers as winners. It is this that caused rancour, which is responsible for confusion in the town; this is what caused the crisis between the two parties. Owólabí uses dialogue and irony to reveal how political promises are weaponized to deceive the electorate. The manipulation of electoral commissions, ballot stuffing and vote buying mirrors real-life electoral malpractices that have plagued Nigeria since its independence. As part of electoral corruption that encourages election manipulation, the author of Gbọ́baníyì also highlights the use of money in politics to win the heart of the electorate in order to vote for them. The political experience during the postcolonial period, with its attendant fraudulent practices, promotes the use of money in politics. The politicians use money to buy votes, directly or indirectly. The excerpt below indicates this:

Bàbá Bámdélé fi náírà márùn-ún lọ wọn ṣùgbọn wọ́n kọ̀. Wọn sọ ọ di ọ̀ranyàn pé àwọn gbọ́dọ̀ gba owó kí àwọn tó dìbò; wọ́n sọ ìbò wọn di ọja tí ènìyàn ń díyelé. Àfi ìgbà tí Bàbá Bámdélé fi náírà méjọ bẹ wọ́n ni wọ́n to jáwásílẹ̀. Bàbá Bámdélé rọra fi ara mọ́ náírà méjì tó kù ó gba kámú. Tàbí èwo ni èniyàn ó wá ṣe!

Yémitàn (Gbọ́baníyì, 1972:31)

Bámdélé's father offered them five naira, but they rejected it. They insisted that they must collect money before they would vote. They turned their votes into commodities that could be purchased. Until Bámdélé's father gave them eight naira, they refused to vote. Bámdélé's father accepted the remaining two naira. Or what could one do! The money given was to influence the election process. This is done to buy the conscience and votes of the electorate. This is the use of money in politics. The novel also exposes the complicity of the masses who, due to poverty and ignorance, trade their votes for temporary material benefits. The author in Ọ tẹ̀ N' Ìbò depicts a scene of electoral violence after the announcement of the House of Assembly election results. Violence is presented in the novel as an extension of corrupt politics. Political actors recruit thugs and intimidate opponents to secure an electoral victory. Electoral

contests are transformed into violent confrontations rather than peaceful democratic exercises.

Ní dédé agogo mẹ́jọ àárọ̀ ni ìbò dídì bẹ́rẹ̀. Wọ́n sì di í títí tí ó fi dí agogo mẹ́fà ìrọ̀lẹ́. Nígbà tí yóò sì fi di agogo méjìlá òru, èsì ìbò ti fẹ́rẹ̀ jáde tán. Ṣàngbá fẹ́rẹ̀ẹ́ fọ́, nítorí díẹ̀ ló kù kí Ẹgbẹ́ Alágùnfọn wọlé. Ròǵbòdìyàn sì ni àbájáde ìbò yìí dá sílẹ̀. Kódà, ìjà ńlá bẹ́sílẹ̀ láàrin àwọn Ẹgbẹ́ méjèèjì pẹ̀lú

Owólabí (*Ọ̀tẹ̀*, 1973:40)

Voting commenced at exactly 8.00 am in the morning. Votes were cast till 6.00 pm in the evening. Before 12.00 midnight, the announcement of the election results was almost completed. Problems nearly occurred because the Alágùnfọn party's victory was very narrow. The outcome of this election resulted in violence. Even, there was a big fight between the two political parties. In *Ote Nibo*, Olú Owólabí paints a vivid picture of a corrupt electoral system where politics is reduced to a game of deceit and greed. The title itself, *Ote Nibo* (translated roughly as "There is a conspiracy in the election), symbolizes the pervasive nature of political manipulation. Characters such as Chief Adeoye and others embody the corrupt political elite who view elections as investments that must yield profits once in office.

In *Ọ̀tẹ̀ N'Íbò*, violence becomes normalized within the political process. Opposition figures are threatened while public spaces become sites of fear and insecurity. Political actors weaponize ethnic sentiment and social divisions to mobilize violent supporters.

Ju gbogbo rẹ̀ lọ, èsì ìbò jade; ìjàngbọ̀n ńlá mìíràn tún bẹ̀rẹ̀. Ṣe kò sí ẹni tí í ṣubú nínú ìbò dídì tí í fẹ́ gbà wí pé alátakò òun lágbára jú òun lọ.

Owólabí (*Ọ̀tẹ̀*, 1973:51)

Upon all these, the election results were out; there was another act of violence. No one will lose an election victory if they accept that the opposition is superior to him/her. The depiction of violence in the novels reflects broader African political experiences, Nigeria in particular, where elections frequently result in bloodshed, displacement, and instability. The texts suggest that violence persists because corrupt leaders view political office as a means of economic survival and domination. The representation of violence in the text reflects Nigeria's political reality, where elections are frequently associated with killings, destruction, and social unrest. The novel, therefore, serves as a critique of the militarization of democratic processes.

Ju gbógbo rẹ̀ lọ, àbájáde ìbò ti dé, ibi tí wọn fojú sí, ọ̀nà kò gba ibẹ̀ lọ. Ayé pa kádàrá ìbò dà tán; ìlú kò fararọ

Owólabí (*Ọ̀tẹ̀*, 1973:91)

Amid all these, their expectation of the election outcome was not what was obtained. There was manipulation in the election; there is violence in society. Nigeria's democratic process has remained vulnerable to corruption and violence despite repeated electoral reforms. Political office holders and party elites frequently manipulate elections through bribery, coercion, and violence. The consequences include political instability, poor governance, insecurity, and public distrust in democratic institutions. The connection between corruption, political instability, assassination, and governance crises has also been examined in African political literature and Yoruba political narratives. According to Agabi (2026), for Nigeria to get out of the shame of corruption as a nation that has been enslaved by corruption, one of the major area that need to be addressed is the issue of electoral corruption, electoral violence, and democratic instability. He states that:

> *If we are ever going to free ourselves from corruption, if the nation is ever going to be non-violent and secure, we must first have free and fair elections. So far, our elections have been far from free or fair. If a president, a governor, a legislator, or a councillor sees nothing wrong with employing the most inferior methods to acquire office, he or she should not be surprised if other citizens employ unethical methods to achieve their own aims. A leader who has acquired power by such means should expect that his bad example will be followed. Until we hold free and fair elections, the people will never take the government seriously when it condemns corruption. There should be a total overhaul of electoral processes in Nigeria to allow free and fair selection of political leaders into office.*

Conclusion

This study has examined electoral corruption, electoral violence, and democratic instability in Nigeria by analyzing Ọ̀tẹ̀ N'ìbò and Gbọ́baníyì. The novels portray Nigerian politics as deeply affected by corruption, manipulation, violence, and abuse of power. Elections become corrupt processes controlled by political elites who prioritize personal interests over public welfare. The study established that electoral violence and democratic instability are consequences of failed leadership, institutional weakness, and socio-economic inequality. Through indigenous storytelling, the authors critique postcolonial African governance, Nigeria in particular, and advocate political accountability and democratic reform. The paper, therefore, concludes that,

unless and until electoral contests in Nigerian elections are devoid of corruption and manipulation, become violence-free and credible, it would be impossible to attain democratic stability. Also, national cohesion and experience of having good governance will be a dream that never comes to reality. African, including Nigerian indigenous literature, remains an important medium for political reflection, democratic advocacy, and resistance against corruption.

Recommendations

1. Nigerian governments should strengthen electoral institutions to ensure transparent and credible elections.
2. Political leaders should be held accountable through effective anti-corruption agencies and independent judicial systems.
3. Civic education should be encouraged to discourage vote-buying and political violence.
4. Indigenous African literature should be promoted as a tool for creating political awareness and spreading democratic education.
5. African youths, Nigerians in particular, should actively participate in democratic processes and resist political manipulation.
6. Governments should implement policies that reduce poverty and unemployment, which often make citizens vulnerable to political exploitation.

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HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA: ASSOCIATED FACTORS AND POLICY RESPONSES

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Abstract

Food insecurity is still a global challenge, and a need to understand the contributing factors is needful for effective interventions. In Kwara State, demographic and socioeconomic elements have been found to strongly influence food insecurity. This study analyzed the link between household food insecurity and its determinants in Kwara State. The objectives were to assess household food security status; demographic and socioeconomic determinants of food insecurity; and State measures for combatting food insecurity. A descriptive mixed-methods approach was adopted, with both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The data was analyzed through descriptive statistics, Pearson Chi-square, and content analysis. Findings revealed that there is a predominance of moderate food insecurity, and low food security among the households; demographic determinants were place of residence, sex, age, and family size; socioeconomic determinants were income level, educational level, employment,

agricultural engagement, and credit access; and the State measures to mitigate food insecurity included the 'Policy on Food and Nutrition', the '10-Year Agricultural Transformation Plan', the 'Multi-Sectoral State Working Committee on Food Security', and the 'Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zone'. The study concluded that household food security is low in Kwara State, with the prevalence of moderate food insecurity, and mild food insecurity; demographic and socioeconomic determinants highly influenced household food insecurity; and a set of initiatives aimed at agricultural production and institutional coordination have been directed toward food insecurity. The study recommends government assisted food programs, capacity building and economic inclusion initiatives; higher priority for rural households, larger families, and women-headed households in agricultural policies; increased social access to income, education, employment, agriculture, credit, transportation, and information systems; and the scaling-up of the existing food security programs to improve household food security in Kwara state.

Keywords - *household food security, food insecurity, determinants, interventions.*

Introduction

Food insecurity stands as a major developmental challenge in many parts of the world, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is widely recognized as the lack of consistent access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food necessary for a healthy and active life, and not just as the absence of food. The World Health Organization, citing the 2025 SOFI report, showed that between 638 and 720 million people experienced food insecurity in 2024, with an estimated figure of 673 million. There is a decrease of 22 million when compared to 2022, and a reduction of 15 million when compared to 2023. Although, in Africa and Western Asia, and in countries experiencing prolonged food crises, the overall positive trend contrasts sharply with a continued rise in food insecurity. In Africa, over 20% of the population, approximately 307 million people were affected by food insecurity in 2024, while an estimated 12.7% or more than 39 million people, experienced food insecurity in Western Asia. By 2030, it is projected that 512 million people may face chronic undernourishment, with nearly 60% living in Africa. Poor demographic and socioeconomic factors have continued to impact food insecurity (The World Health Organization, 2025).

In Nigeria, food-insecure population increased from 66.2 million to 100 million by the first quarter of 2024, this included approximately 18.6 million people who are experiencing acute food insecurity and 43.7 million at risk of crisis-level or above-crisis-level food insecurity (Veriv Africa, 2024). According to the 2024 Global Hunger Index, Nigeria ranks 110th out of 127 countries, with a score of 28.8, this indicates a serious level of food insecurity (Global Hunger Index, 2024). In Kwara

State, agriculture is the primary livelihood for some households, but food insecurity is still prevalent due to limited access to resources, low productivity, and income disparities. A significant proportion of households, struggle with inadequate food supply and limited dietary diversity, and their ability to consistently access sufficient and nutritious food is not certain. Food insecurity among households in Kwara State has been documented over the years: 64% in 2007 (Babatunde et. al., 2007), 65.5% in 2010 (Omotesho and Mohammed-Lawal, 2010), 54% in 2017 (Ogunbiyi and Olajide, 2017), and 54.5% in 2021 (Mukaila et. al., 2021). While the 2017 figures showed an improvement of about 10% compared to 2007, there was no significant reduction between 2017 and 2021. In 2024, a study reported that household food security in Kwara State was at 41% (Gabriel et. al., 2025).

Poor demographic and socioeconomic factors are major contributors to food insecurity in Kwara State as observed by Agidew and Singh (2018), Jimoh *et. al*. (2018), Alani *et. al*. (2019), and Mukaila *et. al.* (2021); but access to comprehensive and up-to-date literatures on this relationship is limited. The study further investigates household food insecurity and its demographic and socioeconomic determinants in Kwara State, guided by the following objectives: (i) assess the food security status of households in Kwara State; (ii) examine the demographic determinants of household food insecurity in Kwara State; (iii) analyze the socioeconomic determinants of household food insecurity in Kwara State; and (iv) evaluate Kwara State measures for addressing household food insecurity.

Literature Review

The Concept of Food Security and its Indicators

In 2001, the State of Food Insecurity in the World 2001, defined food security as "a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO, 2002). Four indicators must be present to achieve food security, viz: food availability, access, utilization, and stability. Rivera-Ferre described 'availability' as the physical quantities of food that is produced, stored, processed, distributed and exchanged (Rivera-Ferre, 2014). *Food access* relates to 'food affordability', 'food allocation', and 'food preferences' (Omeje and Ogbu, 2015). FAO (2008a) opined that food access is basically economic and physical access to food, which is determined by income, expenditure, market and prices. Omeje and Ogbu (2015) describe food utilization as the nutritional value, social value and safety of food. FAO (2008b) explained *food stability* as the capacity of stabilizing all the first three dimensions of food security over time, against

conditions that threaten it such as rising food prices, adverse weather conditions, political instability, and war.

Global Food Insecurity Statistics

FAO has measured food insecurity through the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES); moderate food insecurity, occurring when there is compromised food quality and variety, reduced quantity or skipping of meals, and when access is uncertain; while severe food insecurity occurs whenever there is lack of food for a day or more (FAO, 2023). In 2025, a study showed that between 638 and 720 million people or between 7.8% and 8.8% of global population experienced hunger in 2024. In 2024, regionally, hunger affected approximately 307 million (20.2%) people in Africa, 323 million (6.7%) in Asia, and 34 million (5.1%) in Latin America and the Caribbean. Globally, the number of undernourished people is expected to decline to about 512 million people by 2030. Approximately, 2.3 billion people globally experienced moderate or severe food insecurity in 2024. Throughout 2023 and 2024, rising food prices increased the global average cost of a healthy diet. Prices ranging from 4.01 PPP dollars in 2022, 4.30 PPP dollars in 2023, to 4.46 purchasing power parity (PPP) dollars per person per day in 2024 (FAO et.al. 2025). According to the 2024 Global Hunger Index, Nigeria ranked 110th out of 127 countries with insufficient data to calculate the GHI scores. With a score of 28.8, the country was said to face a serious level of hunger (Global Hunger Index, 2024). Food security remains a challenge for some households in Nigeria. In a study of smallholder farming households in Kwara State, Gabriel *et. al*. (2025) reported that food availability was at 55%, food accessibility was at 40%, food utilization was at 29%; and the overall food security stood at 41.3%.

Demographic and Socioeconomic Factors Affecting Food Security

Gender is a significant determinant of food security. Joshi and Joshi (2016) found that female-headed households in Rwanda were more likely to be food insecure than their male counterparts. In Ethiopia's South Wollo zone, Agidew and Singh (2018) reported that 84.4% male-headed households compared to 15.6% female-headed households were food secure. Drammeh *et. al.* (2019) noted that although women contributed substantially to food availability, accessibility, and utilization in Sub-Saharan Africa, they were more vulnerable to food insecurity. Aboaba et. al. (2020) reported that the majority (61.67%) of rural farming household heads in Southwest Nigeria were male. In a related study in East Java, Indonesia, Rachman et. al., (2021) found that gender had a positive and significant effect on food security, with an odds

ratio of 1.19, suggesting that male farmers had higher likelihood for household food security.

In Enugu, Nigeria, Arene and Anyaeji (2010) found that 60% of the study population were food insecure, and age of household heads featured as an important determinant; the older household heads showed a higher probability of food security due to accumulated years of experience in public or private businesses. However, in the South Wollo zone of Ethiopia, Agidew and Singh (2018) reported that age of household heads was statistically significant, and had a negative association with rural household food security; the result indicated that older farmers were less likely to achieve food security compared to younger ones. Drammeh et. al. (2019) observed that increase in age reduced food production capacity, and undermined household food security in Sub-Saharan Africa. Aboaba *et. al.* (2020) noted that about one-quarter of household heads in rural Southwest Nigeria were aged between 31 and 40 years, with a mean age of 49, indicating that agriculture in the region is largely practiced by people in their productive years. In the Paute River Basin of Azuay Province, Ecuador, Cordero-Ahiman et. al. (2020) also found that the age of household heads had a negative and significant effect on food security.

Ogunbiyi and Olajide (2017) associated age, household income, and sustainable farming practices with the food security status of households; among marginally food-secure households, married heads experienced a significant 44.24% increase in food security, compared to their unmarried counterparts. However, Akukwe (2020) found that in Southeast Nigeria, households with married heads proved to have higher likelihood for food insecurity compared to households with unmarried heads because of reduced family size. Drammeh et. al. (2019) emphasized education as a key determinant of food production, access, and utilization in Sub-Saharan Africa, stressing the importance of higher education, particularly for female household heads. Nurudeen and Shaufique (2019) observed that higher education improved skills and productivity, and contributed to a 15.4% rise in food security in Nigeria. Akukwe (2020) also found that a significant positive relationship between education and food security in Southeast Nigeria. Diallo et. al. (2021) reported that in Mali, school attendance was lower in rural areas than urban areas, with a negative correlation between education and food insecurity, but education still had a positive impact on nutritional knowledge.

Mebratu (2018) found credit access had a significant influence on food insecurity in rural Eastern Ethiopia. Aboaba et. al. (2020) also revealed that credit access significantly improved food security by 32% for high food security households in southwest Nigeria. However, Agidew and Singh (2018) reported that in South Wollo,

Ethiopia, credit access showed no significant impact, as 31.1% of households without credit access were food secure, and 20.6% of them were food insecure. On family size, Astemir (2014) and Joshi and Joshi (2016) identified household size as a significant negative determinant of food security. Mebratu (2018) highlighted that higher dependency ratios significantly increased food insecurity. Nurudeen and Shaufique (2019) noted that larger households in rural areas often struggle with food security because demand outweighs supply, and the negative impacts are mostly seen on children. Aboaba et. al. (2020) found that while an additional household member could increase the probability of food insecurity by 2.48%, household members could also serve as a source of farm labor, particularly in rural settings. Holleman and Conti (2020) found that higher GDP per capita reduced food insecurity, while income inequality worsened it; and that social capital and social networks significantly lowered the probability of food insecurity, with social capital having the stronger effect. Gabriel and Yusuf (2024) revealed that the impacts of low income on food security included prevalence of hunger, and limited food allocation within the households.

Methodology

This study employed mixed method of survey and descriptive research design that integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the determinants of household food insecurity in Kwara State. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires and key informant interviews. The secondary data were gathered from reviewed documents and some previous research studies. The study population comprised 468,780 households in 16 local government areas (LGAs). Out of these, nine LGAs were purposively selected from the three geopolitical zones in Kwara State; these are Edu, Patigi, Moro, Asa, Ilorin East, Ilorin South, Oke-Ero, Ifelodun and Irepodun LGAs. For the quantitative data, the study sample consists of 528 households that were selected randomly and surveyed through structured questionnaires. The qualitative data were obtained with key informant interviews that featured government officials that were selected purposively to provide expert perspectives. The quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics to assess food insecurity levels, while the Pearson Chi-square tests was employed to establish the relationship between household food insecurity and their determinants. The qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis. Ethical considerations were observed through informed consents that were obtained from the participants, and confidentiality of responses was maintained.

Results and Discussion

The Food Security Status of Households in Kwara State

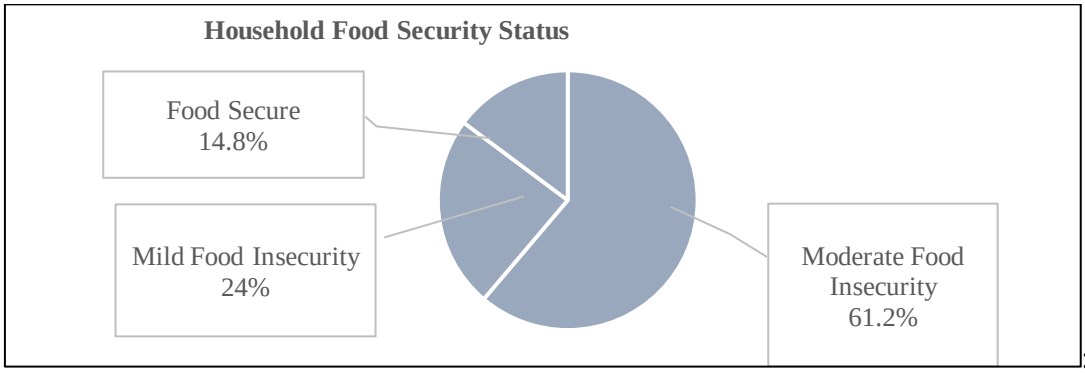
Household food security status was assessed using the Food Insecurity Experience-Based Measurement Scale (FIES). The scoring framework classified households with scores ≤6 as *moderately food insecure*, those with a score of 7 as *mildly food insecure*, and those with a score of 8 as *food secure*. According to Figure 1, 61.2% of respondents were moderately food insecure, 24.1% were mildly food insecure, and 14.8% were food secure.

Table 1 - Pearson Chi-square Test on the Demographic Determinants of Household Food Insecurity (HFI) in Kwara State

	Variable	Coefficient	X^2	(Df)	P-Value
Demographic Determinants of HFI	Place of Residence	-0.051	78.381	8	**<0.001**
	Sex	0.106	11.913	1	**0.001**
	Age	-0.081	38.037	6	**<0.001**
	Marital Status	-0.043	3.010	2	0.222
	Family Size	0.084	12.225	3	**0.007**

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2023

Figure 1 - Food Security Status of Households in Kwara State



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The Demographic Determinants of Household Food Insecurity in Kwara State

The results from the Pearson Chi-square test showed that four demographic variables had a significant relationship with household food insecurity, as their p-values were less than the alpha level ($p < 0.05$). These variables are place of residence ($p < 0.001$), sex ($p < 0.001$), age ($p < 0.001$), and family size ($p = 0.044$). Table 1 presents the details. *Place of residence* had a coefficient of -0.051, which indicates an average negative correlation with household food insecurity; this implies that the local government area of respondents had a moderately negative influence on household food insecurity; it also suggests that improvements or differences in location could contribute to a reduction in food insecurity. *Sex* had a coefficient of 0.106, which represents a strong positive correlation with household food insecurity. This means that the sex of respondents had a significant positive influence on household food insecurity; it also implies that food insecurity is more prevalent among households with higher number of a particular gender. The study showed that males had increased probability of food security than females among the households. *Age* had a coefficient of -0.081, this indicates a strong negative relationship with household food insecurity; and suggests that as the age of respondents increases, the likelihood of household food insecurity decreases. It means older respondents are less likely to experience food insecurity. *Family size* had a coefficient of 0.084, showing a strong positive correlation with household food insecurity. This implies that larger family sizes are associated with higher levels of household food insecurity, and it suggests that food insecurity is more likely to rise as household size increases.

The Socioeconomic Determinants of Household Food Insecurity in Kwara State

The results from the Pearson Chi-square test showed that ten socioeconomic factors had significant relationships with household food insecurity, as their p-values were less than the alpha level ($p < 0.05$). These factors are income level ($p < 0.001$), education level ($p < 0.001$), employment ($p < 0.001$), primary occupation ($p < 0.001$), secondary occupation ($p < 0.001$), agricultural engagement ($p < 0.001$), transportation access ($p = 0.021$), sanitation access ($p < 0.001$), credit access ($p = 0.003$), and access to information ($p = 0.005$). It means food insecurity of the households are influenced by socioeconomic determinants. Table 2 presents the details.

Table 2 – Pearson Chi-square Test on the Socioeconomic Determinants of Household Food Insecurity (HFI) in Kwara State

	Variable	Coefficient	X^2	Df	P-Value
Socioeconomic Determinants of HFI	Income Level	-0.210	52.988	4	**<0.001**
	Educational Level	-0.061	23.650	4	**<0.001**
	Employment	0.166	29.201	1	**<0.001**
	Primary Occupation	-0.028	22.932	4	**<0.001**
	Secondary Occupation	0.180	21.796	4	**<0.001**
	Agricultural Engagement	-0.392	162.486	1	**<0.001**
	Market Access	0.043	1.939	1	0.164
	Transportation Access	0.125	16.461	1	**<0.001**
	Water Access	0.005	0.028	1	0.867
	Sanitation Access	-0.100	10.460	1	**0.001**
	Culinary Method	-0.058	3.607	1	0.058
	Health Care Access	-0.047	2.340	1	0.126
	Credit Access	-0.090	8.627	1	**0.003**
	Access to Information	-0.090	7.800	1	**0.005**

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2023

Income level had a coefficient of -0.210, indicating a very strong negative correlation with household food insecurity; and suggesting that as household income increases, the likelihood of food insecurity decreases substantially. *Educational level* had a coefficient of -0.061, showing a strong negative relationship with food insecurity; it means that higher educational attainment among respondents contributed to a reduction in household food insecurity. *Employment* had a coefficient of 0.166. This indicates a strong positive correlation with household food insecurity, and suggests that employment status exerts a significant positive influence, such that disruptions or vulnerabilities in employment increase the likelihood of food insecurity. *Primary occupation* had a coefficient of -0.028, which represents a weak negative relationship with food insecurity; it means while primary occupation had some impact, its role in reducing food insecurity is relatively small. *Secondary occupation* had a coefficient of 0.180, this showed a very strong positive correlation with household food insecurity; and indicates that engagement in secondary occupations is highly associated with increased food insecurity, possibly due to the unstable or low-income nature of such work.

Agricultural engagement had a coefficient of -0.319; it showed a very strong negative correlation with food insecurity. This suggests that involvement in agriculture plays a critical role in reducing household food insecurity in Kwara State; it means

households who engage in farming are less likely to be food insecure. *Transportation* access had a coefficient of 0.125, indicating a strong positive correlation with food insecurity; this implies that limited or inadequate access to transportation increases the likelihood of food insecurity for some households. *Sanitation access* had a coefficient of -0.100, signifying a strong negative correlation with food insecurity. This suggests that improved access to sanitation reduces the probability of households experiencing food insecurity. *Credit access* had a coefficient of -0.090, indicating a strong negative relationship with food insecurity. This means that households with greater access to credit facilities are less likely to experience food insecurity. *Access to information* had a coefficient of -0.086, showing a strong negative relationship with food insecurity; this implies that improved access to information significantly contributes to reducing household food insecurity. Access to information influences various food security indicators such as availability, access, and utilization.

Kwara State Measures for Addressing Household Food Insecurity

From the qualitative data, the study found that Kwara State adopted specific strategies to reduce food insecurity through increased food production and by building farmers' capacity. The Off-Takers Demand Driven Agriculture (ODDA) Scheme was established in 2017 to provide subsidized land preparation services and improve market access for farm produce. In 2021, the Kwara State government adopted the Rural Access and Agricultural Marketing Project (RAAMP), a federal-level program, as a state initiative to enhance rural infrastructure and facilitate the movement of agricultural goods to markets. The document review identified several policy measures adopted by Kwara State to address food insecurity, these include: the Policy on Food and Nutrition (2020) that is aimed at achieving the zero-hunger goal (Kwara Nutrition, 2020); the 10-year Agricultural Transformation Plan (2021) that was designed to drive the state toward food sufficiency by 2030 (Kwara State Government, 2021); the Multi-sectoral State Working Committee on Food Security (2024); the Local Government Multi-Sectoral Plan of Action on Food and Nutrition (2024) which was to promote grassroots participation in food security initiatives (Kwara MOC, 2024a and Kwara MOC, 2024b); and the Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zone (2025) adopted to strengthen agricultural infrastructure and food processing (Kwara State Government, 2025). Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate the state's commitment to addressing structural challenges in agriculture, enhancing food availability, and improving household food security.

Kwara State's initiatives toward strengthening food security align with established evidence in the literature. As observed in a study, food insecurity in urban areas still persists due to inadequate infrastructure, limited livelihoods, and restricted access to

farmland (Peprah et. al., 2014). The *SOFI* report emphasizes that achieving SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) requires coordinated, multi-level interventions that are tailored to regional contexts (FAO, 2025). Similarly, the World Bank (2025) highlights the role of state-led initiatives such as improved access to inputs, agronomic advice, and post-harvest technologies in enhancing smallholder productivity and resilience. Both FAO and the World Bank underscore the importance of nutrition-sensitive agricultural investments and extension services, while positioning state governments to deliver localized, context-specific interventions that will strengthen food security.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following conclusions were drawn: (i) household food security status in Kwara State indicates that only a small proportion of the households were food secure (14.8%), majority of households were experiencing moderate food insecurity (61.2%), and mild food security (24%); (ii) household food security is strongly influenced by demographic features such as place of residence, sex, age, and family size; (iii) socioeconomic characteristics such as income level, educational attainment, employment status, primary and secondary occupations, agricultural engagement, access to transportation, sanitation, credit, and information significantly influenced household food security; and (iv) Kwara State adopted a range of policies and programs such as ODDA, RAAMP, Policy on Food and Nutrition, the 10-year Agricultural Transformation Plan, the Multi-sectoral State Working Committee on Food Security, the Local Government Multi-Sectoral Plan of Action on Food and Nutrition, and the Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zone to tackle structural challenges, and household food security.

Based on these conclusions, the study recommends the following: (i) government assisted food programs, capacity building and economic inclusion initiatives that improve food access, availability, and stability across the state; (ii) formulation and implementation of agricultural policies that prioritize rural households, larger families, and women-headed households; (iii) social support that boost access to income, education, employment, agriculture, credit, transportation, and information systems; and (iv) the scaling-up of the existing food security programs in Kwara state through stronger institutional coordination, sustainable financing, and grassroots participation.

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DIGITAL PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NIGERIA: ASSESSING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN COMMUNITY PEACE PROCESSES IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION

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Abstract

This article studied digital peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Nigeria with emphasis on assessing the role social media plays in building community peace processes in the Niger Delta region. The Niger Delta region have long been known as a region in Nigeria prone to conflict related to environmental degradation, oil-related disputes, varying degree of youth unemployment, agitation for resource control, political inclusion and socio-economic in-balance. Recently, social media have become a viable tool for wide-spread communication, an ideological contribution space where notable persons with high followership who may be referred to as activists, group leaders, community heads and organizations share information, garner support and engage in dialogues channeled towards drawing attention to popular opinions on subjects of concern. This study investigated the varying degrees on how social media influences peacebuilding efforts positively or adversely. This will impact the academic and policy body of knowledge using the Conflict Transformation Theory of Lisa Schirch (2004) which focuses on exploring the positives rather than the negatives in seeking to utilize social media in the address of underlying conflict and building sustainable peace, as technology can strengthen or weaken social cohesion. Thematic content analysis was the methodology explored for the purpose of this study, and it revealed that social media serves as an important tool for digital peacebuilding, as it encourages local participation, early warning and proper education; information dissemination among the key actors in the stages of Conflict Resolution within the Niger Delta communities. The study recommended fortifying the digital literacy networks and encourages responsible use of the social media platforms, as these will advance scholarly knowledge and proffer evidence-based outcomes that enhances the use of these digital communication tool in the building of sustainable peace in the Niger Delta region and beyond, we therefore concluded that, social media remains a veritable tool for community peace advancement, hinging its effectiveness on constitutional based regulations, responsible digital influencers participation and literacy .

Keywords: *Digital Peacebuilding, Conflict resolution, social media, Peace processes, Niger Delta.*

Introduction

The Niger Delta Region of Nigeria is an economically strategic coastal zone in the southern part of Nigeria uniquely featured by a network of rivers, creeks and mangrove ecosystems. It is the bedrock of the country's Petroleum production, and thus has been the region in the country that suffered environmental degradation, recurrent communal conflict over its resources, socio-economic inequality, infrastructural development, inclusive politics and the control of their resources, Ojaide (1997). Digital peacebuilding, according to Mercy corps (2024) can be said to be a medium of using social media platforms and like technology to make peace efforts broader and more inclusive through peace campaigns, online mediation and sensitization, digital civic education, conflict monitoring, rumor verification and data-driven early response to misinformation, which could lead to conflict uprising. Against this backdrop communal and in this case regional Conflict resolution according to Ayodele (2024) entails establishing a long-lasting solution that reduces tension and restores peace, it can be formal (mediation, negotiation and arbitration) or informal mode of settling any form of misunderstanding between or among parties.

This study focuses on examining how the expansion of social media platforms such as the Facebook, twitter now X, Tik Tok, among others have transformed the trajectory of communication and social behavior globally. In Nigeria, social media have become a means for social advocacy, political opinions, information dissemination, social engagement, and information sharing; while these are positive and advances wider communication reach as well as participation, we must also understand that it could also serve as a medium through which a wider populace can be misinformed thus encouraging hate propaganda and conflict escalation. A notable feature of the Niger delta region, is its history of conflict linked to resource control, environmental injustice, militancy, election violence and communal disputes; and these tensions have made the Niger Delta one of the most politically sensitive and security-challenged part of Nigeria, Sokoga Agasokoa Chiale (2024). However, there is limited empirical evidence on the extent to which these digital platforms contribute to sustainable peacebuilding outcomes within local communities, raising questions on inclusiveness, effectiveness and sustainability as regards social media overall contribution to conflict resolution in the Niger delta.

Aims of the Paper

Notably, the paper considers the following as its objectives:

i. To adumbrate the use of social media platforms in moves on community peace processes geared towards peacebuilding sustainability.
ii. To assess how effective these moves will be in this promoting lasting peace and conflict resolution within the region.
iii. To identify the possible challenges that could be encountered in the use of social media in peacebuilding.
iv. To evaluate the influence different digital communication has on community participation in peace building
v. To suggest strategies for enhancing digital peacebuilding initiatives in the Niger Delta region.

Conceptual Framework

Digital Peacebuilding

Digital Peacebuilding refers to a framework for critical and reflexive engagement with technology in peace work, focusing on digital tools that can support as well as undermine peace, Schirch (2004); Grunewald and Hedges (2021) strictly opined that in as much as digital peacebuilding is an integrated approach to building peace through digital media, it should also be noted that the medium and not just the message shapes the possible peace outcome. Thus, leading us to Hirblinger (2024) who cautioned that it should not be treated as automatically transformative but as something embedded in local contexts and power relations. Digital peacebuilding should be studied through its social and political environments rather than as a universally applicable fix to varying degrees of communal unrest associated with the Niger Delta region, Njeri and colleagues (2023).

Conflict Resolution

Conflict Resolution is a structured and multilevel process for addressing disputes and reducing violence. It is viewed by FAO (1994) as the application of appropriate techniques to settle conflict. The resolution of conflict is believed to be a multilevel process that addresses the aspirations behind political violence, including elite, middle-range, and grassroots approaches, kadioglu (2020), understanding the origin of any form of dispute and its environment is instrumental in its resolution, as put by Budd, Colvin, Pohler (2020), conceptualizes it as an integrated framework that

examines the sources of conflict and links them to effective dispute-resolution methods; further conceptualizing conflict resolution Atagboro and Ogbe (2025), defined it as both a theoretical and practical framework involving negotiation, mediation, arbitration and collaborative conflict resolution involves the varying ways communities in the Niger Delta use communication, dialogue and social interaction including social media to reduce tensions, address grievances and restore peace.

Peace Processes

This involves the actions or a series of deliberate formal structures and interventions directed at preventing managing resolving and transforming conflicts geared towards sustaining peace among individual or groups. It is usually a formal (mediation, peace agreements) or informal (negotiation, dialogue, reconciliation) as well as post-conflict reconstruction addressing both the immediate manifestation and underlying causes of conflicts. John Paul Lederach (1997) Peace processes involves more than the cessation of violence; they seek to transform relationships, attitudes, social structures, and systems that sustain conflicts. In this same light Peace processes are viewed as a continuous process and inclusive strategy that engages various stakeholders-including the government, civil society organizations, community leaders, youths, women and international actors-in building conditions necessary for a lasting peace.

Social Media

Social media has been conceptualized by varying scholars to mean internet-based applications that enable users to create, share and exchange user-generated content, interact with others and form digital networks of communication and participation. It is a youth dominant medium of information dissemination, support mobilization, opinion sharing and influences public position on matters. Carr and Hayes (2015) describe social media as internet-based channels that enable users to create, share, and interact with content and with one another. Although in contrast, El Ouirdi, El Ouirdi, Segers and Henderickx (2014) holds that social media should be understood as a broad and evolving concept, and they stress that there is still little agreement on a single definition.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design using content analysis across selected media and statements, which is based on depth, content, context and interpretation, rather than on any form of quantitative or numerical measurement. It enabled comprehensive assessment of social media platforms contributions to peacebuilding

and conflict resolution. The study area includes the Niger Delta region of Rivers State, Bayelsa State, Delta State, Akwa Ibom State, Edo State, Cross River State, Ondo State, Abia State, and Imo State. The method of qualitative content analysis, focused on: journal articles, government reports, non-governmental organizations, online databases of Twitter(X), Facebook, YouTube content analysis of influencers, Tik Tok focus group discussions, and observation of online discussions. The thematic analysis identified patterns, coding interview responses and grouping them into categories of misinformation and fake news, peace communication, activism, and conflict escalation, observing ethical principles.

Theoretical Framework

Lisa Schirch's(2004) Strategic Peace building theory is relevant to this study because she sees peacebuilding as a strategic process that goes beyond utilizing force or any other stringent means to curb violence and rather preached justice, relationship repair and community capacity building. She upholds that peace building should concentrate on four major actions:

- Combating conflict non-violently.
- Reducing direct violence.
- Transforming relationships.
- Building capacity for peace.

This theory upholds that social media can be a tool that supports community peace by spreading peace messages, reducing baseless rumors, encouraging dialogue, and strengthening local peace networks. Schirch's approach is useful because it does not assume technology automatically brings peace rather bases her ideology on how digital tools are used to control outcomes and reactions. In relation to the region under study, the theory helps explain how social media may function as a peace tool when used to promote dialogue, early warning, and community participation, but may also undermine peace when used to misinform the public or deliberately escalate tensions. A strong theorist who further supports this approach is Johan Galtung (2000) on his theory of Peace. This theory helps explain how social media may contribute to peacebuilding by promoting dialogue, awareness and advocacy against injustice and reveals how structural issues continue to sustain conflict. He holds that social media may support peacebuilding when it: exposes injustice, encourages dialogue, spreads peace messages and promotes community participation; at the same time, may deepen conflict if it spreads hate speech, misinformation or inflammatory narratives.

Discussion

The analysis revealed several patterns in relation to the objectives as follows:
Objective 1: Information sharing: social media as a peacebuilding tool aid communities receive real-time information regarding emerging conflicts, peace meetings, security threats and mediation efforts.

Objective 2: Social media increases citizens' participation in peace discussions through online forums, whatsapp groups, facebook communities, live-streamed town hall meetings and active youth participation in political affairs that impacts their communities thus creating opportunity for constructive engagement in peace initiatives.

Objectives 3: Social Media aids stakeholders' engagement and participation in peace processes by bringing the right people into the peace process at the right time and in the right way through negotiation tables, consultations, public forums, problem-solving workshops or implementation committees. Such stakeholders include community leaders, youth groups, women, civil society, faith-based organizations, government officials and sometimes business actors.

Objective 4: the challenge of misinformation and fake news limits social media effectiveness as a peacebuilding tool through false information, which can escalate tensions and undermine peace efforts. Digital divide which could occur as a result of limited internet access in some rural communities which adversely restrict participation as well as digital literacy, as some community members lack skills needed to critically assess online information. Online hate speech is yet another serious challenge as it could create and sustain ethnic and political divisions.

Objective 5: measures of improving social media role in community peace should strongly focus on responsible use of all social media platforms, verification of information received before dissemination, inclusion of all stakeholder's opinion as regards actions that concerns them, stronger coordination. This could also include promoting fact-checking and rumor management and further improve media practice in the protection of the civic space.

Conclusion

The social media has come to be a veritable tool in recent years significant for community peacebuilding medium as well as an instrument through which conflicts can be resolved in the Niger Delta region. It has shown its effectiveness in the

promotion of stakeholders' engagement in the affairs of their common interest, facilitating communication, promotes information dissemination, supports early warning signals and enhances wider participation in peace processes. However, the effectiveness of social media platforms for engaging in peacebuilding remains constrained by digital illiteracy, exclusion, misinformation and weak regulatory outfits to curb abuse of the use of social media. Thus, the future of peacebuilding in the Niger Delta will increasingly depend on integrating digital technologies with traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.

Recommendations

Online peace education campaigns should be thoroughly encouraged by civil society groups, this will go a long way schooling the people on the right way to fully use the platform for positive campaign of peacebuilding and conflict resolution; government agencies are not left out as they should institutionalize digital peacebuilding frameworks; community leaders are not left out as they should utilize social media for inclusive dialogue and mediation. Digital literacy programs should be implemented across rural communities, technology companies are not left out as they should strengthen mechanisms for combating misinformation and hate speech. Peacebuilding organizations should establish digital early warning systems for conflict monitoring; and finally for this study, researchers should conduct longitudinal studies on the long-term impacts of digital peacebuilding interventions.

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RENTIERISM TO RESILIENCE: TOURISM AS STRUCTURAL DIVERSIFICATION IN POST-OIL NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria's prolonged dependence on petroleum rents has entrenched a rentier state configuration characterized by fiscal volatility, institutional fragility, and sectoral imbalance. This chapter critically examines tourism as a strategic alternative for economic diversification and sustainable development. Drawing on rentier state theory, the tourism-led growth hypothesis, and Sustainable Development theory, the study employs a systematic qualitative review of institutional reports, policy documents, peer-reviewed literature (2010–2024), and the authors' prior empirical fieldwork to analyze the political economy of tourism underdevelopment in Nigeria. The study's theoretical contribution lies in integrating rentier state theory, the tourism-led growth hypothesis, and Sustainable Development theory, with tourism development analysis to explain how petroleum dependence structurally constrains non-oil sector governance. The analysis reveals that rentier pathologies, including Dutch Disease effects, allocation-state logic, and patronage-based governance, have systematically disadvantaged the tourism sector despite abundant natural and cultural assets. While Nigeria's direct tourism contribution reached ₦2.55 trillion (1.1% of GDP) in 2023, with total contributions (including indirect and induced effects) at ₦8.75 trillion (3.7%), the sector remains constrained by security deficits, infrastructure gaps, and weak institutional coordination. The chapter argues that sustainable tourism development requires moving beyond policy rhetoric to structurally embed tourism within strategic national development planning through dedicated funding mechanisms, security corridor development, and community-based governance models. These measures could reposition Nigeria's tourism sector as a viable pathway toward post-rentier economic resilience.

Keywords: *Rentier state; tourism-led growth; economic diversification; sustainable development; Nigeria*

Introduction

Nigeria is a typical case of a rentier state because it has been depending mainly on crude oil rents for its fiscal revenue generation and foreign exchange earnings since the 1970s (Beblawi & Luciani, 1987; Mahdavy, 1970). The discovery of commercial oil in 1956 at Oloibiri and the boom in the 1970s led to a structural shift in Nigeria's economy from an agrarian to a rentier economy based on oil. OPEC (2024) estimated that by 2024, petroleum exports would represent around 90% of merchandise exports and about 40–50% of fiscal revenue, leaving the economy highly exposed to price fluctuations in the global market as well as external demand shocks. This dependence has been jeopardized by the 2014-2016 oil price collapse and the COVID-19 pandemic, which have accelerated policy attention to economic diversification.

Tourism is increasingly seen as a key candidate for diversification in the national policy debate. The sector has strong potential to create jobs, generate foreign exchange earnings, and promote the development of rural communities, aligning with Nigeria's commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), and SDG 15 (life on land). Despite its rich cultural heritage, ecological diversity, and historical monuments, Nigeria's tourism sector generated only 1.1% of GDP directly in 2023, whereas several countries, including Kenya (5.5%) and Morocco (8.4%), make their mark in this area (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2024). The question to be asked is this: How is it that after years of policy talk, Nigeria has not been able to systematically develop her tourism potential? This study maintains that the solution lies not only in addressing shortcomings in technical aspects but also in the political economy of rentierism. Structural disadvantages have been imposed on non-oil sectors, such as tourism, by rentier-state pathologies, the allocation-state logic, Dutch Disease effects, and patronage-based governance, which have affected investment incentives, institutional capacity, and the ability to invest in the long term. The study's central research question is: What are the limitations of rentier-state dynamics for tourism development in Nigeria, and what structural reforms are needed to reposition tourism as a viable means of diversification?

Conceptual Framework

Rentier State

The concept of a rentier state refers to a country that derives a substantial proportion of its national income from external rents, particularly revenues generated from the export of natural resources such as oil and gas, rather than from domestic taxation or

productive economic activities (Beblawi & Luciani, 1987; Mahdavy, 1970). In rentier economies, governments rely heavily on resource rents to finance public expenditure, often reducing incentives to diversify the economy, strengthen institutions, and promote productive sectors. Nigeria is widely regarded as a classic example of a rentier state due to its long-standing dependence on crude oil revenues for fiscal and foreign exchange earnings (Karl, 1997).

Tourism-Led Growth

Tourism-led growth is an economic development concept which posits that the expansion of the tourism sector can stimulate overall economic growth through increased foreign exchange earnings, employment creation, investment, and government revenue (Balaguer & Cantavella-Jordá, 2002). Based on the export-led growth hypothesis, tourism is viewed as an invisible export that generates multiplier effects across sectors such as transportation, hospitality, construction, and trade, thereby contributing to national income and economic transformation (Brida et al., 2016).

Economic Diversification

Economic diversification is the process of broadening an economy's productive base by developing multiple sectors that generate income, employment, exports, and government revenue (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2011). The aim is to reduce dependence on a single commodity or sector while enhancing economic resilience, competitiveness, and sustainable growth. For resource-dependent economies such as Nigeria, diversification into sectors including tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, and services is widely considered essential to reduce vulnerability to fluctuations in global oil prices and to achieve long-term development (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2016).

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], 1987). The concept emphasizes the balanced integration of economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection to ensure long-term societal well-being. Within the tourism sector, sustainable development promotes responsible management of natural and cultural resources while maximizing economic benefits and improving the quality of

life of host communities (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2018).

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a theoretical framework that integrates Rentier State Theory, the Tourism-Led Growth Hypothesis (TLGH), and Sustainable Development Theory to provide a comprehensive explanation of how tourism can facilitate structural diversification in post-oil Nigeria. The three theories are complementary rather than competing, with each addressing a distinct dimension of the study.

Rentier State Theory

Rentier State Theory provides the structural explanation for Nigeria's persistent dependence on oil revenues and the institutional weaknesses that have constrained the development of productive sectors, including tourism. According to Mahdavy (1970), and later developed by Beblawi and Luciani (1987), a rentier state is a political entity whose main revenue comes from external rents rather than from domestic production. Beblawi (1987, p. 51) notes four features: (1) rent situations dominate; (2) external rents are an important part of the economy; (3) a small fraction of the population participates in rent generation; and (4) the government is the main beneficiary of external rents. Importantly, Luciani (1987) distinguishes between "production states" (taxation on the economic activity of the country) and "allocation states" (allocation of externally derived rents). The consequence of this, as regards governance, is a strong incentive for allocation states to act against citizens' demands and in favour of productive sectors, due to their dependence on external markets rather than domestic taxation (Ross, 2001). The rentier state framework creates three mechanisms that are significant to tourism underdevelopment. The "rentier mentality" (Beblawi, 1987) first creates bureaucratic inertia and a risk-averse tendency among state elites, who focus on the distribution of rents rather than on productive investments. Second, the Dutch Disease effects (Corden & Neary, 1982) are negative, as increases in the real exchange rate due to resource booms increase factor costs and reduce demand for tradable goods and services. Thirdly, the “no taxation without representation” principle (Ross, 2001) undermines fiscal accountability, giving rise to the systematic neglect of sectors like tourism, which need long-term, decentralized coordination.

Tourism-Led Growth Hypothesis

The tourism-led growth hypothesis (TLGH) posits that tourism development will spur overall economic development through foreign exchange earnings, employment, and

multiplier effects (Lanza & Pigliaru, 2000). There are significant differences and backward linkages between the extractive and tourism sectors, including tourism's potential for more inclusive growth patterns (Scheyvens, 2011). Its validity, however, depends on context, including factors such as infrastructure levels, institutional capacity, and macroeconomic stability (Brida et al., 2016). While Rentier State Theory diagnoses the structural constraints created by oil dependence, the TLGH provides the economic mechanism through which diversification can occur. However, the hypothesis also acknowledges that tourism can only drive economic growth where adequate infrastructure, institutional capacity, security, and sound governance exist, conditions often weakened in rentier economies.

Sustainable Development Theory

Sustainable Development Theory provides the normative and evaluative dimension of the framework by emphasizing that diversification should not merely increase economic output but should also promote environmental stewardship, social inclusion, and intergenerational equity (UNWTO, 2024; Weaver, 2006). The theory ensures that tourism development is assessed not only by its contribution to gross domestic product but also by its ability to create resilient local economies, conserve natural and cultural resources, and improve the welfare of host communities. This perspective is particularly relevant to Nigeria's oil-producing regions, where tourism has the potential to support environmental restoration, livelihood diversification, and community empowerment if supported by inclusive governance structures (Watts, 2004). Collectively, the three theories provide a coherent analytical framework for this study. Rentier State Theory explains the structural origins of Nigeria's dependence on oil and the institutional barriers to diversification; the Tourism-Led Growth Hypothesis identifies tourism as a strategic pathway for economic transformation; while Sustainable Development Theory establishes the principles by which tourism-led diversification should be implemented and evaluated to ensure long-term resilience. Together, they support the central argument of this study that transitioning from rentierism to resilience requires not only developing tourism as an alternative economic sector but also undertaking institutional reforms that enable tourism to contribute to inclusive, diversified, and sustainable national development.

Methodology

The study uses a systematic qualitative review of secondary sources along with the authors' own field experiences to critically analyze the political economy of tourism development in Nigeria. The study concentrates on macro-level structural constraints and policy architecture, which is suitable for a secondary data approach to synthesize

existing evidence and find systemic patterns (Snyder, 2019). The micro-level contextualization is supported by the authors' previous primary research on community-based tourism governance and insecurity-tourism dynamics in Ekiti State (Omotoba & Omotoso, 2020; Omotoba et al., 2022, 2024).

Method of Data Collection

The sources were purposively selected from three groups: (i) peer-reviewed academic articles (2010-2024), Web of Science and Google Scholar using key words such as Nigeria tourism development, rentier state Africa, economic diversification oil, and sustainable tourism sub-Saharan Africa; (ii) institutional reports from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Nigerian Tourism Development Authority (NTDA) and World Tourism Organization (WTTC); and (iii) policy documents like the National Tourism Development Master Plan (NTDM) (Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, 2022) and pertinent federal ministry circulars. The temporal scope focuses on post-2010 sources to reflect contemporary policy environments and includes foundational theoretical texts (Beblawi & Luciani, 1987; Mahdavy, 1970) for conceptual grounding.

Analytical Procedure

Thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the data was carried out around the three a priori themes identified from the rentier state framework: (1) rent dependence and sectoral neglect, (2) institutional capacity and policy implementation, and (3) economic diversification and sustainable development. Emergent sub-themes were inductively identified (such as diaspora tourism, infrastructure deficits, community participation, and the insecurity-tourism nexus), while deductive coding was supplemented. Source triangulation was used to support statistical claims, and national estimates were used when there was a mismatch with other data, specifically that from the WTTC or UNWTO.

Limitations

Secondary analysis limits the study's ability to explore implementation dynamics at the micro-level or to capture stakeholders' views at this time. Inconsistent measurement procedures between federal and state agencies also make it very difficult to interpret employment and revenue statistics in Nigerian tourism. A conservative approach was adopted where data conflicted, and market research aggregators were omitted because their methodology was opaque.

Nigeria's Rentier Condition and Tourism Underdevelopment

Nigeria's transformation from an agrarian economy into a rentier state began with the commercial discovery of crude oil at Oloibiri in 1956 but became structurally entrenched during the oil boom of the 1970s. Before the dominance of petroleum, the Nigerian economy was driven by regionally specialized agricultural production, with cocoa in the Southwest, palm produce in the Southeast, and groundnuts and cotton in the North. This diversified production structure generated employment, foreign exchange earnings, and broad-based rural development while supporting relatively balanced regional economic growth (Ajakaiye & Tella, 2014). The emergence of oil as the principal source of national revenue fundamentally altered this productive structure by replacing a production-based economy with one increasingly dependent on externally generated resource rents. The rapid expansion of oil revenues produced the classic symptoms of Dutch Disease, in which large foreign exchange inflows appreciated the real exchange rate, eroded the competitiveness of agriculture and manufacturing, and drew labour and capital towards non-tradable and import-dependent sectors (Auty, 1993). Consequently, productive sectors that had previously sustained employment and export diversification underwent a prolonged decline. By the early 1980s, agriculture's share of gross domestic product had fallen sharply from over 60 per cent in the pre-oil period to less than 30 per cent, while petroleum had become the dominant source of fiscal revenue and foreign exchange. Rather than strengthening productive capacity, oil wealth consolidated an allocation-oriented political economy in which public finance became increasingly detached from domestic production and taxation.

Rentier state theory explains why this structural transformation has had profound governance implications. Because governments in rentier economies derive substantial revenues from external rents rather than domestic taxation, they face weaker incentives to build accountable institutions or promote productive economic diversification (Ross, 2001). Instead, political legitimacy is frequently maintained through the distribution of resource rents via patronage networks, subsidies, and elite bargains rather than through improvements in public service delivery or productive investment. Nigeria exemplifies this pattern, as successive administrations have relied heavily on oil revenues to finance recurrent expenditure while making comparatively limited investments in sectors capable of generating sustainable employment and long-term economic resilience. The experience of the Niger Delta illustrates the developmental contradictions inherent in Nigeria's rentier political economy. Despite generating the country's principal source of national income, the region continues to experience widespread poverty, environmental degradation, inadequate infrastructure, and social exclusion. This paradox demonstrates that abundant natural resources do

not automatically translate into inclusive development when governance institutions prioritize rent extraction over productive investment (Watts, 2004). The persistence of environmental conflicts, pipeline vandalism, militancy, and community resistance reflects deeper structural tensions between resource extraction, environmental sustainability, and equitable development. These contradictions underscore the broader limitations of Nigeria's rentier development model and reinforce the need for alternative growth pathways based on productive sector expansion and economic diversification.

Insecurity as a Rentier-Derived Constraint

One of the most significant manifestations of Nigeria's rentier governance failure is the persistent insecurity that undermines tourism development. Tourism is uniquely dependent on perceptions of safety, political stability, and institutional effectiveness. Consequently, even isolated incidents of violence can substantially reduce destination attractiveness, discourage investment, and weaken the competitiveness of the tourism sector. In the Nigerian context, insecurity has evolved from a social challenge into a structural barrier to tourism-led economic diversification. Recent empirical evidence demonstrates the centrality of security in shaping tourism demand. Orimaye et al. (2025) found that tourists carefully evaluate destination security before making travel decisions and are generally unwilling to visit states perceived as unsafe. Similarly, Omotoba et al. (2024) reported that persistent insecurity in Ekiti East Local Government Area has created an atmosphere of fear that constrains the development of agri-tourism and discourages both local participation and external visitation. These findings indicate that security is not merely a complementary component of tourism development but a fundamental prerequisite for destination competitiveness. From the perspective of rentier state theory, Nigeria's security challenges are closely linked to the structural characteristics of an economy dependent on oil rents. First, the allocation-state model prioritizes the distribution of resource rents over sustained investment in public goods, including policing, intelligence gathering, border management, judicial effectiveness, and community security systems. As a result, institutions responsible for maintaining law and order frequently suffer from inadequate funding, weak coordination, and limited operational capacity. Second, because the state's fiscal dependence on externally generated oil revenues reduces reliance on taxation, the reciprocal relationship between government accountability and citizen participation is weakened. This erosion of the social contract diminishes public trust, weakens community cooperation with security agencies, and ultimately reduces the effectiveness of locally driven security initiatives.

The consequences of these institutional deficiencies are evident across Nigeria's geopolitical zones. The Boko Haram insurgency and other extremist activities continue to threaten tourism development in the North-East, banditry and kidnapping have discouraged travel across much of the North-West and North-Central regions, while separatist violence and periodic civil unrest have negatively affected tourism activities in parts of the South-East. In addition, kidnapping for ransom and violent crime in several southern states have reinforced negative international perceptions of Nigeria as a high-risk destination. Collectively, these security challenges discourage international tourist arrivals, reduce domestic travel, increase operating costs for tourism businesses through higher insurance and security expenditures, and weaken investor confidence. Consequently, insecurity is not merely a law-and-order problem but a structural outcome of Nigeria's rentier political economy, which continues to undermine the country's capacity to leverage tourism for sustainable economic diversification.

Market Performance and Structural Underdevelopment of Tourism

The limited contribution of tourism to Nigeria's economy further illustrates the developmental consequences of prolonged rentier dependence. Despite possessing exceptional natural attractions, rich cultural diversity, extensive historical heritage, and the largest domestic market in Africa, Nigeria's tourism sector remains significantly underdeveloped relative to its economic potential. This underperformance is not simply a function of inadequate tourism assets but reflects deeper structural and institutional constraints associated with rentier governance. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2024), tourism contributed approximately ₦2.55 trillion to Nigeria's economy in 2023, representing only 1.1% of gross domestic product through direct activities. Including indirect and induced effects, the sector generated ₦8.75 trillion, equivalent to 3.7% of GDP. Similarly, tourism directly supported approximately 506,900 jobs (0.7% of total employment), while its overall contribution to employment reached about 1.98 million jobs (2.6%). These figures remain considerably below the performance of comparable African destinations that have strategically positioned tourism as a pillar of national development. For example, tourism contributes approximately 8.4% of GDP in Morocco and about 5.5% in Kenya (WTTC, 2024), demonstrating the gains achievable through sustained policy commitment, institutional coordination, and long-term investment.

International tourism receipts reveal a similar pattern of underperformance. Foreign visitor expenditure in Nigeria reached approximately US$0.8 billion in 2023, reflecting a gradual recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic but remaining below the pre-pandemic level of US$1.1 billion recorded in 2019 (WTTC, 2024). These earnings

are substantially lower than those generated by major African tourism economies such as South Africa (US$8.9 billion), Morocco (US$9.7 billion), and Tanzania (US$3.2 billion), despite Nigeria possessing the continent's largest population, one of Africa's largest economies, and an exceptionally diverse cultural and ecological resource base (WTTC, 2024). This contrast highlights a fundamental paradox. Nigeria's relatively weak tourism performance cannot reasonably be attributed to deficiencies in tourism resources or market size. Instead, it reflects the cumulative effects of decades of policy neglect, weak institutions, inadequate infrastructure, persistent insecurity, and governance incentives that have historically favoured oil extraction over the development of productive sectors. In other words, tourism has remained institutionally marginalized because rentier political economies reward the distribution of externally generated rents rather than sustained investment in sectors that require long-term planning, innovation, and productive capacity.

The implication is that Nigeria's tourism challenge is fundamentally structural rather than resource-based. Unlocking the sector's considerable economic potential therefore requires more than promotional campaigns or isolated infrastructure projects. It demands a comprehensive restructuring of development priorities that shifts public investment and institutional attention away from dependence on petroleum rents toward productive sectors capable of generating employment, foreign exchange earnings, regional development, and sustainable economic resilience. The following section examines Nigeria's extensive tourism assets and compares them with countries that have successfully transformed similar endowments into internationally competitive tourism industries.

Tourism Assets and Comparative Benchmarks

Nigeria's Tourism Asset Base

Nigeria possesses one of the most diverse tourism resource endowments in Africa. Its tourism potential is anchored in four interrelated pillars: cultural heritage, ecological diversity, historical significance, and diaspora connectivity. Collectively, these assets provide a strong foundation for tourism-led economic diversification. Despite this rich resource base, the sector has remained significantly underdeveloped, suggesting that Nigeria's tourism challenge lies not in the availability of attractions but in the institutional and governance environment needed to transform these assets into globally competitive tourism products. Nigeria's cultural heritage is among its greatest comparative advantages. With more than 250 ethnic groups, hundreds of indigenous languages, and a rich diversity of customs, festivals, music, dance, cuisine, and traditional arts, the country offers exceptional opportunities for cultural tourism.

Internationally recognized attractions such as the Argungu Fishing Festival in Kebbi State, the Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, and the Durbar festivals of Northern Nigeria demonstrate Nigeria's capacity to attract both regional and international visitors (Aremu, 2001). Nevertheless, the economic potential of these cultural assets remains largely unrealized because of inconsistent government funding, inadequate supporting infrastructure, weak destination management, and limited international promotion.

Nigeria is similarly endowed with substantial ecotourism resources. Major attractions include Zuma Rock, Yankari National Park in Bauchi State, the country's largest wildlife reserve and home to elephants, buffaloes, baboons, and the Wikki Warm Spring Obudu Mountain Resort in Cross River State; Erin Ijesha Waterfalls in Osun State; Idanre Hills in Ondo State; and numerous forest reserves, wetlands, and coastal ecosystems along the Atlantic shoreline. These resources position Nigeria to compete in the rapidly expanding global ecotourism market. However, environmental degradation, inadequate conservation funding, poor transport infrastructure, and limited visitor facilities have constrained their commercial development and international visibility. Nigeria's historical and heritage tourism assets are equally significant. The country possesses important slave trade heritage sites in Badagry and Calabar, remarkable examples of colonial architecture, internationally recognized archaeological collections, and important pre-colonial monuments, including the Benin Bronzes and the Sukur Cultural Landscape. Museums such as the National Museum, Lagos, preserve valuable cultural and archaeological collections that contribute to the country's historical identity. Yet many of these heritage assets continue to suffer from inadequate conservation, limited interpretation services, outdated museum facilities, and weak integration into national tourism strategies, reducing their attractiveness to international heritage tourists.

An additional but underutilized tourism asset is Nigeria's extensive diaspora community. Millions of Nigerians living abroad maintain strong cultural, religious, and family connections with their homeland. These connections create significant opportunities for heritage tourism, cultural festivals, family reunions, religious pilgrimages, investment tourism, and creative industry events. Despite this considerable market potential, Nigeria has yet to develop a coordinated diaspora tourism strategy comparable to those implemented by other African countries.

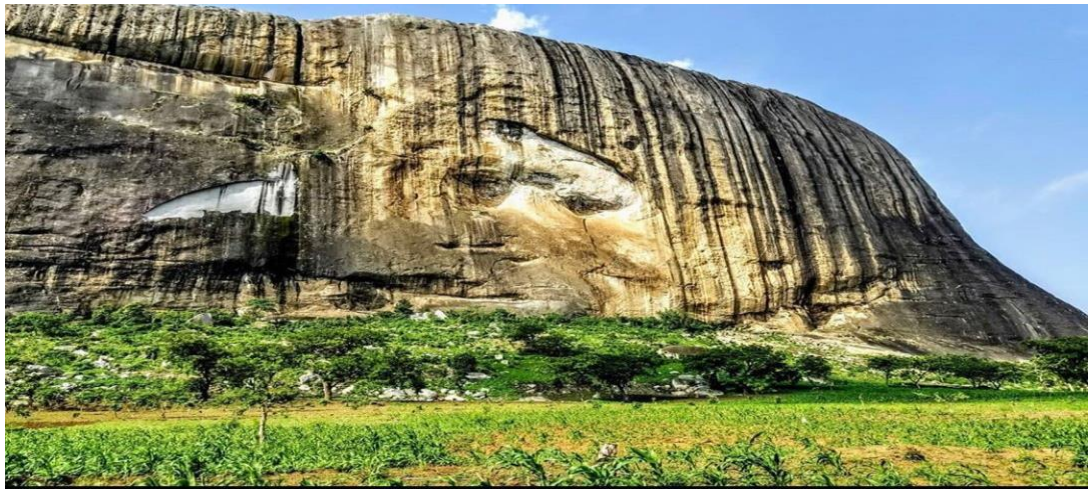


Fig. 1: *Facial Silhouette of Zuma Rock*
Source: Ogundeko, 2025

Overall, Nigeria's tourism resource endowment compares favourably with many successful tourism destinations. The country's continued underperformance therefore reflects structural governance and policy failures rather than any shortage of tourism assets.

Comparative Benchmarks: Learning from Successful Tourism Economies

Effective assessment of Nigeria's tourism potential requires comparison with countries that have successfully transformed available resources into competitive tourism industries. Such benchmarking demonstrates that institutional quality, governance effectiveness, and strategic investment are more important determinants of tourism success than resource abundance alone. Dubai in the United Arab Emirates represents a notable example of successful economic diversification within a rentier economy. Recognizing the finite nature of petroleum resources, Dubai strategically invested oil revenues in world-class tourism infrastructure, including the Burj Khalifa, Palm Jumeirah, Dubai Mall, integrated transport systems, and internationally competitive hospitality facilities. These investments transformed tourism into one of the emirate's leading economic sectors, contributing approximately US$29.4 billion, or about 12% of GDP, in 2023 (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2024). Importantly, Dubai's success was supported by strong institutional capacity, long-term strategic planning, substantial sovereign investment, and governance arrangements capable of sustaining development beyond short-term political considerations. These institutional characteristics contrast sharply with Nigeria's rentier governance system, where policy

continuity is frequently undermined by patronage politics and fragmented implementation.



Fig. 2: *Comparative Benchmarks: Learning from Success*
Source: Researcher's Survey, 2026

Rwanda offers a more instructive comparator. With minimal natural resources and a recent history of genocide, Rwanda has positioned itself as an ecotourism destination through governance reform, security provision, and targeted investment. Volcanoes National Park's mountain gorilla tourism generates $20 million annually, with community benefit-sharing mechanisms ensuring local ownership (Rwanda Development Board, 2023). Rwanda's success demonstrates that tourism development requires neither oil wealth nor pre-existing infrastructure, but rather institutional capacity, security, and community inclusion; achievements that contrast sharply with Nigeria's rentier-derived governance fragmentation.

Ghana, Nigeria's West African neighbour, provides regional benchmarking. Ghana's "Year of Return" campaign (2019) leveraged diaspora connectivity to generate $1.9 billion in tourism revenue, with arrivals increasing 45% year-on-year (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2020). Ghana's relative success reflects political stability, targeted diaspora marketing, and incremental infrastructure improvement; achievements within Nigeria's reach if governance priorities shift from rent distribution to productive investment.

Competitive Gap Analysis

Nigeria's competitive disadvantages relative to these benchmarks are structural rather than asset-based. Security remains the binding constraint: The Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, banditry in the northwest, and separatist tensions in the southeast create destination-level risks that international tourists and diaspora visitors weigh heavily (Orimaye et al., 2025). Infrastructure deficits, particularly road quality, airport efficiency, and electricity reliability, raise operational costs and degrade visitor experience. Institutional fragmentation between federal, state, and local tourism authorities, combined with NTDA's limited enforcement capacity, prevents coherent destination management. However, Nigeria possesses comparative advantages that remain underexploited. The diaspora population, estimated at over 17 million, represents a captive market for cultural and heritage tourism. The seasonal diaspora return phenomenon generates significant economic activity, though official measurement remains inadequate. Nigeria's entertainment industry (Nollywood, Afrobeats) creates cultural soft power that could be leveraged for tourism marketing, following South Korea's Hallyu-driven tourism strategy.



Fig. 3*: Nigerian Tourism Market*
Source: Researcher's Survey, 2026

Policy Architecture and Implementation Gaps

Existing Policy Framework

Nigeria's tourism policy architecture comprises the National Tourism Development Master Plan (2022), the NTDA operational framework, and various state-level tourism policies. The Master Plan identifies priority development zones, product diversification strategies, and institutional strengthening requirements. The NTDA,

established as the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation before its 2022 rebranding, holds statutory responsibility for regulation, promotion, and coordination (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2022).

However, policy implementation has consistently lagged policy formulation, a challenge that has long characterized tourism governance in many developing economies (Hall, 2011). The Master Plan's ambitious targets, including doubling tourism's GDP contribution by 2025, developing 20 priority sites, and establishing tourism police units, lack dedicated funding mechanisms, implementation timelines, or accountability frameworks (NTDA, 2022). The NTDA's budgetary allocation remains minimal relative to sectoral needs, and its coordination capacity across 36 state tourism boards is constrained by constitutional revenue allocation formulas that privilege oil-derived revenues over investment in the productive sector (Ross, 2012).

The Political Economy of Policy Failure

From a rentier state perspective, policy failure is not accidental but structurally embedded within the incentive systems of resource-dependent economies (Beblawi & Luciani, 1987; Ross, 2012). The allocation-state logic privileges visible, centralized projects over decentralized, long-term investments. Tourism development requires precisely the latter: community-level engagement, environmental management, and service-quality standards that cannot be delivered through federal patronage networks. Omotoba and Omotoso (2020), in their assessment of government and heritage-custodian roles in Ekiti State, found that host communities were systematically excluded from decision-making on development issues relating to their cultural heritage. This community-level exclusion reflects the broader national pattern, in which rentier centralization produces performative policy without structural implementation. Government approaches employed top-down decision-making that privileged distributive announcements over participatory planning, a pattern replicated at the national level, where the 2022 NTDA rebranding created institutional visibility without statutory funding guarantees, personnel expansion, or decentralization of authority (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2022).

The 2025 National Tourism Brand Framework launch similarly represents marketing activity without underlying product development or infrastructure investment (Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy, 2025). This performative pattern is structurally incentivized by rentier governance: visible, centralized initiatives generate political credit more efficiently than the dispersed, long-term investments that tourism actually requires (Karl, 1997; Ross, 2012).

Institutional Coordination Deficits

Effective tourism governance requires horizontal coordination across ministries (transport, environment, interior, and finance) and vertical coordination across federal, state, and local governments. Nigeria's current architecture fragments these responsibilities: The Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy oversees policy; the NTDA regulates and promotes; state governments manage sites; and local governments collect minimal tourism revenues. This fragmentation generates accountability gaps, with each level blaming others for implementation failures. Security coordination illustrates these deficits. Tourism security requires police presence, intelligence sharing, and emergency response capacity at attraction sites. However, the Nigerian Police Force operates under federal command, while site management falls to state or private operators. The absence of dedicated tourism police units, promised in multiple policy documents but never adequately staffed, reflects the broader coordination failure that Section 7.2's recommended multi-agency security architecture directly addresses.

Conclusion

This study examined tourism as a pathway for structural economic diversification in post-oil Nigeria through the combined lenses of Rentier State Theory, the Tourism-Led Growth Hypothesis, and Sustainable Development Theory. The triangulation of Rentier State Theory, the Tourism-Led Growth Hypothesis, and Sustainable Development Theory provides a comprehensive explanation of the transition from rentierism to resilience. While Rentier State Theory explains the structural barriers created by oil dependence, the Tourism-Led Growth Hypothesis identifies tourism as a viable engine of economic transformation, and Sustainable Development Theory ensures that such transformation promotes long-term economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Collectively, these perspectives reinforce the argument that Nigeria's transition to a resilient post-oil economy requires moving beyond petroleum dependence towards productive sectors capable of generating inclusive and sustainable development. The analysis demonstrates that Nigeria's persistent dependence on petroleum revenues has produced institutional, fiscal, and governance conditions that systematically constrain the development of productive sectors such as tourism. Rather than being primarily the result of inadequate tourism resources, the sector's underperformance reflects the structural consequences of rentier governance, including policy inconsistency, weak institutional coordination, infrastructure deficits, insecurity, and limited community participation.

The study further establishes that tourism possesses considerable potential to contribute to economic diversification through employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, enterprise development, rural transformation, and cultural preservation. However, realizing this potential requires governance reforms that address the institutional weaknesses associated with the rentier state. Tourism-led growth can only become a realistic diversification strategy when supported by effective institutions, adequate infrastructure, security, private-sector participation, and the sustainable management of natural and cultural resources. Ultimately, the study concludes that tourism should not be viewed merely as a complementary sector but as a strategic component of Nigeria's long-term economic transformation agenda. Achieving this objective will depend less on the country's abundance of tourism assets than on its willingness to undertake the structural governance reforms necessary to convert those assets into sustainable national prosperity.

Recommendations

Addressing Nigeria's tourism underdevelopment requires moving beyond generic policy prescriptions and structurally embedding tourism in national development planning. The following strategic recommendations are sequenced by governance level and time horizon, with explicit implementation agents, indicators, and theoretical rationales. Discuss below are some strategic reforms:

Sustainability and Community Inclusion

All recommendations must incorporate sustainability safeguards: mandatory environmental impact assessments for tourism infrastructure; community benefit-sharing agreements that require a minimum 30% local revenue retention at ecotourism sites; gender-targeted programming to ensure women's participation in hospitality entrepreneurship; and climate adaptation planning for coastal and highland attractions vulnerable to environmental change (Scheyvens, 1999; United Nations, 2015; UN Tourism, 2023). These cross-cutting requirements address the governance failures identified in Section 6.2, ensuring that community participation shifts from rhetorical inclusion to a statutory entitlement. Beyond the strategic policy reforms discussed in this paper, several recommendations naturally follow from the analysis. The study shows that Nigeria's weak tourism sector is primarily a governance issue, not a lack of tourism resources. Future efforts should focus on improving institutions, increasing transparency, and enhancing coordination among government levels before investing heavily in destination marketing or infrastructure. Without fixing these governance problems, tourism investments are unlikely to yield lasting economic benefits.

Second, the analysis reveals that the disconnect between federal, state, and local tourism institutions has significantly constrained tourism development. Greater collaboration among government agencies, private investors, traditional institutions, and host communities is therefore essential. Tourism planning should adopt a participatory governance approach that empowers local communities as active partners in destination management rather than passive beneficiaries. Third, the findings indicate that insecurity remains one of the most significant barriers to tourism growth. Consequently, tourism planning should be integrated into broader national security and regional development strategies. Destination security, community policing, and conflict-sensitive tourism planning should become integral components of tourism governance, particularly in regions with high tourism potential. Fourth, the comparative analysis with Rwanda, Ghana, and Dubai demonstrates that successful tourism-led diversification depends more on policy consistency, institutional quality, and long-term investment than on the abundance of natural or cultural attractions. Nigeria should therefore focus on improving the quality of governance, regulatory certainty, and investment confidence while leveraging its comparative advantages in culture, heritage, entertainment, and diaspora tourism. Fifth, the study highlights the need for improved tourism data systems. Reliable statistics on visitor arrivals, tourism expenditure, employment, domestic tourism, and community-level economic impacts remain inadequate. Strengthening tourism data collection and monitoring systems would provide evidence-based support for policy formulation, programme evaluation, and investment decisions.

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INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND SHIFTS IN CAPITALIST PRODUCTION

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between the Industrial Revolution, technological transformations, and shifts in capitalist production from the eighteenth century to the contemporary digital era. Despite extensive scholarship on industrialization, limited attention has been given to the reciprocal relationship between technological innovation and the structural evolution of capitalism across successive industrial phases. Adopting a qualitative historical research design, the study relies exclusively on secondary data obtained from historical policy documents, economic treatises, peer-reviewed journals, academic books, and institutional publications. The analysis is anchored in Marxist Theory and the Liberalist Theory to evaluate the interplay between technological change, state-market interactions, labour organization, and capitalist accumulation. The findings reveal that successive industrial revolutions fundamentally restructured European and global production systems by replacing feudal agricultural relations with mechanized production, expanding markets, and strengthening capitalist accumulation. While technological innovation drove productivity growth and economic expansion, it simultaneously intensified class inequality, labour exploitation, and global economic disparities between industrialized core nations and peripheral developing economies. For African countries, including Nigeria, participation in the Fourth Industrial Revolution remains constrained by poor infrastructure, weak industrial policies, limited research investment, and technological dependence. The study argues that peripheral countries can overcome dependency if local institutions demonstrate political will to build indigenous technological capabilities and implement coherent industrial policies. It further contends that the European experience provides important policy lessons for developing countries seeking industrial transformation. The study recommends that national government of Nigeria should prioritize investment in scientific inventions aimed boosting local

capabilities in home grown technology and innovative development, provide an inclusive industrialization polices to support small and medium scale enterprises; strengthened institutional capacity by combating corruption; invest in digital infrastructure, broadband connectivity, and revamp the electricity sector for optimal power supply, leverage regional economic integration; and establish social protection mechanisms to mitigate technological displacement. The study concludes that sustainable development requires technological advancement alongside effective institutions, local technology blue print for industrial development, equitable distribution, and social protection mechanisms.

Keywords: *Industrial Revolution, Political Economy, Capitalist Production, Marxism, Liberalism, Europe, Technological Change*

Introduction

Technological transformations and shifts in capitalist production constitute central themes in economic history, political economy, agricultural economics, and industrial sociology. From the eighteenth-century Industrial Revolution to the contemporary digital age, technological inventions such as the steam engine, spinning jenny, power loom, mechanized crop cultivation, and iron production revolutionized productive activities and significantly increased industrial outputs. These innovations altered the mode of production by replacing manual labour with machine-based manufacturing systems, shifting production from small-scale household agrarian enterprises to centralized factory and industrialized systems controlled by industrial capitalists. The transformation of capitalist production during industrialization involved several major shifts: first, the transition from merchant and agrarian capitalism to industrial capitalism centered on mechanized factory production; second, the fundamental change in labour relations as independent artisans and peasants became wage workers dependent on factory employment; and third, the encouragement of specialization, division of labour, and large-scale industrial organization leading to unprecedented growth in productivity and economic expansion.

Accordingly, Karl Marx (1867) argued that capitalism possesses an inherent drive toward technological advancement because capitalists constantly seek to reduce production costs, increase surplus value, and dominate markets. For Marx, the Industrial Revolution marked the transition from feudalism and merchant capitalism to industrial capitalism, fundamentally transforming the "means of production" and reorganizing social relations around factory, based production and wage labour. He viewed industrialization as both a progressive force that increased productive capacity and a system that intensified exploitation and inequality. Marx's theory of surplus value explains that workers produce more value during labour than the wages they

receive, with the excess appropriated by capitalists as profit. He further argued that industrial technology increased the domination of workers by capitalists, reducing workers to mere appendages of industrial systems and leading to what Marx called "alienation"—workers becoming separated from the products they produce, the production process, their creative abilities, and their fellow workers. Despite his criticism, Marx acknowledged that the Industrial Revolution greatly expanded productive forces, though he predicted that increasing exploitation and inequality would eventually lead to class struggle between the bourgeoisie and proletariat and the emergence of socialism.

In contrast, Adam Smith (1776) provided a fundamentally different interpretation of industrialization and capitalist development. Smith, widely regarded as one of the foundational thinkers of modern economics and capitalist theory, wrote before the full emergence of the Industrial Revolution, yet his ideas in *The Wealth of Nations* greatly influenced industrial capitalism and modern systems of production. Smith's analysis focused on division of labour, productivity, free markets, specialization, and economic growth, all of which became central features of industrial production during and after the Industrial Revolution. Smith argued that division of labour increases production through improvement in workers' skills, saving of production time, use of specialized machinery and tools, and greater efficiency and innovation. He believed technological innovation naturally emerges from specialization and industrial activity, as workers and manufacturers constantly seek methods to reduce labour, improve efficiency, and increase output. In Smith's view, the Industrial Revolution represented a positive transformation in economic production because it expanded national wealth, increased commercial activity, and improved productive efficiency, free markets and competition. He argued that individuals pursuing their own economic interests unintentionally promote broader economic prosperity through what he called the "invisible hand." Unlike Marx, who emphasized exploitation and class conflict, Smith viewed industrial capitalism primarily as a system capable of promoting prosperity and economic progress when guided by free competition and limited government interference. He believed government should mainly provide security, public infrastructure, and basic education, opposing excessive state control over industry and commerce.

A third major perspective comes from Immanuel Wallerstein (1974), who argued that industrialization cannot be understood solely as a national development within Europe but must be viewed as part of the expansion of a global capitalist world economy that linked Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas into an interconnected economic system. Wallerstein's World-System Theory argues that the Industrial Revolution was not simply the result of technological inventions or European innovation alone, but rather the outcome of long-term global processes involving trade, colonialism,

exploitation, and unequal economic relationships. He maintained that the Industrial Revolution marked the consolidation and expansion of capitalist production on a world scale, developing through the unequal relationship between three major zones: core countries (Britain, France, Germany, and later the United States), which became industrialized and technologically advanced, controlling industrial production, capital accumulation, financial systems, and global trade networks; peripheral countries (particularly Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia), which supplied raw materials, cheap labour, agricultural products, and mineral resources; and semi-peripheral countries, which occupied an intermediate position between the core and the periphery. Wallerstein argued that the Industrial Revolution intensified the exploitation of peripheral societies because industrialized countries required cotton, sugar, rubber, minerals, slave labour, and overseas markets. He rejected the idea that industrialization was purely a European achievement, maintaining that Europe's industrial success depended heavily on wealth extracted from colonial colonies through slavery, unequal trade, resource extraction, and colonial domination. For example, Britain's textile industries depended on cotton produced by enslaved labour in the Americas and raw materials obtained through imperial trade systems. Wallerstein further emphasized that technological transformation during the Industrial Revolution strengthened capitalist domination, enabling core countries to dominate global markets and create an international division of labour in which core countries specialized in industrial manufacturing while peripheral countries specialized in raw material production, reinforcing global inequality and economic dependency. These three major perspectives, of Marx's with emphasis on class exploitation and internal contradictions of capitalism, Smith's focus on productivity, markets, and the benefits of specialization, and Wallerstein's analysis of global inequality and core-periphery relations provide the analytical foundation for understanding the complex relationship between technological transformation and capitalist production. Each perspective offers unique insights while also revealing the limitations of single-factor explanations. This study draws upon these assumptions to examine how successive industrial revolutions have reconfigured capitalist production from the eighteenth century to the contemporary digital economy.

Statement of the Problem

Despite extensive scholarship on the Industrial Revolution, significant gaps remain regarding the dynamic relationship between technological transformations and the structural evolution of capitalism. Classical political economists, including Adam Smith (1776), emphasized the role of specialization and the division of labour in increasing productivity, while Karl Marx (1867) argued that technological innovation under capitalism primarily served the interests of capitalists by increasing surplus value extraction and reinforcing class struggle. Immanuel Wallerstein (1974)

expanded this analysis to the global level, demonstrating how industrialization intensified exploitation between core and peripheral nations. However, much of the existing literature treats technological innovation either as an independent driver of economic development or as a consequence of capitalist expansion, without sufficiently examining the reciprocal relationship through which technological change both shapes and is shaped by the changing dynamics of capitalist production across different historical phases.

Another important limitation concerns the unequal geographical distribution of industrialization benefits. While industrialization generated unprecedented economic prosperity in developed economies, numerous developing countries, particularly in Africa, experience technological dependence, weak industrial capacity, limited innovation systems, and persistent integration into the global economy primarily as suppliers of raw materials rather than producers of advanced technologies (Ake, 1981; Frank, 1967; Wallerstein, 1974). This uneven pattern of technological development raises important questions regarding whether the historical processes initiated during the Industrial Revolution continue to reproduce structural inequalities within the contemporary capitalist world economy.

Objectives of the Paper

i. Examine the historical origins and development of the Industrial Revolution and its impact on economic transformation and production.
ii. Analyze the major technological innovations associated with the Industrial Revolution, including mechanization, steam power, factory systems, transportation, and industrial manufacturing.
iii. Investigate how technological transformations changed modes of capitalist production from merchant and agrarian capitalism to industrial capitalism.
iv. Examine the effects of industrial capitalism on labour relations, wage systems, class formation, and working conditions.

Conceptual Clarification

Industrial Revolution

According to Eric Hobsbawm (1962), described the Industrial Revolution as "the most fundamental transformation of human life in world history since the invention of agriculture." For this study, Inyang and Etukeren (2026) conceptualize it as the historical process of technological transformation that fundamentally restructured production methods, mechanized farming, labour organization, and economic

institutions, facilitating the transition from agrarian economies to industrial capitalism. They view the Industrial Revolution not as a single historical event but as the beginning of a continuous process of technological and economic evolution that has evolved through successive industrial epochs and continues to reshape capitalist production in the contemporary digital economy through automation, artificial intelligence, and digital technologies.

Capitalist Production

An economic system based on private ownership, profit maximization, wage labour, and continuous innovation to increase productivity and competitiveness. It evolved from merchant capitalism to industrial capitalism, characterized by factory production, mechanization, and large-scale capital accumulation.

Agrarian Transformation

The transition from subsistence farming to commercial agriculture to technological innovation, enclosure systems, and market integration, which provided food surpluses, labour, and capital essential for industrialization. Agricultural development constituted one of the most significant preconditions for the Industrial Revolution, introducing innovations such as the four-course crop rotation system, selective livestock breeding, mechanized seed drilling, and improved drainage techniques.

Theoretical Framework

Marxist Theory

The study adopted the Marxist theory, espoused by Karl Marx, who provided one of the most influential and critical analyses on the Industrial Revolution and the transformation of capitalist production, mainly presented in Das *Capitale* (1867), *The Communist Manifesto* (1848, with Friedrich Engels), and *The German Ideology* (1846). Marx examined how industrialization transformed economic systems, labour relations, class structures, and modes of production within capitalist society.

According to Marx, the Industrial Revolution marked the transition from feudalism and merchant capitalism to industrial capitalism, arguing that technological innovation and mechanized industry fundamentally transformed the "means of production" and reorganized social relations around factory-based production and wage labour. Marx argued that before the Industrial Revolution, production was mainly organized through small-scale handicraft and agrarian systems where artisans owned their tools and controlled their labour. However, the emergence of machines, factories, and industrial

technology shifted production into the hands of capitalists who owned the means of production, forcing workers to sell their labour power for wages. This transformation created two major social classes: the bourgeoisie (owners of capital and factories) and the proletariat (industrial working class). Marx's theory of surplus value explains that workers produce more value during labour than the wages they receive, with the excess value generated by workers appropriated by capitalists as profit. Marx argued that industrial capitalism intensified exploitation through long working hours, low wages, harsh working conditions, child labour, and strict labour discipline. Marxist Theory explains how industrial technology transformed capitalism through mechanized factory systems, wage labour, and large-scale accumulation. Its tenets include:

i. Historical Materialism: Material and economic conditions determine social development; technological advancement changes productive forces and transformed social relations.
ii. Class Struggle: Capitalist society is divided into bourgeoisie (owners of means of production) and proletariat (working class).
iii. Exploitation and Surplus Value: Workers produce more value than wages received; surplus value becomes capitalist profit.
iv. Alienation**:** Industrial factory production alienates workers from labour, products, creativity, and fellow workers.

Put differently, the World-System Theory of Immanuel Wallerstein, equally explains the global expansion of industrial capitalism through core-periphery relations, colonialism, and unequal exchange. It helps relate Africa's role in capitalist development, technological inequality between nations, and dependency within global capitalism. Wallerstein's framework demonstrates that industrialization cannot be understood without examining the global exploitation that enabled European industrial growth. Liberalist Theory, also seek to justify the argument by explaining the economic benefits of industrialization, productivity growth, industrial specialization, market expansion, and economic development through free markets and competition.

Liberalist Theory

On the other hand, Adam Smith, widely regarded as father of liberalism and one of the foundational thinkers of modern economics and capitalist theory, wrote before the full emergence of the Industrial Revolution, yet his ideas in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) greatly influenced industrial capitalism and modern systems of production. Smith's analysis focused on division of labour, productivity, free markets, specialization, and economic growth, all of which became central features of industrial production during and after the Industrial Revolution. Smith argued that division of labour increases

production through improvement in workers' skills, saving of production time, use of specialized machinery and tools, and greater efficiency and innovation. He believed technological innovation naturally emerges from specialization and industrial activity, as workers and manufacturers constantly seek methods to reduce labour, improve efficiency, and increase output. In Smith's view, the Industrial Revolution represented a positive transformation in economic production because it expanded national wealth, increased commercial activity, and improved productive efficiency. He emphasized that industrial development encourages economic growth, expansion of trade, capital accumulation, market development, and increased employment opportunities. Smith also stressed the importance of free markets and competition in industrial production, arguing that individuals pursuing their own economic interests unintentionally promote broader economic prosperity through what he called the "invisible hand." Under competitive capitalism, producers innovate and improve production methods to maximize profits, thereby increasing industrial productivity and national wealth. Another important aspect of Smith's analysis was capital accumulation, maintaining that industrial expansion depends on investment and reinvestment of profits into productive activities such as factories, machinery, and infrastructure. However, although Smith generally viewed industrialization positively, he also recognized certain negative effects of industrial labour, warning that excessive specialization could make workers intellectually stagnant and reduce their creativity. Unlike Marx, who emphasized exploitation and class conflict, Smith viewed industrial capitalism primarily as a system capable of promoting prosperity and economic progress when guided by free competition and limited government interference, believing government should mainly provide security, public infrastructure, and basic education.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative historical research design, complemented by documentary analysis and the historical-comparative method, to examine the relationship between the Industrial Revolution, technological transformations, and shifts in capitalist production. This approach enables the study to explain how technological innovation has continuously reshaped labour relations, industrial organization, capital accumulation, and global economic development across successive historical phases. The study covers the period from the First Industrial Revolution (1760) to the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the 21st century, with particular attention devoted to major technological innovations, changes in industrial organization, labour processes, production systems, and the evolution of capitalist institutions.

Data were collected through documentary research, involving the systematic review of scholarly literature, historical documents, policy reports, and institutional publications.

Documentary research is appropriate because the study investigates historical events and long-term structural transformations that cannot be observed directly. The documentary sources are carefully selected based on their scholarly credibility, relevance, methodological rigor, and contribution to debates on industrialization, technological change, and capitalist production. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the study adopts data triangulation by drawing evidence from multiple scholarly sources representing different academic disciplines, including economic history, political economy, sociology, development studies, and innovation studies. Information obtained from one source is cross-checked with evidence from other authoritative sources to ensure consistency, accuracy, and analytical validity. This methodological approach ensures that the study's findings are robust, reliable, and grounded in comprehensive historical and theoretical evidence.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of the study provides evidence which demonstrates that the Industrial Revolution was not a single historical event but a sequence of technological transformations that fundamentally altered the organization of production, agriculture, labour relations, and capitalist accumulation. The findings indicate that successive industrial revolutions have continuously restructured economic institutions, expanded productive capacity, and reshaped global patterns of economic development. These transformations support the central proposition of this study that technological innovation has been the principal catalyst for shifts in capitalist production from the eighteenth century to the contemporary digital era. Following the First Industrial Revolution and the emergence of industrial capitalism, the study findings reveal that the period from 1760 to 1840 marked the transition from agrarian and cottage-based production to mechanized factory production. The introduction of steam power, mechanized textile manufacturing, improved iron production, and factory organization significantly increased productivity while reducing dependence on manual labour.

Consequently, technological innovation in agriculture and manufacturing developed as mutually reinforcing processes that accelerated industrial growth. Consistent with Marx (1867), the evidence indicates that mechanization strengthened capitalist production by enabling owners of capital to increase labour productivity, expand surplus value, and intensify the exploitation of wage labour. In a related development, the Second Industrial Revolution and the expansion of mass production, the findings indicate that the period from 1870 to 1914 significantly expanded industrial capitalism through the introduction of electricity, steel production, petroleum, chemical industries, telecommunications, and scientific management. Unlike the First Industrial Revolution, which relied primarily on steam power, this phase introduced more efficient production systems capable of supporting large-scale manufacturing. The

adoption of the assembly line, pioneered by Henry Ford, transformed industrial organization by reducing production costs while increasing output and standardization. Simultaneously, it advances in transportation, including railways and steamships, and communication technologies such as the telegraph and telephone, integrated national economies into an increasingly interconnected global market. The rapid growth of multinational corporations and financial institutions further accelerated capitalist expansion during this period.

These findings are consistent with Schumpeter's (1942) theory that technological innovation constitutes the engine of capitalist development through continuous processes of innovation and industrial restructuring. The evidence demonstrates that new technologies repeatedly displaced older methods of production, thereby confirming the process of "creative destruction" within capitalist economies. Also, the Third Industrial Revolution and digital transformation of production, the findings reveal that the period from 1970 to 2000 fundamentally altered industrial production through computers, microelectronics, telecommunications, automation, and information technology. Unlike previous industrial revolutions, production increasingly depended on information processing, digital communication, and computer-controlled manufacturing systems. The invention of the microprocessor, personal computer, internet, satellite communications, fibre-optic technology, and programmable industrial robots fundamentally changed production systems.

On the whole, the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the transformation of contemporary capitalism, represents a new phase in capitalist development characterized by the convergence of artificial intelligence, robotics, biotechnology, cloud computing, big data analytics, blockchain, the Internet of Things (IoT), and cyber-physical production systems. These technologies have transformed manufacturing into intelligent production systems capable of autonomous decision-making and real-time adaptation. Manufacturing has evolved into "smart factories," where machines communicate autonomously, production processes are digitally monitored, and supply chains operate through real-time data integration. Artificial intelligence enables predictive maintenance, automated decision-making, and enhanced production efficiency, while digital platforms have transformed commerce, finance, transportation, and labour markets. The findings further reveal that digital platforms have fundamentally altered business models by facilitating platform capitalism, digital entrepreneurship, global labour chains, financial technology, and the gig economy. These developments have generated new forms of wealth creation while simultaneously increasing market concentration among multinational technology corporations. These findings are supported by Schwab's (2016) contention that the Fourth Industrial Revolution differs from previous industrial revolutions

because of its unprecedented speed, scale, and integration of physical, biological, and digital technologies.

However, the Fourth Industrial Revolution also raises profound concerns regarding employment displacement, income inequality, data privacy, surveillance, and the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few multinational technology corporations. The gig economy, characterized by precarious, short-term, and platform-mediated employment, has intensified labour insecurity and weakened traditional labour protections. Automation and artificial intelligence threaten to displace millions of workers in manufacturing, services, and even knowledge-intensive sectors, potentially exacerbating inequality and social unrest. Also, findings further reveals that agricultural development constituted one of the most significant preconditions for the Industrial Revolution, in that industrialization of European economies were predominantly agrarian, with agriculture employing the majority of the labour force and serving as the principal source of food, raw materials, and income.

Succinctly reveal, the Agricultural Revolution which was associated with the industrial revolution introduced significant technological and organizational changes in farming, including the "four-course crop rotatio system" pioneered by Charles Townshend, selective livestock breeding advanced by Robert Bakewell, mechanized seed drilling developed by Jethro Tull, improved drainage techniques, and the widespread adoption of the enclosure system. These innovations enhanced soil fertility, reduced fallow periods, increased crop yields, and improved livestock quality, thereby creating a more productive agricultural sector capable of sustaining growing populations. One of the most important consequences of agricultural development was the dramatic increase in food production, which reduced the frequency of food shortages and famines, improved nutrition, lowered mortality rates, and contributed to sustained population growth across Britain and much of Western Europe. The expanding population created a larger labour force and a growing consumer market for manufactured goods, thereby stimulating industrial expansion and capitalist production.

Undoubtedly, the findings further reveals that Africa's contributions and experience in the Industrial Revolution, has been complex, characterized by both significant contributions to global industrialization and profound experiences of exploitation under the capitalist world economy. Although the Industrial Revolution originated in Britain, Africa played a critical role by supplying raw materials, cheap labour, and markets that sustained European industrial expansion. Africa contributed through the provision of abundant raw materials required by European industries, including cotton from Egypt and Sudan for the textile industry, palm oil from present-day Nigeria and Ghana for soap, lubricants, and machinery, cocoa from Ghana for food processing

industries, rubber from the Congo Basin for tyres and industrial products, gold and diamonds from South Africa for industrial finance and manufacturing, copper from Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo for electrical industries, and tin and coal from Nigeria for metallurgy and manufacturing. Although, slavery predated the Industrial Revolution, its economic legacy contributed to capital accumulation that financed industrial investment in Europe. Colonial policies also transformed Africa into a found market for European manufactured goods, undermining indigenous industries through the importation of cheaper industrial products and increasing dependence on European manufactures. Colonial governments of the west, restructured African economies to serve metropolitan industrial interests rather than domestic development. Colonial infrastructure, including railways, ports, and roads, were designed primarily to transport raw materials from inland production areas to coastal ports for export. According to Walter Rodney (1972), colonialism systematically integrated Africa into the global capitalist economy as a supplier of raw materials while preventing the emergence of autonomous industrial economies.

African scholars such as Samir Amin (1976) developed the concept of unequal development within the capitalist world economy, with African countries becoming peripheral economies producing raw materials for industrialized core countries in Europe. This unequal exchange reinforced technological dependence and limited industrial growth in Africa. For African countries, including Nigeria, participation in the Fourth Industrial Revolution remains constrained by poor electricity supply, inadequate digital infrastructure, low investment in research and development, weak industrial policies, limited technological skills, and dependence on imported technologies. Consequently, technological inequality continues to reinforce disparities in productivity, industrialization, and global competitiveness. Breaching the gap in knowledge, the paper emphasizes that critiques of the industrial revolution arguing that the capitalist world system permanently locks the Third World countries into dependency and underdevelopment could no longer hold a watertight argument and is also not tenable in social science debates to justify African countries' backwardness and dependency on the core countries. According to the researcher, peripheral countries can become major industrial and technological powers if local institutions and national governments demonstrate the needed will power and institutional structure to overcome the dependency syndrome and take the lead in building local capabilities and home-grown industrial and technological policies that can actually drive the needed change when compared to the Asian Tigers such as Singapore, Japan, China, and South Korea.

They further argue that corruption, weak institutions, democracy, and bad leadership in the national governments of African countries, especially Nigeria and the forms of government inhibited true leadership will and innovative thinking that promote and

drive economic development when relatively compared to other Third World countries that were at the same stage with African countries, such as Nigeria before the awakening of industrialization. Generally speaking, the findings demonstrate that technological transformation constitutes the central mechanism through which capitalism has evolved over successive historical periods. The study concludes that understanding contemporary capitalist production requires situating current digital technologies within the broader historical trajectory of industrial revolutions. The Fourth Industrial Revolution should therefore be viewed not as an isolated technological phenomenon but as the latest stage in a long process of technological and economic transformation that began with the First Industrial Revolution in eighteenth-century Britain.

First Industrial Revolution and Emergence of Industrial Capitalism

The findings reveal that the First Industrial Revolution marked the transition from agrarian and cottage-based production to mechanized factory production. The introduction of steam power, mechanized textile manufacturing, improved iron production, and factory organization significantly increased productivity while reducing dependence on manual labour.

Second Industrial Revolution and Expansion of Mass Production

The Second Industrial Revolution significantly expanded industrial capitalism through electricity, steel production, petroleum, chemical industries, telecommunications, and scientific management. The adoption of the assembly line transformed industrial organization by reducing production costs while increasing output and standardization. Advances in transportation and communication integrated national economies into increasingly interconnected global markets. These findings support Schumpeter's (1942) theory that technological innovation constitutes the engine of capitalist development through continuous processes of "creative destruction," while also confirming Wallerstein's argument that this phase intensified global inequality through imperial expansion.

Third Industrial Revolution and Digital Transformation

The Third Industrial Revolution fundamentally altered industrial production through computers, microelectronics, telecommunications, automation, and information technology. Production increasingly depended on information processing, digital communication, and computer-controlled manufacturing systems. Digital technologies facilitated globalization by enabling multinational corporations to coordinate production across multiple countries through global value chains. This corroborates

Beniger's (1986) argument that advances in communication and information processing emerged as mechanisms for managing increasingly complex industrial production systems.

Fourth Industrial Revolution and Contemporary Capitalism

The Fourth Industrial Revolution represents a new phase in capitalist development characterized by convergence of artificial intelligence, robotics, biotechnology, cloud computing, big data analytics, blockchain, the Internet of Things (IoT), and cyber-physical production systems. These technologies have transformed manufacturing into intelligent production systems capable of autonomous decision-making and real-time adaptation. Digital platforms have fundamentally altered business models by facilitating platform capitalism, digital entrepreneurship, financial technology, and the gig economy. These findings support Schwab's (2016) contention that the Fourth Industrial Revolution differs from previous revolutions because of its unprecedented speed, scale, and integration of physical, biological, and digital technologies.

Conclusion

This study examines the reciprocal relationship between technological innovation and the structural evolution of capitalism from the eighteenth-century Industrial Revolution to the contemporary Fourth Industrial Revolution, utilizing Marxist and Liberalist, theoretical frameworks to analyze how successive technological transformations, shifts production models from feudalism to mechanization and steam power to industrialization for mass production, to third industrial revolution that facilitates artificial intelligence and digital platforms, have fundamentally restructured production methods, labour relations, class formations, and global economic inequalities. The findings reveal that while technological innovation has driven unprecedented productivity growth, economic expansion, and industrial transformation across Europe and the global economy, it has simultaneously intensified class exploitation, labour alienation, and global disparities between industrialized core nations and peripheral developing economies, with African countries like Nigeria remaining constrained by poor infrastructure, weak industrial policies, technological dependence, and institutional deficiencies that limit meaningful participation in the digital age.

The study argues that developing economies can overcome technological dependency if national governments demonstrate political will to invest in indigenous research and development, digital infrastructure, human capital, institutional reforms, and coherent industrial policies, drawing lessons from the European experience and the success of Asian economies that transformed from peripheral to industrial powers through

strategic state intervention and local capacity building. Ultimately, the study concludes that sustainable development requires not only technological advancement but also effective governance institutions, equitable distribution mechanisms, social protection systems to mitigate technological displacement, and inclusive industrialization policies that support small and medium enterprises while leveraging regional integration frameworks like the African Continental Free Trade Area to enhance industrial competitiveness and reduce raw material dependence.

Recommendations

This study recommends that governments in developing countries like Nigeria adopt a comprehensive industrial transformation strategy by prioritizing investment in research and development, STEM education, and university-industry collaboration to foster indigenous technological capabilities. This must be complemented by inclusive industrialization policies supporting SMEs, technology start-ups, and local value addition through accessible finance, tax incentives, innovation hubs, and public-private partnerships, alongside strengthened institutional capacity through anti-corruption measures and coherent governance frameworks essential for technological innovation. Governments should invest massively in digital infrastructure, particularly broadband connectivity and electricity supply, to bridge the digital divide and enable Fourth Industrial Revolution participation, while developing human capital through enhanced STEM and vocational training to build a skilled workforce. The research also recommends leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area to enhance regional industrial competitiveness and reduce raw material dependence, while establishing social protection mechanisms including unemployment benefits and retraining programmes to mitigate technological displacement of workers. Ultimately, successful industrial transformation requires an integrated approach combining technological advancement, institutional reforms, infrastructure development, human capacity building, regional cooperation, and social safety nets to foster inclusive and sustainable economic development in the contemporary digital age.

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SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZE ENTERPRISES AS A PANACEA FOR RAPID ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as a panacea for rapid economic growth and development in Nigeria, with a focus on the Buhari administration (2015–2019). Nigeria, a strategic player in the global market with over 239 million people, operates a mixed economy heavily dependent on crude oil and natural gas. Despite its status as Africa's second-largest economy, the country grapples with unemployment, poverty, inflation, exchange rate volatility, insecurity, and social vices. SMEs represent a 21st-century innovative business framework that fuels national development through entrepreneurship and industrialization. The Buhari administration introduced various policies targeted at SME development, yet their effectiveness remains questionable. This research critically reviews the administration's agenda to determine whether it succeeded in its goals for SME expansion. The study adopted a qualitative methodology, utilizing primary and secondary sources for data gathering, analysis, and presentation. Findings reveal that although the administration made significant strides in SME development, progress was undermined by regime changes and public corruption, which remain pervasive in Nigerian public life. The study recommends that for SMEs to succeed, the Federal Government should improve access to affordable finance through expanded low-interest credit facilities via the CBN, Bank of Industry, and SMEDAN. Investment in critical infrastructure such as reliable electricity, transportation, and digital networks is essential to reduce business costs. Relevant agencies must strengthen entrepreneurship development, training, and digital skills enhancement. Policy consistency and business environment reforms should be prioritized to reduce bureaucracy, multiple taxation, and insecurity. Finally, a robust legal framework, institutionalization, and effective youth participation are crucial for sustainable SME growth and national development.

Keywords: *Small and Medium Size Enterprises, Economic Growth and Development, Innovations, Entrepreneurship, Employment Generation and Nigeria Economy sustainability.*

Introduction

Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) occupy a strategic position in Nigeria's economy, serving as critical drivers of employment generation, poverty reduction, industrialization, innovation, and economic diversification. Globally, SMEs account for over 90% of businesses and contributed significantly to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment, particularly in developing economies. In Nigeria, the sector contributes approximately 48–50% of GDP growth and employs more than 80% of the workforce, making it an indispensable to sustainable economic development of Nigeria. The administration of Muhammadu Buhari recognized SMEs as a major instrument for achieving its Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) (2017–2020) and subsequent National Development Plan (2021–2025). Consequently, the government introduced several intervention programmes aimed at improving access to finance, encouraging entrepreneurship, stimulating domestic production, promoting import substitution, and enhancing youth employment.

Notable initiatives included the Anchor Borrowers' Programme, Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP), Survival Fund Scheme, MSME Clinics, Payroll Support Scheme, and various intervention funds administered by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Bank of Industry (BOI) and the Modular Refinery initiatives. These programmes sought to strengthen the resilience and competitiveness of SMEs, particularly during the economic recession of 2016 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.National Bureau of Statistical Report (2019). Despite these policy interventions, scholarly literature argues that the Buhari administration faced considerable challenges in creating an enabling environment for SMEs. Researchers identify persistent macroeconomic instability, foreign exchange shortages, high inflation, multiple taxation, inadequate infrastructure, and insecurity, limited to access affordable credit, policy inconsistency, and bureaucratic bottlenecks as major constraints that weakened SMEs performance. While government financing initiatives improved access to credit for some enterprises, many SMEs struggled with rising production costs, declining consumer purchasing power, and disruptions in supply chains, particularly between 2020 and 2023.

Overall, academic evidence suggests that the Buhari administration made deliberate efforts to reposition SMEs through various intervention programmes and policy reforms. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these initiatives was constrained by structural weaknesses within Nigeria's business environment. Consequently, while some SMEs benefited from government support, the sector's overall contribution to inclusive economic growth remained below its full potential due to persistent institutional and macroeconomic challenges. Buhari served as Nigeria’s 5th president,

democratically elected to govern from May 29th 2105 to May 29th 2023 as the period of political administration. The administration in the past has implemented several programs for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), with particular focus on support for youth entrepreneurs and economic recovery for economic diversification before the COVID-19 pandemic**.**

The present government should review these programs and re-strengthen it's for it Economic benefits and prosperity of the country. The Government should also encourage and support a free online registration platform for SMEs businesses through SMEDAN so as to establish a network of professionals, innovators, and entrepreneurs that will provide the needed synergy for rapid economic growth and development of Nigeria. For instance, the Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP), CBN-backed initiative of Buhari administration was to provided soft loans and farm inputs to small-scale farmers and related agricultural businesses in collaboration with the Bank of Industry (BOI) supports, that should actively provide the needed buffer for financing and funds management for several large-scale intervention programs targeting towards SMEs, and the Creative Industries Financing Initiative (CIFI) to strengthen SMEs to meet the sustainable development goals of the previous government on SMEs in Nigeria.

Though, recent reforms and measures under the present administration of Bola Tinubu, have been taken to address these challenges, such as fuel subsidy removal, exchange rate unification, tax law reform, and military engagement and containment and neutralization of the effect of the insurgency, banditry, and kidnapping operations in the country. The political development has struggled to build a stable, unified nation from its diverse population, leading to challenges with state capacity and citizen participation. There can be no overstatement of the importance of SMEs in Nigeria, as they provide substantial contributions to Nigeria in both the creation of jobs and in GDP growth. It has long been acknowledged that small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) play a critical role in reducing poverty, fostering economic growth, and creating jobs in both developed and developing countries, according tothe United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2020). In Nigeria, where unemployment rates have been a longstanding challenge, SMEs tend to contribute significantly to job creation and poverty reduction, crediting SMEs as a critical component of the economy. SMEs have emerged as important sources of employment, absorbing a large section of the workforce. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) claims that SMEs employ more than 84% of Nigeria's workers and comprise roughly 96% of all enterprises in the nation NBS, (2020).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the universal recognition of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as critical drivers of economic growth, employment, and innovation, and despite successive Nigerian governments introducing various policies to strengthen the sector, the performance of SMEs has remained below expectations. During the Buhari administration (2015–2019), these intervention programs were intended to improve finance, encourage entrepreneurship, and diversify the economy, yet Nigeria simultaneously experienced slow economic growth, rising unemployment, and declining industrial productivity. This underperformance is largely attributed to a challenging operating environment characterized by poor infrastructure, unstable electricity, multiple taxation, high interest rates, and insecurity, which have constrained SME growth and competitiveness despite the availability of government support. Existing empirical studies have consistently identified these environmental constraints as major impediments, with research by Effiom and Edet (2019) finding that infrastructure and government policies significantly influence SME performance, while Tsagem, Ukairo, and Mohammed (2019) highlighted the critical role of sound corporate governance. Further studies by Danjuma, Teru, Jerry, and Adamu (2019) on regulatory compliance and Omiunu (2019) on digital literacy have all demonstrated significant positive relationships between specific factors and SME performance. However, these valuable research findings have regrettably not received considerable attention from the government, creating a disconnect between academic insights and policy formulation.

This gap in the literature is particularly concerning because prior studies have concentrated on isolated operational challenges, such as access to finance, while paying limited attention to the broader question of whether SMEs actually served as a panacea for rapid economic growth and development during the Buhari regime. Specifically, there is a need to evaluate the extent to which government interventions translated into measurable improvements in employment, industrial output, and overall economic growth. It is against this background that this study seeks to fill this gap by critically examining the role of SMEs as a driver for economic growth in Nigeria from 2015–2019, with the goal of providing empirical evidence to help policymakers and stakeholders design more effective SME policies for sustainable national development.

Objectives of the Paper

i. To investigate the role of SMEs as drivers of economic growth in both developing and developed countries, with innovation and entrepreneurship as key motivators.
ii. To determine how innovative and entrepreneurial skills can move Nigeria from poverty and high unemployment to a productive economy with increased youth participation, job creation, and improved per capita incomes.
iii. To serve as a bridge between government policy frameworks and implementation, filling gaps in policy evaluation to support Nigeria's drive toward economic self-reliance.

Conceptual Clarification

Innovation

Innovation is a multidimensional concept that has pre-occupies a central place in entrepreneurship, economics, management, and development studies. It refers to the process of creating, introducing, or improving products, services, production methods, organizational structures, or business models in ways that generate value and enhance productivity, competitiveness, and economic growth. Scholars generally agree that innovation is not merely the invention of something new, but the successful application and commercialization of new ideas. Schumpeter is widely regarded as the pioneer of innovation theory. He conceptualized innovation as the driving force of economic development through what he termed "new combinations" of productive resources. "Innovation consists of carrying out new combinations," including the introduction of new goods, new methods of production, the opening of new markets, the discovery of new sources of raw materials, and the creation of new forms of industrial organization (Schumpeter, 1934). Innovation is the introduction of something new, such as a new product, process, or idea, or a significant improvement on something existing, that creates value. It involves transforming creative ideas into practical solutions that can drive progress, growth, and efficiency. The core of innovation is the creation of value and a positive outcome, which requires novelty, improvement, and implementation. According to Peter Drucker, innovation is not random but the result of a systematic process of creating purposeful, focused change to improve economic or social potential. He identifies seven specific sources where innovation opportunities arise: the unexpected, incongruity, process needs, changes in industry and market structure, demographic changes, changes in perception, and new knowledge. Successful innovators are conservative, opportunity-focused, and aim to exploit these changes systematically.

In the word of Schumpeter, innovation disrupts existing economic structures through a process of creative destruction, whereby new technologies and business practices replace obsolete ones, thereby stimulating economic growth. For him, innovation is the process of creating economic change through new combinations of existing factors, driven by entrepreneurs. This includes five key tenets: launching new products, introducing new production or sales methods, opening new markets, acquiring new sources of supply, and reorganizing industry structure. These innovations lead to the "gales of creative destruction," where new ideas replace old ones, disrupting markets and driving economic growth.

Entrepreneurship

On the other hand, Entrepreneurship can be defined as the process of creating, developing, and managing a new business venture, which involves identifying market opportunities, taking on financial risks, and using innovation to generate profit or value. It is the act of being an entrepreneur, an individual who takes initiative and responsibility to start and grow a business, whether it's a startup, a small business, or an innovative project within an existing company. This can also include creating social value through a new product, service, or process. Joseph Schumpeter (1934) is the founding scholar of entrepreneurship theory. He viewed entrepreneurship as the process of introducing innovations into the economy. For Schumpeter, "Entrepreneurship" is the carrying out of new combinations," including the introduction of new products, new methods of production, new markets, new sources of supply, and new forms of industrial organization (Schumpeter, 1934).

Operationally defined, entrepreneurship implies the action of an individual in creating value that has a lifelong economic impact and sustainable development capacity over a period of time, with small-scale business as a lifeline and key driver for poverty reduction and increasing wealth creation through human efforts, technology and participation in the economic transactions and markets dynamics that motivate economic growth and development of Nigeria. For Howard Stevenson (1983), he defines entrepreneurship as "the pursuit of opportunity beyond the resources currently controlled." This definition emphasizes opportunity recognition, innovation, and resourcefulness rather than ownership of capital. More so, the researcher defines entrepreneurship as the art or skill of creating and managing a new idea or business for the purpose of creating value and economic fortune. It the process of bring abstract idea into visible reality for gainful economic or business advantage.

Succinctly pointed out, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN, 2013) in Nigeria, as the official small and medium size

enterprises institution, owned by the federal government of Nigeria, propounded an econometric definition of SMEs. According to SMEDAN (2013), micro enterprise Employees, less than 10 personnel and has an asset less than ₦5 million (excluding land and buildings). Small Enterprise, Employees: 10–49 employees, has an asset of ₦5 million or less than ₦50 million. While Medium Enterprise, Employees are up to 50–199 employees and an asset of ₦50 million or less than ₦500 million naira approximately.Put differently, according to Peter Drucker (1985)**,** opined thus; entrepreneurship is not merely about establishing new businesses; it is the systematic practice of identifying opportunities, innovating, and creating value through effective management. Drucker further argues that innovation is the specific instrument of entrepreneurship because it enables firms to exploit change as an opportunity for new products, services, markets, and organizational methods. He maintains that small and medium enterprises are particularly well positioned to innovate because of their flexibility, adaptability, and capacity to respond quickly to changing market conditions.

In his view, SMEs stimulate employment generation, encourage competition, increase productivity, and promote technological advancement, thereby making significant contributions to national economic growth. He emphasizes that governments should create an enabling environment through supportive policies, access to finance, managerial training, and institutional frameworks that allow entrepreneurial ventures to thrive. For him, small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are the primary engine of economic growth, but they must be entrepreneurial and innovative to succeed and survive. He emphasized that entrepreneurship is not a unique trait but a systematic discipline that can be applied within any organization, country, or business regardless of size and location. Drucker's philosophy centers on the idea that the purpose of any business is to create and keep a customer, not to simply make a profit. For SMEs, this means a relentless focus on the market and the customer's needs. In the Nigerian context, Drucker's perspective suggests that SMEs can serve as catalysts for rapid economic growth when supported by sound macroeconomic policies, stable institutions, and targeted government interventions. It is important to buttress that the Buhari administration (2015–2019), initiatives such as improved access to credit, agricultural development programmes, and support for local production were intended to strengthen SMEs. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives depended largely on policy implementation, infrastructure, access to finance, and the overall business environment.

Drucker's ideas therefore support the argument that sustainable economic growth is achieved not simply through government expenditure but through empowering entrepreneurs and SMEs to innovate, create employment, and expand productive

capacity. His work provides a useful theoretical lens for examining the role of SMEs in Nigeria's development during the Buhari era. Globally, small and medium scale businesses (SMEs) are acknowledged as key contributors to economic expansion. SMEs are seen as vital components of the Nigerian economy since they contribute significantly to job creation, income generation, and poverty alleviation. However, despite all these achievements of SMEs, their performance in Nigeria has been a subject of concern for several years. This study tends to empirically measure how SMEs have affected Nigeria's economic growth using key macroeconomic indicators as the Commercial Bank Loan, Patent Application, Trade, Value Added Tax, among others are key examples.

In fact, according to the study conducted by Deborah Oluremi (2024) in the International Journal of SMEs (2024). It was discovered that while patent applications harm Nigerian economic growth, loans from commercial banks, inflation, value-added tax, labour force participation, and SME trade have a favorable impact. In order to support SMEs and growth in the Nigerian economy, it was suggested that a combination of fiscal and monetary policies be used by the Nigerian government. The Nigerian Government recognizes SMEs as key catalysts to achieving growth and development as they can enhance a country's economic resilience by diversifying economic activities, reducing dependence on a few sectors, and providing a buffer against external shocks Aikor, (2021).

The study argued that Buhari, viewed SMEs are seen as a means to diversify the economy away from its heavy dependence on oil revenue, an attempt the previous administration made. This diversification objective was crucial for Nigeria under the Buhari administration in order to withstand economic shocks and ensure long-term sustainability, given Nigeria's vulnerability to global commodity price fluctuations in terms of exchange rates and unbalanced trades on crude oil prices (CBN, 2018).In this study, the researcher, define small and medium size enterprises as microeconomic venture that is individually owned for purpose of carrying out business activities, with the intention of making money or profits. It is a business outfit, created and owned by local entrepreneurs, that creative in skills and talented in idea.

Michael Ayyagari, Thorsten Beck, and Aslı Demirgüç-Kunt (2007) argue that SMEs are the backbone of most economies because they stimulate private-sector development, create employment opportunities, and contribute significantly to national income. Similarly, Paul Cook and Fred Nixson (2000) maintain that SMEs play a critical role in poverty reduction, technological innovation, entrepreneurship development, and regional economic integration, particularly in developing countries.

Theoretical Framework

To establish a sustainable theoretical basis for the design and approaches to this study, two trusted theories have to be examined. First, the Theory of Innovation was adopted and secondly, The Developmental State Theory are to be critically considered to justify the study assumptions to the study. The study is anchored on the Theory of Innovation propounded by Joseph Schumpeter in *The Theory of Economic Development* (1934). Schumpeter viewed entrepreneurship as the engine of economic development, arguing that economic progress is driven not merely by capital accumulation but by innovation introduced by entrepreneurs. He contended that entrepreneurs transform economies by introducing "new combinations" of productive resources through new products, new methods of production, new markets, new sources of raw materials, and new forms of business organization.

Schumpeter (1934) further argued that entrepreneurs perform a unique economic function by disrupting existing patterns of production through innovation. This process, which he termed creative destruction**,** replaces outdated technologies and inefficient production systems with more productive and competitive alternatives. Consequently, innovation stimulates productivity, employment creation, industrial expansion, investment, and sustained economic growth. In relation to Nigeria economic ecosystem, of the study during the Buhari administration (2015–2019), the theory suggests that government interventions, such as financial assistance, entrepreneurship development programmes, institutional reforms, and policies promoting ease of doing business, should enhance the innovative capacity and productivity of SMEs. If these interventions successfully reduce barriers to enterprise development, SMEs are expected to increase investment, expand employment, improve productivity, and contribute more significantly to economic growth and development. The major assumptions of the innovation theory include the follows tenets: The theory rests on several assumptions holds that: Entrepreneurs are the primary agents of economic transformation, Innovation is the principal source of long-term economic growth, Economic development results from the introduction of new combinations of productive resources, SMEs are important channels for entrepreneurial innovation, Government policies and institutional support can either stimulate or hinder innovation and enterprise development and Sustainable development depends on continuous innovation and entrepreneurial dynamism. However, critics of this theory hold a contrary view. Despite its strengths, Schumpeter's innovation theory has several limitations, such that it places considerable emphasis on innovation while paying comparatively less attention to structural constraints such as inadequate infrastructure, weak institutions, insecurity, corruption,

and macroeconomic instability, all of which affect SME performance in developing countries.

The theory assumes that entrepreneurs have relatively equal opportunities to innovate, whereas access to finance, technology, education, and markets is often highly unequal. It underestimates the influence of political and institutional factors on enterprise development, especially in countries were governance challenges shape business outcomes. It focuses primarily on entrepreneurial innovation without fully explaining how broader macroeconomic conditions influence economic growth. However, the relevance of this theory can be succinctly postulated in the following dimension. The theory is highly relevant to this study, because it provides a logical explanation of how SMEs contribute to rapid economic growth and development. The theory emphasizes innovation as a link between entrepreneurship and national development, which aligns directly with the objectives of this study.

This makes it particularly suitable for analyzing the Buhari administration, which introduced several SME-related interventions through institutions such as the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), the Bank of Industry (BOI), the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), and the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC), as key institutional drivers of the small and medium size enterprises development in the country.

The Developmental State Theory

On the other hand, the Development State Theory emerged from studies of the rapid industrialization of East Asian economies, particularly Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore. It was popularized by Chalmers Johnson (1982) in his study of Japan's industrial transformation. The theory was later developed by scholars such as Alice Amsden (1989), Robert Wade (1990), and Peter Evans (1995).The theory argues that rapid economic development is achieved when the state actively guides industrialization, promotes private-sector development, protects strategic industries, coordinates investment, and provides institutions capable of supporting economic transformation. Unlike the laissez-faire approaches postulated by Adam Smith that sees minimal state interventions, the developmental state theory views the government as an active participant in economic development rather than merely a regulator.

The theory assumes thus; that the state plays a strategic role in economic development, Government intervention is necessary for industrialization and structural transformation and Strong institutions to promote investment and entrepreneurship. Although, critics of this theory also argue that excessive government intervention may

discourage private-sector initiative, encourage rent-seeking, and distort market competition if not accompanied by transparency and accountability. Pointedly argued, this study concludes that, the pit fall in the criticism of the developmental state theory, was the major constraints that faced the Buhari regime in the development of economic progress using small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurship initiatives as key drivers of the country economic growth and development.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative explanatory research design. The design is appropriate, as it seeks to examine the extent to which small and medium enterprises (SMEs) contributed to rapid economic growth and development in Nigeria under the Buhari administration (2015–2019). This qualitative approach enables an in-depth analysis of government policies, institutional interventions, and empirical evidence on SMEs development without manipulating variables. It facilitates the interpretation of policy documents, official reports, academic literature, and macroeconomic indicators to explain the relationship between SMEs development and economic growth of Nigeria. For this study, the adopted methodology is qualitative analysis. The research adopted secondary sources of data gathering to use this approach, small and medium enterprises development agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) reports on SMEs development programmes, Enterprise performance statistics, SMEs contribution to employment and GDP Bank of Industry (BOI) Annual Reports on SMEs financing and intervention programmes, loan disbursement statistics and enterprise support initiatives. Other were results of extend studies conducted by erudite scholars and online publications etc.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) remains a critical driver of economic growth and national development in Nigeria. Consistent with the theoretical propositions of Joseph Schumpeter's Innovation Theory, Paul Romer's Endogenous Growth Theory, and Chalmers Johnson's Developmental State Theory, the study found that SMEs have significant potential to stimulate innovation, employment generation, industrial development, poverty reduction, and economic diversification when supported by appropriate government policies and institutions. The study further revealed that the Buhari administration (2015–2019) implemented several policy initiatives aimed at strengthening the SME sector. These included expanded intervention financing by the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Bank of Industry, enterprise development programmes coordinated by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria.

However, the findings also indicate that the overall impact of these interventions on rapid economic growth and development was constrained by persistent structural and macroeconomic challenges. High lending costs, inadequate infrastructure, unstable electricity supply, multiple taxation, insecurity, foreign exchange volatility, bureaucratic bottlenecks, weak institutional coordination, and the economic recession of 2016 significantly reduced the effectiveness of government programmes. Consequently, while SMEs contributed substantially to employment generation, income creation, and private-sector activity, their contribution to broad-based economic transformation during the study period remained below their full potential. Accordingly, key initiatives of the regime under study, aimed strengthening SMEs Survival, were SMEs Survival Funds, to provided support to vulnerable businesses to meet payroll obligations and safeguard jobs., Payroll Support, Artisan and Transport Support Grant to give a one-off grant of N30,000 to artisans and transport workers, Guaranteed Off-take Scheme to Stimulated production and guaranteed the purchase of local products, such as face masks and hand sanitizers, and SMEs Formalization Support and Payment for the registration of 250,000 new businesses with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and Expansion of MSME support through the ESP, the government was able to support over 1.1 million establishments and individuals.

For instance, Effiom and Edet **(**2019**),** conducted a study**,** titled: "*Success of Small and Medium Enterprises in Nigeria: Do Environmental Factors Matter"?* With a survey research design, using multiple regression analysis. Also, Tsagem, Ukairo, and Mohammed (2019), carried out a Study on the topic: "*Corporate Governance and Performance of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Nigeria.* With survey of 55 SMEs using panel data". And the findings revealed that: Sound corporate governance practices significantly improve SME performance, sustainability, and entrepreneurial growth, while inadequate management practices reduce business performance. Omiunu (2019), study reveals titled: "*E-literacy Adoption Model and Performance of Women-Owned SMEs in Southwestern Nigeria".*, with an empirical survey method, that has its , findings reveal that; "ICT adoption and digital literacy significantly improve productivity and competitiveness among SMEs, suggesting that digital capacity is an important determinant of enterprise performance."

It is surprising, that these novel and innovative programmes of that regime came under attack by policy hijackers and corruption in the public sectors of Nigeria, as the study reveals that most of the funds were diverted into private accounts by fraudulent government officials who embezzle the public funds meant for the development of those programmes. This is not far-fetched, as the succeeding administration greeted the nation with teething poverty and hunger that took over 115 million Nigerians back

to abject poverty, due to "fuel subsidy removal". Consequently, while SMEs contributed substantially to employment generation, income creation, and private-sector activity, their contribution to broad-based economic transformation during the study period remained below their full potential. The findings further suggest that government intervention alone is insufficient to achieve sustainable SME-led development. Effective implementation of policies, institutional efficiency, policy consistency, access to affordable finance, technological innovation, investment in infrastructure, entrepreneurial capacity building, and a stable macroeconomic environment are equally essential for maximizing the developmental impact of SMEs.

To this end, SMEDAN should urgently open registration of SMEs, legalization and accreditation processes and funding in Nigeria to formally and officially carry out national planning for its management and transformation. The agency should be decisive to continue its mandate by promoting SMEs in providing training, capacity building, and facilitating access to finance. For instance, the Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP), a CBN-backed initiative of the Buhari administration, was to provide soft loans and farm inputs to small-scale farmers and related agricultural businesses. Bank of Industry (BOI) was to provide Support in funding to SMEs to actively provide the needed buffer for financing and funds management for several large-scale intervention programs targeting at SMEs, and the Creative Industries Financing Initiative (CIFI) to strengthen SMEs' sustainable development in Nigeria.

Conclusion

According to the researcher, , this study stands to fill the gap in knowledge as it will contribute new knowledge to an area of the study in which previous research has been conducted and will generate data that will be useful to a range of researchers and stakeholders, both within academia and elsewhere. Specifically, it will provide data which may be useful to potential innovators and entrepreneurs in decision-making to guide the undertaken of entrepreneurial activities or about existing enterprises as they navigate their entrepreneurship journey. It will equally be used as a consultative base for government objectives and policy formulation guidance on SMEs, innovation, and entrepreneurship growth and development in the country, as a force to drive the industrial revolution and economic recovery of Nigeria.

Recommendations

In line with the objectives of the study and to enhance SMEs performance and their contribution to Nigeria's economic growth, the following recommendations are proposed:

Firstly, the Federal Government should improve access to affordable finance by expanding low-interest credit facilities through the CBN, Bank of Industry, and SMEDAN, while simplifying loan procedures, reducing collateral requirements, and targeting productive sectors like manufacturing, agriculture, and technology. Secondly, government should invest in critical infrastructure, including reliable electricity, transportation networks, digital infrastructure, and industrial clusters, to reduce business costs, increase productivity, and strengthen SMEs competitiveness. Thirdly, relevant agencies should strengthen entrepreneurship development and institutional support through intensified training, advisory services, innovation support, and digital skills development, while improving coordination among agencies for effective policy implementation and evaluation. Fourthly, government should ensure policy consistency and improve the business environment by formulating stable and transparent policies, reducing bureaucratic bottlenecks, multiple taxation, regulatory inefficiencies, and insecurity, while strengthening ease-of-doing-business reforms to enhance SMEs sustainability and their contribution to rapid economic growth and national development and finally provide the needed legal structure, legislative farmwork and professionalism for effective youth participation.

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CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF STATE FAILURE, CONFLICT, VIOLENCE AND INTRA-NATIONAL INSECURITY: AN APPRAISAL OF THE NIGERIAN STATE

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Abstract

This paper examines the concepts of failed states and weak states in relation to conflict and violence within the contemporary political system of Nigeria. It explores the theoretical foundations used to distinguish between weak and failed states, focusing on indicators such as institutional fragility, loss of monopoly over the legitimate use of force, erosion of governance capacity, and declining legitimacy of state authority. The paper further analyzes how state weakness and failure contribute to the emergence, escalation, and persistence of violent conflicts, including civil wars, insurgencies, terrorism, and communal violence in Nigeria. Drawing on comparative case studies from different regions of Nigeria, the study highlights the interaction between internal governance deficits and external pressures such as globalization, transnational crime, and foreign intervention. It also considers the cyclical relationship between violence and state fragility, where conflict further weakens institutions and deepens instability, with Somalia and South Sudan as examples. The paper argues that understanding the dynamics of weak and failed states is essential for designing effective conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and state reconstruction strategies in Nigeria. The paper adopted a qualitative method of data analysis; secondary sources of data collection were used to gather data. The paper adopted foundational theories such as Rotberg's theory of State Failure and the Institutional theory of state building as an appropriate basis for theoretical analysis. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for inclusive governance, institutional strengthening, and sustainable development as necessary pathways to guarantee a strong and powerful state. Accordingly, the study recommends: (i) strengthening democratic institutions and governance; (ii) comprehensive security sector reforms; and (iii) promoting inclusive socio-economic development and citizenship participation in nation building.

Keywords: *State Failure, State Fragility, Conflict, Political Violence, Intra-National Insecurity, Governance, Nigerian State.*

Introduction

The concepts of failed and weak states have become central to contemporary political science and development studies, particularly in explaining the inability of some countries to provide security, maintain political order, deliver public goods, and promote sustainable development. While, collapsed state represents the extreme end of institutional collapse. Also, a weak state refers to the one that continues to function, but exhibits significant deficiencies in governance, institutional effectiveness, and state capacity. These concepts gained prominence after the end of the Cold War as scholars and policymakers sought to understand the causes of civil conflict, political instability, terrorism, humanitarian crises, and economic underdevelopment in many developing countries. Rotberg, (2004) and Fukuyama (2004).Robert Rotberg (2004), opine that a state is considered weak when it struggles to perform its fundamental responsibilities, including maintaining law and order, protecting citizens, providing public services, and exercising effective control over its territory. A failed state, by contrast, is one in which government institutions have deteriorated to such an extent that they can no longer guarantee security, enforce the rule of law, or deliver essential public goods. Similarly, Francis Fukuyama (2004) argues that state strength is determined not merely by the extent of governmental intervention but by the institutional capacity of the state to formulate and implement public policies effectively.

The administration of President Bola Tinubu (2023–2026) placed national security, anti-corruption, and economic recovery at the forefront of its policy agenda. Despite efforts to combat insurgency, strengthen security institutions, and implement economic reforms, Nigeria continued to face significant governance and security challenges. Consequently, debates persist over whether these challenges reflect temporary governance deficiencies or deeper structural weaknesses that threaten the effectiveness and legitimacy of the Nigerian state. Understanding the distinction between weak and failed states is therefore essential for analyzing Nigeria's political development and governance trajectory. Rather than viewing the country as a failed state in the strict sense, many scholars classify Nigeria as a weak or fragile state whose institutions continue to function but remain constrained by limited capacity, poor governance, insecurity, and socioeconomic inequalities. Addressing these structural deficiencies through institutional reforms, accountable leadership, inclusive economic policies, and strengthened public institutions remains critical to achieving sustainable national development and democratic consolidation.

The theoretical foundation of the concept is linked to the classical understanding of the state as articulated by Max Weber, who defined the state as an institution possessing

the legitimate monopoly of force within a defined territory. When a state loses this monopoly and becomes incapable of performing its fundamental responsibilities, it begins to exhibit characteristics of failure. The term gained wider scholarly attention through the works of Robert Rotberg, et al (2004), conceptualized state failure as the inability of governments to provide essential political goods such as security, justice, infrastructure, healthcare, and economic stability. Zartman further described state collapse as a situation in which "the structure, authority, law, and political order have fallen apart.".For Abu-Bakarr Bah (2012), he argues that many African states experience *state decay* before failure occurs. According to him, weak states suffer progressive deterioration caused by colonial legacies, ethnic fragmentation, authoritarian leadership, economic crises, and civil wars African scholars have contributed significantly to the debate by arguing that state failure in Africa must be understood within the context of colonial legacies, weak institutional foundations, ethnic divisions, external dependency, and postcolonial governance crises. Scholars such as Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg introduced the idea of the "quasi-state," referring to postcolonial states that possess international recognition but weak domestic governance capacity

A weak state still maintains some level of institutional functionality and sovereignty, although, governance may be poor and ineffective. In contrast, a failed state experiences extensive breakdown of authority, loss of territorial control, widespread insecurity, institutional collapse, and erosion of legitimacy. The concept became especially relevant in the analysis of countries such as Somalia, South Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Afghanistan, where prolonged civil wars and governance breakdown demonstrated the inability of the state to perform core functions, in which the Nigerian state is gradually faced with similar red alerts and declining dangers. African scholars have contributed significantly to the debates by arguing that state failure in Africa must be understood within the context of colonial legacies, weak institutional foundations, ethnic divisions, external dependency, and postcolonial governance crises. Scholars such as Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg introduced the idea of the "quasi-state," referring to postcolonial states that possess international recognition but weak domestic governance capacity.

Statement of Problem

Over the past two decades, Nigeria has experienced escalating insecurity in the form of terrorism, banditry, kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, farmer-herder conflicts, separatist agitations, piracy, oil theft, and communal conflicts and violence. These security challenges have resulted in unquantifiable loss of lives and property, displacement of populations, disruption of economic activities, and erosion of public

confidence in state institutions. At the same time, widespread corruption, weak public institutions, unemployment, poverty, inequality, inadequate infrastructure, poor service delivery, electoral violence, and declining trust in government have raised concerns about the effectiveness and legitimacy of the Nigerian state. Scholars such as Robert Rotberg (2003, 2004), Francis Fukuyama (2004), Claude Ake (1981), Richard Joseph (1987), and Eghosa E. Osaghae (1998) collectively argues that states exhibiting persistent institutional weaknesses, ineffective governance, inability to provide security, and failure to deliver essential public goods are vulnerable to state fragility and, in extreme cases, state failure. Although Nigeria has not experienced the complete collapse of governmental authority associated with classical failed states, several indicators of institutional weakness continue to generate concern among scholars, policymakers, and international organizations.

Although, previous studies have examined insecurity, corruption, governance, democratization, and development in Nigeria, comparatively fewer have comprehensively assessed these interconnected issues through the analytical framework of state weakness and state failure**.** Many existing studies focus on individual dimensions of governance without providing an integrated assessment of how institutional capacity, legitimacy, security, and public service delivery collectively shape the resilience of the Nigerian state. This creates a significant gap in the literature regarding the extent to which Nigeria exhibits the characteristics of a weak state rather than a failed state and the implications of this distinction for policy and national development. It is against this background that this study seeks to fill the gap in knowledge, while critically examine the nature and extent of state weakness in Nigeria, assess the factors responsible for institutional fragility, and to evaluate as to whether the Nigerian state demonstrates the characteristics of a weak state, a fragile state, or an emerging failed state. The study also aims to identify policy measures capable of strengthening state institutions, improving governance, enhancing security, and promoting sustainable national development.

Objectives of the Paper

i. Examine the conceptual and theoretical foundations of the Nigerian state, weak state, and failed state in contemporary political science literature.
ii. Assess the extent to which the Nigerian s
iii. Analyze the characteristics of a weak state or a failed state syndrome.
iv. Identify the political, economic, institutional, historical, and socio-cultural factors responsible for the persistence of weak state syndrome in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Conflict

It is apposite to take juxtaposition of the conceptual clarification of the twin concepts, conflict and violent, before divvying into state definition, as used in the analysis of the study. According to Lewis Coser (1956), he defined conflict as the struggle over values, status, power, and scarce resources in which the objectives of the opposing parties are not only to gain desired values but also to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals. Coser argues that conflict is a normal social process that can contribute to institutional adaptation and social change when managed constructively. For Johan Galtung (1996), he argues that conflict exists whenever there is incompatibility of goals between individuals or groups. He distinguishes between conflict and violence, explaining that while conflict is a natural consequence of differing interests, violence is one possible manifestation of unresolved conflict. Galtung further emphasizes that unresolved structural inequalities and social injustices often create conditions that sustain conflict within societies.

In this work, cited in Michael Nicholson (1992), defines conflict as a situation in which two or more actors pursue incompatible objectives or perceive that their interests cannot be achieved simultaneously. This perspective underscores that conflict may occur at interpersonal, communal, national, or international levels and may involve political, economic, ethnic, religious, or ideological dimensions. Within the Nigerian context, conflict has manifested in various forms, including ethnic and communal clashes, religious violence, electoral disputes, farmer–herder conflicts, insurgency, separatist agitations, militancy, and banditry. These conflicts are often driven by competition over political power, natural resources, identity, socio-economic inequalities, and perceived marginalization. The persistence of these conflicts has weakened state institutions, undermined national cohesion, and posed significant challenges to governance and development. For the purpose of this study**,** conflict is defined as a condition of disagreement or confrontation arising from incompatible interests, competing values, unequal access to resources, or divergent political, economic, social, or cultural objective**s** among individuals, groups, or institution**s.** When poorly managed, conflict may escalate into violence, threaten state stability, weaken governance institutions, and contribute to state fragility and failure. Conversely, when managed through dialogue, negotiation, mediation, and inclusive governance, conflict can become a catalyst for institutional reform, social transformation, and sustainable peace.

Violence

On the other hand, `Violence is one of the most complex concepts in the social sciences because it encompasses physical, psychological, structural, political, economic, and symbolic dimensions. Although violence is commonly understood as the use of physical force to inflict harm, contemporary scholarship recognizes that it also includes institutional arrangements and social structures that systematically deprive individuals or groups of their fundamental rights, opportunities, and well-being. Consequently, violence extends beyond direct physical aggression to include structural inequalities, discrimination, exploitation, oppression, and other forms of systemic harm. Put differently, Hannah Arendt (1970), conceptualizes violence as an instrument employed to achieve political or social objectives through coercion and force. Arendt argues that violence differs fundamentally from power because genuine political power derives from legitimacy, collective consent, and public support, whereas violence relies on coercion and the threat or application of force. She maintains that governments often resort to violence when their legitimacy and authority are weakened. While non-state actors resort to violence as a means to express aggression against the state

State

According to Appadorai, a state is defined as "a community of persons, more or less numerous, permanently occupying a definite portion of territory, independent or nearly so of external control, and possessing an organized government to which the great body of inhabitants render habitual obedience." This definition emphasizes the five essential elements of a state to include but not limited to the following: Population, Territory, Government, Sovereignty, and Recognition. The paper defines a state as an entity of human creation with configured geographical demarcations and defined boundaries, having a political sovereign authority, with the power to make policy and enforce obedience from its subjects and having the resources to manage its affairs.

The Nigerian State

Claude Ake (1981) characterizes the Nigerian state as a post-colonial entity that inherited the institutional structures and coercive apparatus of British colonial administration, which was established primarily to facilitate economic exploitation rather than national development. Consequently, the post-independence Nigerian state retained many extractive characteristics, making it susceptible to authoritarianism, corruption, and weak democratic institutions. In a related development, Richard Joseph (1987) conceptualizes the Nigerian state through his theory of "prebendal

politics," wherein public offices are treated as prebends in positions from which office holders and their supporters expect to derive personal and group benefits. Structurally, Nigeria operates as a federal state with 36 Sub-national governments and 744 Local Area Councils. For Kenneth Wheare (1963) defines a Federal State as a method of dividing powers so that Centra and regional governments are each coordinate and independent within their respective constitutional spheres; thus, Nigeria as a federal state refers to a political system in which powers are constitutionally shared between a central government and regional governments, with each level operating independently. Operationally, the Nigerian state may be defined as a sovereign federal political entity established to exercise legitimate authority over the territory and people of Nigeria through constitutional institutions responsible for maintaining security, promoting public welfare, administering justice, and facilitating national development. However, its historical evolution, colonial legacy, political economy, and governance challenges have significantly influenced its institutional capacity and developmental performance, raised urgent concerns that demanded political solutions to address the threats of state failure confronting the country.

Overview of the State Failure and Conceptual Analysis:

In the words of Barry Buzan. (1991), weak states possess low levels of political and social cohesion and lack institutional strength and capacity to produce economic resource capable of adequately, maintaining and sustain its population. He characterized a weak state in the following category basically as the following, poor governance, weak institutions, corruption, economic instability and limited territorial control. Examples, Nigeria in some periods like the fourth republic, from 1999 to the time of this study are faced with vital syndrome of both weak and fragile states, as compared to Lebanon and Haiti. According to Robert Jackson (1990)**,** many post-colonial African states possess "juridical sovereignty", that is international legal recognition, but lack **"**empirical sovereignty", which refers to the practical ability to govern effectively. Jackson argues that such states continue to exist because of international recognition even though their internal institutional capacity is weak. This distinction helps explain why many African countries are regarded as fragile or weak rather than completely failed.

Fragile State

The concept of a fragile state, as framed by Robert Rotberg (2004), places states on a continuum between strong and failed, with fragile states unable to adequately deliver political goods like security, rule of law, and economic opportunity, yet still retaining formal sovereignty. This study operationally, definition of a fragile state as a sovereign

entity with weak institutions, contested legitimacy, and limited capacity to provide security and public goods and been vulnerable to corruption and shocks, because of it unstable governance structure and functional government , that characterize Nigeria for lack of power to provides a useful political framework for its governance challenges.

Collapsed State

A collapsed state represents the extreme form of state failure where governmental structures, authority, law, and political order completely disintegrate. In a collapsed state, there is no central authority exists. Rival groups compete for power and Government institutions cease functioning. For Buzan, a collapsed state has the attribute of complete breakdown of authority, absence of effective government and widespread violence. Typical collapsed states are; Somalia after 1991 political violence conflict confronting the country and Libya during severe conflict periods that outer the leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2012.

Strong State

A strong state in political science refers to a state that possesses high institutional capacity, effective governance structures, and the ability to exercise authority over its territory and population without significant internal or external challenge.
According to Joel Migdal (1988), "a strong state is one in which the state apparatus is able to penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources, and appropriate or use resources in determined ways.

Conflict and Violence Management Strategies

Effective conflict management in fragile and weak states requires a multifaceted approach that integrates multiple strategies. International organizations like the UN and AU employ peacekeeping operations and preventive diplomacy, such as mediation and early warning systems to stabilize conflicts, though these efforts are often limited as they fail to address underlying structural causes or incorporate local dynamics. State-building and institutional reform, including strengthening governance, rule of law, and democratic accountability, are also critical, but must be complemented by indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms like traditional mediation and community dialogue, as emphasized by African scholars and grassroots peace builders. Ultimately, a comprehensive human security approach is necessary, one that combines security, governance, economic development, and local peace-building. This requires bridging foreign perspectives which highlight institutional weakness and African

viewpoints, which stress colonial legacies, socio-economic injustice, and identity politics, to prioritize inclusive governance, institutional legitimacy, and active community participation.

Approaches and Perspectives in Conflict and Violence Prevention in the Nigerian State

Conflict prevention in weak and failed states focuses on addressing the root causes of violence, strengthening institutions, promoting inclusive governance, and enhancing peace building mechanisms. Different theoretical perspectives provided varying explanations for the causes of fragility and the most effective prevention strategies include but not limited to the following:

i. Liberal Peace building Approach: The liberal peace building approach emphasizes democracy, rule of law, market reforms, and strong institutions as pathways to peace and stability. International organizations such as the United Nations and World Bank often support this model through state-building initiatives. The basic assumption of this is that key features have potent manifestation in conflict and violence prevention, in the following dimensions, promotion of democratic governance, strengthening judicial and security institutions, human rights protection, economic liberalization and international peacekeeping operations.

ii. Human Security Perspective: The human security perspective shifts attention from state security to the protection of individuals and communities. It recognizes that poverty, unemployment, disease, and inequality contribute significantly to violence in fragile states.

Pathways to Recovery of State failure in Nigeria:

Addressing the problem of failed states requires rebuilding the social contract and strengthening political society. Core strategies include: Promoting inclusivity, fostering genuine political will and encourage citizens' participation by ensuring all ethnic, regional, and religious groups have a voice in the political process. According to Francis Fukuyama (2004), state reconstruction is "the creation of new government institutions and the strengthening of existing ones that are capable of sustaining development and maintaining political order." Similarly, Robert Rothberg (2004) argues that successful reconstruction requires restoring security, rebuilding state institutions, promoting economic recovery, and establishing legitimate governance.

Restoration of Security and Rule of Law

The first priority in reconstructing a failed state is restoring security and public order. Without security, political and economic reforms cannot succeed.

Reconstruction Strategies Applicable to Nigeria

For this study, the paper opines thus; should Nigeria continue to experience deeper manifestations of state failure syndromes this far beyond the "red line", the following strategies would be particularly important:

i. Comprehensive security sector reforms to address insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, and organized crimes.
ii. Strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law.
iii. Decentralizing governance while preserving national unity.
iv. Tackling corruption through stronger accountability mechanisms.
v. Investing in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and employment.
vi. Promoting inclusive governance that reflects Nigeria's ethnic and religious diversities.
vii. Addressing poverty and youth unemployment to reduce recruitment into criminal and extremist groups.

Consequence and Manifestation of state failure in Nigeria

Agents of State Failure in Nigeria

State failure is generally understood as a gradual process resulting from the interaction of political, economic, institutional, and social forces that undermine the authority, legitimacy, and effectiveness of the state. In the Nigerian context, scholars argue that state weakness has been reinforced by multiple actors whose actions, inactions, or competing interests have eroded institutional capacity, weakened governance, and reduced public confidence in government (Ake, 1981; Joseph, 1987; Rotberg, 2004).

Political Governance and Leadership

The political elite constitute one of the principal agents associated with state weakness in Nigeria. According to Claude Ake (1981), the post-colonial African state became an instrument for elite accumulation rather than national development. Political office is frequently treated as a means of controlling public resources instead of serving the collective interest. Richard Joseph (1987), he explains this phenomenon through his

concept of prebendal politics, whereby holders of public office distribute state resources to themselves, their families, supporters, and ethnic constituencies. Such practices weaken public institutions, encourage corruption, and undermine accountability.

Economic Elites and Rent-Seeking Networks

Nigeria's political economy has often been characterized by rent-seeking behaviour in which influential economic actors benefit from privileged access to public contracts, natural resources, and regulatory institutions. According to Ake (1981), when political power becomes the principal avenue for wealth accumulation, economic productivity declines while corruption and patronage increase. Such arrangements weaken state institutions by subordinating public policy to private interests.

Security Agencies and Institutional Weakness

The military, police, intelligence agencies, and other security institutions are expected to guarantee national security and protect citizens. However, inadequate funding, poor coordination, corruption, weak intelligence gathering, human rights abuses, and insufficient operational capacity have often reduced their effectiveness. Where security institutions fail to exercise effective territorial control, non-state armed groups expand their influence, weakening the authority and legitimacy of the state. Recent scholarship on Nigeria links persistent security governance failures to broader institutional weaknesses rather than only operational deficiencies.

Colonial Legacy and Structural Constraints

On the whole, several African scholars argue that state weakness cannot be fully understood without considering the colonial origins of the Nigerian state. The colonial administration established centralized institutions primarily to facilitate resource extraction and political control rather than inclusive governance and development. Consequently, at independence, Nigeria inherited institutions characterized by limited accountability, weak legitimacy, centralized authority, and uneven development. These structural legacies continue to influence contemporary governance challenges in the country.

Clamp Down Mechanism on Agent of Failed and Weak State Formations

To the fill the knowledge gap in this study, the paper (2026) postulated thus; to dismantle the networks that cause state failure in Nigeria, the nation must fashion out

an international coalition, that must execute an aggressive, multi-layers strategies targeting the political, financial, and military actors driving institutional decay. Clamping down on these agents requires shifting them from positions of impunity to total accountability using the following recommended strategies; Neutralizing corrupt political agents and targeted Magnitsky Sanctions, independent Anti-corruption Tribunals, Abolishing Offshore Shell Companies**,** Supply Chain Certification, the implementation of mandatory international tracing systems for natural resources modeled after the Kimberley Process for diamonds in Liberia and Sierra Leone, that prevented the warlords and multinationals from illegally exporting oil, timber, and minerals, from both countries in Africa. Dismantling violent non-State agents and targeted disarmament, demobilizations, and reintegration (DDR). Governments must run comprehensive DDR programs that offer rank-and-file militia members alternative economic livelihoods, thereby starving warlords of manpower. And Interdicting Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) with buffer intelligence services, that must track and freezes the digital assets, hawala networks, and cryptocurrency wallets used by terrorist groups like the Boko Haram and Bandits to finance operations.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted two distinct theories of analysis to explain the justifications of the model to these research findings. These include; the State Failure Theory developed by Robert Rotberg and the Institutional Theory State of Building, propounded by Fukuyama (2004)**.** These are most influential frameworks for explaining why states become weak, fragile, or fail altogether. Rotberg (2004), he argues that the fundamental responsibility of every state is to provide political goods to its citizens. These political goods include security, law and order, justice, public services, economic opportunities, infrastructure, education, healthcare, and protection of fundamental rights. According to Rotberg (2004), a state begins to fail when it can no longer perform these essential functions effectively. The theory is based on the following tenets or assumptions: The primary duty of the state is to provide security and public goods., Government, legitimacy depends on effective governance and service delivery, Failure to maintain law and order leads to political instability, Weak institutions encourage corruption and organized crime, The inability to protect citizens undermines national development and State failure creates opportunities for insurgents, terrorists, and criminal organizations to flourish. The State Failure Theory provides a strong analytical framework for examining Nigerian state failure syndrome and reconstruction strategies in Nigeria, which are succinctly presented as follows: Explains the relationship between weak governance and insecurity and identifies institutional failure as a major cause of instability and Links corruption and poor service delivery to declining state legitimacy and demonstrates how insecurity affects

national development. Critically, in Nigeria, despite governance challenges, Nigeria continues to conduct elections, maintain diplomatic relations, collect taxes, and operate national institutions. Therefore, describing Nigeria as a "failed state" simply because it experiences insecurity may be misleading. But the reality is, this study has painstakingly outline persistence syndromes in manifestation. On the other hand, the institutional theory of state building, emphasize that sustainable development and political stability depend on effective, accountable, and capable state institutions. Reconstruction should therefore prioritize strengthening institutions rather than merely changing political leaders.

To this theory, the major assumptions include; Strong institutions are essential for state stability, institutional capacity is more important than the formal size of government, effective governance requires professional public administration, long-term peace depends on institutional resilience and sustainable reconstruction is impossible without institutional reform.

Methodology

According to the study, the methodology to this work explains the procedures adopted in conducting the study. It describes the research design, sources of data, methods of data collection and analysis, study population, and the theoretical approach employed.

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on the descriptive and analytical research method**.** A qualitative design was adopted as an appropriate tool of analysis to the study, because it examines the conflict, violence and it's causes, manifestations, and reconstruction strategies of state failure in Nigeria through the analysis of existing literature, government documents, policy reports, and scholarly publications rather than statistical surveys.

Sources of Data

The study relies primarily on secondary sources of data, and the data were obtained from: mostly Peer-reviewed journal articles, reports of the National Bureau of Statistics. Credible online publications, Books on political science, security studies, and governance and Peer-reviewed journal articles etc

Method of Data Collection

The study employs the documentary method of data collection**.** Documentary research involves collecting information from published and unpublished materials relevant to the research problem. Documents reviewed include textbooks, scholarly journals, government reports, policy papers, institutional reports, and electronic databases. The documentary method is suitable because it provides historical and contemporary evidence necessary for analyzing the phenomenon of state failure in Nigeria.

Method of Data Analysis

The study adopts qualitative content analysis as the method of data analyzes. Content analysis involves the systematic examination, interpretation, and comparison of information obtained from documentary sources. The researcher identifies major themes such as: Causes of state failure, indicators of state fragility, security challenges, Governance deficits, reconstruction strategies and institutional reforms that are typical indicator of failed state or state failure syndromes.

Results

This study examined the drivers, manifestations, consequences, and reconstruction strategies related to state failure in Nigeria. The findings identified corruption, weak institutions, poor governance, insecurity, poverty, unemployment, ethnic/religious divisions, and ineffective policies as the primary drivers, all interacting to erode the state's capacity to deliver security, services, justice, and economic opportunity. These results align with scholars like Rotberg (2004) and Zartman (1995), who link state failure to the inability to provide essential political goods, and with Umoh et al. (2023), who cited institutional dysfunction and corruption in Nigeria. In terms of manifestations, the study found that state failure is visibly expressed through terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, separatist agitations, farmer-herder conflicts, widespread corruption, and poor service delivery; all indicating a declining governmental capacity to maintain law and order. This supports Rotberg's (2003) assertion that insecurity is the foremost indicator of failure, and Mlambo's (2023) argument that weak governance enables violent non-state actors to challenge state authority. The consequences of state failure have severely reduced economic productivity, discouraged investment, increased unemployment and poverty, displaced communities, weakened health and education systems, and undermined national unity. Lambert (2023) and Awopeju & Adesina (2023) corroborate that weak institutions hinder development and democratic consolidation.

For reconstruction, the researcher proposes strengthening democratic institutions, combating corruption, reforming the security sector, ensuring judicial independence, improving accountability, creating jobs, promoting inclusive governance, investing in education, and increasing civic participation. This aligns with Isike & Olasupo (2023), who advocate for a renegotiated social contract based on inclusion and accountability, noting that institutional reforms alone are insufficient. Finally, the study emphasizes that violence is both a cause and a manifestation of state failure as weak institutions invite non-state actors to fill governance vacuums, while persistent violence further erodes state capacity, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of failure, consistent with Rotberg's (2003) framework.

Conclusion

This study concludes that state failure in Nigeria is the cumulative outcome of persistent governance failures, institutional weaknesses, widespread corruption, insecurity, socio-economic deprivation, and ineffective public administration. These interconnected challenges have weakened the capacity of the Nigerian state to perform its core responsibilities of maintaining security, enforcing the rule of law, delivering essential public services, and promoting sustainable development. The study further concludes that reconstruction of the Nigerian state cannot be achieved through military intervention alone. Rather, it requires a holistic approach that combines institutional strengthening, good governance, transparency and accountability, judicial and security sector reforms, inclusive economic development, poverty reduction, youth empowerment, and adherence to the rule of law. Effective leadership and strong public institutions are indispensable for restoring citizens' confidence in government and rebuilding the legitimacy of the Nigerian state.

Recommendations

In line with the objectives of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to reverse state failure and rebuild state capacity in Nigeria. First, democratic institutions and governance must be strengthened by enhancing the independence, accountability, and effectiveness of public institutions, rigorously enforcing the rule of law, and intensifying anti-corruption measures across both public and private sectors, all of which are essential to restoring public trust and improving state legitimacy. Second, comprehensive security sector reform is urgently needed, combining modernized security operations, intelligence-led policing, active community participation, and conflict prevention strategies to address both immediate threats such as terrorism, banditry, and kidnapping and the deeper structural causes of insecurity. Third, inclusive socio-economic development must be promoted through strategic

investments in in economic opportunities, employment generation, education, healthcare, infrastructure, agriculture, and poverty reduction, with particular focus on marginalized and conflict-affected regions, as these measures are critical to reducing state fragility, addressing socio-economic grievances, and supporting sustainable national reconstruction. Together, these integrated approaches spanning governance, security, and development offer a viable pathway toward reversing state failure and fostering long-term stability in Nigeria.

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DECONSTRUCTING RELIGIOUS NARRATIVES THAT IMPEDE DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

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Abstract

Religious narratives remain highly influential in shaping gender relations and development structures in contemporary Nigeria. In many Christian and indigenous cultural contexts, patriarchal interpretations of sacred traditions continue to define women within restrictive domestic and subordinate roles, thereby limiting their participation in political leadership, economic empowerment, education, and decision-making processes. Although religion possesses transformative potential for promoting justice and human dignity, certain interpretations of biblical texts have reinforced gender inequality and legitimized exclusionary social systems. This study examined how religious narratives impede gender development in Nigeria and seek to deconstruct patriarchal theological frameworks that sustain women's marginalization. The objectives were to identify dominant religious narratives that reinforce gender inequality, evaluate their implications for national development, and explore alternative interpretive approaches that promote gender inclusion. The study employed a qualitative methodology using textual analysis, gender-critical hermeneutics, and decolonial theory to examine selected Old Testament texts alongside Nigerian socio-cultural realities. Findings revealed that many oppressive gender constructions are products of selective androcentric interpretations merged with patriarchal cultural traditions rather than inherent features of religion itself. The study further found that contextual and gender-sensitive readings of biblical traditions offer emancipatory possibilities capable of advancing equality and inclusive development. The study concluded that deconstructing oppressive religious narratives is essential for achieving sustainable gender development and recommends integrating gender-sensitive hermeneutics into theological education, promoting inclusive church leadership, and strengthening collaboration between faith-based institutions and gender development initiatives to foster social justice and national transformation in contemporary Nigeria.

Keywords: *Religious Narratives, Gender Relations, Patriarchal Interpretations*

Introduction

Nigeria is a deeply religious and culturally plural society in which religion significantly shapes social values, political structures, and gender relations. Christianity, Islam, and African Indigenous Religions continue to influence public morality, family structures, leadership patterns, and perceptions of women's social roles. In many communities, religious worldviews are intertwined with patriarchal cultural traditions that define women primarily within domestic and subordinate spaces. Consequently, theological interpretations and cultural ideologies often function together to reinforce unequal gender relations and legitimize male dominance in political, economic, and religious institutions (Whitnah, 2022). Despite global advocacy for gender equality and the adoption of development frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), women in Nigeria continue to experience exclusion from decision-making processes, economic opportunities, and leadership positions (United Nations, 2016). The persistence of these inequalities suggests that developmental challenges in Nigeria cannot be separated from the religious and cultural narratives that shape social consciousness.

Historically, colonialism contributed significantly to the entrenchment of patriarchal structures within African societies. Although precolonial African societies were not entirely egalitarian, colonial administrations and missionary Christianity institutionalized rigid gender binaries and strengthened male-centred authority systems (Akukwe, 2024). Biblical interpretations introduced through missionary enterprises often privileged androcentric readings that portrayed women as secondary, submissive, and morally weaker beings. Texts such as Genesis 2–3, Ephesians 5:22–24, and 1 Timothy 2:11–14 have frequently been interpreted in ways that legitimize female subordination within both church and society. Over time, these interpretations became embedded within Nigerian religious discourse and social institutions, thereby influencing political participation, educational access, inheritance rights, and leadership opportunities for women.

The political implications of such religious narratives are profound. Gender inequality remains a major challenge within Nigeria's democratic and developmental landscape. Women remain underrepresented in governance, public administration, and policymaking despite constituting a substantial proportion of the population (Udo, et al, 2025). According to reports by organizations advocating gender inclusion, socio-cultural and religious barriers continue to discourage women's active participation in politics and leadership (UN, n.d.; National Democratic Institute, 2021; UN Women, 2021). Religious rhetoric is often employed to oppose feminist advocacy and to maintain traditional gender hierarchies. In many religious communities, leadership is

still interpreted as a male prerogative, while women are expected to operate within supportive or domestic roles. These dynamics undermine efforts toward inclusive governance, sustainable development, and social justice.

The problem addressed in this study is the persistence of religious narratives that impede gender development in contemporary Nigeria. While religion possesses liberative and transformative potentials, dominant patriarchal interpretations of sacred traditions have contributed to the marginalization of women and the normalization of gender inequality. Many studies on gender inequality in Nigeria have focused primarily on socio-economic or political dimensions without sufficiently interrogating the theological and hermeneutical foundations that sustain oppressive structures (Oladipupo & Emmanuel, 2025; Othman, et al, 2025). Furthermore, some religious communities continue to resist gender-inclusive reforms because patriarchal interpretations are perceived as divinely sanctioned and culturally authentic. This creates a significant gap between development policies advocating gender equality and the religious-cultural realities shaping public attitudes.

The goal of this study is therefore to deconstruct religious narratives that reinforce gender inequality and to explore alternative interpretive frameworks capable of promoting inclusive development in Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to examine how selected biblical and religious narratives have been used to justify patriarchal systems, evaluate their socio-political implications for women's development, and propose contextual and gender-sensitive hermeneutical approaches that affirm equality, dignity, and mutuality. By engaging religion as both a cultural and political force, the study contributes to broader discussions on development, governance, and social transformation in Africa.

The study is theoretically grounded in feminist hermeneutics and decolonial theory. Feminist hermeneutics provides a critical framework for interrogating androcentric interpretations of sacred texts and recovering marginalized female voices within religious traditions (Oduyoye, 2001). It challenges patriarchal readings that legitimize oppression and advocates interpretive approaches that promote liberation and equality. Decolonial theory complements this framework by exposing how colonial epistemologies shaped African religious consciousness and reinforced gender hierarchies through missionary theology and Western cultural assumptions (Mignolo, 2025). Together, these frameworks enable a critical reassessment of religious narratives and their socio-political implications within contemporary Nigeria. The combination of these theories is particularly relevant because it allows the study to challenge both imported colonial ideologies and indigenous patriarchal structures that continue to hinder gender development.

Conceptual Clarification

This study examines the relationship between religious narratives, gender relations, and patriarchal interpretations in shaping gender development in contemporary Nigeria. These concepts constitute the analytical foundation upon which the study is built.

Religious Narratives

Religious narratives refer to the stories, doctrines, symbols, beliefs, and interpretive traditions through which religious communities understand God, humanity, morality, and social relationships. They extend beyond the biblical text itself to include sermons, liturgical teachings, theological traditions, and cultural interpretations that shape collective behaviour and institutional practices. Religious narratives function as powerful social instruments because they provide moral legitimacy for patterns of authority, identity, and social organisation (Edgell, 2012). In Nigeria, Christian religious narratives significantly influence public attitudes toward gender, family, leadership, and social participation. While many biblical narratives affirm justice, equality, and human dignity, others have historically been interpreted in ways that reinforce male dominance and female subordination. This study therefore distinguishes between the biblical text and the religious narratives constructed through its interpretation, arguing that the latter often determine how religion influences gender development.

Gender Relations

Gender relations refer to the socially and culturally constructed interactions, roles, responsibilities, opportunities, and power relations between men and women within society. Unlike biological sex, gender relations are historically and culturally shaped and therefore vary across societies and historical periods (Wilson, 2023). They influence access to education, economic resources, political participation, religious leadership, and decision-making processes. In the Nigerian context, gender relations are shaped by the interaction of religion, culture, customary law, and socio-political institutions. Where these relationships are structured around unequal power dynamics, women experience exclusion from leadership and development opportunities. Consequently, gender development is understood not merely as women's advancement but as the creation of equitable social structures that enable both women and men to participate fully in national development (Das, 2025).

Patriarchal Interpretations

Patriarchal interpretations refer to readings of sacred texts and religious traditions that privilege male authority while presenting women's subordination as divinely ordained or naturally prescribed. Such interpretations frequently emerge from androcentric interpretive traditions rather than from the intrinsic meaning of the biblical text. Within Christian theology, passages such as Genesis 2–3, 1 Timothy 2:11–15, and Ephesians 5:22–24 have often been interpreted to justify male headship and female submission in both church and society (Jusu, 2017). Feminist biblical scholars argue that many of these conclusions result from selective historical and cultural interpretations rather than faithful exegesis of Scripture. In this study, patriarchal interpretations are understood as socially constructed theological readings that legitimise unequal gender relations and hinder women's participation in development.
Collectively, these concepts explain the study's central argument that religious narratives, when interpreted through patriarchal frameworks, shape gender relations in ways that impede inclusive development. Conversely, contextual and gender-sensitive interpretations provide opportunities for promoting equality, justice, and sustainable national development.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two complementary theoretical perspectives: Feminist Hermeneutics and Decolonial Theory. Together, these frameworks provide the analytical lens for examining how religious narratives are constructed, interpreted, and deployed to influence gender relations and development in Nigeria.

Feminist Hermeneutics

Feminist hermeneutics serves as the primary theoretical framework of this study. Emerging from feminist theology and biblical studies, it critically interrogates patriarchal interpretations of biblical texts that perpetuate women's marginalisation. Rather than accepting inherited interpretations as objective or divinely fixed, feminist hermeneutics examines how androcentric assumptions have shaped biblical interpretation and ecclesiastical traditions. As Fiorenza (1983) argues, biblical interpretation has historically privileged male experiences while silencing women's voices, thereby legitimising exclusionary religious and social structures.

The relevance of feminist hermeneutics to this study lies in its ability to distinguish between Scripture and its interpretation. Texts such as Genesis 2–3 have frequently been employed to portray women as secondary or subordinate to men. Feminist

scholarship, however, demonstrates that many of these hierarchical conclusions arise from selective interpretive traditions rather than from the biblical text itself. This perspective aligns with Dike's (2025) feminist re-examination of the Yahwist creation narrative, which argues for the theological equality and mutuality of male and female. Consequently, feminist hermeneutics provides the interpretive tools for evaluating how patriarchal religious narratives are constructed and how alternative readings may contribute to gender justice and inclusive development.

Decolonial Theory

The study also draws on decolonial theory, particularly its critique of colonial knowledge systems and epistemic domination. Decolonial scholars argue that colonialism extended beyond political control to reshape systems of knowledge, religion, identity, and social organisation (Mignolo, 2025). Within African societies, missionary Christianity often reinforced patriarchal structures through biblical interpretation and institutional practices that privileged male authority while limiting women's agency.

Decolonial theory is particularly relevant because it demonstrates that many contemporary religious assumptions about women's silence, domesticity, and exclusion from leadership reflect the convergence of colonial missionary ideologies and indigenous patriarchal traditions rather than immutable biblical truths. The theory therefore exposes the historical construction of oppressive gender systems and highlights the possibility of their transformation through contextual reinterpretation. Furthermore, decolonial thought advocates epistemic liberation by recovering indigenous perspectives and contextual knowledge systems. Rather than rejecting religion, it seeks to reclaim its emancipatory potential for justice, inclusion, and social transformation. Applied to this study, decolonial theory supports the contextual reinterpretation of biblical narratives in ways that respond to Nigeria's contemporary developmental realities.

The integration of feminist hermeneutics and decolonial theory provides a comprehensive analytical framework for the study. Feminist hermeneutics explains how patriarchal interpretations of Scripture are produced and sustained, while decolonial theory explains how colonial and socio-cultural structures normalised these interpretations within African Christianity. Together, the two theories illuminate how religious narratives influence gender relations and development outcomes and provide the conceptual basis for reconstructing more inclusive theological interpretations that promote gender equality and sustainable national development.

Review of Scholarly Literature on Religion, Gender, and Development in Africa

Scholarly discussions on religion, gender, and development in Africa have increasingly demonstrated that patriarchal interpretations of sacred texts significantly shape social structures, political participation, and developmental outcomes. Within Nigerian society, religion remains one of the strongest forces legitimizing gender roles and cultural expectations. Consequently, contemporary scholarship has shifted from merely identifying gender inequalities to interrogating the theological and hermeneutical foundations sustaining them. This study builds on these conversations by examining how religious narratives impede gender development in contemporary Nigeria and by proposing transformative interpretive approaches capable of fostering inclusive development.

A major contribution to this discourse is the growing feminist re-examination of the Yahwist narrative in Genesis. In *Is God Partial in Creation? A Feminist Re-examination of Gender in the Yahwist's Narrative*, the authors challenge traditional patriarchal interpretations of Genesis 2–3 that portray women as secondary creations designed for male subordination. Rather than accepting androcentric assumptions embedded in conventional readings, the study argues that hierarchical gender constructions emerge primarily from interpretive traditions rather than from the biblical text itself (Dike & Agbo, 2025). This argument is particularly relevant to the present study because it exposes how theological narratives become ideological instruments for legitimizing gender inequality in African societies. By demonstrating that patriarchal readings are hermeneutically constructed rather than divinely fixed, the work provides a critical foundation for deconstructing oppressive religious narratives within contemporary Nigeria.

Similarly, Dike's *An Exegesis of Genesis 1:27–28; 2:20b–23 and its Implication for Gender Relations and Sustainable Development Goal* advances the argument that biblical creation traditions contain principles of mutuality and shared human dignity that align with contemporary gender-inclusive development frameworks. Unlike conservative theological approaches that interpret creation texts as establishing permanent male authority, the study emphasizes the co-humanity of male and female in the divine image (2021). Importantly, the work connects biblical interpretation to sustainable development discourse by arguing that gender inequality undermines social and economic transformation. This connection significantly informs the present study, which investigates how religious narratives shape developmental realities in Nigeria. The work demonstrates that theological interpretation is not merely a religious exercise but also a socio-political activity with direct implications for governance, inclusion, and national development.

The intersection between gender and ecology within biblical interpretation is further explored in Adam *and Adamah: A Feminist Re-examination of Gender and Environment in the Yahwist's Narrative* (Dike, 2025). The study critiques Western dualistic interpretations that separate humanity from nature and simultaneously reinforce patriarchal domination over women and the environment. By recovering the earth-bound identity of humanity within the Yahwist narrative, the work proposes an eco-feminist reading that emphasizes relationality, stewardship, and interconnected existence. This perspective contributes to the current study by revealing how oppressive religious narratives function not only in gender relations but also within broader systems of domination and exclusion. The emphasis on relational anthropology challenges patriarchal models that prioritize hierarchy and control, thereby providing an alternative theological framework for inclusive social development.

Another important contribution is found in *An Inquiry into the Loud Absence of the Female Progenitors: Implications for the Contemporary Nigerian Socio-Political Space* (Nwabueze, et al, 2025). The study interrogates the marginalization and invisibility of female figures within religious and socio-political narratives. By analysing the symbolic absence of women within dominant traditions, the authors argue that exclusion within sacred memory often translates into exclusion within political and social institutions. This insight directly supports the present study's argument that religious narratives shape political consciousness and developmental structures in Nigeria. The work is particularly important because it moves beyond textual interpretation to demonstrate how symbolic gender exclusion contributes to women's underrepresentation in leadership and governance. Thus, the study bridges religion and political development, reinforcing the interdisciplinary orientation of the current research.

The relationship between biblical interpretation, social justice, and development is also evident in Biblical *Ecological Framework for Re-evaluating the Nigerian Land Use Act: An Exegetical Study of Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15* (Dike, 2026). Although primarily ecological in focus, the work illustrates how biblical texts can be reinterpreted to challenge oppressive socio-political structures and advocate for justice-oriented reforms. The study's engagement with land, power, and human dignity is relevant to the present research because gender inequality in Nigeria is often connected to unequal access to land, resources, and economic opportunities. By demonstrating that biblical traditions can serve as tools for liberation rather than oppression, the study strengthens the argument that transformative hermeneutics can contribute meaningfully to inclusive development.

Beyond these studies, African feminist scholars such as Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musa W. Dube have consistently argued that African women experience oppression through the intersection of patriarchy, religion, and culture. Oduyoye (2001) critiques theological systems that sanctify women's silence and subordination, while Dube (2000) exposes how colonial biblical interpretation reinforced structures of domination within African Christianity. Their works are foundational to the present study because they emphasize the necessity of contextual and liberation-oriented hermeneutics capable of addressing African socio-political realities. Despite these significant contributions, a major gap remains in existing scholarship. Many studies focus either on feminist biblical interpretation or on gender and development as separate concerns. Few studies explicitly examine how religious narratives function simultaneously as theological, cultural, and political instruments that impede gender development within contemporary Nigeria. Moreover, insufficient attention has been given to the relationship between hermeneutics and national development within Nigerian socio-political discourse. The present study addresses this gap by integrating biblical studies, gender analysis, religion, and development studies to demonstrate how deconstructing patriarchal religious narratives can contribute to inclusive governance, social justice, and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and interdisciplinary analytical approach situated within feminist biblical hermeneutics, decolonial theory, and socio-religious analysis. Since the study is conceptual rather than empirical, it relies primarily on critical textual engagement, interpretive analysis, and contextual evaluation of existing scholarly materials relating to religion, gender, culture, and development in contemporary Nigeria. The analytical approach focuses on examining how religious narratives, particularly patriarchal interpretations of biblical texts, shape socio-cultural attitudes and political structures that affect gender development. Through critical hermeneutical analysis, the study interrogates the ideological assumptions embedded within dominant religious interpretations and evaluates their implications for women's inclusion in governance, leadership, economic participation, and national development.

The study reviews both primary and secondary sources relevant to the discourse on religion and gender. Primary sources include selected biblical texts frequently invoked in discussions of gender relations, especially Genesis 1–3 and other passages traditionally used to justify female subordination. Secondary sources include scholarly works on feminist theology, African biblical hermeneutics, decolonial studies, gender studies, religion and politics, and development studies. Attention is given to

contemporary African scholarship addressing the intersections of patriarchy, religion, and socio-political exclusion. Works by scholars such as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Musa W. Dube, and recent studies by Uzoma Amos Dike provide significant theoretical and contextual insights for the study.

The key concepts examined in this study include religion, patriarchy, gender development, feminist hermeneutics, decoloniality, and inclusive development. Religion is examined not merely as a spiritual phenomenon but as a socio-cultural and political force that shapes public consciousness and institutional practices. Patriarchy is analysed as a system of male dominance sustained through theological, cultural, and social structures. Gender development is understood within the framework of social inclusion, equal participation, and access to opportunities necessary for sustainable development. Feminist hermeneutics is explored as a critical interpretive approach that challenges androcentric readings of sacred texts, while decoloniality is examined as an intellectual framework for exposing colonial influences embedded in African religious and cultural systems.

The argument of the study is developed on the premise that dominant religious narratives significantly influence societal attitudes toward women and consequently affect development outcomes in Nigeria. The study argues that many patriarchal gender constructions are not inherent within sacred texts themselves but emerge from selective interpretations shaped by historical, colonial, and cultural forces. By critically reassessing these narratives through feminist and decolonial lenses, the study develops the argument that transformative and gender-sensitive hermeneutics can contribute to social justice, inclusive governance, and sustainable national development. Thus, the study's analytical framework links religious interpretation directly to socio-political realities and development discourse in contemporary Nigeria.

Discussion

Religious Narratives as Instruments of Gender Construction in Nigeria

Central to patriarchal constructions within Nigerian Christianity is the interpretation of the Yahwist creation narrative in Genesis 2–3. Traditional interpretations of Genesis 2–3 have frequently emphasized the sequential creation of woman after man, the derivation of woman from man, the designation of woman as "helper," and Eve's role in the fall narrative as evidence of divinely ordained female subordination. Within patristic theology, Augustine of Hippo argued that the prior creation of man signified ontological and functional precedence, while woman's creation from man

demonstrated her dependence and orientation toward assisting the male within domestic and ecclesial structures (Augustine 1982). In scholastic theology, Thomas Aquinas, drawing on Aristotelian categories, interpreted woman as naturally ordered toward man as a subordinate helper, contending that the sequence and derivation narratives in Genesis confirmed male authority within the created order (Aquinas 1983). Similarly, Reformation exegete John Calvin maintained that woman's creation after and from man established a divinely instituted hierarchy in which the woman functioned under male leadership, a reading that significantly shaped Protestant patriarchal household codes (Calvin 1850). In contemporary complementarian theology, Wayne Grudem argues that the Genesis creation order reveals a timeless structure of male headship and female submission, with woman's derivation from man interpreted as evidence of differentiated gender roles rather than inferiority, while Eve's involvement in the fall is frequently invoked to reinforce restrictions on women's leadership in church and society (Grudem 2004; 2016). This interpretive tradition has profoundly shaped church teachings concerning women's silence, obedience, and exclusion from authority. Drawing from texts such as 1 Timothy 2:11–15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, theologians such as John Chrysostom and Augustine maintained that women should remain submissive within ecclesial and domestic structures because Eve was deceived first in the fall narrative. Medieval ecclesiastical traditions influenced by Aquinas excluded women from priestly and authoritative teaching offices on the basis that woman was created as a subordinate helper oriented toward male leadership. Likewise, Calvin and other Reformers reinforced patriarchal household codes that emphasized wives' obedience to husbands and restricted women's public teaching roles within the church. In modern complementarian evangelicalism, scholars such as John Piper and Grudem continue to defend male-only pastoral leadership and female submission in marriage by appealing to the order of creation and Eve's deception.

The influence of these patriarchal interpretations becomes particularly visible within church traditions that institutionalize the silencing of women. Several conservative denominations operating in Nigeria prohibit women from ordination into pastoral or episcopal offices. In some Pentecostal and evangelical circles, women may lead women's fellowships or children's ministries but are excluded from senior pastoral leadership or doctrinal authority over men. Such restrictions are commonly justified using texts such as 1 Timothy 2:11–12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 (See Jusu, 2017), where women are instructed to remain silent in church assemblies. Furthermore, some church traditions encourage women's silence through culturalized teachings on submission and modesty. Women are often taught that questioning male authority reflects rebellion against God. Sermons on marriage frequently stress the duty of wives to submit while paying comparatively less attention to mutual love, justice, and

partnership. In extreme cases, women experiencing domestic violence are advised to remain prayerful and patient rather than seek institutional protection or accountability. Such teachings demonstrate how religious narratives directly shape social attitudes and power relations.

This study therefore finds that religious narratives in Nigeria function as mechanisms of gender construction by defining acceptable female behaviour, regulating access to authority, and legitimizing patriarchal social arrangements. However, evidence from feminist biblical scholarship and contemporary commentaries demonstrates that many restrictive constructions of Genesis 2–3 are interpretive rather than intrinsic to the biblical text itself. Feminist scholars such as Phyllis Trible argue that the Hebrew term *ʿēzer* ("helper") used for the woman in Genesis 2:18 does not imply subordination, since the same term is frequently used for God as Israel's helper in the Old Testament, thereby indicating strength and partnership rather than inferiority (Trible 1978). Similarly, Katharine Doob Sakenfeld demonstrates that *ʿēzer* carries no inherent hierarchical meaning in Hebrew usage, challenging traditional assumptions that the woman was created merely to serve the man (n.d.). Feminist exegete Tikva Frymer-Kensky further contends that Genesis 1 presents both male and female as equally created in the image of God and jointly entrusted with dominion, suggesting mutuality rather than hierarchy (Frymer-Kensky, 2002). Postcolonial and African feminist scholars similarly demonstrate how colonial missionary Christianity reinforced patriarchal biblical interpretations within African societies. Mercy Amba Oduyoye argues that missionary hermeneutics often merged Victorian patriarchy with selective biblical interpretation to legitimize women's exclusion from leadership in church and society (Oduyoye 1995). Musa W. Dube shows that colonial biblical interpretation frequently silenced liberative and egalitarian dimensions of scripture while promoting structures favourable to male authority and imperial control (Dube 2000). Dike (2025) contends that the Yahwist narrative, when critically reread through feminist and ecological lenses, does not inherently support rigid gender hierarchy but instead reflects interconnectedness between humanity, gender, and the environment. She further argues that androcentric interpretations imposed by religious tradition and socio-cultural ideology have contributed to the marginalization of women within both religious and social structures. These scholarly interventions collectively demonstrate that the persistence of women's marginalization within religious and political spaces reflects hermeneutical choices shaped by patriarchal tradition, colonial influence, and socio-cultural ideology rather than unavoidable meanings embedded within the biblical text itself.

Patriarchal Interpretation and the Misreading of the Yahwist Narrative

A key finding of this study is that the Yahwist creation narrative (Genesis 2–3) has been persistently misread through patriarchal lenses that transform a relational and anthropological text into a hierarchical gender ideology. As has been demonstrated above, rather than explicitly establishing male supremacy, the narrative has been shaped by centuries of theological tradition that selectively foregrounds certain elements (creation order, naming, "helper" language, and Genesis 3:16 (See Jusu, 2017) while suppressing its broader egalitarian and relational logic. Contemporary feminist and critical scholarship demonstrate that such readings are often products of eisegesis rather than close engagement with the Hebrew text.

A major corrective insight is found in Phyllis Trible, who argues that Genesis 2:23 ("bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh") expresses mutuality and ontological equality rather than hierarchy. Trible's rhetorical reading shows that the text initially presents man and woman as equal partners before domination is introduced because of the fall, not as a creation mandate (Trible, 1978). This directly challenges patriarchal interpretations that treat subordination as divinely ordained structure. Similarly, Claus Westermann emphasizes that the Yahwist narrative is fundamentally relational. According to Westermann (1984), the use of *ʿezer kenegdo* ("suitable helper") does not imply inferiority but correspondence and partnership. The helper terminology, when read in its broader Old Testament usage, often describes divine assistance (e.g., God as Israel's helper), undermining any inherent hierarchical implication. Despite this, many Nigerian theological traditions continue to interpret "helper" as subordinate assistant, thereby reinforcing gender asymmetry in church and society.

This interpretive distortion is further problematized by Gordon J. Wenham, who highlights the theological coherence between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. Wenham (1987) notes that Genesis 1:27 explicitly affirms that male and female are created equally in the image of God and jointly entrusted with dominion over creation. However, patriarchal readings frequently isolate Genesis 2 while marginalizing Genesis 1, thereby constructing a false theological hierarchy that privileges male authority. Walter Brueggemann further argues that Genesis 2–3 should be read as a narrative of human vocation and disrupted relationality rather than a blueprint for gender hierarchy. In Brueggemann's interpretation, the statement "he will rule over you" (Gen. 3:16) describes the tragic distortion of sin, not the divine intention for gender relations (Brueggemann, 1982). Yet in many Nigerian church traditions, this verse is routinely interpreted as normative, thereby sacralising male dominance in marriage, leadership, and ecclesial authority.

The misreading becomes more evident when examined alongside the grammatical insights of Uzoma Amos Dike. In her feminist re-examination of Genesis 2:21–25, Dike demonstrates that the Hebrew terms *adam* and *adamah* indicate a shared human identity rooted in earth rather than a gendered hierarchy of creation (Dike, 2025a; 2025b). Her analysis shows that *ha'adam* refers to "humanity" rather than a male individual, and that the formation of woman from the man's "side" (*tsela*) suggests relational continuity rather than subordination. By linking adam and adamah, Dike further argues that the narrative emphasizes ecological and relational interdependence rather than male primacy. These findings reinforce the claim that hierarchical interpretations are interpretive constructions rather than textual necessities. Taken together, the evidence from feminist, evangelical-critical, and African contextual scholarship indicates that patriarchal readings of the Yahwist narrative arise from selective interpretive traditions rather than the Hebrew text itself. The consistent marginalization of Genesis 1:27, the over-reading of "helper" as subordination, and the elevation of Genesis 3:16 as normative all reflect theological traditions shaped by cultural patriarchy rather than authorial intent.

Colonial Christianity and the Institutionalization of Patriarchal Ideology

A major finding of this study is that contemporary gender ideology in Nigerian Christianity is deeply connected to the historical influence of colonial missionary Christianity, which institutionalized patriarchal interpretations through theology, education, and ecclesial governance (Sakupapa, 2023). Although precolonial African societies maintained diverse gender systems, European missionary Christianity introduced more rigid models of male authority shaped by Victorian social ideals that defined women primarily as submissive wives, homemakers, and moral guardians. As Oyeronke Oyewumi argues, colonial modernity reorganized African societies through Western gender categories that privileged male dominance and female subordination (Oyěwùmí, 1997).

Within this framework, biblical interpretation became a central instrument for legitimizing patriarchy. Missionary teachings frequently emphasized texts such as Ephesians 5:22–24 and 1 Timothy 2:11–14 as universal prescriptions for female submission and male headship. According to Kwame Bediako, African Christianity inherited a form of "Western theological captivity" in which European cultural assumptions became fused with biblical authority (Bediako, 1995). Consequently, patriarchal ideology was embedded structurally within church leadership, theological education, and mission schools, where boys were prepared for leadership roles while girls were directed toward domestic and caregiving responsibilities.

Postcolonial African theologians further demonstrate that this colonial legacy continues to shape ecclesial practice and gender relations. Oduyoye (2001) identifies the combined influence of cultural patriarchy, colonial Christianity, and ecclesial structures in sustaining women's marginalization within African Christianity.

Similarly, Dube (2000) argues that missionary biblical interpretation functioned as an ideological tool that reinforced colonial power relations and Western patriarchal norms. In Nigeria, these inherited structures remain visible in church traditions that restrict women's ordination, limit female leadership, and normalize male-controlled ecclesial authority despite women's numerical and ministerial contributions. The evidence therefore suggests that patriarchy within Nigerian Christianity is not simply a biblical mandate but also a historical and institutional construction shaped by colonial encounter and missionary hermeneutics. This underscores the importance of feminist and decolonial approaches that seek to disentangle Christian theology from inherited colonial patriarchal frameworks and recover more inclusive and contextually grounded interpretations of scripture.

Gender Exclusion and Developmental Consequences in Nigeria

This study finds that gender exclusion in Nigeria is sustained by an interplay of socio-cultural norms and religious interpretations that frame leadership as predominantly male. Patriarchal readings of sacred texts continue to shape attitudes in political, economic, and institutional spaces, producing both formal barriers and informal resistance to women's participation in leadership. Empirical evidence from the United Nations Development Programme and Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics shows persistent gender gaps in governance despite constitutional equality provisions. These disparities are reinforced by socio-religious beliefs that legitimize male dominance and restrict women's access to decision-making roles.

Religious texts such as 1 Timothy 2:12 and Ephesians 5:22–24 are often interpreted to support male-exclusive authority, reinforcing gender hierarchy as divinely ordained. This aligns with the views of Oduyoye (2001), who critiques the sacralization of patriarchy, and Oyěwùmí (1997), who highlights the colonial intensification of gender hierarchies in Africa.

Developmentally, gender exclusion reduces effective human capital utilization, weakens governance, and slows economic growth. Women's underrepresentation in leadership limits policy responsiveness, particularly in health, education, and welfare sectors. It also sustains poverty through restricted access to land, credit, and economic opportunities, especially in rural contexts (Khalifa, 2025). The symbolic exclusion of

women in religious narratives further reinforces their material marginalization, normalizing invisibility in public life (Nwabueze, et al, 2025). However, feminist and contextual hermeneutics highlight egalitarian biblical motifs such as Genesis 1:27, offering theological resources for inclusion. The study concludes that overcoming gender exclusion in Nigeria requires both structural reforms and critical re-interpretation of religious narratives that sustain inequality.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that religious narratives, particularly patriarchal interpretations of biblical texts, play a significant role in shaping gender relations and influencing development outcomes in contemporary Nigeria. It argued that many forms of gender inequality attributed to scripture are not inherent in the biblical texts themselves but arise from selective, historically conditioned, and culturally reinforced interpretations. Through feminist hermeneutics and decolonial theory, the study showed that the Yahwist narrative and other biblical traditions contain egalitarian and relational dimensions that have often been overshadowed by patriarchal readings.

The study further established that colonial Christianity contributed to the institutionalization of gender hierarchy by embedding European patriarchal norms within African ecclesial, educational, and interpretive systems. These historical processes continue to influence church traditions and public attitudes toward women's leadership and participation in development. Consequently, gender exclusion persists not only as a socio-political issue but also as a theological and hermeneutical problem. By integrating biblical studies, gender analysis, and development discourse, the study contributes to ongoing scholarly efforts to reframe religion as a potential resource for justice rather than exclusion. It advances the argument that transformative and gender-inclusive hermeneutics are essential for dismantling oppressive narratives and promoting equitable participation in both religious and public life.

Thus, the study recommends a multifaceted approach to addressing the ways religious narratives continue to hinder gender development in Nigeria. This includes reforming theological education to incorporate gender-sensitive and contextual hermeneutics, promoting inclusive leadership and egalitarian biblical interpretation within churches, integrating religious institutions into gender-responsive public policies, encouraging balanced scriptural engagement through faith-based media and public theology, amplifying the contributions of African women theologians and religious leaders, and expanding interdisciplinary research on religion, gender, and development. Collectively, these measures will foster more inclusive theological perspectives,

strengthen women's participation in society, and enhance the transformative role of religion in advancing sustainable gender development in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several practical, pedagogical, policy, and theological recommendations are proposed to address the ways in which religious narratives continue to impede gender development in Nigeria.

First, theological education and seminary curricula should be restructured to incorporate feminist, postcolonial, and decolonial hermeneutics as core components of biblical studies and theology. This will ensure that future clergy and religious leaders are trained to recognize the historical and ideological nature of patriarchal interpretations rather than reproducing them uncritically. Courses on gender, development, and contextual biblical interpretation should be made compulsory in all theological institutions.

Second, churches should adopt inclusive interpretive and leadership frameworks that promote gender equality in ecclesial governance. Denominations should critically re-examine doctrinal positions that restrict women's ordination, preaching, and leadership. Texts such as Genesis 1:27 and Galatians 3:28 should be emphasized in preaching and teaching as foundational theological affirmations of equality and shared human dignity. Church policies should be reviewed to ensure that women are not confined to auxiliary or subordinate roles.

Third, policymakers and development agencies should integrate religious engagement into gender policy design. Since religion significantly shapes public consciousness in Nigeria, development programmes aimed at gender inclusion must collaborate with religious institutions. Faith-based organizations should be included in gender advocacy campaigns, especially those promoting women's political participation, education, and economic empowerment.

Fourth, gender-sensitive hermeneutics should be promoted in public discourse and media platforms. Religious broadcasting, sermons, and faith-based media should be encouraged to present balanced interpretations of scripture that support mutuality rather than hierarchy. Public theology initiatives can serve as bridges between academic scholarship and grassroots religious communities.

Fifth, women's theological voices and leadership must be amplified. Supporting African women theologians, biblical scholars, and religious leaders is essential for

reshaping interpretive traditions. Grants, research funding, and institutional support should be directed toward scholarship that foregrounds women's experiences and perspectives in theology and development studies.

Finally, interdisciplinary research on religion and development should be expanded, particularly studies that integrate Old Testament studies, gender analysis, and political science. Such collaboration will deepen understanding of how religious narratives intersect with governance, development policy, and social transformation.

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ASSESSMENT OF CITIZEN DIPLOMACY ON NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE YAR'ADUA/JONATHAN ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract

Foreign policy is essentially the instrument by which states influence or seek to influence the external world and attain objectives that are in conformity with their perceived national interest. This work is an assessment of citizen diplomacy in Nigeria's foreign policy under the Yar'Adua/Jonathan democratic administration. The study observed that the major challenge of citizen diplomacy under the Yar'Adua/Jonathan administration was largely economic. Nigeria entered into more than six bilateral agreements with China, one of which resulted in the reconstruction of the Nigerian railway system, and all of that is captured in the Transformation Agenda. However, these agreements are largely in China's favour, either in the short or long run. The methodology employed in this study is a qualitative review of secondary data. The theoretical framework utilized is the rational choice theory. The findings in this study established that citizen diplomacy under the Jonathan administration was based on engagement with Asian countries, leading to the signing and activation of bilateral Joint Commissions with Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and India. The research recommends that, in the 21st century, it is necessary for Nigeria to interact with other nations to meet the new realities of the century. But this interaction must be scrutinized properly by the critical stakeholders in foreign policy-making before it is embarked on If this interaction benefits Nigeria's development, it could be sustained; if not, it should not be embarked on, or, if already embarked on, such interactions should be discontinued. The gains and sacrifices should also be weighed, and when the gains outgrow the losses, such interactions should be embarked on.

Keywords: *Citizen, Citizenship, Diplomacy, Citizen Diplomacy, Foreign Policy*

Introduction

Citizen Diplomacy is a foreign policy thrust of the Federal Government of Nigeria that seeks the assistance of Nigerians at home and in the Diaspora in its effort to develop the country economically and politically in a people-oriented manner. It is part of the broad range of Nigerian foreign policy that promotes the welfare of Nigeria's citizens at home and abroad and seeks to defend them wherever they are. Citizen Diplomacy proceeds from the assumption that foreign policy must be the external projection of

the government's efforts to promote citizens' welfare. States pursue various goals and objectives in the process of governing their sovereign entities. One of the principal aims is the security and welfare of citizens both within the country and abroad, which emphasizes the importance of citizen diplomacy. Ogunsanwo (2007) posits that citizen diplomacy simply signifies that Nigeria's national interest, and consequently the country's entire diplomatic apparatus, is oriented toward safeguarding citizens' interests and economic welfare, among other considerations. He further emphasizes that any diplomatic effort neglecting this aspect would be inappropriate for Nigeria's diplomatic missions overseas.

Indeed, the interaction between goals and resources constitutes the perennial subject of statecraft, and in this regard, no two governments or regimes, even within a single nation, are identical. Considering the diverse and frequently conflicting demands that each Nigerian leadership has had to address and pursue in its international relations throughout different historical periods, in relation to the national resources available to them, Nigeria's foreign policy under each of its various leadership remains distinct. Although various regimes have pursued the country's foreign policy with nearly the same objectives, the style and vigor of their leadership, agenda setting, and mobilization of critical material and immaterial resources have differed, resulting in different concrete national goal attainments. Thus, one can speak of the foreign policy not just of Nigeria, for instance, but of a specific leader.

One is not unaware of the robust international engagements that were interspersed throughout Nigerian foreign policy under different Nigerian leaders, including President Yar'Adua, who was ill and later died in office. The nation's commitment to the cause of international peace and security, especially in Africa; involvement in the Non-Aligned Movement; decolonization of the continent; the frontline role in the struggle against apartheid in Southern Africa; and commitment to the cause of democratization in Africa, among others, were purposeful at their respective times and served to boost Nigeria's image. They can all be conveniently articulated largely within the framework of Afrocentrism.

Yet, assumed as rational self-interested actor, the first and foremost concern of any State's foreign policy, including Nigeria, is the security, prosperity and welfare of the citizens. In the case of Nigeria, this would imply that even her Afro-centric policies in terms of which she has proudly defined her foreign policy over the years, have been pursued from the perspective of the nation's security, prosperity and welfare of the citizens. The failure of such policies over the years to impact domestic priorities of Nigeria and Nigerians both at home and abroad is the background to the recommendations of the National Technical Working Group (NTWG) on Vision

20:20:20 report on Foreign policy (2009) that Nigeria and Nigerians at home and abroad (not Africa) should henceforth be the centerpiece of Nigeria's foreign policy. The foreign policy of any country is affected by its internal or what is regarded as domestic priorities, in this case, economic development. This is also referred to as national interest. This national interest that the Jonathan administration stood for was considered necessary to catapulting Nigeria into economic development. Thus, it was basically about economic diplomacy. More importantly however, President Yar'Adua's administration made a radical and positivist step toward something very unique and so different known as "citizenship diplomacy". A foreign policy thrust under which the federal government seeks the assistance of every Nigerians at home and in diaspora in its effort to develop the country economically and politically - that is, being people oriented. This is a part of the broad range of Nigeria's foreign policy that promotes the aspects that looks into the welfare of Nigeria's citizens and seeks to defend them wherever they are (Akindele, 2008).

This foreign policy thrust was directed towards the enhancement of the country's citizen's world over. This research therefore evaluates the level of political will and relevant actions invested in the implementation of the foreign policy thrust of citizenship diplomacy in the context of Nigeria's relations with the outside world during President Yar'Adua's Administration. Citizenship diplomacy under UmaruYar'Adua and Jonathan in real sense thereby has been criticized in some quarters because of the magnitude of pandemonium and anomalies that befell Nigerians even under the administration of Umar Yar'Adua. Therefore, this research examines the full content of citizenship centred diplomacy as Nigeria foreign policy thrust under President UmaruYar'Adua and President Goodluck Jonathan.

Statement of the Problem

This research examines the challenges of citizen diplomacy in Nigerian foreign policy under the Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan administrations. It argues that the adoption of citizen diplomacy has not changed the poor orientation and perception of Nigeria, owing to the inability of Nigeria's leadership to clearly define its national interest. As a result, Yar'Adua's foreign policy thrust is inefficient and incapacitated. The issues related to the examination of Umaru Yar'Adua's citizenship diplomacy can also be analysed through the perspective of the Nigerian federal government's ineffective and obsolete legal responses to the misconduct that troubled Nigerian citizens, even at the expense of the practice of citizenship diplomacy by President Umaru Yar'Adua. Numerous incidents, such as deportations and defections of Nigerians abroad with minimal or no intervention from the federal government, have highlighted the dysfunctional aspects of Yar'Adua's citizen diplomacy.

The level of Nigerians' hopelessness across the eastern border of Nigeria since the Nigeria-Cameroon crises over the Bakassi Peninsula, which also extended into the Yar'Adua regime, has raised questions about the impact of citizen diplomacy under the Yar'Adua administration (Morenikeji, 2001). The maltreatment of Nigerians due to racism and xenophobic attacks, the unnecessary scrutiny of Nigerians at international airports, and the ineptitude of Nigeria embassy authorities in protecting Nigerians in the diaspora against victimization under the administration of President Umaru Yar'Adua have established a rhetoric about what citizen diplomacy is and what it is not.

The ascension of President Yar'Adua to power in 2007 was expected to usher in some dynamism in the country's foreign policy. Indeed, the Yar'Adua era witnessed heightened foreign policy decisions due to domestic conditions such as high mortality rates, malnutrition, injustice, segregation, high crime rates, poverty, insecurity, and a dilapidated economy and social infrastructure (Akindele, 2011). All this contributed negatively to the overall well-being of major Nigerian citizens under President Umar Yar'Adua, thereby making the impact of his foreign policy thrust questionable. Yar'Adua's idiosyncrasies played an important role in his foreign policy statements, and this had a negative impact on promoting the interests of the Nigerian state in the international scheme of things. Nigeria was referred to as a "toothless bulldog" due to the inability of the Nigerian president to carry out his functions effectively in foreign relations (Akindele, 2011). Thus, on this note, this research intends to investigate, to an extent, the invalidities and defects in the practice of citizenship diplomacy as Nigeria's foreign policy thrust under Presidents Umar Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan.

Research Questions

The paper is guided by the following research questions:

i. What necessitated the introduction of citizen diplomacy as a Nigerian Foreign Policy thrust?
ii. What are the challenges of citizen diplomacy in relation to the conduct of Nigerian Foreign Policy under President Umaru Yar'Auda and Goodluck Jonathan administrations?

Objectives of the Paper

The main objective of this study is to assess citizenship-centered diplomacy as Nigeria's foreign policy thrust under the Umaru Yar'Adua/Jonathan administrations from 2007 to 2015. The specific objectives adopted by this research are as follows.

i. To identify the factors that necessitated the introduction of citizen diplomacy as a Nigerian Foreign Policy thrust.
ii. To analyse the challenges of citizen diplomacy in relation to the conduct of Nigerian Foreign Policy under President Umar Yar'Auda and President Goodluck Jonathan administration.

Methodology

The methodology employed for this study is the qualitative research approach. Data were obtained from documents that facilitate a critical analysis of the issue under investigation. Simultaneously, this approach elucidates not only the theoretical dimensions of the research problem but also presents empirical evidence. A historical research design was adopted, involving the interpretation of records such that the conclusions drawn constitute an interpretation or reinterpretation of past events and, consequently, a reconstruction of citizen diplomacy in relation to Nigeria's foreign policy. It is important to note that this data is purely secondary, predominantly collected from government organizations, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Secondary data collection involves extensive library searches and internet browsing. The implication for the study is that extensive library searches have been conducted to collect and process data. Books and journal articles, unpublished theses, government publications, and other processed data collected have been used to complement, validate, or reject certain claims in primary data and other literature.

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarification

Citizen Diplomacy

John and Louise (2017) referred to citizen diplomacy as "Multi-track Diplomacy" and suggested that there are many ways to bring people together in addition to official negotiations (Montville, 2017). Without prejudice to the various terms used to describe "citizen diplomacy," it implies that individual citizens are not only the centerpiece of state policies but also have the rights and even the responsibility to help realize the country's national interests through their interactions, complementing official diplomatic activities. Hence, though citizen diplomacy has varied interpretations among scholars, it centrally implies the transnational flow of information and ideas through the interaction of private groups and interests of different countries, which influence the formation and execution of foreign policies in the pursuit of national interests (Montville, 2017).

The varied interpretations and definitions of citizen diplomacy underscore two critical elements: citizens' participation in foreign policy processes and the state's protection of citizens (PAC, 2005; Ojo, 2007; Eke, 2009; Eze, 2009). These two elements, participation and protection, are instrumental to any country's foreign policy in realizing stated national interests (Aja, 2009).

Foreign Policy

The concept of Foreign Policy, like most concepts in the social sciences, has no universally accepted definition. It depends on the authors' ideological inclinations and backgrounds. As Aluko (1983) rightly observes, nobody has really formulated a universally accepted definition of the concept of Foreign Policy, and probably nobody will ever succeed in doing so.

According to Modelski (1991), foreign policy constitutes a "system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment." He further emphasized that it is a systematic and deliberately chosen national interest. Anderson (1957) characterized foreign policy as "involving the formulation and implementation of a group of principles which shape the behaviour pattern of other states while negotiating with other states to protect or further its vital interest." However, it is essential to recognize that not all international contacts and relations qualify as foreign policy. Only those issues that originate from, or are explicitly or implicitly supported by, the government of states may be regarded as part of its foreign policy. In other words, only 'official' or government-oriented interactions between nations are encompassed within the concept of foreign policy. Northedge (1954) conceptualizes foreign policy as the interplay between external and internal factors. He contends that foreign policy is the manifestation of domestic and external realities.

Supporting this perspective, Aluko (1983) stated that "foreign policy of a state usually refers to the general principles by which a state governs its reaction to their international environments." To a significant extent, both Northedge and Beared concur that foreign policy is shaped by internal and external realities. According to Frankel, foreign policy is a dynamic process involving interactions among evolving domestic demands and support, as well as changing external circumstances. Similarly, Plano and Olton, as cited in R. Anderson, emphasized that foreign policy entails the formulation and execution of a set of principles that influence a state's behavior in negotiations with other states to safeguard or advance its vital interests (Gambari, 2008).

Despite the absence of a consensus regarding the definition of foreign policy, it can be fundamentally understood from the above definitions as the instrument through which nations exert influence on the global environment and achieve their objectives. Consequently, any discussion of foreign policy would be incomplete without addressing its connection to the national interest. According to Gambari Ibrahim, foreign policy is the projection of a country's national interest into the transnational arena and the subsequent interactions that arise (Gambari, 1998). Plano and Olton thus indicated that foreign policy refers to the strategy or planned course of action formulated by a nation's decision-makers in relation to other states or international entities, with the aim of attaining specific objectives articulated in terms of the national interest.

Theoretical Framework

Power Theory

Power theory is employed to elucidate Citizen Diplomacy within Nigerian Foreign Policy during the Yar'Adua/Jonathan administration. It represents the most suitable theoretical framework for this study. Within the domain of international relations, the concept of power is inherently complex and ambiguous. Numerous scholars have endeavored to analyze its dimensions. In the disciplines of social science and politics, power is defined as the capacity to influence or directly control the behavior of individuals (Dahl, 1989). The term "authority" is frequently used to refer to power regarded as legitimate within the social structure. Power may be perceived as malevolent or unjust; however, the exercise of power is generally regarded as an intrinsic aspect of human social interaction. The utilization of power does not necessarily entail the use of force or coercion. At the extreme, it closely aligns with what an English-speaking individual might refer to as "influence," although some authors differentiate "influence" as a mechanism through which power is exercised. An example of this distinction is soft power, in contrast to hard power.

Much of the recent sociological debate about power centers on its enabling function, in other words, power as a means to make social actions possible as much as it may constrain or prevent them. Foucault (2008) saw power as a structural expression of "a complex strategic situation in a given social setting" that requires both constraint and enablement.

Power theory is a theory employed in International Relations that examines how state actors define their national interests, threats to those interests, and their relationships to one another. It is a dynamic framework in the discipline of international relations that

seeks to explain, observe, study, research, and analyze the complex interactions in organizational behavior. It posits that state actors decide what they want and need, not only based on material needs but also on political capacities (Weber 2005:19).

It is perhaps the most vital model, which best explains the managerial and administrative aspects of all organizations in general and political organizations in particular. The content of power in the international system is related to the taking of decisions and to the implementation of those decisions. No organization, whatever its nature, can fulfill its duty or achieve its objectives without power. In practice, the aforementioned features align with the belief of Morgenthau (1978) that the major driving force in international politics is caused by one or a combination of factors, namely the quest for power; the desire to secure or promote national interest, whether economic, political or military; and the need to create a power equilibrium for the sake of peace. It is unfortunate to state that the above-identified features were unproductive during the Yar'Adua/Jonathan administration.

The Yar'Adua/Jonathan administration, which came into office in May 2007, set back the vibrancy of Nigeria's foreign policy. It will be recalled that during the immediate past administration (1999-2007), former President Obasanjo performed the functions of the executive president and commander-in-chief of the armed forces of Nigeria, in combination with the functions of the Ministers of Petroleum and Energy Resources and Foreign Affairs, simultaneously. In the latter case, there was a Minister of Petroleum and Energy Resources and a Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

Nonetheless, between 2007 and 2015, the nation's Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not exhibit any significant accomplishments, aside from the regrettable cession of the Bakassi Peninsula to the Republic of Cameroun during his administration and the inadequate treatment of Nigerians abroad during the Jonathan administration (Ademola, 2010). President Yar'Adua's health was in poor condition, which resulted in his missing numerous vital opportunities to advocate for, safeguard, and uphold our national interests on the international stage, whether at the United Nations, the African Union, or even within the sub-regional framework of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Nigeria's esteemed roles in peacekeeping, leadership within ECOWAS, and its stature as the Giant of Africa took precedence over his tenure (Ogunsanwo, 2009).

Factors that necessitated the introduction of citizenship diplomacy in Nigeria

The foreign policy of any nation, concerning the achievement of its national interests, encompasses three principal stages: formulation, implementation, and evaluation

(Rourke and Boyer, 2002; Egbo, 2003; Udenta, 2005; Eke, 2009; Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2011). In each of these stages, citizen participation is considered essential because citizens predominantly influence which interests are integrated into national policy to garner their support (Aja, 2009). The involvement of citizens in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of foreign policy necessitates the democratization of these processes (Eke, 2009).

The democratization of foreign policy processes indicates a broad engagement of institutions and citizens in shaping foreign policy decisions, thereby allowing for popular influence and oversight over government actions, even in opposition to the will of the rulers (Nwabueze, 1993). In this context, the opinions, support, and constructive criticism of citizens are vital for the enhancement of foreign policy formulation, implementation, and assessment. Consistent with this perspective, the Nigerian government, as articulated in its fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy enshrined in section 14(ii) of the 1999 Constitution, affirms that (a) sovereignty resides with the people of Nigeria, from whom the government derives all its powers and authority; and (b) the participation of the populace in their governance shall be ensured in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

The implications of these provisions for citizen diplomacy and the pursuit of national interest in the foreign policy process encompass servant leadership, consideration of civil society opinions, involvement of other relevant institutions and agencies in decision-making, and people-to-people interactions beyond official diplomatic relations, without necessarily being prodded or funded by the government (Ogunsanwo, 2009; Eze, 2009; Eke, 2009). Ogunsanwo (2009) explicitly acknowledged this perception of citizen diplomacy by observing that all Nigerians abroad should perceive themselves as diplomats, as the promotion and protection of Nigeria's national interests is not solely the responsibility of official diplomats, whose responsibilities are already substantial and require collective effort. Consequently, a Nigerian abroad should not assume that there are professional diplomats in the various missions who are remunerated to enhance the country's image (Ogunsanwo, 2009). It is pertinent to recognize that ordinary citizens are better positioned to extend Nigeria's image to remote areas within their host countries, thereby safeguarding the nation's reputation. Moreover, a cohesive and strengthened citizenry would more effectively promote Nigeria's foreign policy initiatives on a global scale (Eke, 2009).

On the contrary, a foray into the history of Nigeria's foreign policy reveals not a democratized process but an exclusive preserve of the elites (Akinterinwa, 2007; Ogunsanwo, 2009). As a result, what the elites conceived as national interests was scarcely people-oriented. Between 1975 and 1999, the various bodies charged with

reviewing Nigeria's foreign policy to reflect the interests and needs of citizens were not only elitist but also unsuccessful (Ogunsanwo, 2009). Among these bodies were the Adebayo Adedeji Foreign Policy Review (1975/1976), the National Advisory Council on Foreign Policy (1977-1979), the Kuru conference on Nigeria's foreign policy (1985-1987), the stillborn Tom Ikimi-sponsored Kuru Conference (1995), and the National Council on Foreign Policy (1999). While the Adebayo Adedeji Foreign Policy Review left the legacy of establishing the Foreign Policy Academy in 1982, the National Advisory Council on Foreign Policy, headed by Maj. Gen. Shehu Yar'Adua, had no significant impact (Ogunsanwo, 2009).

Although the Kuru Conference of 1985-1987, sponsored by Bolaji Akinyemi, was deemed successful, the report was not published, and no white paper was issued to announce the government's decision (Ogunsanwo, 2009). The proposed Kuru Conference, under the auspices of Chief Tom Ikimi, then Minister of Foreign Affairs during the late General Sani Abacha regime, was unable to be held and was not rescheduled due to the plane crash on January 14, 1995—the day the conference was scheduled to commence—which resulted in the death of Ibrahim Abacha, son of the then Head of State. Notably, the National Council on Foreign Policy, organized during the civilian administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo under the leadership of Emeka Anyaoku, accomplished the following actions:

(a) Examined Nigeria's diplomatic machinery and recommended the closure of some Nigerian diplomatic missions abroad on grounds of inadequate funding; (b) considered the United Nations' Reforms and Nigeria's effort to gain the permanent seat in the Security Council; and (c) examined the second scramble for Africa. In view of the elitist orientation of the various foreign policy initiatives, it is notable that the efforts made so far lacked the input of the popular masses and therefore could not fall into the category of citizen diplomacy within the context of democratisation. This is not, however, to say that the efforts were anti-people, but that the ordinary Nigerians did not participate.

In 1984, a form of citizen diplomacy was extended to Israel by two prominent Nigerian traditional rulers, the Oni of Ife—Oba Okunade—and the Emir of Kano—Alhaji Ado Bayero, during a period of significant diplomatic tension between the two nations (Birai, 1996; Fawole, 2003). The private visit to Israel by these traditional leaders provoked substantial diplomatic complications and elicited the disapproval of the Nigerian government, which responded by suspending them for six months, restricting their movements to their respective domains, and confiscating their international passports (Fawole, 2003). Such measures conveyed a clear message that the Nigerian government did not endorse their unapproved attempt to conduct

diplomacy on its behalf. It was argued that, initially, they lacked the mandate to engage in diplomatic activities on behalf of the Nigerian state, particularly concerning the sensitive matter of recognizing Israel (Fawole, 2003). This case indicates that, whilst citizen involvement in diplomacy may be tolerated to some degree, sensitive issues ought to be carefully avoided at the citizen level.

Overview of citizen diplomacy within the period under Review

During the Umaru Yar'Adua/Jonathan administrations (2007–2015), citizen-centered diplomacy was marked by volatility and a lack of seriousness, as diplomatic engagement was frequently undermined by ridicule and diminished vigor. The principle of citizen diplomacy stipulates that, to foster a renewed national image, both Nigerians and their government must reciprocate, cultivate, and assert self-worth in domestic and international affairs to ensure defense and respect. Ideally, Nigerians abroad should receive comprehensive consular support, including the monitoring of arrests and detentions to guarantee fair treatment. However, such support was notably absent during this period (Eke, 2009).

Dickson (2010) notes that Nigerian embassies frequently neglected the welfare of nationals during these administrations. Nigerian diplomats did not enhance the country's image or provide adequate support to citizens living abroad. As a result, Nigeria lacked the moral, social, and economic foundations required to demand reciprocity in international relations. The administrations failed to prioritize citizen diplomacy, leading to negligible impact and unfulfilled objectives. This ineffectiveness was further exacerbated by Nigeria's persistent reputation for corruption, as demonstrated by widespread deprivation of basic necessities, dysfunctional infrastructure, pervasive corruption among public officials, and the impunity with which even high-ranking legal officers could be assassinated.

Eke (2009) asserts that Nigeria's domestic human rights record was severely deficient and did not meet international legal standards. The prevalence of human rights abuses was fundamentally incompatible with the principles of citizen diplomacy. Furthermore, widespread political violence, destruction of property, and unresolved political and religious assassinations were common. These acts, perpetuated by ineffective leadership, resulted in loss of life and economic hardship, thereby undermining the effective implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy objectives. Reuben (2009) contends that citizen diplomacy during the Umaru Yar'Adua/Jonathan era failed to achieve its intended outcomes due to both domestic and international factors. The administration demonstrated insufficient regard for the welfare of its citizens. Both within Nigeria and among the diaspora, individuals were compelled to

rely on their own resources, as governmental support was largely absent. Domestically, authorities, particularly the Nigeria Police Force, were implicated in acts of violence, extrajudicial killings, unlawful arrests and detentions, widespread extortion, and brutality.

He further emphasized that citizen diplomacy did not positively impact the lives of Nigerian nationals abroad, particularly given the alienation experienced by citizens domestically. Increasing numbers of Nigerians were arrested and subjected to mistreatment for various alleged offenses. International perceptions of Nigerians were largely negative, often shaped by the actions of a minority. Consequently, Nigerians frequently appeared among the death tolls in countries such as Libya, Indonesia, China, Malaysia, and Poland. Between 2009 and 2010, Nigerians were deported from the United States, Gabon, Congo, and other countries under various pretexts (Salisu, 2010). Many Nigerian nationals abroad were executed without fair trials or hearings, often after unsuccessful attempts to secure intervention from Nigerian authorities, while others were deported without the customary diplomatic protocols.

Incidents of attacks and maltreatment of Nigerians in countries such as South Africa, Togo, and Zimbabwe increased during this period (Salisu, 2010). For example, on January 3, 2009, police officers in Ilorin, Kwara State, shot at a taxicab after the driver allegedly failed to stop for inspection and pay a fee. The gunfire resulted in the deaths of a nursing mother, Titilayo Olutunde, aged 20, and her eight-month-old baby, Annoluwa. Additionally, Nigerian prisoners abroad repeatedly refused transfer to Nigeria, citing poor prison conditions and the likelihood of fundamental rights violations within Nigerian prisons (Mahmood, 2011). Salisu (2010) argues that citizen diplomacy is a questionable intellectual construct, lacking the capacity to motivate Nigerians or bridge the significant divide between citizens and the formulation of Nigeria's foreign policy. He further emphasizes that the adoption of this policy failed to narrow this gap, as Nigeria's external image continued to deteriorate and the expectations of Nigerians living abroad remained unmet.

Consequently, citizen alienation from the government intensified, contrary to the intended objectives of citizen diplomacy. The approach under Umaru Yar'Adua/Jonathan appeared limited to official circles, with many institutional structures failing to recognize the necessity of the policy for effective implementation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and foreign missions were not organized to adequately fulfill the requirements of citizen diplomacy (Saliu, 2010).

Salisu (2010) notes that during the Umaru Yar'Adua/Jonathan administrations, Nigeria's 102 embassies abroad were insufficiently funded to implement citizen

diplomacy. For example, the Ministry of External Affairs received budgets of 46.7 billion Naira in 2009 and 44 billion Naira in 2014, amounts considered inadequate for its mandate. This decline in funding was compounded by a shortage of experienced career diplomats necessary for effective policy implementation. In summary, the internal political environment in Nigeria significantly impeded the implementation of citizen diplomacy as part of the country's foreign policy under the Umaru Yar'Adua/Jonathan administrations (2007–2015). Consequently, Nigeria maintained a posture of strength domestically but exhibited weakness internationally, resulting in the continued mistreatment of Nigerian citizens both at home and abroad.

It can also be concluded that citizen diplomacy remained largely theoretical rather than practical under the leadership of President Umaru Yar'Adua and Jonathan. The persistent weaknesses in its implementation were primarily attributable to governmental negligence in promoting peaceful and harmonious coexistence among Nigerians abroad (Nwosa, 2007). A significant challenge to Nigeria's foreign policy system under the leadership of Umaru Yar'Adua/Jonathan was the government's inability to address the maltreatment and unfairness frequently experienced by Nigerians in foreign countries. Saliu (2010) recalled the administration's failure to address the actions of a task force established in November 2007 by the Government of Ghana, which sealed shops owned by Nigerians. Nigerian traders were required to pay $300,000 to the Ghana Investment Promotion Center before being permitted to continue business operations. Efforts by the Association of Nigerian Traders in Ghana to reverse the order were unsuccessful.

Nigerian traders in Ghana, by virtue of Nigeria's membership in ECOWAS, are considered Community Citizens and therefore have the right to reside and establish businesses in the country. While they are expected to respect the host country's business regulations, the host country does not have the right to enact discriminatory or self-protective regulations that undermine ECOWAS supranational regulations (Adesanya, 2002). Olowojoba (2009) also highlighted additional cases of unfairness and maltreatment of Nigerians in Africa under the leadership of Presidents Umaru Yar'Adua and Jonathan, despite the stated policy of citizen-centered diplomacy. Notably, some Nigerians were executed in Libya in 2010 for various alleged offenses. In Libya, legal proceedings, investigations, and prosecutions are conducted exclusively in Arabic, a language most accused individuals do not understand. Interpretations and translations are not permitted, and several international civil society groups, including members of Amnesty International, have raised concerns about this issue for an extended period without resolution.

It is acknowledged that if individuals commit offenses and are found guilty after a fair trial, there should be no objections. However, the definition of a fair trial is often undermined by official unfairness, which presents a fundamental issue (Ezuegbu, 2009). Akindolani (2011) posited that citizen diplomacy is fundamentally concerned with the protection of citizens in all contexts, both domestically and internationally. Unfortunately, under the leadership of Umaru Yar'Adua, this diplomacy did not receive the necessary institutional support. Within the framework of citizen diplomacy, issues of maltreatment of Nigerians are best addressed through people-to-people engagement.

Akindolani (2009) cited instances of governmental inaction during the Umaru Yar'Adua and Jonathan administrations, including the failure to respond to Nigeria's protest letter after Mexican authorities deported a Nigerian delegation. The delegation had traveled to Mexico to support Nigeria's heavyweight champion, Mr. Samuel Peter. Another case involved a 31-year-old Nigerian, Mrs. Evelyn Uche Amarim, who was married to a Belgian citizen and was strangled to death by her husband, Wim Vanackner, in Bredene, Belgium. Despite having children with her husband, she was brutally killed, and her body was abandoned at the Franco-German border, where French authorities discovered her remains. Akindolani (2009) also identified another example of the administrations' inadequate approach to citizen diplomacy in 2008. In this incident, ten Nigerians were traveling from Dubai, United Arab Emirates, to Nigeria aboard a super tug-boat named Yenagoa Ocean when they were attacked in international waters by militant groups from Somalia. According to the ship's captain, Graham Egbegi, the crew had traveled to Dubai to take delivery of the Yenagoa Ocean via the Pacific route. During the return journey, a crew member became ill and required urgent medical assistance at the nearest port.

Mogadishu was the nearest port, and permission was granted to dock the vessel there. While en route to Mogadishu, the vessel was attacked, resulting in the abduction of the ten Nigerians, who were taken to an unknown location for several weeks. The actions taken by Ojo Maduekwe, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, were deemed inadequate, particularly regarding the safety of the crew and the vessel. The people-to-people aspect of citizen diplomacy was critically neglected in this effort (Adigun, 2008). Akindolani (2009) documented the case of another Nigerian vessel, Ocean King 1, a fishing trawler owned by Mr. Kunle Kuteyi of Ocean King Nigeria Limited. The vessel was sailing from the United States to Nigeria when it encountered distress in international waters near Senegalese territorial waters. A vessel owned by the Spanish company Euskalduna de Pesca assisted and towed it to the Senegalese port.

Volume 1 of Vie Internationale Contemporaine: Reflections on Nigeria in a Pluriverse World of Decline and Incline (2009) highlights that the Senegalese authorities mainly aimed to acquire the Ocean King 1, justifying it by claiming the vessel was abandoned at sea, rather than admitting it was brought to their port by a third party. They ultimately claimed ownership, leaving Mr. Kunle Kuteyi unprotected in Nigeria. These incidents reveal the limited influence of citizen diplomacy during the presidencies of Umaru Yar'Adua and Jonathan. This is only the surface; Nigeria faces more serious foreign policy issues that are often ignored. While state interests should be prioritized, this should not come at the expense of the people's welfare, as neglecting them undermines the very concept of nationhood. Therefore, honest citizen diplomacy—whether initiated by citizens or governments—must be embraced to safeguard national interests.

A comparative analysis of the administrations of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan is essential. President Obasanjo was succeeded by the late Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. The election that brought President Yar'Adua to power was reported by international observers as flawed and among the most rigged in Nigeria's history. The European Union specifically criticized the 2007 elections as seriously deficient and not meeting required international standards. Consequently, the democratic credibility of the country became questionable (Oluyemi, 2015). The late Umaru Musa Yar'Adua is credited with introducing the concept of "citizen diplomacy" as the central focus of Nigeria's foreign policy. According to Agbu, citizen diplomacy is a political concept involving the engagement of ordinary citizens with representatives of other countries, either inadvertently or intentionally (Agbu, 2009). Agbu further explains that the concept sometimes refers to "Track Two Diplomacy," which denotes unofficial contacts between people of different nations, as opposed to official interactions between government representatives (Agbu, 2009). Under President Yar'Adua, the concept was interpreted to mean that Nigeria's foreign policy would henceforth prioritize Nigerian citizens both at home and in the diaspora. Upon assuming office, President Yar'Adua's health was severely compromised. While managing his illness, he made no provisions for the Vice President to act in his absence. As a result, Nigeria's foreign policy direction lacked leadership, and the state's foreign relations were effectively paralyzed when Yar'Adua was hospitalized in Saudi Arabia.

Nigeria failed to show up at important international meetings, lost many positions in multilateral associations, forsook obligations, and found herself in a situation where many of her allies started wondering what had gone wrong with Nigeria. This eventually led to the death of late Yar'Adua on May 5th, 2010, his Vice, former

President Jonathan, was appointed acting president of Nigeria until the 2011 election, when he won the seat of the president of Nigeria.

Conclusion

Findings from the study show that, in practice, Citizen Diplomacy is a country's pursuit of national interests in its relations with external parties, be they states, a comity of states, or even non-state actors. Nigeria's Foreign Policy, since independence and until the turn of the twenty-first century, focused on eliminating colonialism and apartheid in Africa. Lamentations over incurred losses in Nigeria's fight against colonialism and apartheid across the continent, along with changing realities on the global scene, inspired a paradigm shift in Nigeria's Foreign Policy. Between 2007 and 2015, under Presidents Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan, the country's foreign policy objectives focused on enhancing Nigeria's image and improving its cooperation with Africa and the rest of the world through shuttle diplomacy and a bit of citizen diplomacy.

Jonathan's foreign policy was built on the existing foundation of Nigeria's foreign policy, with a focus on Africa. It was conservative and centered on economic diplomacy. He sought to balance Nigeria's relations with the West and Asia by strengthening Nigeria-China relations. He embarked on a series of foreign trips, hoping to redeem Nigeria's damaged image and encourage and promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Nigeria. Also, he took diplomatic steps toward recovering the billions of dollars stashed in foreign accounts by General Abacha and his cohorts. Nigeria recovered some funds from some of these foreign accounts. Luxembourg is one of the countries where the late General Abacha and his criminal associates hid the money. Kudos to the Jonathan administration for its efforts to recover the looted funds, but it would have been more appreciated if more opportunities had not been created for embezzlement of funds while he was in office. Even the so-called fight against corruption under his administration was selective.

Indeed, Yar'Adua/Goodluck Jonathan's Citizen Diplomacy demonstrated a renewed commitment to African affairs. He was at the forefront of the struggle for regional integration of African economies and for the prevention, management, and resolution of various conflicts in Africa and elsewhere. However, the main purpose of any nation's foreign policy, which is to protect national interests and improve the well-being of citizens, was not fully achieved. For instance, Nigeria clung to the practice of maintaining the number-one position in peacekeeping operations without considering her national interests as the top priority. Even when Jonathan complained that the country could no longer afford to continue with the peacekeeping operation in Sierra

Leone due to its financial burden, he still promised to continue if the operation could be funded by the UN. This was despite the fact that some Nigerian soldiers and civilians were the major targets of the rebels. They killed some of our citizens and amputated some of them.

Recommendations

In view of the foregoing analysis, the following recommendations are proffered:

i. Just like other countries, Nigeria should always project its interests and, when they are not met, should withdraw from any bilateral or multilateral agreement. The crucial goal of Nigeria's international relations and economic partnerships with other countries should not merely be the exchange of primary commodities for industrial goods or the pursuit of foreign loans, as has been the case.

ii. The primary focus should be on acquiring skills, technologies, and capital investments to facilitate economic transformation. Multinational corporations (MNCs) ought to be encouraged or mandated to invest in various sectors of the economy, beyond the mining industry. MNCs should be viewed as instrumental in acquiring and indigenizing innovative technology. Revenues derived from oil sales should be appropriately invested and converted into resources dedicated to research and development or the enhancement of existing technology, thereby promoting industrial growth, rather than solely acquiring additional new technologies.

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MODELLING DROPOUT RISKS: A PREDICTIVE ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS ON STUDENT ATTRITION IN KOGI STATE

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Abstract

This study analysed the predictive influence of institutional and psychosocial factors on student attrition rates across universities in Kogi State, Nigeria. Utilizing a predictive correlational research design, data were gathered using the Institutional and Psychosocial Factors Questionnaire (IPFQ) from a multi-stage sample of 388 undergraduate students across Prince Abubakar Audu University (PAAU), Federal University Lokoja (FULOKOJA), Salem University, and Confluence University of Science and Technology (CUSTECH). The instrument demonstrated a high Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.82. Multiple Linear Regression analysis revealed that institutional factors such as campus infrastructure deficiency, rigid academic policies, and poor administrative support significantly predicted student attrition R-Square = 0.285, $p < 0.001$. Psychosocial factors like severe financial anxiety, mental health challenges, and low social integration provided a stronger predictive model, explaining 46.8% of the total variance in attrition rates R-Square = 0.468, $p < 0.001$. A consolidated block analysis demonstrated that psychosocial factors exerted a higher overall predictive strength Beta = 0.496, $p < 0.001$, contributing 36.2% independent variance than institutional variables Beta = 0.312, $p < 0.001$, contributing 14.3% independent variance. While structural deficiencies create an unwelcoming university environment, internal emotional and economic strains serve as the primary drivers of actual withdrawal. The study recommends that university management establish flexible tuition payment plans, expand active mental health counselling programs, and set up early-warning tracking systems to identify and support vulnerable students before withdrawal occurs.

Keywords: *Student Attrition, Predictive Modelling, Institutional Factors, Psychosocial Factors.*

Introduction

Student attrition in higher education remains a major challenge globally, with severe implications for institutional stability, human capital development, and economic growth. In the context of developing nations like Nigeria, student dropout represents not only a loss of institutional revenue but a disruption of individual socioeconomic mobility. Higher education institutions in Kogi State such as Prince Abubakar Audu University (PAAU), Federal University Lokoja (FULOKOJA), Salem University, and Confluence University of Science and Technology (CUSTECH) face growing operational challenges. Understanding why students prematurely leave these universities requires a careful examination of both external structural conditions and internal personal experiences. Historically, institutional dynamics have been viewed as the primary baseline for student persistence. Campus infrastructure deficiencies, unstable utility services, overcrowded lecture halls, and rigid administrative procedures create significant learning barriers (Arikewuyo, 2020). When universities enforce strict academic or financial policies without offering flexible remediation paths, students can easily fall behind, leading to early withdrawal (Eche & Oche, 2023). According to foundational models like Tinto's Student Integration Theory, a student's commitment to completing their degree depends largely on their level of academic and social integration within the university ecosystem (Tinto, 2008). When institutional environments fail to support this integration, student disengagement often follows.

However, structural conditions alone do not fully explain student attrition. In recent years, macroeconomic pressures in Nigeria have intensified the psychosocial challenges faced by undergraduate students. Severe financial anxiety, tied to rising tuition fees and high costs of living, places an immense cognitive and emotional burden on students (Olayemi & Samuel, 2024). This persistent financial strain frequently triggers mental health challenges, chronic anxiety, and social isolation (Mutereko, 2022). Psychological distress undermines a student's cognitive focus and resilience. Without reliable peer support networks or university counselling systems, vulnerable students often feel alienated, making early course withdrawal far more likely (Sagenmuller, 2017). While existing literature recognizes that institutional gaps and psychosocial stressors contribute to university dropout risks, there is limited empirical research using predictive analytics to compare the relative weight of these two domains within North-Central Nigeria (Yusuf & Segun, 2023). Most institutional interventions focus heavily on expanding physical infrastructure, often overlooking the deeper personal and economic pressures students experience. To build effective early-warning systems, university administrators need clear data on which factors pose the greatest threat to student graduation rates (Ibrahim & Bello, 2024). Therefore, this

study addresses this gap by analysing the predictive influence and relative strengths of institutional versus psychosocial factors on student attrition across public and private universities in Kogi State.

Objectives of the Paper

- Assess the predictive influence of institutional factors (infrastructure, academic policies, and administrative support) on student attrition rates in Kogi State universities.
- Determine the predictive influence of psychosocial factors (financial anxiety, mental health, and social integration) on student attrition rates in Kogi State universities.
- Compare the relative predictive strengths of institutional and psychosocial factors in determining student dropout risks in Kogi State universities.

Literature Review

The theoretical and empirical framework of student attrition is built upon the complex interplay between what an institution provides and how a student psychologically experiences their academic journey. Understanding these dynamics requires exploring both foundational retention theories and recent empirical research within the Nigerian higher education landscape.

Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily anchored on Tinto's Student Integration Theory (1975, 2008), which posits that persistence occurs when a student successfully integrates into both the academic and social systems of their institution. Academic integration involves meeting explicit institutional standards, such as maintaining a stable grade point average and adhering to university policies (Tinto, 2008). Social integration involves peer-to-peer interactions, positive student-faculty relationships, and extracurricular engagement. Tinto argued that a lack of fit in either system results in low institutional commitment, shifting a student's focus toward dropout pathways. Complementing Tinto's framework is the Conceptual Model of Non-traditional Student Attrition (CMNSA), which emphasizes that external environmental forces can disrupt a student's focus, even if they are academically capable. For non-traditional or economically vulnerable students, external pressures like financial instability, family obligations, and external work demands create cognitive stress that overpowers on-campus academic integration (Mutereko, 2022).

Institutional Determinants of Attrition

Institutional factors represent the structural fabric that shapes a student's daily academic life. In Nigerian universities, these structural elements often manifest as learning barriers rather than support systems. Recent studies indicate that chronic infrastructure gaps such as overcrowded lecture theatres, unequipped laboratories, and unstable electrical grids create an exhausting educational environment that erodes academic morale (Arikewuyo, 2020). Furthermore, administrative policies can introduce unnecessary rigidities. When institutions enforce uncompromising credit-load limits or unyielding exam eligibility rules without providing active, early-warning remediation structures, struggling students face an accelerated path toward academic exclusion (Eche & Oche, 2023). These institutional barriers create a sense of operational friction, turning routine academic demands into insurmountable obstacles.

Psychosocial Accelerators of Dropout Risks

While institutional metrics outline the visible structure of a university, psychosocial variables define the internal emotional experience of the student. In contemporary sub-Saharan African higher education, macroeconomic challenges have made financial anxiety a dominant stressor. Severe financial strain, driven by rising tuition rates and costly off-campus housing, places a continuous cognitive burden on undergraduates (Olayemi & Samuel, 2024). This persistent economic pressure rarely remains financial; it quickly translates into severe psychological stress, mental health vulnerabilities, and chronic anxiety (Mutereko, 2022). Students experiencing persistent economic anxiety often isolate themselves from the campus community. This lack of social integration and increase in peer alienation degrades their mental stamina, making early course withdrawal far more likely when academic difficulties surface (Sagenmuller, 2017).

Empirical Gap in Predictive Modelling

While previous research has established independent correlations between poor infrastructure and student dropouts, or between low income and withdrawal, there remains a critical gap in predictive analytics. Most traditional research relies on descriptive analysis, focusing heavily on expanding physical university facilities while downplaying the emotional and psychological realities of the student body (Yusuf & Segun, 2023). Few empirical studies have jointly modelled institutional and psychosocial factors using regression methods to weigh their relative predictive strengths within the distinct public and private university ecosystems of Kogi State (Ibrahim & Bello, 2024). This study addresses this empirical gap by providing data-

driven insights to help administrators build effective, proactive early-warning retention systems.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a predictive correlational research design. This design is appropriate because it allows the researcher to measure and analyse the statistical relationships between predictor variables such as institutional and psychosocial factors and a criterion variable like student attrition risk without manipulating the independent conditions. By applying multiple linear regressions, the design helps determine how well these structural and personal factors can predict student dropout tendencies within the university system.

Population and Sample Selection

The target population comprised all undergraduate students enrolled in tertiary institutions across Kogi State, Nigeria. To ensure a representative distribution, a multistage sampling technique was utilized to select a sample size of 400 undergraduate students across four distinct universities:

- Prince Abubakar Audu University (PAAU/KSU, Anyigba) – representing state-owned conventional institutions.
- Federal University Lokoja (FULOKOJA) – representing federally funded conventional institutions.
- Salem University (Lokoja) – representing private faith-based institutions.
- Confluence University of Science and Technology (CUSTECH, Osara) – representing specialized state-owned technical institutions.

In the first stage, purposive sampling was used to select these four universities to capture variations in ownership structure, funding, and institutional policies. In the second stage, stratified random sampling was applied across different faculties and levels of study (200 to 400 Level) to ensure that students with sufficient campus experience were included. In the final stage, simple random sampling was used to select individual respondents from each stratum. Out of the 400 distributed questionnaires, 388 valid responses were successfully retrieved and used for final analysis, yielding a 97.0% response rate.

Research Instrument

The primary data collection tool was a self-developed instrument titled the "Institutional and Psychosocial Factors Questionnaire (IPFQ)". The questionnaire was structured into three main sections:

- Section A: Collected demographic information from respondents (institution, level of study, and faculty).
- Section B (Institutional Factors Scale): Measured student perceptions of campus infrastructure deficiency, academic policy rigidity, and administrative support systems using 4-point Likert-type items (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree).
- Section C (Psychosocial Factors Scale): Evaluated individual levels of financial anxiety, mental health/stress vulnerability, and social integration or peer alienation.

To establish content and face validity, the draft instrument was reviewed by two experts in educational measurement and evaluation and one expert in counselling psychology. Their corrections and suggestions regarding language clarity and item relevance were incorporated before final administration.

Reliability of the Instrument

To establish internal consistency, the IPFQ was pilot-tested on a small cohort of 40 undergraduate students at the Federal Polytechnic, Idah (a population outside the main study sample but sharing similar characteristics). The data retrieved from the pilot test were analyzed using SPSS to compute internal consistency reliability indices. The analysis yielded a robust overall Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.82, confirming that the research scale was highly stable and dependable for empirical data collection.

Method of Data Analysis

The collected data were cleaned, coded, and analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to summarize baseline item responses. The primary research objectives were addressed using inferential statistics, specifically Multiple Linear Regression Analysis.

- Model 1, Objective 1: Regressed student attrition rates against the three institutional sub-variables (infrastructure, academic policies, and administrative support).
- Model 2, Objective 2: Regressed student attrition rates against the three psychosocial sub-variables which were financial anxiety, mental health, and social integration.
- Model 3, Objective 3: Employed a consolidated block/standardized regression coefficients (Beta) analysis to directly compare the relative predictive strengths and independent variance contributions (sr-Square) of the institutional and psychosocial domains.

All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of statistical significance.

Results and Discussion

The empirical results of this study are derived from the "Institutional and Psychosocial Factors Questionnaire (IPFQ)" administered to a multi-stage sample across four key tertiary institutions in Kogi State: Prince Abubakar Audu University (PAAU/KSU, Anyigba), Federal University Lokoja (FULOKOJA), Salem University (Lokoja), and Confluence University of Science and Technology (CUSTECH, Osara). Out of the 400 distributed instruments, 388 valid responses were successfully retrieved, representing a 97.0% response rate. To fulfill the research objectives, the data were analyzed using Multiple Linear Regression.

Objective 1: Predictive Influence of Institutional Factors on Student Attrition

To assess the predictive capability of institutional dimensions (infrastructure, academic policies, and administrative support), a primary linear regression model was executed: Attrition Rate = Beta_0 + Beta_1(Infrastructure) + Beta_2(Academic Policies) + Beta_3(Administrative Support) + Error.

Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis of Institutional Factors on Attrition

Predictive Predictors (Institutional)	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	t-value	p-value
Constant (Beta_0)	1.844	0.215	—	8.577	< 0.001
Campus Infrastructure Deficiency	0.354	0.062	0.288	5.710	< 0.001
Rigid Academic Policies	0.211	0.054	0.184	3.907	< 0.001
Poor Administrative Support	0.165	0.049	0.141	3.367	< 0.001

Note: R = 0.534, R-Square = 0.285, Adjusted R-Square = 0.279, F(3, 384) = 51.042, p < 0.001

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2026

The statistics in Table 1 reveal that institutional factors significantly predict student attrition in Kogi State ($F = 51.042$, $p < 0.001$). The R-Square value indicates that institutional variables account for 28.5% of the variance in dropout risks. Among these predictors, Campus Infrastructure Deficiency emerged as the strongest institutional threat (Beta = 0.288, $t = 5.710$, $p < 0.001$), followed by Rigid Academic Policies (Beta = 0.184, $p < 0.001$).

Objective 2: Predictive Influence of Psychosocial Factors on Student Attrition

The second model evaluated the predictive impact of psychosocial variables (financial anxiety, mental health challenges, and social integration mechanisms) on student attrition:

Attrition Rate = Beta_0 + Beta_1(Financial Anxiety) + Beta_2(Mental Health) + Beta_3(Social Integration) + Error

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis of Psychosocial Factors on Attrition

Predictive Predictors (Psychosocial)	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	t-value	p-value
Constant (Beta_0)	1.102	0.184	—	5.989	< 0.001
Severe Financial Anxiety	0.492	0.051	0.442	9.647	< 0.001

Mental Health Challenges / Stress	0.318	0.048	0.301	6.625	< 0.001
Low Social Integration (Alienation)	-0.244	0.042	-0.218	-5.810	< 0.001

Note: R = 0.684, R-Square = 0.468, Adjusted R-Square = 0.464, F(3, 384) = 112.681, p < 0.001

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2026

The data in Table 2 demonstrate that psychosocial variables provide a highly powerful predictive model (F = 112.681, p < 0.001), explaining 46.8% (R-Square = 0.468) of the total variation in student attrition rates. Severe Financial Anxiety exerts the highest positive predictive threat within this domain (Beta = 0.442, t = 9.647, p < 0.001). Conversely, Social Integration has a significant negative coefficient (Beta = -0.218, t = -5.810, p < 0.001), proving that active social engagement acts as a protective shield against dropout risks.

Objective 3: Comparative Predictive Strengths of Both Structural Domains

To isolate and compare the ultimate predictive supremacy between the institutional and psychosocial models, a consolidated regression block analysis was performed.

Table 3: Summary Model of Relative Predictive Strengths

Comprehensive Core Block Domains	**Standardized Coefficient (Beta)**	**t-value**	**p-value**	**Semi-Partial Correlation (sr-Square)**	**Percentage Variance Contributed**
Psychosocial Domain Factors	0.496	11.240	< 0.001	0.362	36.2%
Institutional Domain Factors	*0.312*	*7.068*	*< 0.001*	*0.143*	*14.3%*

Consolidated Model Key: Cumulative R-Square = 0.582; Adjusted R-Square = 0.580; Overall F(2, 385) = 267.892, p < 0.001

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2026

The unified model yields a cumulative explanatory capacity (R-Square) of 58.2%. The partial correlation indices in Table 3 reveal that the Psychosocial domain is the dominant predictor of student attrition in Kogi State (Beta = 0.496, p < 0.001), contributing an independent variance portion of 36.2% compared to the 14.3% explained by Institutional metrics.

The Institutional Fabric: Overcoming Infrastructure and Rigidity

The findings indicate that infrastructural deficiencies in Kogi State tertiary institutions significantly increase attrition risks (Beta = 0.288). Across state and federal settings like PAAU and FULOKOJA, overcrowded lecture theatres, substandard laboratories, and inconsistent campus utilities foster structural frustration. This trend mirrors the observations of Alameri (2025), who found that modern academic facilities positively correlate with classroom engagement. When the learning environment degrades, it strains the student's institutional bond. Furthermore, rigid administrative policies add structural pressure, complicating academic recovery for students who fall behind early in their studies (Eche & Oche, 2023).

The Psychosocial Reality: Economic Anxiety and Mental Vulnerabilities

With financial anxiety emerging as the single most critical driver of attrition (Beta = 0.442), the study underlines the profound impact of socioeconomic hardship on higher education in Nigeria. In institutions like Salem University (a private university with higher tuition fees) and CUSTECH (a newer technical establishment), the pressure to cover tuition, instructional supplies, and off-campus housing creates persistent psychological strain. This dynamic validates the arguments of Tinto's Student Integration Theory and echoes recent evidence from Mutereko (2022), who observed that financial stress rarely operates in isolation; it quickly triggers mental health challenges, sleep disturbances, and social withdrawal. The long-term anxiety caused by financial insecurity weakens cognitive persistence, transforming manageable academic challenges into insurmountable obstacles that often lead to early withdrawal (Olayemi & Samuel, 2024).

The Power of Social Integration as a Defensive Shield

The significant negative path coefficient for social integration (Beta = -0.218) shows that active engagement in peer support groups, campus associations, and student leadership acts as a vital buffer against attrition risks. Students at PAAU or FULOKOJA who feel connected to their campus community develop stronger resilience against economic and structural challenges. This finding aligns with Bernstein and Borchardt's (2021) retention frameworks, which emphasize that meaningful peer and mentor networks protect vulnerable students from the sense of isolation that frequently precedes the decision to drop out (Sagenmuller, 2017).

Synthesis: Why Psychosocial Factors Outweigh Institutional Factors

The comparative analysis confirms that psychosocial factors (Beta = 0.496) are a much stronger predictor of dropout risk than institutional variables (Beta = 0.312). While structural issues like poor classroom infrastructure and rigid administrative procedures create an unwelcoming learning environment, it is the internal emotional toll—driven by financial stress, isolation, and mental anxiety—that ultimately prompts students to abandon their degrees (Yusuf & Segun, 2023). Therefore, addressing student retention in Kogi State requires a shift from purely structural modifications to a holistic approach that integrates robust counselling systems, mental health resources, and targeted financial aid.

Conclusion

This study establishes that student attrition in Kogi State tertiary institutions is driven by a combination of academic and environmental factors, with psychosocial elements acting as the primary catalyst. While institutional issues like poor campus infrastructure and rigid academic policies create structural friction, the internal emotional toll of severe financial anxiety, mental stress, and social isolation is what ultimately forces students to drop out. The unified model reveals that psychosocial factors explain 36.2% of the variance in dropout rates, compared to 14.3% for institutional factors. This demonstrates that mitigating student attrition across PAAU, FULOKOJA, Salem University, and CUSTECH requires moving away from purely structural administrative adjustments toward a holistic approach centered on comprehensive student support and targeted welfare interventions.

Recommendations

1. Expand Financial Safety Nets: University managements should establish flexible, instalment-based tuition payment structures, campus work-study opportunities, and emergency relief funds to reduce student financial anxiety.
2. Strengthen Mental Health Support: Institutional counselling centres must transform from passive entities into active support systems by organizing regular mental health screenings, stress management workshops, and peer-led support programs.
3. Modernize Academic Environments: School authorities should prioritize upgrading lecture halls, laboratories, and reliable campus utilities to reduce the daily structural frustrations that alienate students.

4. Enhance Social Integration: Universities must implement deliberate orientation and mentorship programs to help new students build strong social connections and peer support networks.
5. Review Academic Policies: Faculty administrations should design responsive academic remediation paths and early-warning warning systems to identify and support struggling students before they face academic disqualification.

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FISCAL COMMITTEE SYSTEM EFFECTIVENESS IN NIGERIA'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: LEGISLATIVE SPECIALISATION, INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY, AND POLICY INFLUENCE, 1999-2025

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Abstract

This article examines the effectiveness of Nigeria's National Assembly committee system in enabling legislative specialisation and policy influence between 2015 and 2025, spanning the 8th, 9th, and 10th Assemblies. Since 1999 the combined number of standing committees has grown from 72 to 245. Proponents justify expansion through the logic of specialisation and division of labour; critics contend that expansion beyond a threshold produces fragmentation and committees oriented toward patronage rather than policy work. Anchored in Committee Government Theory and Institutional Capacity Theory, the study adopts a sequential explanatory mixed methods design. The quantitative component draws on the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre lawmaking tracker, BudgIT dashboard, and a structured sample of Hansard records. The qualitative component deploys most different systems case studies of the Committees on Appropriations (high performing), Public Accounts (average performing), and Health (weak performing), supported by documentary sources and six key informant interviews. Capacity figures are triangulated estimates because the National Assembly does not publish disaggregated committee budgets or staff establishments. Findings show that committee effectiveness correlates more closely with resources, autonomy, leadership stability, and political salience than with the sheer number of committees. Legislative output concentrates in a small subset of committees while the majority operate with minimal staff and no independent research capacity. The paper concludes that a substantial share of standing committees function predominantly as symbolic and patronage distributive institutions rather than as vehicles of policy influence, and recommends reforms centred on rationalisation, professionalisation of staff, budget transparency, enforcement powers, and published performance metrics.

Keywords: *National Assembly, legislative committees, institutional capacity, policy influence*

Introduction

The legislature occupies a central place in democratic governance. Beyond lawmaking it performs representation, executive oversight, and the articulation of policy alternatives (Mezey, 1979; Norton, 1990). Within the legislature, committees serve as the principal institutional mechanism through which members discharge these functions. Fenno (1973) captured the point memorably: committees are where the institution's work is done. The theoretical justification for organising legislative work through committees rests on division of labour and specialisation. Given the technical complexity of contemporary governance, plenary sessions cannot deliberate with adequate depth on every bill and oversight question. Committees allow subsets of members to develop sustained familiarity with a policy domain, engage expert witnesses, and conduct line by line scrutiny that the full chamber cannot accommodate (Krehbiel, 1991; Shepsle & Weingast, 1987).

In Nigeria this logic has driven marked expansion of the committee system since the return to civilian rule in 1999. The 4th Assembly began with a combined 72 standing committees. By the 10th Assembly that figure had risen to 245, comprising 109 Senate committees and 136 House committees. Nigeria's National Assembly now maintains substantially more standing committees than the United States Congress, the United Kingdom Parliament, and the South African Parliament combined, yet operates with a considerably smaller central legislative staff establishment than any of those three legislatures individually (National Assembly, 2023; Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2024).

Performance metrics do not track this expansion. Between 2015 and 2023 more than 2,300 bills were introduced across the 8th and 9th Assemblies, of which fewer than one in ten ultimately passed into law (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2024). Committee oversight reports are frequently laid before the relevant chamber but rarely scheduled for plenary debate. Public trust in the National Assembly remains comparatively low (Afrobarometer, 2022, 2024). This combination of rapid committee proliferation alongside stagnant output and public confidence raises the core research problem: has expansion translated into genuine legislative specialisation and policy influence, or has it produced more than two hundred largely symbolic structures whose primary function is constituency representation and patronage distribution?

The problem is twofold. First, a capacity problem: the great majority of standing committees appear to operate with two to three legislative aides and no dedicated research budget, limiting their ability to generate independent analysis. Second, an incentive problem: committee chairmanship carries material and symbolic value that

appears distributed according to party balancing and constituency considerations rather than demonstrated expertise. This paper terms the resulting pattern the committee system's symbolic or patronage function, distinguished throughout from its policy function.

The study pursues five objectives: to examine the evolution and structure of National Assembly committees from 1999 to 2025; to assess the extent to which the current structure enables genuine legislative specialisation; to evaluate policy influence across committees using bill passage and budget engagement data; to identify factors that explain variation in performance through three comparative case studies; and to propose institutional reforms responsive to the findings.

Conceptual Clarification

Legislative Committees and the Proliferation Debate

Legislative committees are small working groups to which the parent chamber delegates functions impractical for the full membership (Strøm, 1998; Mattson & Strøm, 1995). Core functions include bill markup, oversight, investigation, and representation. Comparative scholarship distinguishes strong from weak committee systems by reference to autonomy relative to the plenary and party leadership (Strøm, 1998).

Krehbiel's (1991) informational theory argues that committees solve an information problem facing the full chamber. Additional committees, provided members wish to specialise and receive adequate resources, should improve the chamber's aggregate information position. Cox and McCubbins (1993) offer a partisan account: committee structure serves majority party leadership's coalition management interests. On this account additional committees may advance leadership goals without corresponding gains, and potentially with net losses, to substantive legislative capacity. Barkan (2009) documents Kenya's committee rationalisation, in which a reduction from thirty two to twenty committees was associated with improved per committee funding and oversight output.

Existing Nigerian literature remains comparatively thin and descriptive. Aiyede (2005) and Okolie (2015) documented weak committee capacity and reliance on executive supplied information without systematic comparative or longitudinal designs. The Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre lawmaking tracker supplies the most systematic quantitative data on bill outcomes, yet focuses on bills and plenary activity rather than committee level capacity. This paper supplies a comparative case design capable of

isolating factors that explain performance variation, combined with multi Assembly data spanning the period of most rapid proliferation.

Theoretical Framework

Committee Government Theory, associated with Fenno (1973) and Polsby (1968), holds that meaningful legislative influence is exercised substantially through committees that possess defined jurisdiction, specialised expertise, adequate staff and resources, and meaningful autonomy. Institutional Capacity Theory, drawing on North (1990) and March and Olsen (1989), directs attention to the material and organisational resources an institution requires to perform its assigned functions. Formal mandate alone is analytically insufficient absent the resources needed to exercise it.

This paper combines the two frameworks. Committee Government Theory specifies the attributes an effective committee should possess. Institutional Capacity Theory explains why many committees in a resource constrained system may fail to acquire those attributes. The working proposition is that capacity variables, specifically staff strength, budget adequacy, leadership stability, and political salience, account for the substantial majority of variance in committee performance, while the sheer number of committees functions primarily as an indicator of how thinly a fixed pool of resources has been divided.

Methodology

The study adopts a sequential explanatory mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). A quantitative phase maps committee level output across the 8th to 10th Assemblies. A qualitative phase deploys in depth comparative case studies to explain observed variation. The primary empirical focus is 2015 to 2025. Primary sources comprise National Assembly Votes and Proceedings, Hansard records (structured sample), committee reports, and Appropriation Acts. Six background key informant interviews with committee clerks, civil society legislative trackers, and former committee members supplement the documentary record. Secondary sources include the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre Lawmaking Tracker, BudgIT National Assembly dashboard, SERAP budget tracking reports, and Afrobarometer surveys.

For the national overview the sampling frame is the full population of standing committees. For the case studies the study employs purposive sampling on a most different systems design (Seawright & Gerring, 2008), selecting the Committees on Appropriations (high performing), Public Accounts (average performing), and Health

(weak performing). The dependent variable, committee effectiveness, is operationalised through bills passed relative to bills referred, public hearings held, reports laid, and documented instances of policy influence. Independent variables are staff strength, budget allocation, leadership stability, political salience, and autonomy. Where a summary indicator is required the study uses a Legislative Productivity Index defined as bills passed divided by bills referred, multiplied by 100.

A significant limitation concerns the non publication of official disaggregated data on individual committee budgets and staff establishments. Capacity figures presented in this paper are therefore triangulated estimates derived from aggregate Appropriation Act transfers, key informant testimony, and secondary civil society sources. Every specific estimate is labelled as such. Output figures derive from a structured sample of Hansard records combined with the PLAC tracker rather than an exhaustive administrative audit.

Historical Background: Evolution of Committees, 1999 to 2025

The committee system has evolved in response to political, administrative, and constituency pressures. The 4th Assembly began with 32 Senate and 40 House committees, a combined 72. Under the People's Democratic Party the count grew to 146 by the 6th Assembly. Since 2015 expansion accelerated: 161 committees in the 8th Assembly, 178 in the 9th, and 245 in the 10th. Three compounding drivers explain the post 2015 acceleration. Constituency and zonal demand creates continuous pressure for proportionate shares of chairmanships. Party balancing uses committee slots to manage internal factions. Individual level budgetary incentives associate chairmanship with access to running costs and oversight travel allocations.

Table 1

Growth of Standing Committees in the National Assembly, 1999 to 2025

Assembly	Years	Senate	House	Total	% Growth
4th	1999 to 2003	32	40	72	n/a
6th	2007 to 2011	57	89	146	102.8%
8th	2015 to 2019	65	96	161	10.3%
9th	2019 to 2023	69	109	178	10.6%
10th	2023 to 2027	109	136	245	37.6%

Source: *National Assembly records and Standing Orders (National Assembly, 2023); Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (2024). Compiled by author. Figures for the 5th and 7th Assemblies are omitted where a reliable combined total could not be corroborated.*

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2026

By the 10th Assembly Nigeria maintains a combined committee count exceeding those of the United States Congress, the United Kingdom Parliament, and the South African Parliament combined, despite operating with a smaller central non partisan legislative research staff. This trajectory frames the central question: whether quantitative expansion has produced qualitative gains in specialisation and policy influence.

National Overview of Committee Performance, 2015 to 2025

Capacity Profile

Estimated capacity figures reveal a pronounced disparity. The Appropriations Committee commands an estimated staff complement of approximately 18 legislative aides plus dedicated policy analysts. An average standing committee operates with two to three aides and no dedicated research staff. The Health Committee falls at the lower end of this distribution. These figures are directional estimates derived from the 2024 Appropriation Act aggregate transfer combined with key informant testimony; the National Assembly does not publish committee level budget or staff breakdowns.

Table 2
Estimated Capacity per Committee, 10th Assembly

Indicator	**Appropriations (est.)**	**Average (est.)**	**Health (est.)**
Legislative aides	approx. 18	2 to 3	approx. 2
Dedicated research staff	approx. 4 analysts	0	0
Operating allocation	Substantially above average	Modest	Modest
Office space	Multiple rooms	1 room typical	1 room typical

Source: 2024 Appropriation Act (aggregate transfer) and Key Informant Interviews (2024). Computed by author. Figures are directional estimates, not audited administrative data.
Source: Researcher's Survey, 2026

Output Distribution

Legislative output is markedly skewed. On estimated figures the ten highest output committees, representing roughly four percent of the 245 standing committees, account for a disproportionate share of bills passed. The overall bill to passage conversion rate remains low, in the region of one bill passed for every five referred. A substantial share of public hearings do not culminate in reports formally laid before the relevant chamber.

Table 3
Estimated Committee Output Distribution, 8th to 10th Assembly

Tier	No. of Committees	Bills Referred	Bills Passed	LPI %	Hearings
Top 10	10	1,240	420	33.9%	340
Middle 50	50	890	110	12.4%	180
Bottom 185	185	670	38	5.7%	95
Total	245	2,800	568	20.3%	615

Source: Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre Lawmaking Tracker (2015 to 2023), cross referenced against a structured sample of Hansard records. Computed and tiered by author. LPI equals Legislative Productivity Index (bills passed divided by bills referred, multiplied by 100). Tier boundaries reflect author classification by output volume.
Source: Researcher's Survey, 2026

Three patterns merit emphasis. First, proliferation appears to have diluted rather than expanded the aggregate resources available to any individual committee. Second, output concentrates in high salience committees; high substantive policy need, as in health, does not reliably translate into high committee level political salience or resource access. Third, the absence of published committee level performance metrics removes a significant incentive for individual committees to prioritise policy output.

Comparative Case Studies

Committee on Appropriations: High Performing

The Appropriations Committee holds the gatekeeping position in the annual budget cycle and is widely regarded as the most consequential standing committee in either chamber. Estimated staff strength substantially exceeds that of the wider committee population, and the committee maintains dedicated budget analysis capacity. Over the 2020 to 2024 period the committee processed successive Appropriation Acts and supplementary budgets, conducted approximately twenty joint public hearings, and laid budget reports that received substantive plenary debate in every year examined. Key informants describe specific instances in which committee engagement preceded upward revisions to capital allocations in politically salient sectors. Three factors consistently explain this performance: high political salience and proximity to chamber leadership; comparatively larger operating resources and dedicated analytical staff; and sustained external media and public scrutiny that creates performance pressure. On the criteria of Committee Government Theory the Appropriations Committee most closely approximates the theoretical benchmark of defined jurisdiction, specialised expertise, adequate staff, and autonomy.

Committee on Public Accounts: Average Performance

The Public Accounts Committee derives its mandate from sections 85(2) and 88 of the 1999 Constitution. It considers the Auditor General's report and holds accounting officers accountable for the use of public funds. Estimated staff strength stands at approximately four legislative aides without dedicated policy analysis capacity. Between 2020 and 2024 the committee held approximately eighteen public hearings involving major federally owned entities. An estimated four reports were laid in plenary. The documentary and interview evidence did not identify a single instance within the review period in which a Public Accounts Committee report led to documented financial recovery or formal sanction against a queried accounting officer. The committee possesses a strong formal legal mandate yet weak practical enforcement power: it can summon, query, and report, but cannot compel restitution, prosecute, or impose administrative sanction. Reports once laid frequently do not progress to scheduled plenary debate. The committee also depends on the Office of the Auditor General, itself constrained by staffing and resource limitations. Assessment places the committee as intermediate: active in investigation yet structurally constrained in translating findings into enforceable outcomes.

Committee on Health: Weak Performance

The Health Committee oversees the Federal Ministry of Health and associated agencies, a jurisdiction of high substantive salience given Nigeria's disease burden and the Basic Health Care Provision Fund. Estimated staff strength stands at approximately two legislative aides per chamber committee with no dedicated research staff. Between 2020 and 2024 the committee held approximately nine public hearings and received an estimated six referred bills, of which the National Health Insurance Authority Act 2022 passed. Interview accounts describe the committee's substantive role in shaping that Act as comparatively minimal relative to executive drafting input. Capital allocation to health remained well below the fifteen percent Abuja Declaration target across the years examined. Chronic underfunding and leadership instability, including multiple changes of House chairmanship within a single Assembly, emerge as the most consistently cited explanations. Members also prefer assignment to committees offering greater constituency project access. On Committee Government Theory criteria the Health Committee falls furthest short of the theoretical benchmark: it possesses a defined and urgent jurisdiction yet lacks the staff, budget, and leadership continuity required to translate jurisdiction into genuine specialisation and policy influence.

Cross Case Synthesis

Capacity indicators (staff strength, estimated budget, leadership stability) associate consistently with output and influence indicators (hearings held, reports submitted, qualitative policy influence assessment). This pattern supports the working theoretical proposition that institutional capacity is the principal driver of variation in Nigerian committee performance. A further individual level mechanism operates: where a committee possesses high political salience and adequate resources, a chair's personal standing is closely bound to demonstrated performance; where salience and resources are low, the chairmanship still confers visibility and allowance access regardless of substantive output. This asymmetry helps explain why aggregate committee output remains concentrated.

Discussion

Four principal conclusions follow. First, committee proliferation has not produced a proportional increase in aggregate legislative output. The 245 standing committees draw on a comparatively fixed and thinly divided pool of resources, producing a small number of well resourced, high output committees alongside a larger number of committees with minimal capacity. Second, effectiveness is determined substantially by capacity variables rather than by committee number as such. The Appropriations Committee's performance tracks access to dedicated staff and high salience more closely than any distinctive feature of its formal jurisdiction; the Health Committee's weak performance occurs notwithstanding high substantive urgency. Third, the committee system serves two frequently competing functions: a policy function of lawmaking and oversight, and a symbolic and patronage function encompassing constituency representation, distribution of allowances, and political management. Where these functions come into tension the symbolic function has in practice taken precedence. Fourth, the absence of published committee level performance metrics removes a significant incentive for individual committees and chairs to prioritise policy output.

These findings refine the application of Committee Government Theory in resource constrained, patronage influenced systems. Jurisdictional assignment and the other attributes Fenno identified appear more separable than in the American congressional context in which the framework was developed. Institutional Capacity Theory's central prediction, that policy influence tracks capacity more closely than formal mandate, receives strong support from the contrast between the Public Accounts Committee's strong constitutional mandate and limited demonstrated influence, and the Appropriations Committee's less constitutionally elaborated but capacity rich position.

The findings also invite reconsideration of what specialisation means in this context. Theoretical literature treats specialisation as an information generating process. Nigerian evidence suggests jurisdictional proliferation has produced fragmentation without corresponding growth in genuine subject matter expertise. The paper therefore distinguishes nominal specialisation (the mere existence of a narrowly defined jurisdiction) from substantive specialisation (demonstrated capacity of membership and staff to engage a domain with technical depth). Committee proliferation since 1999 has generated considerably more of the former than of the latter.

Comparative Lessons

Four jurisdictions offer relevant lessons. The United States Congress maintains 20 House and 16 Senate standing committees, each supported by substantial professional staff and centralised non partisan institutions such as the Congressional Research Service and Congressional Budget Office. The United Kingdom House of Commons operates departmental select committees supported by a centralised House of Commons Library and comparatively long member tenures conducive to sustained specialisation. South Africa's portfolio committee system includes a Parliamentary Budget Office providing independent analysis, together with a procedural expectation that the executive respond formally to committee reports within a specified period. Kenya's rationalisation experience, documented by Barkan (2009), associated a reduction in committee numbers with improved per committee funding and oversight output.

Taken together these cases indicate that rationalisation of committee numbers, investment in centralised professional non partisan staff support, and formal enforcement or response mechanisms are each associated with stronger committee level outcomes than those documented for the majority of Nigeria's current standing committees. Committee number alone is not treated as a virtue in any of the four jurisdictions; each design reflects a deliberate trade off between jurisdictional breadth and per committee analytical depth.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the effectiveness of Nigeria's National Assembly committee system between 2015 and 2025. Evidence indicates that proliferation has produced quantity without a corresponding proportional gain in quality. From 72 standing committees in the 4th Assembly to 245 in the 10th, expansion has been driven principally by constituency and zonal representation pressure, intra party balancing,

and material incentives associated with chairmanships rather than by growth in aggregate legislative resources. Output concentrates in a small number of high salience committees. Capacity variables, staff strength, budget access, leadership stability, and political salience, explain the substantial majority of performance variation across the three cases examined in depth.

Institutional capacity rather than the number of committees is the principal driver of effectiveness. A substantial share of standing committees function predominantly as symbolic institutions oriented toward constituency representation and patronage distribution rather than as effective engines of policy scrutiny. If the National Assembly is to strengthen its constitutional functions of representation, lawmaking, and oversight, reform should prioritise the quality and capacity of the committee system over further quantitative expansion.

Five recommendations follow. First, the National Assembly should undertake structured rationalisation of its 245 standing committees, with particular attention to merging overlapping jurisdictions, concentrating currently thinly divided resources into a smaller number of committees. Second, it should establish a centralised non partisan research service, modelled on comparative examples such as the Congressional Research Service and the House of Commons Library, available to all standing committees. Third, it should publish each standing committee's approved annual allocation and subsequent expenditure on a routine disaggregated basis, enabling independent verification and extending external accountability beyond the small number of high visibility committees. Fourth, drawing on the South African precedent, it should consider a procedural or statutory requirement compelling the executive to respond formally to committee reports within a defined period. Fifth, it should establish and publish an annual Committee Performance Report tracking hearings conducted, reports laid, bills processed relative to bills referred, and documented instances of policy influence for each standing committee.

Rationalisation and professionalisation should proceed as a paired first phase. Transparency, enforcement, and performance metrics should follow as a second phase whose effectiveness would be strengthened by prior completion of the first. The findings remain subject to the data limitations arising from non publication of disaggregated committee level budget and staffing data. The central qualitative conclusion, that capacity rather than number drives effectiveness, is nonetheless robustly supported across national level output data, case level documentary reconstruction, and key informant testimony.

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KINETIC AND NON-KINETIC INSTRUMENTS ACROSS THE CONFLICT CONTINUUM: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ, THE SAHEL, AND RUSSIA-UKRAINE

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Abstract

Contemporary security operations require states, coalitions, and international organisations to calibrate the direct application of force against diplomatic, informational, economic, and governance instruments, yet practitioners continue to struggle with how that calibration should shift across the conflict continuum. Existing scholarship largely treats counterinsurgency, hybrid warfare, deterrence, sanctions, and whole-of-government coordination as distinct literatures, leaving the conditions governing instrument choice under-theorised as a single, cross-cutting problem. This article addresses that gap through a comparative qualitative case-study analysis, informed by an integrative narrative review of academic, governmental, and institutional sources, of four conflicts spanning the conflict continuum: Afghanistan (2001 –2021), Iraq (2003–201 1), the Sahel (2012–present), and Russia-Ukraine (2022–present). Cases are coded across seven instrument categories and six outcome dimensions and compared systematically rather than narrated in parallel. Findings indicate that neither kinetic nor non-kinetic instruments produce durable outcomes in isolation: kinetic tempo outpacing institutional capacity in Afghanistan, an administrative decision that generated an insurgency in Iraq, and kinetic-led counter-terrorism that eroded legitimacy in the Sahel are contrasted with the more favourable, if still fragile, outcome of the 2007 Iraq reconciliation and the deliberately integrated Russian hybrid campaign in Ukraine. The article develops a conditions-based integration framework connecting these instrument domains across the conflict continuum and closes with operational recommendations for doctrine, resource allocation, inter-agency coordination, and outcome assessment.

Keywords: *kinetic operations, non-kinetic instruments, conflict continuum, hybrid warfare*

Introduction

Contemporary security operations confront states, coalitions, and international organisations with a persistent dilemma: how to combine the direct application of force with the diplomatic, informational, economic, and governance instruments that shape an adversary's will and capacity. Existing scholarship treats counterinsurgency, hybrid warfare, deterrence, sanctions, and whole-of-government coordination as largely separate literatures, leaving the conditions governing instrument choice under-theorised as a single, cross-cutting problem.

This article addresses that gap by asking three research questions. RQ1: Under what conditions do kinetic and non-kinetic instruments produce complementary rather than substitutive effects? RQ2: How does the appropriate balance vary across phases and

types of conflict? RQ3: What institutional conditions sustain integrated application once a balance is chosen? Its contribution is a conditions-based integration framework, developed from a comparative analysis of four cases, treating instrument calibration as a continuous function of threat character, institutional capacity, political legitimacy, and adversary strategy rather than a fixed sequence or static ratio. Section 2 sets out conceptual foundations; Section 3, the research design; Section 4, the four case studies; Section 5, cross-case findings; Section 6, sanctions as a test case; Section 7, institutional coordination; Section 8, the framework itself; Section 9, policy recommendations Section 1 0, limitations; and Section 1 1 conclusion.

Conceptual Framework

Conflict Continuum

Kinetic operations are conventionally defined as the direct, physical application of force—airstrikes, ground manoeuvre, raids—intended to defeat, degrade, or deter an adversary through violence or its credible threat. Non-kinetic instruments are defined by exclusion: diplomacy, information and psychological operations, economic tools such as sanctions and aid, and governance, rule-of-law, and development activity. U.S. doctrine increasingly treats these as instruments to be integrated rather than sequenced, though critics argue the underlying DIME construct (diplomatic, informational, military, economic) can encourage a checklist mentality that understates diplomacy's coordinating role (O'Connor, 2025). This article treats kinetic and non-kinetic as analytical rather than mutually exclusive categories: cyber operations can produce kinetic-equivalent effects, sanctions are coercive rather than merely persuasive, and intelligence collection directly enables kinetic targeting. A second conceptual pillar is the conflict continuum, from stable peace through competition, crisis, and armed conflict to stabilisation. Non-kinetic instruments tend to dominate at low intensity and in stabilisation, kinetic operations at high intensity, though Western doctrine has historically struggled with this framing, tending toward rigid categorisation where the reality is continuous (Hoffman, Neumeyer, & Jensen, 2024). Hybrid Warfare and Theoretical Antecedents Hybrid warfare, first articulated by Hoffman (2007, 2009), captures the deliberate blending of conventional, irregular, and non-kinetic means by adversaries exploiting a target state's specific vulnerabilities; the concept broadened after Russia's 201 4 Crimea annexation to describe grey-zone state strategies using proxies, disinformation, and sabotage while retaining plausible deniability (Käihkö, 2021). This article treats hybrid warfare as one operational form within the broader condition of grey-zone competition, distinct from irregular warfare and whole-of-government coordination.Much of the literature on balancing kinetic and non-kinetic instruments traces to Galula's (2006 [1 964]) argument that insurgency is

fundamentally a political contest for the population's allegiance in which force is subordinate to political action, revived and adapted to transnational, globalised insurgency by Kilcullen (201 0). At the stabilisation end of the continuum, a landmark study found the risk of a return to civil war fell by to eighty-five percent or more when international peacekeepers were present (Fortna, 2008), suggesting internationally backed security guarantees can substitute for, not merely follow, sustained kinetic engagement.

Methodology

Research Design and Case Selection

This article uses a comparative qualitative case-study design, informed by an integrative narrative review of the secondary literature, suited to the research questions' focus on the conditions under which instrument relationships shift rather than on effect-size estimation. Its aim is analytic generalisation rather than statistical generalisability. Four cases were selected purposively—Afghanistan (2001 –2021), Iraq (2003–201 1), the Sahel (2012–present), and Russia-Ukraine (2022–present)—to maximise variation across adversary type, external-actor structure, the phase of the conflict continuum emphasised, and documentation density.

Definitions, Sources, and Analytical Approach

For coding purposes, a kinetic intervention is any direct application of lethal or destructive physical force; a non-kinetic intervention is any other action intended to shape behaviour, including diplomacy, information operations, economic instruments, and governance programming. Evidence was drawn from an integrative narrative review of English-language secondary sources—peer-reviewed articles, official reports (including SIGAR, the U.S. Government Accountability Office, and the Congressional Research Service), policy-institute analysis, and academic books. Each case is coded across seven instrument categories and six outcome dimensions (immediate security, political legitimacy, institutional resilience, civilian protection, conflict recurrence, and strategic sustainability

Comparative Case Analysis

Afghanistan (2001 –2021): Kinetic Tempo Outpacing Institutional Capacity
The conventional account of the twenty-year Afghanistan engagement attributes its stabilisation failures largely to insurgent resilience and terrain. SIGAR's evidentiary record supports a more specific interpretation: stabilisation programming was

structurally mismatched to the pace of kinetic and political decision-making. Despite nearly five billion dollars spent between 2002 and 201 7, stabilisation efforts were largely unsuccessful because U.S. agencies overestimated their ability to build and reform Afghan institutions on a timeline compressed by the 2009 surge and an announced transition, with disbursement itself sometimes treated as a proxy for success (SIGAR, 201 8). SIGAR's twentieth-anniversary retrospective found the U.S. spent approximately 1 45 billion dollars on reconstruction and 837 billion on the broader war while identifying the absence of a reliable post-conflict stabilisation model as a structural weakness (SIGAR, 2021

The consequences appear to have intensified after the 2021 withdrawal: the Afghan economy contracted by roughly a quarter to a third across 2021 –2022 (Saenger, Kapstein, & Sircar, 2024), linked to the abrupt suspension of donor support and continued sanctions that led banks worldwide to restrict Afghan transactions (Human Rights Watch, 2022), leaving acute food insecurity among the world's worst humanitarian emergencies (International Crisis Group, 2024). For the framework, Afghanistan's implication is that non-kinetic investment disbursed against a calendar-based political timeline, rather than measured institutional absorptive capacity, is unlikely to survive the withdrawal of the kinetic and financial support that sustained it.

Iraq (2003–201 1): Institutional Disruption, the Surge and the Limits of Reconciliation. The conventional account of the 2007 Iraq surge attributes the sharp decline in violence primarily to five additional combat brigades. Rigorous analysis complicates this: troop numbers alone could not account for the scale or timing of the decline, and the Anbar Awakening—the realignment of Sunni tribal networks against al-Qaeda in Iraq—interacted with the additional forces in ways a simple troop-count model could not capture (Biddle, Friedman, & Shapiro, 201 2).

This recalibration followed an earlier, largely non-kinetic decision with severe kinetic consequences: in May 2003 the Coalition Provisional Authority banned the Ba'ath Party and dissolved Iraq's armed forces, security services, and intelligence apparatus, disbanding some 385,000 armed forces personnel against the explicit recommendations of senior U.S. officers (Pfiffner, 201 0). Subsequent analyses associate this decision with a bureaucratic and security vacuum and a large population of unemployed, armed young men with a specific grievance against the occupying authority—conditions several analyses treat as a significant contributing factor in the insurgency that eventually gave rise to the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (Pfiffner, 201 0). For the framework, Iraq's implication is twofold: a purely administrative, non-kinetic decision taken without attention to its security consequences can itself manufacture the conditions for insurgency, while the subsequent recalibration toward

integrated kinetic and non-kinetic reconciliation was associated with a real, if ultimately fragile, improvemen

The Sahel (2012–present): Kinetic-Led Counter-Terrorism and Eroding Legitimacy
The conventional account presents a heavily kinetic counter-terrorism strategy as a necessary response to a rapidly expanding jihadist insurgency. The empirical record suggests the strategy's kinetic emphasis may itself have contributed to the deterioration it was meant to prevent. France's Operation Serval (201 3) succeeded in retaking key northern Malian towns, but its successor, Operation Barkhane, coincided with violence spreading as jihadist groups adapted to the new operational norm, and by its 2022 conclusion its primary targets still controlled substantial territory (DefenceWeb 2026). By 2023 the Sahel accounted for a substantial share of global terrorism deaths, with Burkina Faso ranked the country most affected by terrorism worldwide (Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2025), a trajectory analysts associate with a security response weighted toward kinetic operations rather than sustained engagement with marginalised communities, with militant violence up roughly 1 40 percent since 2020 (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2022).

France's withdrawal from Mali did not resolve this dynamic; the ruling junta engaged the Russian Wagner Group, later reorganised into the state-controlled Africa Corps, which analysts report has continued similar patterns of civilian harm (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2025). For the framework, the Sahel's implication is that kinetic operations pursued across three successive external actors without sufficient parallel investment in legitimate governance appear associated with eroding, rather than building, the local legitimacy durable security depends upon.

Russia-Ukraine (2022–present): Deliberately Integrated Hybrid Warfare

The conventional account treats the 2022 invasion as a primarily kinetic conflict with an accompanying, secondary information and cyber campaign. Analysis of Russian military theory suggests a different sequencing: non-kinetic measures—sanctions, sympathetic political networks, disinformation—are described by Russian theorists as tools that can themselves escalate tensions toward open kinetic conflict, with armed force understood as the culminating rather than initiating stage of a hybrid campaign (Genini, 2025), inverting the sequencing typically assumed in Western doctrine.

The Congressional Research Service documents an escalating pattern of Russian hybrid activity across Europe, including cyber operations against NATO territory rising sharply between 2023 and 2024, operating below the threshold likely to trigger a unified military response (Congressional Research Service, 2026). Russia's hybrid

toolkit—cyberattacks, disinformation, sabotage, and economic manipulation—has intensified in step with the kinetic conflict rather than functioning as a substitute for it (Center for European Policy Analysis, 2025). For the framework, Ukraine's implication is the sharpest of the four cases: where an adversary treats the kinetic/non-kinetic boundary itself as a deliberately exploitable seam, a purely reactive, phase-by-phase response is poorly matched to the threat, and non-kinetic resilience must be built as a standing capability before, not during, a crisis.

Cross-Case Findings

Three patterns emerge from systematic comparison. First, the direction of imbalance differs: Afghanistan and the Sahel show kinetic emphasis outpacing non-kinetic investment, but Iraq shows the reverse, where a non-kinetic administrative decision generated a kinetic-scale insurgency; the framework in Section 8 must accommodate both directions. Second, external-actor turnover appears to compound rather than resolve imbalance: the Sahel's transition from French to Malian-Russian to Africa Corps engagement did not interrupt the erosion of legitimacy documented across all three periods. Third, Ukraine stands apart because its integration is adversarial: Russia's deliberate sequencing of non-kinetic escalation toward kinetic conflict is the same mechanism the framework recommends for prevention-phase resilience-building, applied in reverse by the aggressor.

Economic Statecraft and Sanctions as a Test of the Framework

Sanctions offer a useful test of this article's central claim that the kinetic/non-kinetic boundary is porous: economic coercion can function simultaneously as a substitute for kinetic force, a complement applied alongside it, and a signal of potential escalation. An assessment of 1 1 5 sanctions episodes since the First World War found roughly a third at least partially successful, associated with modest objectives, multilateral participation, and clearly specified demands, and more likely to succeed when signalling or deterring norm violations than when compelling a fundamental change in a target government's core interests (Peterson Institute for International Economics, n.d.).

Applied to the cases above, the literature offers a cautionary parallel: sanctions on Russia since 2022 have constrained specific economic sectors but have not, alone, altered the trajectory of Russian kinetic operations, while continued sanctions against senior Taliban figures after 2021 led banks worldwide to restrict ordinary Afghan transactions, deepening a crisis that appears to have served neither the sanctions' original counter-terrorism rationale nor the goal of encouraging moderated governance

(Human Rights Watch, 2022). Sanctions are not a discrete fifth instrument sitting outside the kinetic/non-kinetic framework; they are a case study in how thoroughly the two categories interpenetrate.

Institutional Coordination and Implementation

Even where the strategic logic of integration is accepted, implementation depends on institutional machinery the case studies suggest is frequently the weaker link. RAND research found that although official planning consistently calls for a whole-of-government approach, this has proven difficult to implement, partly because civilian agencies cannot redeploy expert personnel to conflict environments without damaging domestic missions (RAND Corporation, 201 3), a finding echoed by a GAO review of persistent interagency planning gaps (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2007)
The countries that have made the most sustained progress have done so through dedicated coordinating structures rather than doctrine alone: the UK's Stabilisation Unit and the United States' Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization both emerged from cross-departmental funding pools (PolSci Institute, 2026), though even such structures have not resolved friction between civilian-led and military-led approaches (Simons Center, 201 9). The Sahel, which lacked an equivalent coordinating architecture, illustrates how the absence of durable coordination compounds the imbalance documented in Section 4.3 (International Crisis Group, 2025).

A Conditions-Based Integration Framework

Drawing together the conceptual foundations, the comparative case evidence, and the sanctions and institutional analysis above, this article proposes a conditions-based integration framework. Threat environment, institutional capacity, and political legitimacy jointly determine strategic calibration: the relative weighting of kinetic and non-kinetic instruments at a given point in the conflict continuum. That calibration is expressed through two instrument categories operating simultaneously rather than sequentially: kinetic instruments directed principally at immediate security, non-kinetic instruments at legitimacy and institutional resilience, with the boundary between them porous rather than fixed. Both channels feed into the six outcome dimensions coded in Section 3.2, which feedback into a conditions-reassessment stage that updates the next round of calibration.

Three principles operationalise this logic. First, sequencing must be conditions-based rather than calendar-based: Afghanistan shows the risks of tying stabilisation timelines to political rather than institutional readiness (SIGAR, 201 8, 2021), drawing on the

finding that non-kinetic security guarantees can substitute for continued heavy kinetic engagement once minimum stability is met (Fortna, 2008). Second, kinetic operations should be a precondition for, not a substitute for, non-kinetic legitimacy-building, and vice versa: Iraq demonstrates both directions, and the Sahel demonstrates the inverse failure mode across three successive external actors, each pursuing kinetic operations with insufficient parallel investment in governance. Third, adversary strategy must inform one's own calibration, particularly where the adversary treats the kinetic/non-kinetic boundary as exploitable rather than fixed, as Russia-Ukraine demonstrates (Genini, 2025).

Policy Implications

Four operational recommendations follow. First, on doctrine: conflict assessments should identify the appropriate kinetic/non-kinetic mix at predefined, conditions-based decision points rather than fixed calendar milestones (Hoffman, Neumeyer, & Jensen, 2024). Second, on resources: civilian stabilisation capacity should be funded as a standing, deployable capability rather than surged reactively, addressing the mismatch RAND identified (RAND Corporation, 201 3). Third, on coordination: a permanent interagency strategic-integration cell should be established before, not during, deployment, addressing the planning gaps documented by the GAO (2007) and the Simons Center (201 9). Fourth: outcome indicators corresponding to the six dimensions in Section 3.2 should be tracked jointly and continuously, rather than assessed separately by kinetic and non-kinetic lines of effort.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. The case selection is purposive rather than random, chosen to maximise variation; this supports analytic generalisation but means the framework's applicability elsewhere is untested and should be treated as a hypothesis for further research. The four cases differ substantially in conflict type, external-actor structure, and available documentation, so comparison addresses outcome patterns rather than standardised effect sizes. Measuring non-kinetic effects is inherently harder than measuring kinetic effects such as territorial control, and the sources drawn upon rely predominantly on qualitative, retrospective assessment; causal language has therefore been deliberately hedged rather than stated as established fact. The Russia-Ukraine case is ongoing and should be understood as provisional. Future research could test the framework against a larger, more systematically sampled set of cases and develop quantitative indicators for the six outcome dimensions.

Conclusion

The evidence surveyed across Afghanistan, Iraq, the Sahel, and Russia-Ukraine converges on a consistent finding: neither kinetic nor non-kinetic instruments, applied in isolation or poorly sequenced, are associated with durable security outcomes. Where kinetic tempo outpaced the slower work of building legitimate governance, as in Afghanistan and the Sahel, security gains proved unsustainable. Where a purely non-kinetic administrative decision was taken without regard to its kinetic consequences, as in Iraq's 2003 de-Baathification order, the result appears to have been the manufacture rather than the management of an insurgency. Where the two instrument categories were more genuinely integrated, as in the 2007 Iraq reconciliation, outcomes were more favourable, though still contingent on the underlying political settlement. Russia-Ukraine illustrates a further complication the framework is designed to address: an adversary that treats the kinetic/non-kinetic boundary as an exploitable seam requires a response that builds non-kinetic resilience as a standing, pre-conflict capability. The relationship between kinetic and non-kinetic power is, in short, iterative and conditions-dependent rather than linear or static.

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