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Editorial

This edition of NIU *Journal of Social Sciences* focuses on Development Administration, Social Philosophy and Organizational or Personnel Management.

The first part of the Journal addresses issues in Development Administration such as Rural Farming, Anti-Corruption Policies, National Security, Civil-Military Cooperation, Government Empowerment and Decentralization in Development Decision-Making. It is argued in one of the papers that meaningful decentralization is essential for sustainable development and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. It is therefore, suggested amongst others, that Federal government must enforce the 2024 Supreme Court judgment, initiate constitutional amendments, establish support programs, and strengthen monitoring. State governments must respect local autonomy, conduct credible elections, support capacity building, and enable revenue generation.

Papers in the second section are on Social Philosophy. One of the papers in this Section explores how parental income, education, and family structure influences youth behaviour, propensity and predisposition to internet crime. Anchored on Relative Deprivation Theory, the study finds that although youths engage in internet crime, socio-economic conditions and family dysfunction are an indirectly influence that shapes such behavioural tendencies while pointing that deprivation and societal glorification of wealth act as motivating factors. The paper concludes that addressing youth unemployment, improving parenting quality, and reshaping societal values are crucial in mitigating internet crime.

In last section on Organizational and Personnel Management, one of the papers explores the effects of leader-member exchange, job satisfaction and motivation on organizational commitment in public service with major focus on National Examinations Council Offices in Nigerian North-Central States of Niger, Benue and Nasarawa. These findings of the paper highlight the importance of positive leader-member relationships, meaningful job roles, and both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in fostering strong organizational commitment. Specifically, the paper suggests that the agency must invest in recognition programs, employee empowerment, improved health and safety provisions, and clearer leader–employee communication pathways in order to strengthen commitment. This is because enhancing these job satisfaction dimensions is likely to yield a more motivated, committed, and productive workforce.

On the whole, this issue of *NIU Journal of Social Sciences* features many interesting research papers. Some of these papers are empirical in nature while others have theoretical base. Each of them focuses on one specific social and management problem or the other; trying to proffer solutions to them. Readers are therefore advised to make proper use of the ideas presented by the various authors.

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Part One
Development Administration

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Influence of Point of Sale (POS) on the Nigerian Economy, 2003-2023

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Abstract. Point of Sale (POS) has significantly impacted the banking sector of the Nigerian economy. The study is retracted to Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The POS operation in Benin City generated employment for the operators and made banking services available to all parts of the society, thereby reducing the stress of going to the bank for their customers except in some serious transactions. The study adopted the Innovation Diffusion Theory and Humphrey, Pulley, & Vesala's Cashless Economy Theory to explain the rationale for e-banking in Nigeria. The study was exploratory and purely qualitative; it made use of the in-depth interview guide in eliciting the required responses, adopting purposive and convenience sampling techniques. It made use of 20 participants who are POS operators in Benin City. The study revealed that even though the POS system improves banking operational efficiency in Benin City by ensuring the availability of banking services to members of the public, it also faces some challenges like poor network connectivity and security risks to both the operators and the customers. The study concludes that the POS operation in Benin City needs support and a more secure environment for the operators to fully utilize the system. In this regard, the study suggested financial assistance to the operators by the government and the banks, improving network stability by the network providers, and improved security for the operators.

Keywords: Benin City, Challenges, POS Operators and Significant Impact.

1. Introduction

Nigeria's contemporary market economy is driven by an e-payment system known as point of sale (POS). This e-payment system has been acknowledged to have detrimental effects on monetary policy, financial stability, and overall economic activity (CBN, 2011). The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) introduced a payment system that made electronic payments possible in 2002. During this period, the Nigeria Automated Clearing System (NACS) was introduced as a legitimate platform to promote electronic payments and reduce inspection processing time. Additionally, in 2003, Interswitch unveiled Automated Teller Machines (ATMs). The new standard accounting system (NUBAN) was introduced in 2010, and Real Time Gross Settlement was put into effect in 2006. The first set of cash deposit ATMs was then introduced in early 2011 after the Nigerian Inter-Bank Settlement System announced fast payment services (KPMG, 2012). The move to a cashless economy was suggested in December 2011 and made official in Lagos in January 2012. Abuja, Port Harcourt, Abia, Kano, and Ogun State successfully adopted cashless policies by the end of 2013 (Amadiokoro, Ozurumba, Nwaimo, Anyanwu, and Ubah, 2023). After successful implementation of the e-payment policy in the country, many Nigerians have been included in the mainstream financial system since the introduction of various e-payment channels, which has allowed them to mobilize idle funds for investment purposes. The various e-payment platforms have made transactions easier and more convenient, particularly for the new e-commerce companies that are gaining prominence. In addition, it has enabled numerous online enterprises and witnessed the smooth movement of funds from one location to another.

The e-payment channels, specifically point-of-sale (POS), have become ubiquitous in our society, offering banking services directly to individuals, leading to an increase in both direct and indirect employment. It has led to financial inclusion and a cashless economy (Kayode, 2021). Since Nigeria's

economy relies heavily on cash, managing it is expensive. It has been determined that depending on cash-based payment systems is both dangerous and inconvenient. A sizable amount of money is in the hands of unbanked people as a result of carrying cash in the economy. The CBN introduction of electronic payment technologies, such as point of sale (POS), into the Nigerian economy is therefore an attempt to lower the amount of cash in circulation and lower the risk of carrying large quantities of cash.

The policy has given rise to the introduction of switch companies that facilitate interconnectivity (Adeoti 2013). Retail transactions are carried out through point-of-sale (POS) terminals. Depending on the type, it can offer a wide range of services, including transactions, check reading, and credit card processing. These gadgets are present almost everywhere in Nigeria where buying and selling takes place. This is as Nigerians enthusiastically and warmly embraced the usage (POS) in their daily transactions. This has led to a sharp rise in its application in the public and commercial sectors of the Nigerian economy. According to Salimon (2006), the introduction of payment instruments such as point of sale (POS) terminals and automated teller machines gave rise to significant growth in the use of electronic payment systems. He continued that the implementation of the POS policy had numerous positive effects on the Nigerian economy. POS helped to generate hundreds of work opportunities for thousands of young Nigerians. Okoye, Orajaka, & Nnebe (2022) reported that, with advancements in financial technology, Nigerians are taking the POS services subsector as agency banking; many have become self-employed, creating jobs for many others, making banking service available to all parts of the country. Against this background, the study examines the influence of point of sales (POS) on the Nigerian economy.

1.1 Objectives of the study

The following are the specific objectives of the study, to:

- examine the challenges faced by POS operators in Nigeria;
- determine the impact of POS on the Nigerian economy

2. Review of Related Literature

According to Anyanwu & Anumaka (2020), the Central Bank of Nigeria's cashless policy initiative is an attempt to improve the economy's financial landscape. The broad use of computer technology in the financial sector is known as the cashless society (Ordu, & Mike (2016).). Evaluating this policy's chances of success. Ejiros (2012) opined that "in the long run sustainability of the policy will be a function of the endorsement of, and compliance by, end-users." The CBN estimates that when the strategy is fully implemented, it will cut the costs associated with sustaining a cash-based economy by 90%. The Point of Sale (POS) terminal was introduced by the CBN to drive home its cashless policy aimed at enhancing Nigeria's payment system (Iwedi, Igbanibo & Uzo-ahunanya, 2018). In Nigeria, among the services it enabled were retail payments, cashless payments, cash back balance inquiries, airtime vending, and mini-statement printing.

The POS are electronic payment devices designed to facilitate the exchange of goods and services without the need for physical cash. This kind of electronic payment handles balance inquiries, payments for goods and services, and electronic financial transfers at a specific point of sale. Customers can utilize the device to pay for the goods and services they have purchased even though they have or no physical cash on hand. Through the use of this technology, local prepaid cards facilitate money settlements and transactions for products and services. (Okoye et al, 2022). At POS terminals, a customer inserts his or her card, enters his information, and if he is paying for goods or services, his or account is debited at that moment, transferring money to the service provider's account. (Okoye et al., 2022).

The POS is among the most widely used methods of payment for credit cards, debit cards, and other online transactions in a buying and selling setting in Nigeria. These terminals are used in in-person transactions and automatically transfer the purchase price from the seller's account through a network connection to bank systems or a telephone (Amir Shahi, 2010). Apart from payment, POS services included checking of account balance, account billing, postponing a purchase, and daily reports, which has the benefits of a small bank branch for its owners. With the POS introduction into the Nigerian economy, banking practices have been altered, and bank clients' affairs have been made easier by the incredible growth of ICT and its integration into financial markets and banking systems of the country. In addition to lowering the costs associated with providing these services, new technologies like bank electronization allow banks to improve the speed, quality, precision, and variety of their services.

The growth of electronic payments could significantly decrease social costs of a country's payment system (Humphrey, Willesson, Bergendahl, and Lindblom, 2006, in Ganjikhah, Rabiee, Karimzadegan Moghaddam, and Vahdat, 2017). POS is a totally known device in the world economy and, in a way, is considered as a catalyst in the global economic system. It offers several advantages, such as reducing wasted time and needless travel by bank customers and reducing the high level of security risk of moving around with physical cash, among other benefits.

POS is a device used for recording transactions in a store, which can be said to be a modern-day cash register. POS is a device that is placed in the middle of the sale of goods and services. According to Gilaninia, Fattahi, and Mousavian (2011), the transaction amount from an account holder (i.e., customer) is electronically taken from their accounts using an electronic card, while the card acceptor (seller) is paid. This eliminates the need for cash payments through physical transportation of money. According to Akerejola, Okpara, Ohikhena, and Emenike (2019), a point-of-sale A POS system is a device placed in a business site where customers swipe their electronic cards to pay for goods or services rather than using cash.

3. Benefits of POS and Cashless Policy

Abubakar, Soliu, & Adejumobi (2023) list some of the following advantages of using POS rather than cash-based transactions: Long lines in banking halls are eliminated, thereby reducing time wasted in the banking halls; conflicts between bank officials, such as cashiers, and bank customers are reduced; sales are increased; time spent collecting, counting, and sorting cash is eliminated; operations are made more convenient; the rate of armed robberies that involved bank customers is decreased; customer satisfaction is increased; the banks' large customer coverage is improved; and funds in circulation are made available for the nation's economic development. Fewer consumers are going to bank branches to make cash withdrawals and deposit funds into centralized accounts, reducing worn-out cash from the circulation, thereby reducing depreciation of banks' notes. Increasing public health and reducing infectious diseases brought on by coin and banknote contact, creating jobs for the POS operators, thereby creating wealth in the society, and finally making banking services available in all parts of the country.

4. Challenges Faced by POS Operators

4.1 Regulatory and Policy Instability

The POS legal framework of the central bank may be affected by frequent government changes of policy, which can lead to revisions to the design of the POS policies in Nigeria (Agoba, Abor, Osei, Sa-Audu, 2018). In the same vein, Aisen & Veiga (2010) noted that frequent changes of the governing structure of the Central Bank of Nigeria have the potential to shorten policymakers' horizons, resulting in suboptimal short-term macroeconomic policies. It has the potential to result in a more frequent change of policies. Monetary policy, managed by central banks, aims to stabilize prices by controlling the money supply, with a primary goal of low and stable inflation. It also supports economic growth and employment, acting countercyclically to address price stability and economic fluctuations. This is achieved through contractionary policy during high inflation and expansionary policy during economic weakness. Implementation typically involves the banking system and financial markets, utilizing tools like reserve requirements, open market operations, and policy rates. Central banks employ various frameworks, including monetary, exchange rate, and inflation targeting, and have increasingly adopted unconventional policies in response to severe economic downturns (CBN, 2017). Research has revealed that there is a time lag in the monetary policy transmission process that reduces the efficiency of the monetary policy (Fu & Liu, 2015). Funds do not always move to or from the sector or business that the central bank aims to regulate when it loosens or tightens its monetary policy.

4.2 Lack of Proper Training and Financial Literacy

The Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (2022) noted that the operators should ensure training as a key requirement for POS operators, which should include routine training on Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) concepts, identification of red flags and indicators of Money Laundering/Terrorist Financing (ML/TF) via the POS machine, and meticulous record-keeping of all transactions. Operators must conduct Know Your Customer (KYC) procedures for all customers and maintain integrity and professional ethics. The training should also involve learning and adhering to the proper procedures for reporting suspicious activities and suspicious customers through relevant channels. Furthermore, collaboration with banks to acquire electronic record tracking devices, such as biometric authentication machines for customer verification in line with KYC principles, is essential for safe operation of POS services. Continuous review of products and services in relation

to associated risks is also mandated for the POS operators.

5. Impact of Point of Sales

5.1 Financial Inclusion

Ogidi and Pam (2021) defined the concept of financial inclusion (TI) as a deliberate strategic effort to ensure that financial products and services are extended to the disadvantaged, vulnerable populace and average category of less privileged income recipients who cannot afford simple costs of savings, money deposits, pensions, credit facilities, and insurance. Consequently, the significance of FI is to provide low-income individuals or unprivileged people with basic financial products and services that are accessible, available, reliable, flexible, and reasonably convenient. (Ogidi and Pam, 2021; Eton, Mwosi, Okello-Obura, Turyehbwa, and Uwonda, 2021). Financial inclusion is the basis and channel of affordable and reachable means of financial empowerment that are inclusive of anyone with or without capital strength. Financial inclusion is a strong determinant of the delivery of financial services/products to the unbanked and the low-income earners of society (Inegbedion, Akande, Olalekan, Adeyemo, Adedugba, 2022). This is what POS has provided for the people of Benin City irrespective of their level of income and locations.

5.2 Employment Generation

In order to improve the payment system and advance its cashless strategy, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) implemented point-of-sale (POS) terminals for financial transactions in 2012. The number of POS terminals that banks have made available to mobile money businesses has been steadily expanding since the launch. It resulted from POS transactions' social acceptance. This opportunity has been explored by the majority of Nigerian youths who were desperately seeking employment opportunities and daily sources of revenue. Because the opportunity was seen as a potentially profitable business and job opportunity, the desire to earn a living despite Nigeria's devastated economy and unacceptable unemployment rate led to an astounding rise in the number of money merchants, or POS businesses in Benin City and it environs. Self-employment through the POS business has been discovered to be a significant source of income for many young people in Benin City. Young entrepreneurs in urban and semi-urban areas are using POS terminals to render banking services like cash withdrawals, airtime purchases, and bill payment to their customers. In 2024, the value of transactions through point of sale (POS) terminals in Nigeria increased to 18 trillion, making it an all-time yearly record (Akintaro, 2025). The operation of thousands of POS agents in Benin City has created direct and indirect employment opportunities.

5.3 Growth of Digital Economy

Nigeria's shift to a digital economy is carefully linked to the increased use of POS (Agboola, 2022). Cashless transactions can be enabled at POS terminals, which reduces the dependence on physical cash, enhances transaction efficiency, and supports e-commerce growth. In Nigeria, the term "cashless policy" refers to the encouragement and uptake of electronic payment methods as a substitute for cash transactions. In an attempt to modernize the nation's payment system, increase efficiency, and lessen reliance on cash, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) implemented it. Nwani, Nwaimo, & Kanu (2020) opined that cashless policy is aimed at promoting a more secure, convenient, and transparent payment ecosystem, contributing to economic growth and financial inclusion. Reducing the expenses related to handling currency, including printing and distribution, security, and counterfeiting risk, is one of the main drivers behind the adoption of the cashless policy. The switch from cash-based to electronic payments is made easier by POS transactions. The cashless policy increases tax collection, decreases leaks, and fosters openness by promoting the use of POS terminals. These factors have positive implications for economic growth, as they foster an enabling environment for business expansion and attract investments (Nwaka & Adeniran, 2021). Nigeria's cashless policy seeks to encourage the usage of electronic payment methods in place of cash transactions. It aims to increase economic growth, lower expenses, encourage financial inclusion, and improve efficiency.

Ezie, Mbabie, and Diyoke (2024) noted that while the broader goal is to reduce dependency on physical cash, the actual mechanics of this transition are intricately tied to technological modalities, primarily ATM transactions, Point of Sale (POS) systems, and web-based payments. Moving deeper into the digital domain, the POS payment system emerges as a game-changer. Ovia (2017) emphasizes the transformative potential of technology in his pragmatic definition of cashless policies. This transformation is readily apparent in POS systems. Instead of handling cash, businesses can use POS terminals to process debit and credit card transactions, increasing the speed, efficiency, and transparency of in-store purchases. These systems reflect the broader objectives of cashless initiatives: promoting efficiency and

transparency and potentially boosting economic growth by streamlining the retail sector.

5.4 Boost to Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)

One benefit of point-of-sale (POS) systems for micro, small, and medium-sized businesses is their ability to accept card payments and mobile transfers. This increases sales, lowers the chance of theft, and improves the breaking of records. Permits access to credit; creditworthiness can be assessed using digital transaction data.

5.5 Reduced Cost of Banking

POS transactions help in expanding financial services beyond physical branches. POS agents can be used by banks to reach customers instead of building new infrastructure in every locality. Adamu, Kawugana, and Abdullahi (2025). It benefits consumers' convenience and banking efficiency, as it helped to reduce crowded banking halls.

6. Theoretical Framework

Cashless Economy Theory was proposed by Humphrey, Pulley & Vesala (1996). The Cashless Economy Theory states that an economy operates more efficiently when transactions are conducted electronically rather than in cash. The introduction of POS transactions is part of Nigeria's effort to transition into a cashless economy. POS transactions help reduce cash handling risks and operational costs for banks. They contribute to the growth of digital banking and financial inclusion.

6.1 Innovation Diffusion Theory

The Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT) explains people's intention to use technology as a channel to carry out a conventional task. The theory was developed by Roger in 1983, and the critical factors that determine the adoption of an innovation at the general level are the following: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability (Rogers, 2004). The notion regarding the adoption of e-banking was examined by researchers like Gerrard and Cunningham (2003). Observability, triability, and complexity are the nominalized factors. The deconstructed theory of planned behavior is the source of the underlying theory used in this work. According to this idea, attitude, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms all have an impact on how people utilize technology. According to the hypothesis, intermediation efficiency increases as the percentage of currency outside banks to the total money supply decreases, and vice versa.

It is sufficient to say that intermediation efficiency will be good when the amount of cash outside of banks declines due to the rise of electronic payment methods, especially point-of-sale (POS) and other e-card products, as well as banking practices; otherwise, it will be negative. The goal of the diffusion of innovations hypothesis is to show how, why, and how quickly new concepts and innovations proliferate across cultural boundaries.

This concept was first put forth by Gabriel Tarde (1890), and it was made popular by rural sociology professor Everett Rogers in his 1962 book Diffusion of Innovations. He clarified that diffusion is the process by which an invention spreads over time among members of a social structure via particular channels. This concept was employed, among others, by Saparudin, Rahayu, Hurriyatin, and Sultan (2020). According to these two hypotheses, the sooner this nation's citizens embrace agent banking, the sooner business operations will improve and young entrepreneurs will be less impoverished, which would promote national economic growth and development.

7. Research Methodology

The study is exploratory and adopts the qualitative method of data collection and analysis on 20 participants who are point-of-sale operators in Benin City. The study made use of an in-depth interview guide in eliciting the desired responses from the participants, who were selected using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Secondary data such as publications and other sources relevant for the study were utilized. Participants were selected based on availability and willingness to give audience to the research team as it adopted all the ethics in social science research.

8. Discussion of Findings

Objective one: The challenges faced by POS operators

In examining the challenges faced by POS operators in Benin City, it shows that various operators interviewed are faced with both operational and financial challenges, as the first participant says:
Poor network connectivity is one of my main operating issues. Transactions can sometimes fail totally or take a while to process; that annoys clients and leads to long queues. This may result in a decline

in client loyalty and a loss of trust (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).

Another respondent added by saying:
Managing capital and float is extremely difficult from a financial standpoint. Obtaining enough cash to cover customer withdrawal requests can be a challenge, especially when banks are closed or cash is scarce. Taking out high-interest loans is necessary to continue operating at times (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).

A respondent summarized her response thus:
The importance of security cannot be overstated. We face fraud threats from both customers and cybercriminals. There have been instances of fake alerts, stolen cards, or individuals trying to tamper with the transactions. POS operators are at risk of financial loss due to all the above-mentioned factors (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).

One respondent said:
When delays are caused by technological glitches or a lack of funds, customers may become unhappy or impatient due to their expectation for fast and seamless service. It can be difficult to manage their expectations, particularly when problems are out of our control (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).

Another respondent added that:
At times, bank policies and regulations can be subject to sudden changes. It's crucial that we comply promptly, which means providing more documentation or altering costs. Misunderstandings caused by it impact our daily operations (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).

When asked the POS operators how they view the effects of security issues, network connectivity, and regulatory policies on their operations. The participant responses were thus:
Network issues are a constant source of discomfort. When the network is unavailable or running too slowly, we are unable to complete transactions, which annoys or turns off customers. Our daily revenue is directly impacted because we are compensated for each transaction (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).

One of our greatest concerns is security. Particularly with phony notifications and cloned cards, we are susceptible to fraud. Some frauds are difficult to identify, despite our best efforts to validate transactions. We suffer a direct financial loss each time we are a victim (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).

Regulations can be erratic, particularly those imposed by the government and banks. For instance, our profit margins are lowered when transaction costs are altered or withdrawal charges are capped. They occasionally fail to take into account how these rules impact small POS agents like ourselves (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).

Poor networks, fraud, and frequent legislative changes are all problems that hinder our capacity to expand. Delays or unsuccessful transactions erode customer trust, and we are unable to grow as we are constantly attempting to address issues rather than concentrating on expansion." (IDI, POS Operator—January, 2025).

We believe that greater assistance is needed for POS operators. The system is unstable; networks go down, we lose money to fraud, and nobody properly updates us on policy changes. We require improved communication between banks and authorities as well as more robust protection (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).

Objective Two: The Impact of POS

When asked of their views on the impact of the POS system on their daily work efficiency and customer service experience. Their responses were thus:

The POS system has made my job a lot easier and more organized. Everything is done automatically, even figuring out how much change to provide and writing receipts. It helps me service more customers in less time (IDI, POS Operator—January 2025).

I found the method a little challenging to use at first, but once I got used to it, it was very easy. Sales, returns, and even inventory inspections are no longer concerns for me (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).

Customers appreciate transactions that are accurate and swift. Errors in pricing and change are less frequent, and they immediately obtain receipts. The service appears more professional as a result (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).

Delays or outages in the POS system have a major effect on our work. We are compelled to employ manual processes, which aggravates clients and creates delays. It might be upsetting when technical issues keep you from offering timely service (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).

With the POS system, I can monitor sales and inventory without constantly checking. It allows you

to spend more time with customers and other obligations (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).

Although I think the system is useful, we weren't well trained when it was first put into place. Sometimes I have to ask my coworkers for help with certain chores. The impact of proper instruction would be substantial (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).

One of the best aspects is the ease with which daily reports may be retrieved. It makes responsibility and planning easier. What I can easily see and what isn't selling well (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).

When asked about their experiences with the influence of POS systems on inventory management and sales tracking.
The respondent's responses were thus:
Since using a POS system, I've seen a substantial improvement in my inventory management. It automatically changes stock levels after every sale, so I don't have to do human counts every day. It reduces errors and prevents overstocking or stockouts (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).

The POS system's real-time sales tracking tool is among its top features. I can see what's selling and when even if I'm not in the store. It helps me make business decisions faster (IDI, POS Operator, January 2025).
The POS system alerts me when stock levels are low, allowing me to restock supplies before they run out. The reordering procedure is made easier and faster by it (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).
I first spent a lot of time entering all the inventory data and setting up the POS system. There was a monetary investment as well. However, once everything was set up, I was able to save a significant amount of time (IDI, POS Operator—January, 2025).

The sales numbers that the POS system produces allow me to observe how well my company is doing. My ability to identify best-selling items, slow-moving commodities, and customer buying trends helps with promotion planning and increases sales (IDI, POS Operator—January, 2025).

Since putting the POS in place, I've noticed reduced inventory loss. It is harder for items to vanish unnoticed because every item is tracked. Employee accountability has surely grown as a result (IDI, POS Operator—January, 2025).
Most of the time, the system works perfectly; however, when it crashes or the network is down, I can't access my sales and inventory data. That might be a significant problem, especially at busy times (IDI, POS Operator-January, 2025).

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper has revealed the mixed experience of point-of-sale operation in Nigeria. The POS system enhances operational efficiency by making banking services available to all parts of Benin City, providing job opportunities for the operators of POS in Benin City. The POS operation in the city faces a number of challenges, including poor network connectivity, security risks from fraud and cybercrime, and inadequate communication from banks, which reduce its effectiveness and result in financial losses and eroded customer trust. In order to improve support and sustainability for POS operators in Benin City, the study recommends that the following measures be taken: establishing clear communication channels for regulatory updates; offering low-interest financial assistance and technical support that is available around-the-clock; improving network stability with dedicated infrastructure and automated failover systems; improving security through improved fraud detection and continuous training for the operators; and creating a community-based support system for the operators to share best practices and experiences.

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Socio-Economic Drivers of Benefits from Agri-Environmental Measures among Rural Farming Households in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract. The study investigated the socio-economic characteristics of rural farming households, the types of Agri-Environmental Measures (AEMs) adopted, and the determinants of benefits derived from participation in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. A total of 240 farmers were surveyed using a multi-stage sampling procedure. The results showed that 36.7% of respondents were aged 41–50 years, 67.5% were male, and 53.4% had secondary or tertiary education. Most farmers (80.8%) had over 10 years of farming experience, while 64.2% belonged to cooperatives and **70%** had extension contact. Farmers mainly adopted organic manure (71.7%), soil conservation (67.5%), controlled chemical use (65%), agroforestry (61.7%), and climate-smart practices (57.5%).Binary logistic regression showed that farm size ($\beta = 0.311$, $p = 0.003$**)**, cooperative membership ($\beta = 0.842$, $p = 0.000$), extension contact ($\beta = 1.124$, $p = 0.000$), income ($\beta = 0.514$, $p = 0.005$), and farming experience ($\beta = 0.042$, $p = 0.020$**)** significantly increased the likelihood of benefiting from AEMs. Age had a mild negative effect ($\beta = –0.028$, $p = 0.048$**)**, while education and household size were not significant. The study concluded that socio-economic readiness, institutional support, and access to information strongly shaped the probability of deriving benefits from AEM participation. Strengthening extension services and farmer cooperatives was essential for enhancing AEM effectiveness.

Keywords: Benefit, agricultural, environmental measures, participation and farming households.

1. Introduction

Sustainable agriculture has evolved beyond the mere pursuit of increased productivity; it now emphasizes responsible management of natural resources, balanced ecosystem functioning, and climate-resilient farming systems (FAO, 2021). Agricultural–Environmental Measures (AEMs) constitute formal and informal interventions that encourage farmers to adopt environmentally friendly practices such as agroforestry, soil conservation technologies, climate-smart farming, water-efficient irrigation, biodiversity conservation, waste minimisation, and controlled use of agrichemicals (OECD, 2020). Many rural farmers engage with AEMs based on the expectation of improved soil fertility, yield stability, reduced production costs, and long-term ecological balance. Despite the proliferation of AEM programmes, farmers do not derive benefits uniformly. Some farmers gain substantial economic and ecological advantages, whereas others participate but report marginal or no benefits. Understanding the socio-economic dynamics behind these variations remains critical for effective policy design (Ajayi and Kwame, 2019). Currently, the priority is to promote environmentally friendly production methods. In the shaping and management of natural and agricultural areas, methods of pro environmental activities are of particular importance. Organic and sustainable agriculture is therefore no longer perceived as inefficient and extensive. On the contrary, there is an increasing understanding that it creates both the opportunity to produce high-quality food, as well as

improve the natural environment (Kuczuk, 2005). This study therefore refocuses attention strictly on socio-economic characteristics of farmers, the types of AEMs implemented in the study area, and the logistic determinants influencing their probability of benefiting from AEMs. The structure of presentation mirrors an article format typical of applied rural development research.

This research therefore focuses on three major components:

- The socio-economic characteristics of the farmers in the study area
- The types of agricultural environmental measures practiced by the farmers in the study area.
- The determinants of benefits derived from agricultural environmental measures explained through binary logistic regression.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Study Area

The study was conducted in Akinyele Local Government Area (LGA) of Ibadan, OyoState Nigeria It has an area of 518km2. Its geographic coordinates are 7°23' 47" N and longitude3°55'0"E with her headquarters in Moniya, and shares boundaries with Afijio Local Government to the north, Lagelu Local Government to the East, Ido local government to the West and Ibadan North local government to the south. It has a population of 105,59 males and 106,217 females (NPC, 2006). The town has a tropical climate and it is generally experiences both raining and dry season as well as harmattan, (Efenakpo *et. al.* 2016). It is one of the eleven Local Governments that make up Ibadan metropolis. Akinyele Local government Area were created in 1976 and it occupies a land area of 464.892 square kilometres with a population density of 516 persons per square kilometre. Using 3.2% growth rate from 2006 census figures, the 2010 estimated population for the Local Government is 239,745(NBS, 2009).

Figure 1: *Map of the Akinleye Local Government Area*

2.2 Target Population

The targeted populations of the study were Akinyele local government area of Oyo state.

2.3 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Multi stage sampling techniques was used to carried out the study

Stage 1: Akinyele Local Government Area consists of twelve (12) wards. These are: Ward 1 – Ikereku, Ward 2 – Arulogun, Ward 3 – Olode, Ward 4 – Akinyele, Ward 5 – Iwokoto, Ward 6 – Ojoo, Ward 9 – Ajibade, Ward 10 – Moniya, Ward 11 – Olorisa-Oko, and Ward 12 – Iroko. Purposive sampling was employed at this stage to select wards where farming constitutes the major occupation of residents. Based on this criterion, five (5) wards were chosen out of the twelve. The selected wards include Ikereku (Ward 1), Arulogun (Ward 2), Olode (Ward 3), Moniya (Ward 10), and Iroko (Ward 12).

Stage 2: Random Selection of villages in each selected ward. Three (3) villages were selected in each selected ward. Ward 1 (Ikereku): Oyada, Alakeji, Talontan, Ward 2 (Arulogun): Igbooloyin, Aroro Yerokun, Aroro Kole. Ward 3 (Olode): Olode, Onigborogbo, Amosun, Ward 10 (Moniya): Moniya, Ajibade, Olorisaoko, Ward 12 (Iroko): Oretu, Iroko, Alasoosu.

In order to carry out this research, respondents were selected in each randomly selected villages which make up a total of 240 questionnaire that were administered for this study.

Stage 3: All 12 wards were also purposively selected farmers across Akinyele LGA. In the third stage, a list of registered farmers was collected from the department of agriculture at the LGA headquarters in Moniya

Table 1: Projected and sampled population of study sites

Study sites	List of Registered Farmers	Proportionally sampled population (2.5%)
Oyada	320	8
Alakeji	305	7
Talontan	480	10
Igbooloyin	280	7
Aroro-Yerokun	413	10
Aroro-Kole	1051	37
Olode	460	12
Onigbororogbo	439	11
Amosun	474	12
Moniya	1500	37
Ajibade	188	5
Olorisaoko	154	4
Oretu	800	15
Iroko	2300	57
Alasoosu	326	8
Total	**9167**	**240**

Measurement of Variable

Model specification followed the standard logistic form:

$In(P / (1 - P)) = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + ... + \beta_kX_k + \mu$
Where:
P = probability of benefiting from AEMs
$X_1 \ldots X_k$ = socio-economic variables (age, education, experience, income, extension access, etc.)
$\beta_0 \ldots \beta_k$ = regression coefficients
μ = error term

3. Results and Discussion

The age distribution in Table 2 showed that most respondents (36.7%) were between 41 and 50 years, which aligned with earlier findings that middle-aged farmers remained most actively involved in sustainable agriculture (Kassali and Adepoju, 2020). Farmers in this age group typically possessed adequate experience and adaptive skills needed for implementing environmental measures. The gender composition indicated that males dominated farming activities, reflecting the patriarchal land-ownership structure common in many rural settings (Adedayo and Ogunyinka, 2018). However, the 32.5% female participation suggested a growing level of inclusiveness. Also, educational attainment revealed that 53.4% of respondents had secondary or tertiary education. This was considered positive because education generally improved farmers' understanding of environmental policies, technical information, and openness to trying new practices (Nwachukwu and Odoemenem, 2019). Furthermore, household

sizes showed moderate dependency levels, while farming experience indicated that 80.8% of respondents had more than 10 years of experience. This suggested that most farmers had accumulated substantial indigenous knowledge and were familiar with resource-management practices. In addition, from Table 2, farm sizes were predominantly small-scale, with most respondents cultivating less than 3 hectares. This pattern was typical of the agricultural structure in rural Nigeria (FMARD, 2022). Cooperative membership was relatively high (64.2%), indicating that most farmers belonged to social groups that enhanced access to credit, training, and information. Such social capital was commonly associated with higher participation in environmental measures (Eneji and Ocholi, 2021).it was revealed that extension contact was also high (70%), demonstrating that many respondents maintained regular interactions with extension agents who served as intermediaries for AEM training and incentives (World Bank, 2020). Lastly income distribution showed that most respondents earned ₦300,000–₦600,000 annually, reflecting a modest economic status. Overall, the socio-economic characteristics portrayed a farming population capable of understanding and adopting AEMs, although small farm sizes and moderate-income levels likely constrained the extent of adoption.

Table 2: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 240)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	≤30 years	28	11.7
	31–40 years	54	22.5
	41–50 years	88	36.7
	>50 years	70	29.1
Gender	Male	162	67.5
	Female	78	32.5
Education	No formal education	46	19.2
	Primary	66	27.5
	Secondary	82	34.2
	Tertiary	46	19.2
Household size	1–4 persons	58	24.2
	5–8 persons	142	59.2
	>8 persons	40	16.6
Farming experience	<10 years	46	19.2
	10–20 years	112	46.7
	>20 years	82	34.1
Farm size	<1 ha	52	21.7
	1–3 ha	126	52.5
	>3 ha	62	25.8
Cooperative membership	Yes	154	64.2
	No	86	35.8
Extension contact	Yes	168	70.0
	No	72	30.0
Annual income	< ₦300,000	64	26.7
	₦300,000–₦600,000	108	45.0
	> ₦600,000	68	28.3

The result in Table 3 revealed that farmers in the study area adopted multiple types of Agricultural–Environmental Measures (AEMs), reflecting soil conservation needs, climate-related pressures, and recommendations from extension agents. Organic manure and composting (71.7%) emerged as the most widely adopted practice. This aligned with the increasing recognition that organic inputs reduced production costs and improved soil quality (Oladele & Adebisi, 2020). Also, soil conservation techniques (67.5%), including contouring and terracing, remained essential for controlling erosion, particularly in areas with sloped farmlands. In addition, agroforestry, adopted by 61.7% of respondents, reflected a growing interest in integrating trees into cropping systems. This practice was known to improve microclimates, enhance biodiversity, and provide additional income streams (Mercer, 2019). Controlled chemical use (65%) suggested progress toward safer agrochemical management, which had been strongly promoted through extension services. Furthermore water-management practices (42.5%) recorded relatively low adoption, which might have been influenced by infrastructural and financial limitations. Lastly, biodiversity conservation (35.8%) had the lowest adoption rate, likely because such practices often lacked immediate economic benefits unless supported by incentives (UNEP, 2020).

Table 3: Types of AEMs Adopted by Respondents in the Study Area

AEM Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Soil conservation/terracing	162	67.5
Agroforestry	148	61.7
Organic manure/composting	172	71.7
Cover cropping/mulching	134	55.8
Water management/irrigation efficiency	102	42.5
Controlled chemical use/IPM	156	65.0
Climate-smart practices	138	57.5
Biodiversity conservation	86	35.8

The Table 3 below revealed that a binary logistic regression model was used to determine factors influencing benefits derived from AEMs. Age (β = –0.028, p = 0.048), age had a negative effect, suggesting that younger farmers were slightly more likely to report benefits. Younger farmers may be more experimental and more likely to implement AEM recommendations fully (Adeyemi and Bello, 2021). In term of Farming Experience (β = 0.042, p = 0.020). This Implies that more experienced farmers were significantly more likely to benefit. Experience enables them to understand ecological responses and manage AEM practices optimally. Also, positive relationship existed in term of Farm Size (β = 0.311, p = 0.003), larger farm sizes increased the probability of benefiting. This is consistent with empirical reports that AEMs yield greater visible improvements on larger holdings due to economies of scale (Evenson and Gollin, 2019). Cooperative Membership (β = 0.842, p = 0.000) were 2.32 times more likely to benefit. Cooperatives facilitate training access, group incentives, and learning exchanges (Musa and Fajobi, 2020). Extension Contact (β = 1.124, p = 0.000). This implies that extension access significantly increased the odds of benefiting (Expβ = 3.08). This aligns with previous findings that extension-driven AEM training enhances correct practice application (World Bank, 2020). In addition, the Income level (β = 0.514, p = 0.005). The higher-income farmers were 1.67 times more likely to benefit, probably due to their better ability to invest in required materials, equipment, or labour. Education (p = 0.061), education was positive but not statistically significant at $p < 0.05$; however, its positive direction aligns with the expectation that better-educated farmers manage technologies more efficiently.

Table 4: Logistic Regression Estimates for Determinants of Benefits from AEM Participation

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	Odds Ratio (Expβ)	p-value
Age	-0.028	0.014	0.97	0.048**
Education (years)	0.062	0.033	1.06	0.061
Household size	-0.015	0.027	0.98	0.563
Farming experience	0.042	0.018	1.04	0.020**
Farm size	0.311	0.102	1.36	0.003***
Cooperative membership	0.842	0.217	2.32	0.000***
Extension contact	1.124	0.254	3.08	0.000***
Income	0.514	0.181	1.67	0.005***
Constant	-3.417	0.824	—	0.000

*p < 0.01, p < 0.05

4. Conclusion

The study offers a refocused and evidence-driven analysis of how socio-economic characteristics interact with AEM participation outcomes. The socio-economic profile shows a predominance of middle-aged, moderately educated, experienced small-scale farmers with substantial cooperative involvement and extension exposure. The types of AEMs widely practised include composting, soil conservation, agroforestry, controlled chemical use, and climate-smart interventions. Logistic regression results show that farm size, income, extension contact, cooperative membership, farming experience, and age significantly determine whether farmers derive benefits from participating in AEMs. The findings reaffirm that the successful impact of environmental agricultural programmes relies heavily on socio-economic readiness, institutional support, and access to knowledge.

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Public Sector Reforms and Anti-Corruption Policies in Nigeria

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Abstract. This study examines how public sector reforms and anti-corruption policies and agencies were implemented and established in Nigeria from colonial times to the present. Using the hybrid theoretical framework that incorporates institutional, principal-agent and social norms theories, the paper closely studies the policies and institutions that different governments used to fight corruption. These include early actions like the Foster-Sutton Tribunal (1956), the Recovery of Public Property Decree, 1984, the establishment of the Code of Conduct Bureau, 1979, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offenses Commission, (2000), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, (2003) and recent reforms like the Proceeds of Crime (Recovery and Management) Act, (2022) and the Digital Asset Management Systems started by President Tinubu (2024). While these initiatives reflect a consistent policy commitment to transparency and accountability, the study points out ongoing challenges, such as elite impunity, political interference, weak enforcement, lack of institutional continuity, overlapping roles and limited public confidence. Despite some good efforts, Nigeria's fight against corruption has often been weakened by societal norms and structural contradictions. The study concludes by proposing a holistic approach to reform and strengthen anti-corruption agencies to ensure judicial independence and foster a culture of accountability across all the levels of government. This study adds to the broader discourse on governance in Nigeria by offering a theory-based analysis of reform paths and their different results based on political history.

Keywords: Corruption, Public Sector Reform, Anti-Corruption Policies and Anti-Corruption Agencies

1. Introduction

This paper provides a solid footing for understanding contemporary approaches to combating corruption through public sector reform strategies. Corruption in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon; its origins can be traced to the colonial administrative structures and the cultural norms that gradually evolved to rationalize or even normalize its presence within governance. During the colonial period, the British established an administrative system that significantly disrupted existing traditional governance structures. In their place, they introduced extractive institutions primarily designed to advance colonial economic and political interests (Adebayo, 2001). This new order was characterized by a highly decentralized administrative framework controlled both directly and indirectly by British officials and their local agents.

Although there were no comprehensive policies specifically aimed at addressing corruption, the colonial authorities employed various indirect mechanisms to exert control over native institutions and civil servants. Efforts to maintain discipline and reduce misconduct relied heavily on bureaucratic procedures and the imposition of British civil service values (Ekeh, 1975). These included colonial civil service regulations, which outlined codes of conduct and disciplinary measures for public officers.

Among the legal instruments introduced were the Native Authority Ordinance, which granted traditional rulers' authority over local governance, and the Criminal Code Ordnance of 1916, which formally defined offenses, such as bribery, extortion and fraud (Falola and Heaton, 2008). These ordnances laid a foundational legal framework for dealing with corruption. However, the same instruments also vested broad and often unchecked powers in the hands of local chiefs and native authorities (Osoba, 1996).

These powers were frequently abused and enforcement was selective at best. Corruption thrived in this environment in which legal codes and bureaucratic discipline existed on paper, while in reality, impunity, favouritism and institutionalized exploitation prevailed.

In practice, prosecutions for corruption or abuse of power were rare. Colonial authorities only intervened when such misconduct threatened taxation systems, disrupted local order or undermined colonial control. Beneath the appearance of bureaucratic order, therefore, lay a system that was deeply flawed and prone to corruption, arbitrary enforcement and abuse of power. While their structural frameworks were retained, so too were the ethical flaws embedded in them. Within this framework, public office became less about communal responsibility and more about serving the interests of colonial state and, increasingly, individual officeholders. What emerged as administrative manipulation under colonial rule gradually evolved into an entrenched culture of patronage and self-enrichment. This culture did not end with independence; rather, it was inherited and adapted by successive Nigerian administrations. Thus, British colonial administration bequeathed to Nigeria a bureaucratic culture that was highly hierarchical, largely opaque and prone to manipulation and abuse. The enduring influence of colonial legacies has continued to shape the character of the country's public sector, affecting not only how institutions operate but also how corruption remains deeply embedded within them despite the numerous efforts to reform the system by successive civilian and military administrations.

1.1 Conceptual Definitions

To effectively address the subject matter of this paper, it is essential to understand the central concepts that constitute public sector reforms and anti-corruption frameworks. This section attempts to present comprehensive definitions of the four major concepts: corruption, public sector reforms, anti-corruption policies and anti-corruption agencies. Global institutions like the World Bank (WB) and Transparency International (TI) have shaped how we think about and fight corruption for many years. The WB (1997) sees corruption, which focuses on wrongdoings in government, as the misuse of public office for private gain. TI (2023) has a wider view, defining corruption as abusing entrusted power for private gain. Both definitions focus on using power wrongly for personal gain but differ in scope. The WB looks at the public sector, while TI includes the private sector. Still, TI's assumes that power is legitimately given, ignoring situations of power taken through force, like military coups or revolutions.

Joseph Nye (1967) goes beyond the World Bank's and Transparency International's views, providing a more detailed definition of corruption. He described it as conduct that deviates from the official responsibilities of a public position to gain private benefits for oneself, family or friends. These benefits can be monetary or non-monetary like influence or status. Nye also pointed out actions that break formal rules designed to stop personal interest from affecting public decisions, such as favoritism and patronage. He separated institutional corruption from personal moral lapses like adultery, which might be unethical but are not corruption unless they involve public duty. Arguing on a different perspective, Osoba (2007) characterized corruption as detrimental behavior that yields undue advantage conflicting with established legal and ethical standards. This behavior weakens the ability of authorities to ensure the well-being of all citizens.

Robbins (2000) shared this view, questioning if corruption is only about individual actions. He contended that corruption can become part of a system of accepted rules and practices, showing existing inequalities and strengthened by cooperative networks. From this standpoint, corruption is not merely about single bad people, but as a result of structural conditions that permit, justify or even reward the behavior. In some societies or political settings, corrupt acts may seem routine or required to exist within the system (Mustapha, 2010). Therefore, corruption should be viewed as a systemic problem concerning institutional setups and social standards as much as personal ethics.

Omoyefe (2008) viewed Public Sector Reforms (PSRs) as a sweeping change to the government's administrative system designed to bring more competence, professionalism and financial responsibility to the public sector. This view stresses that real improvements require fixing fundamental systemic problems. The African Development Bank (ADfB) (2005) defined PSRs as actions taken to boost the ability of institutions to create policy and deliver services in ways that are competent, efficient and responsible. Reform, then, is a planned attempt to make an existing system work better; it doesn't happen by chance. In the public sector, this means reorganizing institutions and processes to fix structural and procedural problems. It includes making deliberate changes to strengthen governance and improve public service (Olaleye, 2001, Olaopa, 2003). The main goal of PSRs is to make government institutions more efficient, responsive and generally

competent. Revising how things are done, clarifying job roles and changing how groups are set up can make this happen (Anazobe & Okoye, 2012). Changes usually fit into two groups: how things are done and how things are structured. The first one is about making internal steps better. This means making work flow smoother, setting goals for how well people should do their jobs and helping workers gain skills. The second one is about joining, combining or splitting up groups to make them easier to control, more specialized or clearer in what they do. So, change should be seen as a plan to put public groups in a better spot to meet today's rules (Caiden, 1991). It tries to boost what groups can do, make their aims sharper and, in the end, how the government works better and more effective (Caiden, 1969).

Anti-corruption policies are sets of laws, rules, strategies and institutional methods created by governments or groups to stop, find and punish fraud. These policies offer frameworks for how public officials should act when doing their work and how state resources should be managed fairly at all levels. The goals are to build a culture where good behavior is valued and the misuse of resources discouraged and punished. These policies usually include laws like the Criminal Code, Panel Code, Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provision), the Corrupt Practices and Other Offenses Act (2000) and the Treasury Single Account (TSA). In theory, these policies are the government's plan to ensure the law is followed, safeguard public trust in institutions and promote good governance. So, they are designed to keep corruption from happening in governance and society.

In conclusion, corruption generally involves using a position of power for personal benefit, such as accepting bribes, stealing funds or committing fraud. Anti-corruption agencies are specialized bodies set up to investigate corruption cases and prosecute offenders. These groups can exist at the national, regional and international levels and usually have specific legal powers to investigate, collect evidence and press charges. They play a key role in keeping governance transparent and accountable, acting as watchdogs to ensure public officials and institutions follow ethical standards. Governments put anti-corruption policies in place to prevent corruption, detect it when it occurs and punish those who participate in it. Anti-corruption policies and agencies are important tools for fighting corruption, with definitions focused on preventing the abuse of power for personal gain and enforcing accountability.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

To grasp the ongoing problems facing public sector changes and the fight against corruption in Nigeria, a strong theoretical base is necessary. This research uses hybrid theories, combining the Institutional Theory, the Principal-Agent Theory and the Social Norms Theory, because this method provides benefits. Since social organizations are complex, one theory cannot explain them completely. Hybrid theories combine viewpoints noting many factors that have an impact on something. They let researchers look at things at societal, organizational and individual levels connecting behavior and structure. This plan ensures complete understanding by noting the interactions between individuals, organizations and the society. Because each theory has weaknesses, this method makes up for them by combining the strengths from different frameworks to lower bias, errors and oversimplification.

The use of hybrid theories also provides helpful ways to look at the limits and issues in Nigeria's change process. The Institutional Theory says that people and groups act based on both logical choices and the written and unwritten rules, standards and cultural hopes that are part of organizations (Scott, 1995, Meyer and Rowan, 1977 and DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). It also points out decoupling, where groups officially accept change policies to look legitimate but keep doing things in the old way (Meyer and Rowan, 1977, DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). The Principal-Agent Theory looks at how the ties between two sides—principals (the public or government) and agents (like public workers or agencies)—can cause disagreements. This happens when the agent acts in their own interest instead of the principal's (Jensen and Meckling, 1976; Ross, 1973, Fama, 1980). The Social Norms Theory says that people act based on what they see as normal (descriptive norms) and what society approves of (injunctive norms) (Bicchieri, 2006, Cialdini, et al, 1990, Coleman, 1990). The key idea is that if corruption is common and accepted, people are more likely to do it even if they think it is wrong. This theory stresses that people act depending on the situation. They don't just act based on their own morals; they react to how others act and what they expect. There is a common idea in some societies that refusing to be corrupt could lead to being left out, punished, lose money or not be respected, while going along with it makes the be accepted and protected or move ahead.

2. Nigeria's Anti-Corruption Efforts: An Overview

Corruption in Nigeria has historical roots predating independence, with its origins traceable to the colonial period, specifically the 1940s and 1950s. Upon achieving independence in 1960, Nigeria's new leaders inherited a governmental framework that closely resembled its colonial predecessor. Instead of reforming this structure, the post-independence government adopted it wholesale. This inherited system, lacking institutional checks and balances, was ill-equipped for the transparent and accountable management of public resources. Importantly, the colonial system normalized behaviors, such as favoritism, nepotism, exploitation and a lack of public accountability. These practices became deeply ingrained and persisted even after the departure of the British and influenced governance in the postcolonial state.

The nascent Nigerian political class was placed in positions of authority but lacked personal wealth to support their political activities. Because the government's treasury was the only readily available source of funds, elites often resorted to appropriation. This led to the setting up of several ad-hoc investigative commissions and tribunals in the late 1950s and early 1960s, which validated the extensive history of corruption in the nation. A few examples were the Foster-Sutton Tribunal of Inquiry (1959), which looked into claims of corruption and mismanagement at the Eastern Nigerian Marketing Board, centering on financial issues and abuse of power tied to leading NCNC politicians, such as Nnamdi Azikiwe. The Coker Commission of Inquiry (1962) was created to check claims of corruption and financial mismanagement at the Western Nigerian Marketing Board and other public groups under the Action Group government headed by Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The Elias Commission of Inquiry (1966) investigated claims of mismanagement at the Nigerian Railway Corporation and public businesses during the First Republic.

These commissions and tribunals provided a base for the methods, ideas and limits that came to be seen in Nigeria's later anti-corruption plans under both military and civilian governments. The commissions found large-scale fraud and the misuse of state money. Even though the commissions showed corruption and poor management, their ideas were not fully put in place and not many strong penalties were given. Because of this, the results seemed more symbolic than real. Still, early commissions like the Coker Commission did help to make corruption a common topic in national talks as a system-wide issue that needed the public to get involved. By the time the military took firm control after 1966, fighting corruption had become a reason for military takeovers and a key part of how the government worked. To give an example, the leaders of the 1966 coup said corruption was the reason why they toppled the First Republic.

The 1966 coup brought military personnel into the country's administration, which made accountability more difficult because the military is structured in a hierarchical and dictatorial system. The state was ruled by decrees, which took the place of standard legal or constitutional procedures. This situation allowed corruption to worsen within the civil and security services, as well as in public procurement and state-run businesses. The first military administration under General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi (January –June 1966) was transitional and did not institute formal anti-corruption agencies or sweeping policy reforms, such as constituting formal tribunals, commissions of inquiry or asset recovery mechanisms. However, his administration emerged directly from a military coup that justified itself on widespread corruption and mismanagement. General Ironsi was toppled by General Gowon (1966-1975) whose government started post-war rebuilding, but did not have a specific anti-corruption plan throughout its reign. However, rules like the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree of 1972, which tried to decrease foreign control over the economy and increase local involvement, were used as a way to reduce foreign exploitation of the country's economy and corruption, like using locals as fronts for foreign companies. Gowon's lack of action on major corruption cases, like the claims against Minister Joseph Tarka and Governor Joseph Gomwalk in 1974, showed that he did not do enough to stop corruption from becoming systemic in his government (Akpan, 2015, and Elaigwu, 2009). His government was overthrown and accused of corruption and misuse of public money by General Murtala Muhammed (1975-76), who promised to fight corruption. That led to the indictment, dismissal and confiscation of the assets of General Gowon's Military Governors and one civilian Administrator and a civil service purge affecting more than 10,000 civil servants fired for inefficiency and for corruption.

General Obasanjo (1975-1979) moved away from ad-hoc commission and tribunal means of fighting graft and created the first anti-corruption agencies, the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) and the Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT). The CCB was created by the 1979 Constitution to encourage honesty and accountability among public officials. The agency was created to stop corruption and make sure public officials followed

ethical rules. It set the stage for accountability by requiring asset declarations, prohibiting conflicts of interest and abuse of power and preventing dishonest actions. The CCT is a court-like body that makes sure public officials follow the Code of Conduct. The tribunal makes judgments on violations of the code, such as false declarations, conflicts of interest or abuse of power. So, the two agencies operated together.

President Shehu Shagari's administration (1979-1984) took over a country facing economic hardship and endemic corruption, where patronage was common and the public used to military rule. As a civilian leader, Shagari tried to fight corruption through legal means. He retained the CCB and CCT and established the Ministry of National Guidance in 1982 to promote ethical reorientation, national discipline and patriotism among Nigerians as a response to rising concerns about corruption. The administration introduced the Economic Stabilization Act in 1981to fix financial mismanagement by limiting import license misuse to lower fraud. It also planned to cut government spending and reduce embezzlement. The administration sometimes started investigations into corruption claims, such as probes into the Green Revolution Program's mismanagement. These actions were connected to the administration's fight against corruption. These measures didn't work well because of existing issues, weak institutions and political limits. This caused widespread public anger, which led to the 1983 coup and the rise of General Muhammed Buhari's government.

General Buhari's 1984-1985 government launched the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) to fight corruption and bring back discipline and integrity to Nigeria. The WAI campaign addressed corruption and pushed for accountability. Through the instrumentality of the Recovery of Public Property (Special Military Tribunals) Decree No. 3 of 1984, many politicians and businessmen from the previous Shagari government were tried and jailed for crimes like embezzlement and corruption and their properties taken over. The government also cut the number of Ministries and forced many senior officials suspected of corruption to retire, all to reduce corruption in government offices. Decrees 2 and 4 allowed the government to detain people without trial if they were seen as a threat and restricted press freedom. These rules helped them to act swiftly against corruption, but as these authoritarian ways brought about no system changes, corruption continued even after General Buhari was overthrown in 1985 by General Babangida.

From 1985 to 1993, General Babangida's anti-corruption efforts involved dismantling the authoritarian War Against Indiscipline (WAI) and creating the Mass Mobilization for Self-Reliance, Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) in 1987. MAMSER aimed to promote ethical conduct in public service, discouraging corruption, dishonesty, electoral and census fraud and ethnic and religious prejudice. Another strategy was implementing the International Monetary Fund and World Bank's Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) to reshape Nigeria's economy through deregulation, privatization and liberation. This policy sought to lessen bureaucratic issues, government control and corruption opportunities in state-controlled areas. However, MAMSER and the economic program did not fix the main issues. Instead, they made economic inequality and corruption opportunities worse. Near the end of the government, the National Orientation Agency, part of the Federal Ministry of Information, was created by Decree 100 in 1993. It was meant to cover up the failures of MAMSER and the economic plan. The agency's main job was to communicate what the government was doing and encourage love for the country, unity and growth. But it didn't do much to help fight corruption during that time. Thus, the regime ended in 1993 and became known for embedding corruption as part of the system.

When General Sani Abacha came into power (1993-1998), the country was having problems with politics, elections and the economy. Yet, the government did attain some economic goals. It grew the foreign reserves from $494 million in 1993 to $9.6 billion and lowered the external debt from $36 billion to $27 billion. The reduction of inflation was from 54% to 8.5% and stopped the privatization plans that General Babangida had started. These actions helped to bring some financial order, letting the government start helpful programs like the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF). This fund paid for infrastructure work all over the country, including roads, healthcare and schools. The government's War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC), started by the NOA, tried to teach Nigerians about discipline, honesty and the importance of fighting corruption. It expanded on past efforts like WAI by General Buhari, using public campaigns, workshops and the media. However, the government also created an atmosphere where those in charge felt they could get away with corruption. General Abacha was accused of monumental corruption, as billions of dollars looted were repatriated from his accounts after his sudden death in 1998.

General Abdulsalam Abubakar's relatively brief time in office, from 1998 to 1999 (lasting eleven months), constrained the extent and long-term viability of

reforms and strategies against corruption. His administration focused on establishing political stability rather than creating structured anti-corruption programs. While not known for aggressively combating corruption, he is recognized for setting the stage for democratic governance. Still, his administration should be viewed as a preliminary step toward the more detailed anti-corruption reforms started under President Olusegun Obasanjo between 1999 and 2007. His administration had placed anti-corruption at the forefront, a move unseen in previous regimes. During this time, key anti-corruption bodies were set up with the aim of tackling Nigeria's deep-seated corruption, getting back stolen assets and funds and rebuilding confidence in the government. The fight against corruption was waged via agencies like the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offenses Commission (ICPC) (2000) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) (2004). The ICPC's job was to deal with corruption in public office, centering on bribery, abuse of authority and similar crimes. The EFCC was created to look into and bring to court economic and financial crimes, such as money laundering, fraud and corruption. By 2007, the agency had secured over 150 convictions, including some high-profile cases against politicians, Governors and business people. Cases such as the prosecution of the former Inspector General of Police, Tafa Balogun, for embezzling over N13 billion (*Human Rights Watch,* 2010, August 17) and recovering billions of dollars of Abacha's loot exemplify this (Enweremadu, 2013). Other anti-corruption efforts were the Money Laundering Act of 2003, which tightened rules to control illegal financial activities and matched worldwide standards like those of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Public Sector Reforms were put in place to increase openness in public procurement, cut down on bureaucratic waste and make civil servants more accountable. The Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (BMPIU) created to make sure government contracts were open and honest saved billions of Naira by stopping inflated contracts. Pension Reforms (2004), which introduced the Contributory Pension Scheme, tackled the issues of mismanagement, corruption and lack of accountability in the pension system. In 2004, the regime started Nigeria's participation in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which sought to ensure transparency in revenues from oil and gas, a sector that had long been plagued by corruption. These agencies and numerous Acts became the main focus of the regime's anti-corruption efforts. Despite advances, the administration's attempts to bring corrupt individuals to justice faced criticism for allegedly targeting political opponents of the President and the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP).

President Umaru Yar'Adua (2007-2010) started his term with a clear dedication to the rule of law, good governance and fighting corruption. He showed this personally through open actions and declaring his assets, setting a new standard for those in public positions. Even though his time in office was cut short by his death in 2010, his administration tried to be different from that of President Obasanjo. He put more importance on changes to organizations, proper procedure and openness. He made the EFCC and ICPC stronger by making sure that all anti-corruption cases followed correct legal steps. This helped to remove the perception that these agencies were only targeting certain people or were being used for political reasons. Yar'Adua's administration made the Bureau of Public Procurement Act of 2007 a formal part of how the government worked and was designed to make public purchasing more open and fair. The administration also pushed for sticking to the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2007, which was intended to control how government departments and agencies spent money. He stopped the questionable sale of refineries and stopped spending billions on kerosene subsidies. His Seven-Point Agenda, which included good governance, also covered things like making election better, changing the civil service, following the rule of law and making organizations responsible, all of which lined up with his goal of reducing corruption by improving systems and oversight. The resignation of the Federal Minister of Health, Adenike Grange on 26, March 2008, suggested strength and not weakness in Yar'Adua's attempts to curb corruption in Nigeria. Even though systems were improved, putting them into action was slow and many important corruption cases stalled out or were secretly dropped.

President Yar'Adua's death, Ebele Jonathan, who was his Vice President, took office in 2010 and was later elected in 2011. His time in office saw public complaints about corruption in the oil and gas sector (particularly under the Minister of Petroleum Resources, Diezani Alison-Madueke), the subsidy system and how the government was generally managed. Anti-corruption agencies became less active and faced political limits, even though they did manage to convict some low and mid-level officials. Prominent political figures seemed to be untouchable. Still, it's important to remember that in 2012, he set up the Aig-Imoukhuede Presidential Committee to look into fuel subsidy fraud. The investigation showed a lot of corruption, like fake payments to nonexistent oil marketers. The panel indicted 21 firms in N382 billion subsidy scams (*Daily Post Nigeria*, 2012, July 24). After that, the Nuhu Ribadu Petroleum Revenue Special Task Force (February 2012) checked the money coming in from the oil sector (*Sahara*

Reporters, 2012, February 8*)*. Even though these committees brought problems to light, their results were not fully used. One key thing the administration did was to start the Treasury Single Account (TSA), which was meant to put all government money into one account at the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). This was done to stop money from being lost and get rid of fake accounts. However, President Muhammed Buhari actually made this reform work. President Jonathan's Biometric Registration of Civil Servants helped to lower corruption and stop ghost workers. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) became law, letting people ask for information from public organizations. It helped to make things more responsible. Yet even with all of this, people thought Jonathan's administration responded to corruption problems instead of preventing them, even though it did set the stage for some changes in organizations.

President Muhammad Buhari (2015-2023) based his political image on fighting corruption. He promised Nigerians he would break from the past and bring back honesty to public office. His administration made fighting corruption a key part of its plan, starting many projects, reforms and investigations. These plans included prosecuting corrupt people, recovering looted funds and assets and reforming institutions to be more responsible and efficient. The Treasury Single Account (TSA), which started under President Jonathan, was fully put in place under Buhari. It made public organizations deposit their money into one account with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). This aimed to stop secret deals and fake accounts, saving Nigeria billions in costs and making public money visible. In 2016, the Whistleblower Policy gave Nigerians a reason to report corruption and money problems by paying them 2.5% -5% of the money recovered. This led to big finds of stolen money, like USD 43.449,947 million, GBP 27, 800 and N23.218,000 million found at an Ikoyi apartment (Flat 7B) owned by Mrs. Folahade Oke, wife of the then Girector- General of Nigeria's National Intelligence Agency, Ayo Oke, under the corporate guise of Chobe Ventures Limited, where she and her son were directors in 2017 (*Vanguard,* 2017, November 9, *BusinessDay* 2017, April 14, and *Punch Newspaper* 2017, May 6). Stronger anti-corruption agencies led to many Governors, Ministers, and other important people being arrested and prosecuted. Some examples include the cases of Colonel Sambo Dasuki (the National Security Adviser to President Jonathan), Babachir Lawal (Buhari's Secretary to the Federal Government who was fired for corruption) and Diezani Alison-Madueke (the former Petroleum Minister under President Jonathan). To prosecute corrupt people, the administration pushed for legal changes, like the Proceeds of Crime (Recovery and Management) Act, 2022, the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act 2019 and amending the Anti-Corruption Act, 2022. These gave the agencies more power to prosecute the accused. Putting in place the Integrated Personnel Information System (IPPIS) and Bank Verification Number (BVN) in public sectors, including universities, was a way to cut waste and eliminate ghost workers and bring about financial integrity. President Buhari's administration clearly made progress in reforming systems, asset recovery and working with other countries. It made Nigeria rank higher on some Transparency Indexes early in his time. Still, some people said that the fight against corruption was selective, slow in prosecution and protected political friends.

Since taking office in 2023, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's government has used different ways to fight corruption, including constitutional reforms, asset recovery, transparency and working with other countries in the West African region. Building on the Proceeds of Crime Act of 2022, Tinubu's plan shows a clear move toward accountability and using digital technology in government. The administration first worked on making anti-corruption groups like the EFCC, ICPC, NFIU and CCB stronger and responsive by giving them better leadership, more money and digital tools like block chain and forensic Artificial Intelligence (AI). Judicial changes were also started to speed up corruption trials and pay judges better remuneration (*Guardian Newspaper*, 2024, May 29). The government launched the Automated Asset Forfeiture Management System and created a central database of recovered assets in line with the Proceeds of Crime Act. These actions help the public to keep track of recovered assets that are put back into infrastructure (*The Nation* 2025, May 30). The EFCC also established a Fraud Risk Assessment and Control (FRAC) Unit to identify corruption- prone processes in public organizations (*PM News* Nigeria, 2024, December 28). To make these changes happen, President Tinubu used his role as the Chairman of ECOWAS to approve the organization's anti-corruption rules and funded the establishment of the headquarters for the Network of Anti-Corruption Institutions in West Africa (NACIWA) in Abuja, Nigeria. Tinubu's plan to fight corruption combines law enforcement, better institutions and transparency. As part of these efforts, the government removed a Minister, Betta Edu, in January 2024 because of corruption and got back N32.7 billion and $445,000 from such a decision (*AP News* 2024, January 9). Also, the administration took control of cash ($4.72 million, and N830.9 million) and property of 11-storey buildings at Ikoyi and Lekki Imore Industrial Park,

warehouses, land in Lagos and in Taxas (100 Cottonwood) from the former CBN Governor Godwin Emefilele, secured over 4,100 convictions and recovered N364 billion, including major foreign currency seizures (*ThisDay Live*, 2025, June 3).

However, since Tinubu's inauguration, there's been a noticeable decline in the prosecution of officials associated with the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) party. A notable example is Betta Edu, the former Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation. She was suspended and later removed from the Executive Council after public outrage followed her decision to transfer ₦585 million in grants intended for vulnerable groups into a private bank account. Even after substantial public funds were recovered by EFCC from her ministry, she has not faced prosecution and continues to move about freely, as if no misconduct took place (*Daily Post,* April, 8, 2024). Conversely, opposition figures such as Debo Ologunagba, Omolyele Sowore, Professor Usman Yusuf, Senator Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, and Dele Farotimi (author of "*Nigeria and its Criminal Justice System*") have faced swift and forceful charges (*Sahara Reporters*, January 30, 2025, *Insight Links*, January 30, 2025, *This Day Live,* February 1, 2025, *Guardian* (Nigeria) August 12, 2025, *AllAfrica*, August 12, 2025, and *Premium Times*, December 4, 2025).

3. From Policy to Practice: The Paradox of Persistent Corruption

Nigeria has consistently tried to fight corruption through reforms and specialized agencies from colonial times to the present. While these efforts have sometimes worked, they haven't really reduced corruption for good. Instead, it has become more deeply rooted, changing and adapting within the very systems designed to stop it. Early attempts like the Foster-Sutton Tribunal (1956) and the Coker Commission (1962) were mostly reactions to political conflicts and didn't create lasting ways to ensure accountability (Okonkwo, 2007). During military rule, leaders like General Buhari and General Babangida set up tribunals, issued decrees and started anti-corruption campaigns. Still, these actions were marred by selective enforcement and lack of transparency (Lawal and Tobi, 2006). When democracy returned, the approach changed. Agencies like the CCB, ICPC and EFCC were created and legislations enacted like the Freedom of Information Act (2011) and the Whistleblower Policy (2016) aimed to make things more transparent and involve citizens (Adebanwi, 2012; Ojukwu and Shopeju, 2010). These efforts led to the prosecution and jailing of many politicians and public servants. For example, the General Buhari military administration (1983 to 1985) prosecuted through tribunals politicians from the Second Republic (1979-1984). A lot of state Governors, Ministers and public servants, such as Ambrose Alli, Abubakar Rimi, Bola Ige and Jim Nwobodo (the former Governors of Bendel, Kano, Oyo and Anambra states, respectively) were tried for stealing and misusing their power (Falola and Heaton, 2008). Many got long prison sentences, sometimes more than 100 years in total, but these were often changed and the accused released after Buhari was overthrown in 1985 (Akinyemi, 2013). In contrast to General Buhari, General Babangida did not have a strong record of prosecuting corrupt officials. Those officials who were tried and jailed by the prior administration were released and had their confiscated assets returned after the repeal of Decree 4 of 1984. Nevertheless, his administration was consumed by the alleged mismanagement of the $12.4 billion Gulf War Oil Windfall, as detailed in the Okigbo Panel Report of 1994. Not a single individual was prosecuted for such monumental looting. But General Abacha's time in office saw huge amounts of looting and over $3 billion was taken back from the General's foreign accounts (TI, 2022). Under President Obasanjo, anti-corruption groups tried and found guilty the former Inspector General of Police Tafa Balogun in 2005 for corruption and money laundering, which led to a jail term (*The Guardian*, 2005, November 23). The former Bayelsa State Governor, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, was also arrested and found guilty of looting and jailed, but he was pardoned by the state in 2013 because of political reasons (*Sahara Reporters*, (2005). During Yar'Adua's time, Delta state Governor James Ibori was taken through Nigerian courts for misappropriating millions before he was finally found guilty in the United Kingdom in 2012 (Akinwotu, 2021). Under President Buhari, important cases came up, like the one involving the former National Security Adviser, Colonel Sambo Dasuki, who was accused of misappropriating $2.1 billion meant to buy weapons. Reports show Colonel Dasuki was not the only one who misused funds allocated to procure arms *Premium Times*, 2015, December 1). The EFCC charged Lt. General Kenneth T. J. Minimah (retired), previously Chief of Army Staff, with diverting about N13.8 billion meant for arms (EFCC, 2021, March 15). The Federal High Court in Abuja stopped the trial in December 2021 because of ongoing disputes about jurisdiction. Air Vice Marshal Alex Badeh (retired), formerly Chief of Defence Staff, was accused of misusing around N4 billion from defense funds (EFCC, 2016, March 7). Major General Emmanuel J. Atewe (retired), who once commanded the Joint Task Force (Operation Pulo Shield), is said to have misused

about N8.5 billion from NIMASA funds given to the task force (EFCC, March 10, 2016). Former Governors Joshua Dariye and Jolly Nyame of Plateau and Taraba were found guilty of corruption and given long prison sentences (though both were later pardoned because of political pressure) (*Punch,* April 20, 2022 and *Vanguard* 2022, April 20). President Jonathan's Petroleum Minister, Diezani Alison-Madueke has had substantial assets seized, such as jewelleries, buildings and still being investigated while a refugee in the United Kingdom (Oluwole, (2021). Even though some people have been found guilty and chosen for prosecution, cases take a long time in court. Political meddling has made anti-corruption work less effective. A case worth noting is that of Orji Uzor Kalu, convicted in 2019 for diverting N7.1 billion during his tenure as Abia State Governor. His 12-year jail term was nullified by the Supreme Court on procedural grounds, leading to a retrial that is taking more years. Orji Uzor Kalu is now a Senator despite the court cases (*The Guardian*, Nigeria 2016, September 28). Related examples, Theodore Orji, a former governor of Abia State, was accused of misusing N3.2 billion in public funds (*The Cable*, 2021). The EFCC took him to court in 2018, but the trial has been postponed many times due to legal technicalities (*Premium Times*, 2023). In Niger State, former governor Babangida Aliyu is accused of laundering N2 billion of state funds. While he was brought back to court in 2022, the case is still unresolved years after it began (*Sahara Reporters*, October, 12, 2022). Ayodele Fayose, the former governor of Ekiti State, was charged in 2018 with laundering N6.8 billion. That trial has been adjourned many times (*Premium Times*, June 15, 2023). These delays show ongoing problems in Nigeria's anti-corruption system. The length of these trials lowers public trust and encourages impunity. Some believe that delayed justice in corruption cases will persist until the judiciary is stronger, procedural issues are fixed, and political influence is reduced (Okeke & Ugwu, 2012, Agbiboq, 2022, and Onwudiwe, 2020). Many major corruption cases remain unresolved for years, with little progress. This reinforces the view that justice in Nigeria often depends on political interests rather than the law.

Thus, it is not surprising when Transparency International's Perceptions Index (CPI) shows Nigeria as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. From 1996 to 2024, the data revealed persistent challenges and only marginal improvements despite the priority given to anti-corruption programs. Nigeria entered the CPI in 1996 under General Abacha's military government with a dismal score of 6.9/100, placing it among the world's most corrupt nations (TI, 2004). By 1999, under General Abdulsalam Abubakar, the CPI ranking had barely improved, reflecting the short tenure and the absence of deep institutional reform. President Obasanjo's (1999-2007) civilian government came with a strong anti-corruption message, establishing ICPC and EFCC. Despite these initiatives, Nigeria's CPI rankings fluctuated between 1.0 and 2.2 on the old 10-point scale, keeping the country in the bottom quartile globally (TI, 2004); *Premium Times*, 2014). President Yar'Adua made modest efforts toward transparency with the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI). Yet by 2010, Nigeria still scored just 2.4/10 or the equivalent to about 24/100 on the revise scale, ranking 134th among 178 countries (TI, 2010). Under President Jonathan, Nigeria's CPI ranking showed a slight upward movement in the early years, reaching 27/100 in 2012 and 2013. However, by 2014 the country stood at 136th out of 175, reflecting ongoing scandals, such as the alleged unremitted $20 billion in oil revenue by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) (*Premium Times*, 2014). President Buhari's (2015-2023) Nigeria's CPI score peaked at 28/100 in 2016 but thereafter slid steadily: 27/100 in 2017 (ranked 148th), 25/100 in 2018 (ranked 148th), 26/100 in 2018 (148th) and 23/100 in 2019 (146th). The decline continued, with the country recording 24/100 in both 2021 and 2022, ranking 154th and 150th, respectively (TI, 2022). The first CPI score under President Tinubu (2023-Present) released in early 2024 showed a modest improvement to 25/100, placing Nigeria 145th globally. By early 2025, Nigeria gained one more point to 25/100 and moved up to the 140th position (TI, 2025). While this is the country's best position in four years, it still ranks well below the sub-Saharan African average of 33/100, indicating deep rooted governance deficits. Thus, these results highlighted the gap between anti-corruption rhetoric and enforcement, especially regarding political and oil sector corruption. The nation's CPI trajectory has remained among the lowest globally, with scores rarely surpassing the mid-20s on the 100-point scale. The persistence of these poor rankings suggests that anti-corruption success in Nigeria requires more than the establishment of agencies; it demands structural political and economic reforms, genuine enforcement and a shift in political and societal norms through effective reorientation that changes the perception that looting is justifiable or acceptable.

Even with many arrests and asset forfeitures, corruption remains widespread because of deeply ingrained social norms and tolerance of elite impunity (Smith, 2007). The acceptance of corrupt wealth is clear in how the public celebrates rich people without questioning where their money comes from. In many

communities, actions that should be seen as unethical or illegal are considered normal, acceptable or even necessary for survival or success. Public office is often seen as a chance to personally benefit from state resources, which has become a part of the political and social mind-set. Similarly, practices like patronage, favoritism or bribery for jobs or contracts are often seen as "how things are done" rather than as corruption. In this situation, corruption is not only tolerated but also encouraged by society, especially when corrupt individuals are praised for their wealth and influence instead of being punished. Politicians convicted of corruption often return to office or remain influential, damaging public trust and making impunity acceptable. This is made worse by the idea that anti-corruption agencies are also subject to political influence or unfair enforcement (*Human Rights Watch*, 2019, August 2). Societal tolerance for corruption, driven by patronage, ethnic loyalty and the acceptance of illegal wealth, makes reform even harder.

4. Policy Implications

The ongoing and even growing issue of corruption in Nigeria, despite many years of public sector reforms, complex anti-corruption policies and the rise of enforcement agencies, highlights a troubling reality that formal measures alone are not enough. Nigeria's situation shows the gap between the design of institutions and their actual operation. From the viewpoint of the institutional theory, legal and policy frameworks are mostly established, including criminal laws, asset declaration requirements and various anti-corruption organizations like EFCC, ICPC, CCB and CCT. However, these agencies often lack the independence, stable funding and political support needed to operate effectively. The principal-agent model provides additional insight. Although the anti-corruption agencies are responsible for monitoring and penalizing corrupt actions, political leaders, who act as the "principal," often use selective control to protect their allies while targeting opponents. This selective enforcement weakens the credibility of anti-corruption efforts and encourages corrupt behavior by suggesting that loyalty matters more than legality when it comes to facing consequences. The social norms theory may explain why reforms have not led to real changes in behavior. In Nigeria, corruption is not just a legal issue; it is a part of daily life, often viewed as a survival tactic or an acceptable way to personal gain, recognition and influence. When corrupt actions become normal and those who commit them attain status or political power, the negative impact of prosecution and jail time diminishes. Citizens notice that high-profile convictions are uncommon and even when they happen sentences may be overturned, reduced or followed by political rehabilitation. The belief that "everyone is doing it" creates a cycle where refusing to engage in corruption seems irrational or self-defeating. This indicates that the fight against corruption cannot rely solely on more laws, more agencies or harsher penalties. Policy must tackle the informal system, the "rule of the game," that dictate political and economic interactions. Breaking this cycle will require a sustained effort to change social expectations through civic education, community-led accountability measures and reforming incentives in public service recruitment and promotions. Additionally, political leaders need to show consistent and fair enforcement, even against their allies, to signify a true break from past practices. Ultimately, the implication for policy is that Nigeria does not lack the tools to combat corruption, but these tools are weakened by deep-rooted political interference, misaligned incentives and the widespread social acceptance of corruption. Only a strategy that strengthens institutional independence, alters principal-agent relationships and disrupts the social norms that support corruption can bring about significant change.

To truly curb corruption in Nigeria, we need to both strengthen institutions and promote the societal values that reject corruption. If corruption is both unprofitable and socially unacceptable and disgusted upon, fewer people will engage in it. Failure to do both, anti-corruption efforts may become repetitive and not lead to lasting national integrity and growth. Nigeria's governance will improve if it can make anti-corruption a part of daily life rather than just a political slogan.

5. Conclusion

This research has examined how public sector changes and anti-corruption policies have played out in Nigeria from colonial times to now. It uses a hybrid of theories, integrating institutional, principal-agent and social norms theories. The study finds a familiar pattern: governments have tried to reform things, create anti-corruption groups and punish offenders with jail and asset seizures. But corruption is still common and getting worse because of deep-seated institutional flaws from colonial rule, mismatched motivations between politicians and those working for them and the acceptance of corruption as a social norm. The results suggest that just using laws and institutions won't stop corruption in Nigeria. To truly reduce it, changes must go beyond temporary crackdowns and quick fixes. First, anti-corruption agencies need real independence. This means protecting them from

political meddling and ensuring that they have stable funding and hiring people based on merit. Second, we must tackle the principal-agent problem by making public finances more open, using strong monitoring and evaluation systems and holding politicians and civil servants responsible. Third, it is vital to shift social norms: deeply ingrained practices like patronage, gift-giving and the idea that it is passable to misappropriate public funds for individual or community benefit have made corruption normal and undermined meritocracy (Chatham House, 2017, T*he Guardian May, 30,* 2024). Studies show that people often excuse corrupt behavior if it helps their religious or ethnic groups and the customs of gift-giving and loyalty can cloud ethical lines (Hoffman and Patel, 2018). At the same time, Nigeria has values disconnect where society celebrates wealth and luxury, even if gained illegally. This neutralizes the work of anti-corruption agencies (Adekanye, 2024). Fixing this needs a societal reset. Public education should go beyond slogans and show how corruption erodes service delivery, distorts equity and hinders progress. Although Nigeria had the MAMSER campaign and later NOA, these organizations were too academic and disconnected from everyday people. Their approach was top-down, relying heavily on government-controlled media rather than engaging communities directly. Thus, they failed to inspire citizens to embrace patriotism, self-reliance and active participation in community service and governance. NOA in fact is presently hardly felt despite the need for it to mobilize the people through public enlightenment. Working with religious, traditional and civic leaders to promote honesty, compassion and accountability can help to reset societal expectations. Teaching ethical values in schools (Ogundele and Opeifa, 2004), media and storytelling can create shared identity that shames corruption rather than accepts it. By consistently showing integrity, especially from leaders, anti-corruption messages can move from simple enforcement to real cultural change.

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Corruption in Governance and its Effect on National Security: The Nigeria Experience in the Fourth Republic

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Abstract. This study examines the impact of corruption in governance on national security within the context of Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Employing a qualitative research approach, the study relies exclusively on secondary data sourced from government reports, scholarly analyses, media publications, and institutional records. The theoretical framework underpinning this investigation is Elite Theory, which posits that a small group of influential individuals wields disproportionate control over political power and state resources, often to the detriment of the broader population. Through this lens, the study explores how corrupt practices among political elites have undermined the integrity and effectiveness of national security institutions. Findings reveal that first, corruption among government officials has led to the diversion of critical resources intended for security operations, weakening the capacity of security agencies to respond effectively to threats. Second, the patronage networks fostered by elites perpetuate a cycle of impunity that erodes public trust in governance structures and security apparatuses. Third, systemic corruption has contributed significantly to the proliferation of armed groups and criminal enterprises that exploit governance weaknesses to destabilize the nation. Based on these findings, the study recommends: (1) strengthening institutional checks and balances to promote transparency and accountability among political elites; (2) enhancing the independence and operational capacity of anti-corruption agencies to pursue high-profile cases without political interference; and (3) implementing civic education programs to empower citizens to demand better governance and security provisions, thereby reducing the socio-political space for corruption to flourish. Ultimately, addressing corruption through an elite perspective provides critical insights into the intersection of governance and national security challenges in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Keywords: Governance, Corruption, Transparency. Accountability. National Security and Legitimacy Crises

1. Introduction

Corruption in governance remains a formidable challenge to national security, especially in developing democracies such as Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Corruption, defined as the misuse of public office for personal gain, permeates various levels of government and institutional structures, significantly weakening the state's capacity to maintain law and order. In Nigeria, corrupt practices have undermined governmental institutions tasked with ensuring security and justice, such as the police and judiciary, thereby fostering a culture of impunity and eroding public trust (Yagboyaju, 2023). This systemic corruption facilitates criminal enterprises, including drug trafficking, human trafficking, and arms smuggling, by enabling illicit networks to operate with impunity, further destabilizing the nation. Subsequently, the diversion of public funds for personal enrichment has deprived crucial sectors like education, healthcare, and infrastructure of much-needed investment, aggravating inequality and social discontent that fuel insecurity (Ogundiya, 2010; Onwuka, Okoh, & Eme, 2009).

The Nigerian experience since the advent of the Fourth Republic highlights the profound nexus between corruption and national insecurity. Research and reports have revealed extensive cases of financial

misappropriation, embezzlement, and contract fraud involving high-profile political office holders, including governors and ministers, which have eroded governance effectiveness and legitimacy (EFCC Report, 2013; Kofarmata, 2005). Beyond economic sabotage, corruption has compromised the enforcement of laws, weakened democratic institutions, and obstructed efforts to confront security threats such as insurgency and organized crime (Agbafe, 2005). The political culture that equates public office with personal wealth acquisition further sustains corruption, thereby undermining national cohesion and the capacity to establish a stable security environment.

This study is significant as it seeks to deepen understanding of how corruption in governance impairs national security in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, providing empirical insights and highlighting policy implications vital for reforms. It aims to illuminate the structural challenges undermining security governance and to contribute to the development of effective anti-corruption strategies that strengthen institutional capacities. The study has three objectives: (1) to assess the impact of corruption on the effectiveness of security agencies in Nigeria; (2) to examine how corruption fosters insecurity and social instability; and (3) to suggest policy measures that can mitigate corruption and enhance national security. Correspondingly, three research questions guide the inquiry: (1) what is the extent of corruption's influence on security institutions in Nigeria? (2) How does corruption exacerbate insecurity and social disorder? And (3) what policy interventions can effectively curb corruption to improve national security outcomes?

2. Conceptual Review

2.1 Conceptualizing Good Governance

Good governance entails a structured culture and institution through which the leadership of a state exercises its authority. These consist of even the process through which government is selected, monitored and replaced. Governance reflects the capacity of government to effectively formulate and implement policies and programmes. (Ogege, 2013) conceptualized governance as the capacity of the political leadership to effectively formulate and implement sound policies and the respect of citizens and the state including the institutions that governs the economy and social interaction amongst others. While this conceptualization captures to a large extent the major functions of government in a system, it also paves the way to a large extent the definition of good governance.

Odock (2006) refers to Good Governance as a system of government based on good leadership, respect for rule of law and due process, accountability/ transparency of the state leadership to the citizens. The implication of the aforementioned definition connotes that good governance combines the aforementioned amongst others all in a bid to enhance happiness for greater majority in the political system.

This paper further emphasizes on the ability of the political leadership of the state, to project happiness and good living condition for its citizens, through the provision of infrastructure, transparency and accountable to the citizens. (Rosenboom, Kravchuk & Clerkin, 2009), argued that good governance in political systems entail the creation of job opportunity to curb the high level of unemployment in the system. The ability of the state through its leadership to also perform its core functions of providing security of lives and property to its citizens, amongst others will enhance better living condition for citizens in the political system.

Good governance therefore can also be viewed as the use of democratic culture and principles by the political leadership of a state in the effective performance of state and governmental functions to its citizens. The basic assumption here is the capacity of the political leadership in using the state apparatus and resources within its disposal to create and implement policies and programmes that reflect the overall interest of majority of its citizens through an institutionalized structure. This enables the political leadership gathers more confidence and legitimacy from the citizens and the citizens in returns enjoy more freedoms and better living standard from the political system.

2.2 Conceptualizing Corruption

Corruption is a basic negative factor that dwarf efforts aimed at ensuring good governance in any system. (Hauss, 2009) argued that, state and private institutions acting outside the stipulated rules or their actions and inactions if propelled by selfish gains or based on illegal means of enhancing gratifications. This conceptualization emphasized on actions of institutions of both government and that of the private sector that does not follow laid down rules, rather, these actions are aimed at propelling selfish gains. (Shively, 2008) sees corruption as a political-economic condition, which involves acts by public officials and individuals within a political system, ignoring rules and acting selfishly to enhance their personal gains. The corollary of this definition is that, corruption has both political and economic

implications on the society. For example, the government official that inflates contract sum of project and receive kickbacks is unlawfully increasing the cost of governance thereby reducing economic growth and the voter that is financially induced before or after voting is engendering the enthronement of an unpopular government in the political system. (Ogundiya, 2009) conceptualized political corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gains. This implies that, all action and inactions of public official that are carried out in a way to reflect selfish or private gains is classified as corruption. Also, the (World Bank. 2013) enlarged the scope of corruption as comprising all actions involving the abuse of public powers for private benefit. Taking these conceptualizations into consideration, it is easy to observe that, political institutions of the Nigerian fourth Republic are conceived to be immense in corruption. This includes those in the Executive arm of government, the legislators and judiciary. Their action includes excessive hiking of contract sum for projects, padding of budgets to suit personal interest and pervasion of justice for financial gains amongst other. Though successive government and regimes since 1999 had maintained a trajectory of pretence in the area of fighting corruption with the creation of institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). These have empirically not reduced or abated the issue, owing to top government involvement and general insincerity on the issue. These behaviours are part of those issues negatively affecting the fourth republic democracy and hindering the people from enjoying good governance.

2.3 Conceptualizing National Security

National security concept resolves round an assumed state of being secured, that is, if it is not in a situation where it loses its state sovereignty and independence. In this sense, the core values, as well as its wishes to deter aggression or to be victorious in war if unavoidable. Conceptualizing national security. (Akpuru-Aja 2009) argued that, national security presupposes the existence of a nation with shared consciousness, a people who have agreed to live and work together. Security is the direct opposite of insecurity and it refers to a situation of being insecure, unsafe and frightened with danger and the want of security or stability around the political system. Nigeria's national security objectives can be itemized as consisting of the following concerns: as emphasized by (Jega 2007) peaceful coexistence, food security, sustainable socio-economic development; and democratic development, which involve strengthening the rule of law; creating a democratic Political culture and nurturing civility suitable for democratic sustenance. In essence, peace, stability, socio, political and economic development coupled with other factors revolves round a strong political culture that emphasizes the rule of law. Such political system creates an environment that is conducive for individuals and groups to live their lives to the fullest, without fear and intimidation. This is why (McNamara, 1968) noted that, the security of any nation lies not solely or even primarily in its military capability, but equally in developing relatively stable patterns of economic and political growth. National security has also been defined in terms of capacity to achieve reconciliation among diverse groups in the society. (Nabon 2012: Nweze 2004). Laid credence to the indices of states national security; which includes preservation, protection and guarantee of the safety of life, property, wealth of the citizenry and measures to guard against threat to national sovereignty. Therefore, every aspect of the society is saddled with the responsibility to promote security. Hence, the nation's security is the concerns of the state institutions as well as individuals, associations, political parties amongst others. This is why (Reilly, 2001) advocated an amalgamated measure enhanced by states, aimed at achieving mutual survival, coexistence and safety within and outside the state. The concept entails that all segments of the society are responsible in ensuring that security is achieved in the political system. National security is therefore, an all-encompassing condition in which citizens can live in freedom, peace and safety; participate fully in the process of governance, enjoy the protection of fundamental human rights; have access to resources and necessities of life; and inhabit an environment which is conducive to their health and well-being. Although total security is rarely possible, but it must be noted that Nigerians deserve a strong nation with her fundamental values intact and her institutions and people secure. Part of the means for achieving these, all efforts must be geared towards the protection of values, independence of both territorial and consciousness and projects good humanity in the political system.

3. Theoretical Framework

This paper deploys the Elite theory in explaining the core essence of the study. To this end (Varma, 2007) argued that the elite theory is a sociology, political science and philosophy theory which infer the idea that power in society is held by a small number of individuals, who are assumed to occupy the upper strata of the society. These few individuals often have easy access to more resources than other. As a result

of their status they have control over key decision-making, as well as maintain power hegemony in the political system. These include politics, economy, Education, media etc. (Chilcote 1994) argued that the elite theory focuses on the inevitable group of the powerful in all large-scale societies.

This definition implies that, political systems are stratified basically into two. These are the ruling minority who with their small size are able to deploy their knowledge in ensuring authoritative allocation of scarce values in the political system they are also referred to as the dominant minority, the ruling class, political class, oligarchy, Aristocrats etc. on the other hand, there is the dominant majority or the masses, people, governed, citizens etc.

The elitists recognized the inputs of some philosophical ideas of Plato in the ancient Greek antiquity. In the 19th century, however, Vilfredo Pareto, Geotano Mosca and Robert Michel co-founded the elite theory as well as the Italian school of elitism.

According to (Iyoha, 1999) elite's theory holds that public policy reflects the value and preferences of the elites in every society. The elites therefore are those who occupy leading positions in the strategic aspect of the society, they wield power in the political system. Hence the elites usually project and protect their own interest and values as well as maintaining the status-quo of the elitist common interest, in the process of governance in the political system. Deriving from the character of the political elites in systems such as that of Nigeria, where the ruling elites are in the character of deceiving and manipulating public policies and programs to their own personal gain. No wonder the anti-corruption policies even with the best of intention it cannot work. This is simply because it is not to the interest of the elites; therefore, they will not support it and will do all that is necessary to thwart all efforts not minding the negative effect these actions portend for nation security

3.1 Gap/Contribution to Knowledge

There has been insufficient focus on the direct linkage between corruption and specific national security outcomes in previous study. Most studies discuss corruption's broad negative impacts but do not thoroughly analyze the mechanisms by which corruption directly undermines institutions critical for security, such as the police, judiciary, and military.

Also, there has been lack of integrated approaches combining corruption and socio-economic factors as joint drivers of insecurity. Many works treat corruption in isolation rather than exploring its interplay with poverty, inequality, and political instability as a compounded threat to national security.

This study fills these gaps by:

- Providing detailed empirical evidence on how corruption weakens institutional effectiveness and fosters impunity, thus directly compromising national security.
- Adopting a comprehensive framework that includes socio-economic and political dimensions alongside corruption to offer richer insights into the multifaceted challenges to Nigeria's security.
- Addressing these gaps, the study contributes to the body of knowledge by deepening understanding of corruption's complex role in national insecurity in Nigeria's Fourth Republic and informing targeted anti-corruption and security policies.

4. Corruption Influence on Security Institutions in Nigeria

Corruption has severely compromised the effectiveness of security institutions in Nigeria, profoundly undermining the country's national security framework. According to research, corruption weakens key security agencies such as the police, military, and judiciary by diverting resources meant for personnel, equipment, and operations into private hands (Ogundiya, 2010). This embezzlement and bribery lead to poorly equipped and demoralized forces, unable to effectively combat insurgency, terrorism, and organized crime. Additionally, nepotism and favoritism in recruitment and promotion practices within these agencies reduce the overall competence and professionalism of security personnel, exacerbating operational inefficiencies (Alimi & Isiramen, 2016). This systemic corruption fosters a culture of impunity where criminals exploit gaps in governance to perpetuate insecurity, further destabilizing the nation.

Moreover, corruption perpetuates insecurity by eroding public trust in security institutions. Citizens grow disillusioned with forces perceived as corrupt and ineffective, leading to reduced cooperation in intelligence gathering and community policing efforts essential for crime prevention. Cases such as the mismanagement of military allowances and embezzlement of defense funds have been well documented, where officials prioritize personal gains over national interest, thereby weakening Nigeria's ability to respond to internal threats (Taiwo, 2009;

Transparency International, 2024). This distrust also deters international support and investment, compounding the country's security challenges. Corruption within the defense procurement and budgeting processes leads to financial misappropriation, limiting funds available for critical security infrastructure and training while emboldening criminal networks and insurgent groups (CISLAC, 2024).

The pervasive influence of corruption in Nigeria's security institutions manifests in a vicious cycle where weak institutions enable corruption, and corruption undermines institutional effectiveness. Anti-corruption efforts focusing on transparency, accountability, and civilian oversight remain imperative to breaking this cycle (Aghayere & Alimi, 2009). Without addressing corruption within the security sector, Nigeria's national security will continue to be compromised, impeding sustainable peace and development. Therefore, this discussion highlights the urgent need for comprehensive reforms that strengthen institutional integrity, improve resource management, and rebuild public trust to bolster Nigeria's security architecture.

5. How Corruption Exacerbate Insecurity and Social Disorder in Nigeria

Corruption exacerbates insecurity and social disorder in Nigeria by significantly undermining the rule of law and the state's capacity to provide basic security and economic well-being for its citizens. Corrupt practices within government institutions lead to the misallocation of resources, especially those earmarked for security services, health, education, and infrastructure, creating widespread poverty and inequality, which are root causes of social unrest (Aribatise, 2025). The mismanagement of public funds limits access to social amenities and employment opportunities, increasing the vulnerability of the population to criminal activities, insurgency, and violent conflicts. This creates a vicious cycle where insecurity fuels corruption, and corruption, in turn, deepens insecurity and social disintegration (Akindoyin & Badru, 2025).

Furthermore, corruption within the security sector erodes public trust and cooperation, which are critical for effective community security and intelligence gathering essential to curbing violence and crime. When citizens perceive law enforcement and security institutions as corrupt, unreliable, or complicit in criminal activities, they become reluctant to report crimes or collaborate with these institutions, thereby weakening preventive and responsive mechanisms (Adamaagashi et al., 2023). Incidents of bribery, extortion, and illegal practices within the police and military discourage lawful behavior and foster a culture of impunity among criminals, insurgents, and armed gangs. This breakdown of social order and institutional integrity creates an atmosphere where insecurity thrives, giving rise to kidnappings, banditry, terrorism, and communal clashes frequently witnessed in various parts of Nigeria (Oghuvbu & Oghuvbu, 2020).

The socio-political consequences of corruption-driven insecurity also undermine Nigeria's democratic consolidation and development efforts. Corruption compromises governance quality, weakening political institutions and impeding fair resource distribution, which aggravates regional and ethnic tensions. As a result, communities experience heightened mistrust, inter-group conflicts, and resistance to state authority, creating fertile grounds for insurgent recruitment and violent extremism (Jimoh, 2025). Tackling this challenge requires comprehensive anti-corruption measures integrated with social reforms to address economic deprivation, strengthen institutional accountability, and rebuild public confidence. Only through eradicating corruption and enhancing good governance can Nigeria achieve sustainable security and social stability (Ebo, 2016; Odukoya & Osanaiye, 2017).

6. Policy Interventions to Effectively Curb Corruption and Improve National Security Outcomes in Nigeria

Effective policy interventions to curb corruption and improve national security outcomes in Nigeria require a comprehensive, multi-faceted strategy that addresses both preventive and enforcement dimensions. The recent National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) 2022–2026 reflects Nigeria's commitment to combat corruption systematically, aiming to strengthen governance and institutional integrity (UNCAC Coalition, 2024). Key among the preventive measures is the establishment of autonomous anti-corruption bodies such as the Technical Unit on Governance and Anti-Corruption Reforms (TUGAR), which coordinates and monitors anti-corruption efforts across federal and sub-national levels. These agencies play a crucial role in data collection, policy evaluation, and fostering public awareness. However, challenges such as limited structural independence of agencies and low awareness at local government levels hinder optimal implementation, necessitating reforms that empower anti-corruption bodies with greater autonomy and enhance civic engagement

(Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission [ICPC], 2024).

Enforcement mechanisms must be buttressed by legislative and institutional reforms that ensure timely prosecution and asset recovery while protecting whistleblowers who expose corrupt practices. Progressive legal frameworks like the Money Laundering Act and the autonomy granted to the Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) have strengthened the country's capacity to trace and repatriate stolen assets. Despite successes such as asset recovery related to the Abacha loot, the absence of comprehensive whistleblowing protections and accountability gaps in asset management undermine citizens' confidence and the deterrence effect of anti-corruption laws (UNCAC Coalition, 2024). Strengthening judicial independence and enhancing collaboration between anti-corruption agencies, law enforcement, and the judiciary are imperative for effective criminal justice responses, reducing corruption within security institutions, and restoring public trust in national security architectures (State House Nigeria, 2025).

Ultimately, integrating anti-corruption reforms with technological innovations, transparency measures, and community participation can significantly improve national security outcomes. Initiatives focused on digital procurement systems, real-time monitoring, and transparent public financial management reduce opportunities for rent-seeking behavior and increase accountability. Additionally, fostering partnerships with civil society organizations and the private sector to promote transparency and report corruption empowers citizens and amplifies collective accountability. Nigeria's anti-corruption agenda must also emphasize socio-economic reforms that address poverty and inequality, which are often exploited by corrupt networks to perpetuate insecurity. These holistic interventions, aligned with international best practices and sustained political will, have the potential to dismantle patronage networks, enhance institutional effectiveness, and create a more secure and stable Nigeria (ICPC, 2024; UNCAC Coalition, 2024).

7. Conclusion

Corruption in governance has profoundly undermined national security in Nigeria's Fourth Republic by weakening institutional effectiveness, eroding the rule of law, and fostering socio-political instability. The pervasive nature of corruption across government agencies, law enforcement, and the judiciary has eroded public trust and compromised the ability of security institutions to confront threats such as terrorism, insurgency, and organized crime. Diverted public resources and embezzlement have deprived critical sectors of the investments necessary for socio-economic development, exacerbating poverty, inequality, and social unrest that fuel insecurity. Corrupt practices have also enabled criminal networks to operate with impunity, further destabilizing the nation. The Nigeria experience illustrates that without robust anti-corruption measures aligned with comprehensive security reforms, national security remains fragile and vulnerable to multifaceted challenges. Addressing the intertwined problems of corruption and insecurity requires sustained political will, institutional strengthening, transparency, and public participation to restore governance, build social cohesion, and secure a peaceful and stable Nigeria

8. Recommendations

In view of the facts provided by this study, four salient recommendations are crucial to effectively combat corruption in governance and enhance national security in Nigeria's Fourth Republic:

First, there must be greater structural independence and empowerment of anti-corruption agencies, such as the Technical Unit on Governance and Anti-Corruption Reforms (TUGAR), ensuring autonomy from political interference and sufficient funding to enable robust and unbiased investigations and enforcement actions

Second, comprehensive whistleblower protection legislation should be enacted and implemented to safeguard citizens who expose corrupt practices, thereby fostering a culture of transparency and accountability across all levels of government

Third, transparency must be institutionalized in public procurement and financial management through digital platforms that allow real-time monitoring, reducing opportunities for corrupt rent-seeking and enhancing public oversight

Fourth, holistic anti-corruption reforms should integrate socio-economic development programs aimed at reducing poverty and inequality, which are often exploited by corrupt networks to perpetuate insecurity and social disorder

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The Architecture of Insecurity: A Sociological Analysis of Kidnapping and Banditry in Etsako West LGA, Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract. Etsako West Local Government Area (LGA) in Edo North Senatorial District has, in recent years, experienced rising incidence of kidnapping and banditry, particularly along major transit corridors. This study investigates the prevalence and impacts of the insecurity between February 2022 and August 2025, using purposive sampling. The study used secondary and primary source of data collection. Data were gathered through key informant interviews with community leaders and traditional rulers as well as unstructured in-depth interviews with farmers, traders, students, civil servants, religious leaders, vigilante groups, local hunters, youth groups, and transport workers union in Auchi, South Ibie, Agbede, Jattu, and Aviele. Findings reveal recurrent abductions, ransom payments, and community protests. Major hotspots identified include Auchi–Afuze–Agbede road, Auchi–Benin highway, Auchi–Okpella road, and Auchi–Okene–Abuja highway. The insecurity has disrupted farming, education, trade, and social life of the people. The state response through the police, DSS, and military interventions remain inadequate thereby giving rise to community policing involving vigilantes, local hunters, youth groups, and transport workers union. Yet, the insecurity persisted due to the rugged and forest terrains along the major transit routes to the neighbouring Benin, Ondo, Ekiti and Okene-Kogi State forests corridor, where the kidnappers and bandits have their forest camp/hideouts. The study recommends permanent checkpoints, sustained patrols, publicized hotlines, and combined land and aerial surveillance to effectively curb kidnapping and banditry in Etsako West LGA.

Keywords: Architecture of Insecurity, Sociological Analysis, Kidnapping and Banditry, Etsako West LGA, Edo State Nigeria.

1. Introduction

The roots of Nigeria's kidnapping epidemic can be traced to the early 2000s in the Niger Delta, where militants employed hostage-taking as a tactic to negotiate with oil companies and the government for resource control and economic benefits (Asuni, 2009). Initially politically motivated, this practice evolved into a profit-driven criminal enterprise by the 2010, fueled by lucrative ransom payments (Odo, 2015; Chukwuma, 2020). The profitability of kidnapping has attracted diverse criminal networks, transforming it into a widespread menace across Nigeria's regions. Concurrently, banditry has surged in the North-West and North-Central regions, characterized by armed raids, cattle rustling, and mass abductions (Osumah, 2020; Edeko, 2021). These activities have displaced rural communities, disrupted agricultural production, and deepened poverty.

The convergence of kidnapping and banditry has created a complex security crisis, particularly in areas like Etsako West, a critical link in Nigeria's North-South transport corridor. Highway abductions, farm attacks, and village raids have become rampant, exploiting the region's strategic location and the vulnerabilities of its rural communities (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019). Etsako West, located in Edo State's northern senatorial district, is a predominantly rural area with a mix of agricultural and trading communities. Its position along major transport routes make it a prime target for criminal activities, particularly kidnapping and banditry. Since 2020, the local government area (LGA) has witnessed a sharp increase in violent crimes, including ambushes on highways, raids on farms, and attacks on villages (Alemika, 2019). These incidents have disrupted livelihoods, forced farmers to abandon their fields, and

deterred traders from operating, leading to significant economic losses.

The limitations of conventional policing in Etsako West are stark. The Nigeria Police Force faces chronic challenges, including insufficient personnel, outdated equipment, and limited funding (Alemika, 2013). These constraints hinder effective patrol and response capabilities, particularly in remote areas. Moreover, the lack of trust between communities and law enforcement, stemming from perceived inefficiencies and occasional complicity, has further undermined security efforts (CLEEN Foundation, 2018). As a result, residents have increasingly turned to informal security structures, such as vigilantes and local hunters, to fill the gap. Community policing, defined as a collaborative approach that integrates local knowledge, trust, and collective action to prevent crime, offers a viable solution to the insecurity crisis in Etsako West (Brogden & Nijhar, 2005). Unlike conventional policing, which relies heavily on centralized command and reactive measures, community policing emphasizes proactive engagement, community participation, and localized problem-solving. This approach aligns with Edo State's socio-cultural strengths, including strong communal ties and a history of collective action through vigilante groups and local hunters.

Over and above this, the study investigates the prevalence, trends and impacts of kidnapping and banditry in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State, between February, 2022 and August, 2025. To address this, the specific objectives of the study are to:

- Identify the hot-spots and vulnerable corridors within Etsako West LGA corridor where kidnapping and banditry crimes are most perpetrated.
- Examine the state and the community security responses to the menace.
- Assess the roles and challenges of community policing in mitigating the kidnapping and banditry insecurity in Etsako West LGA corridor.
- And to apply relevant sociological theories to analyze the incidence of kidnapping and banditry insecurity in Etsako West LGA corridor.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts multiple sociological theoretical frameworks, to capture and analyze the kidnapping and banditry insecurity in Etsako West LGA corridor.

2.1 Routine Activity Theory (RAT) By Cohen & Felson, 1979.

Routine Activity Theory (RAT), developed by Cohen and Felson (1979), argues that crime occurs when three elements converge in time and space: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. The theory departs from offender-centered approaches by stressing that everyday social routines shape opportunities for crime. Thus, crime is not merely the product of deviant individuals, but also of the situational context in which potential victims and offenders interact (Felson & Boba, 2010). As lifestyles and mobility patterns change, opportunities for crime expand or contract depending on the presence of guardianship, such as law enforcement, community vigilance, or technological surveillance.

In Etsako West Local Government Area (LGA) of Edo State, the dynamics of kidnapping and banditry reflect the principles of RAT. The LGA is traversed by major roads such as the Auchi–Okene and Auchi–Benin highways, which serve as corridors for commuters, travellers, traders, farmers and students. These roads provide suitable targets for kidnappers and bandits, particularly at night or in isolated stretches where security presence are few. The motivated kidnappers and bandits, often organized gangs, capitalize on the absence of capable guardianship, which is evident in inadequate police patrols, slow emergency response, and lack of surveillance infrastructure. Reports of motorists and even local farmers and traders being abducted on their way to markets and farm lands underscore how routine social and economic activities inadvertently expose residents to hostage-taking (Okoli & Agada, 2014).

Community policing in Etsako West LGA directly corresponds to RAT's preventive strategies. Increasing capable guardianship through local vigilance groups, neighborhood watch associations, and stronger collaboration between the police and communities can disrupt the crime triangle. For example, where joint patrols between police and community vigilantes have been deployed along kidnapping-prone highways, incidents have declined due to increased visibility and deterrence (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2013). Moreover, improved street lighting in rural communities and the installation of community-driven surveillance checkpoints can enhance guardianship. The RAT framework therefore suggests that addressing kidnapping and banditry in Etsako West requires situational crime prevention measures that limit offenders' opportunities,

strengthen guardianship, and alter the routine activities that create vulnerability.

2.2 Social Disorganization Theory by Shaw & McKay, 1942.

Social Disorganization Theory (SDT), advanced by Shaw and McKay (1942), links crime to neighborhood conditions rather than individual pathology. The theory emphasizes that crime thrives in communities characterized by poverty, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility, which weaken the capacity for collective social control. In such disorganized neighborhoods, informal social institutions such as families, schools, and religious organizations fail to regulate behavior effectively, creating an environment where deviant subcultures emerge (Sampson & Groves, 1989). The key insight is that crime is an outcome of ecological breakdown, where community cohesion and collective efficacy are weak.

In Etsako West LGA, conditions of social disorganization are evident in many rural and semi-urban communities. The area has witnessed significant economic stress due to youths unemployment, land conflicts, and the influx of migrants, all of which strain traditional authority systems. Weakening social institutions have made it easier for kidnapping and banditry networks to recruit idle youths. For instance, local accounts reveal that many bandit groups operating around Auchi and surrounding villages exploit the breakdown of trust between residents and formal law enforcement, positioning themselves as alternative sources of authority and income (Onapajo & Idowu, 2015). The erosion of collective efficacy means that residents often feel powerless to resist or report criminal activity, thereby reinforcing cycles of kidnapping and bandit insecurity.

Applying SDT to community policing in Etsako West reveals that crime reduction requires rebuilding social cohesion and strengthening local institutions. Community policing strategies that integrate traditional rulers, youth associations, vigilantes, local hunters, road transport workers union and religious leaders into security networks can revitalize collective efficacy. When residents are encouraged to participate in joint problem-solving with the police, informal social control is restored, making it more difficult for criminal groups to thrive. Furthermore, addressing the structural driver, through poverty alleviation and youths' empowerment programs, and improved access to education, can reduce the conditions of disorganization that fuel crime. In Etsako West LGA, successful policing will depend not only on tactical interventions but also on socio-economic investments that restore the community's ability to self-regulate insecurity. Thus, SDT underscores that tackling kidnapping and banditry in Etsako West LGA requires a holistic approach that combines law enforcement with community-driven youths empowerment programs and resilience-building initiatives.

2.3 Collective Efficacy Theory By Sampson, Raudenbush & Earls 1997.

Collective Efficacy Theory, developed by Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997), emphasizes the importance of social cohesion and mutual trust among community members in promoting informal social control. The theory argues that communities with strong networks of trust and willingness to intervene for the common good are more effective at preventing crime and disorder than communities characterized by social disorganization and weak neighborhood ties. In this sense, crime reduction is not only dependent on formal policing but also on the capacity of residents to collectively mobilize against deviant behavior.

In the context of Etsako West Local Government Area (LGA) of Edo State, where kidnapping and banditry have become pressing security concerns, the theory provides a useful lens for understanding both the vulnerabilities and the potentials for local responses. Kidnapping for ransom and violent banditry thrive in settings marked by weak communal bonds, high levels of fear, and declining trust in formal state institutions. These conditions often discourage residents from sharing information or intervening in suspicious activities. Collective Efficacy Theory suggests that enhancing trust, cooperation, and shared responsibility within communities can significantly strengthen resistance against such crimes (Sampson et al., 1997).

Community policing, as practiced in other Nigerian communities, aligns directly with the principles of collective efficacy. By encouraging partnerships between the police and local residents, community policing fosters information sharing, joint problem-solving, and community-led surveillance. In Etsako West LGA, community policing structures, when supported by traditional institutions, vigilante, youth groups and local hunters, could enhance the collective capacity to monitor movement in and out of the village communities, identify criminal hideouts, and discourage collaboration with kidnappers and bandits. Informal controls such as community members watching over one another, responding quickly to distress calls, and discouraging youth involvement in criminal networks—are essential manifestations of collective efficacy in action.

Also, the theory implies that combating kidnapping and banditry requires more than punitive enforcement. It involves strengthening neighborhood ties, building trust in the justice system, and empowering citizens to take collective responsibility for security. For instance, community policing forums in Etsako West LGA can function not only as security watch mechanisms but also as platforms for dialogue and reconciliation, thereby reducing the culture of silence and fear that often protects criminals. Strengthening collective efficacy can thus create an environment where residents feel responsible for each other's safety, making it more difficult for criminal networks to thrive.

In summary, Collective Efficacy Theory demonstrates that security challenges like kidnapping and banditry in Etsako West LGA cannot be solved by police presence alone but by empowering communities to act collectively. By nurturing social trust, enhancing cooperation, and fostering mutual accountability through community policing initiatives, residents can reclaim control of their neighborhoods, reduce crime rates, and build a stronger sense of safety and resilience.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Study Area

Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria, is largely an agrarian local government area in northern Edo State. It covers about 946 km,^{2} hosting pre-dominantly Etsako people of Afemai ethnic group (Edo State Government,2021). The communities in the local government are connected by rural roads, with Auchi as the main administrative and commercial hub hosting markets, schools, and the Federal Polytechnic, Auchi. Etsako West LGA of Edo State, Nigeria, is administratively divided into six major districts namely: Auchi, South Ibie, Uzairue, Aviele, Anwain and Jagbe, with several clans, villages and communities organized under each district, in traditional and cultural groupings.

Auchi District, Clan and Villages comprise of Aibotse, Akpekpe, Igbei, Iyekhe, Usogun, Auchi (headquarters town)
South Ibie District, Clan and Villages comprise of Ibie-Iyakpi, Egbogio, Ibie-Nafe, Ibie- Iyerekhu, Otegie, Ughieda, Ugiekha.
Uzairue-Jattu District, Clan and Villages comprise of Apana, Iyora, Iyuku, Jattu, Iyamho
Aviele District. Clan and Villages comprise of Agbede, Egeuno, Egho, Odighie (Odigie), Oguolla, Ubiane, Ughioti (Ughiole), Afowa, Wararake, Afashio, Ayogwiri, Ikabigbo, Irekpai, Ogbido, Ayaoghena, Ikholo, Uluoke, Ugbhenor, Idato, Ayua, Imeke, Elele.
Awain District. Clan and Villages. comprise of Amah (Ama), Amogiza, Camp Daniel, Ajuya Camp, Eware, Ewora, Igbirra Camp, Ivioba (Ibhioba), Rabison Camp, Uzoki, Idegun.
Jagbe District. Clan and Villages. Comprise of Ekpola Camp, Ihelame, Ikhua, Imiogia (Imogian), Imiokono, Ukumasi Camp, Ikhwa, Inhianmhen.

Fig.1: *Map Showing Etsako West LGA.*
Source: *https://mapcarta.com/Etsako_West_F1108563347/Map. Retrieved Sept.2025*

3.2 Research Instrument and Sampling Method

There are very few or scanty peer-reviewed scholarly works that focus specifically on kidnapping and banditry in Etsako West LGA. Most of what exists on kidnapping and banditry in Etsako West LGA are news and media reports, NGO/civil society reports documenting community protests over increasing incidence of ransom payments to kidnappers and bandits in the LGA corridor; and the Edo State government Security Reports. This study employs purposive sampling method. An unstructured In-depth interview was conducted with the religious and community leaders, vigilantes, local hunters, youth associations, road transport workers association and key informant interviews with the traditional rulers. In compliance with sociological ethical research standards, the traditional rulers and the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) were consulted prior to the fieldwork to secure approval and foster trust, particularly given the security and sensitivity of the issue of kidnapping and banditry in the LGA. An in-depth unstructured interview was also conducted with 45 local residents (farmers, traders, civil servants and students) in Auchi, South Ibie, Agbede Jettu and Avielle, purposively selected to represent a diverse or cross-section of the communities along the hot-spots and vulnerable corridors within Etsako West LGA where kidnapping and banditry are most perpetrated. The in-depth unstructured interview allowed flexibility to probe and explore the cases of kidnapping and banditry insecurity in the areas. The researcher also had informal discussions (unstructured interview) with the Rapid Response Unit police officers at Auchi Police Divisional Headquarters. This method allowed for first-hand information to corroborate the information sourced from the secondary data

The study employs purposive sampling method and also uses secondary sources of data to investigate the incidence of kidnapping and banditry insecurity in Etsako West Local Government Area (LGA) of Edo State between February, 2022 and August, 2025. The study adopts a qualitative research design with content analysis of the secondary data sourced from Edo State Security Reports, Newspaper Reports from Daily Post, Punch, Vanguard, This Day, The Guardian, Daily Trust, Tribune, Nigerian Observer and TVC News documenting kidnapping and banditry insecurity cases in Etsako West LGA; and Non- Governmental Organisation (NGO) and Civil Society reports documenting community protests over increasing incidence of kidnapping, banditry, hostage taking and ransom payments in Etsako West LGA corridor. Above all, the methodological approach and contextual understanding of the data collected on cases of kidnapping and banditry in Etsako West LGA corridor were qualitatively analyzed.

4. Results and Discussion

Prevalence and Trends of Kidnapping, Banditry and Hostage Taking in Etsako West LGA (Feb. 2022-Aug. 2025)

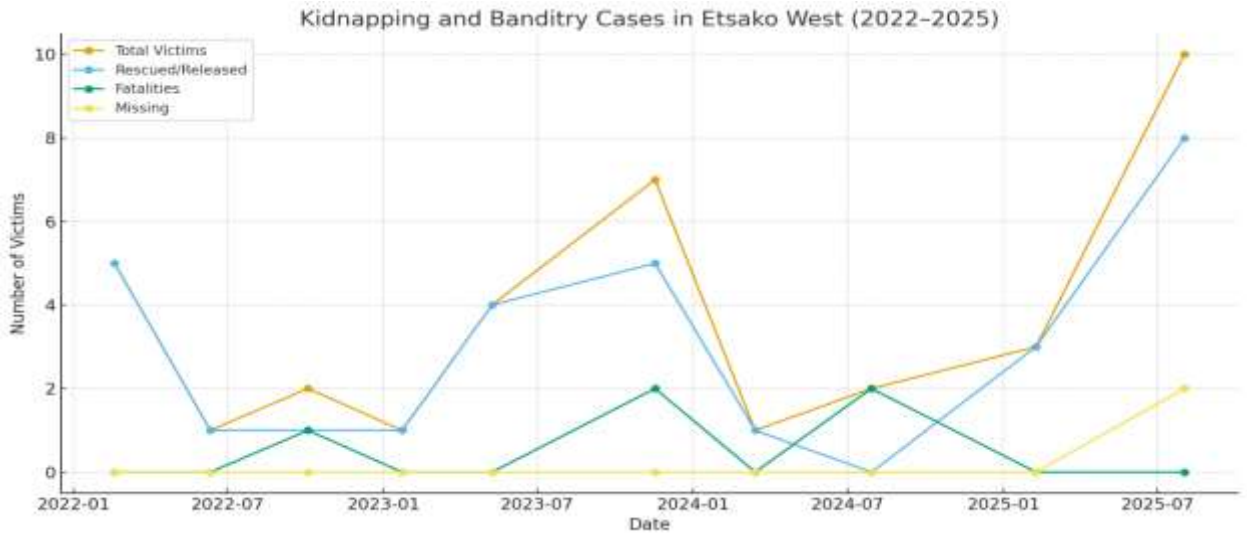
Etsako West Local Government Area (LGA), with Auchi as its administrative headquarters, have experienced several incidences of kidnapping and banditry between February, 2022 and August 2025, with several high-profile abductions, ransom payments and several community protests as responses to the menace. There are also occasional allegations of collusion or complicity by insiders especially where the organized kidnapping attracts ransom. Records of kidnappings and banditry attacks have shown that farmers, traders, polytechnic lecturers, students, travellers, and occasionally commuters on inter-town and inter-state buses travelling on local roads and highways such as Auchi-Benin highway; and Auchi-Okene-Abuja highway were mostly targeted victims.

The composition of data on table 1 (showing secondary sources of data) revealed a total number of victims abducted by kidnappers and bandits (between bebruary,2022-August,2025) as 36. While 12 victims were released after ransom paid, 8 victims were unconditionally freed, 5 victims were killed, 4 were released after vigilante and police raid, 3 were released, 2 were declared missing, 1 released after community protests and I escaped from the kidnappers and bandits forest camp/ hideout.

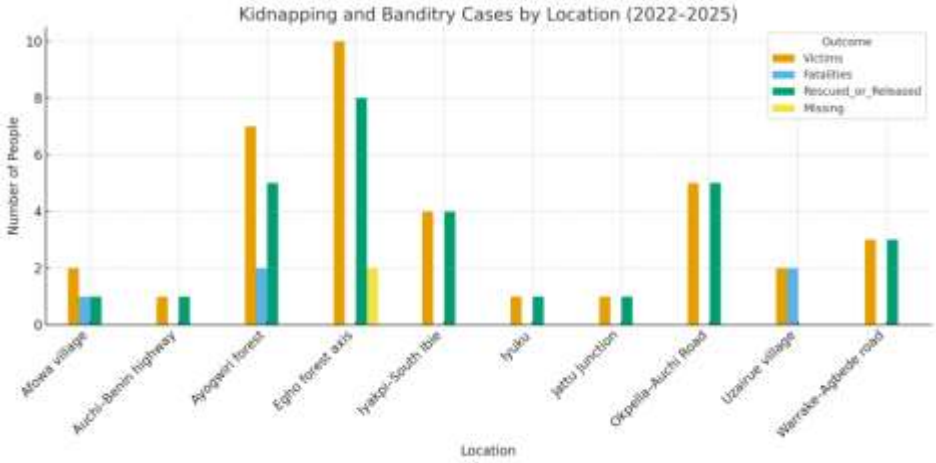
Table showing incidence of kidnapping and banditry per location in Etsako West LGA(Feb.2022-Aug.2025) It shows also, the total victims, fatalities, rescued/released, and missing in each hotspot

Date	Location	Victims Involved	Outcome	Source
Feb 18, 2022	Okpella–Auchi Road	5 travelers in a commercial bus	2 released after ransom; 3 rescued	Punch (2022, p.13)
Jun 11, 2022	Jattu Junction	Local businessman, age 52	Released after ₦3m ransom	Vanguard (2022, p.21)
Oct 4, 2022	Afowa village	2 farmers	1 escaped, 1 killed	Guardian (2022, p.7)
Jan 23, 2023	Iyuku	Polytechnic student	Released after community protest	Daily Trust (2023, p.18)
May 9, 2023	Iyakpi–South Ibie	Family of four (man, wife, 2 kids)	All rescued after vigilante-police raid	Tribune (2023, p.10)
Nov 17, 2023	Ayogwiri forest	7 passengers in a Sienna bus	2 killed, 5 freed after ransom	ThisDay (2023, p.25)
Mar 14, 2024	Auchi–Benin highway	A lecturer at Auchi Polytechnic	Released after ₦5m ransom	Punch (2024, p.12)
Jul 29, 2024	Uzairue village	Truck driver and conductor	Both killed, truck looted	Guardian (2024, p.8)
Feb 8, 2025	Warrake–Agbede road	3 traders returning from market	All released after ransom	Vanguard (2025, p.30)
Aug 2, 2025	Egho forest axis	10 bus passengers	8 freed, 2 still missing	Nigerian Observer (2025, p.5)

Fig 2: *Graph showing incidence of kidnapping, banditry and hostage taking in Etsako West LGA (Feb.2022-Aug.2025) It shows also, the total victims, fatalities, rescued/released, and missing in each hotspot*



Fg 3: *Bar-chart showing incidence of kidnapping, banditry and hostage taking in Etsako WestLGA (from Feb.2022– Aug.2025). It shows also, the total victims, fatalities, rescued/released, and missing in each hotspot*



This kidnapping, banditry insecurity and hostage taking along Etsako West LGA corridor have largely resulted to community protests, erosion of local economic activities (notably farmers have abandoned their farms and traders deterred from operating, leading to significant economic losses and deepened poverty), and repeated protests and calls for stronger security responses from state and federal authorities. The community leaders, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) and civil society reports reveal that the problem has remained unabated and sometimes intensifies in specific forest road corridors to other neighbouring states like Ondo, Ekiti and Kogi.

The police officers report that the cross-border multiple movement routes from Etsako West LGA northern forests corridor to the neighbouring Ondo, Ekiti and Kogi state forest corridors are what the abductors exploit to relocate victims to their forest camps/hide-outs, immediately after abduction. The police officers also report that the abductors sometimes pose in army uniforms to deceive victims. This has made the problem of kidnapping and banditry in Etsako West LGA corridor remained unabated and sometimes intensified. Another reason is that the vast forests and rugged terrain of Etsako West LGA corridor provide a good forest camps and hideouts for the kidnappers and bandits. .Lack of police patrol vehicles and bad roads along the major hot-spots, Auchi-Benin highway; and Auchi-Okene-Abuja highway and other local roads networking communities in Etsako West LGA are other major problems that have made the problem of kidnapping and banditry remained unabated and sometimes intensified.

Hot-spots & vulnerable corridors

Based on media reports and the in-depth unstructured interviews conducted with the community leaders, vigilantes, local hunters, youth associations and the road transport workers union in Auchi, South Ibie, Agbede, Jettu and Avielle, the following locations were recurrently mentioned as hot-spots and vulnerable corridors within Etsako West LGA where kidnapping and banditry are most perpetrated:
Auchi-Okpella road corridor.
Auchi-Benin Highway.
Jettu Junction. Uzairue Village road
Afowa Village corridor.
Auchi–Afuze road corridor
Wararake-Agbede road corridor
Auchi–Afuze–Agbede road corridors
Iyuku road corridor South Ibie corridor
Ayogwiri forest corridor
Avielle–Agbede road corridor
Auchi-Okene-Abuja Highway Auchi-Agenebode road and Farm Lands

State and Community Response to Kidnapping, Banditry and Hostage Taking in Etsako West LGA

The state response to kidnapping and banditry insecurity in Etsako West LGA refers to the activities of the federal security agencies deployed by the Edo State government. The key actors of these security agencies include: the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) Edo State Command with its Divisional Police Headquarters in Auchi, Etsako West LGA. The Nigeria Police Force conducts road patrols, highway checkpoints, and raids on suspected kidnappers and bandits forest camp/hideouts. They also Work covertly with the Department of State Security (DSS) especially because the DSS plays a key role in tracking ransom-related financial flows. Military intervention sometimes reinforces the police operations during peak crises. Their presence is mostly felt notable along Auchi-Benin and Auchi–Okene–Abuja highway hot-spots for kidnappers and bandits. Yet the Nigeria Police Force is faced with the problem of delayed

response because of poor logistics such as lack of patrol vehicles, communication gadgets, surveillance tech, inadequate personnel, and corruption.

The inability of the conventional state policing structures to promptly address the insecurity challenges of the kidnappers and bandits along Etsako West LGA corridor led to a growing demand for community policing as a complementary strategy. Community policing in this context refers to the participatory security framework where the vigilantes, local hunters, youth associations, road transport workers union and traditional rulers collaborate with the Nigeria Police Force to enhance the security along Etsako West LGA corridor. Traditional rulers and youth associations serve as intermediaries between communities and security agencies. They mobilize communal vigilance, local hunters and encourage information sharing, and mediate disputes that could escalate into insecurity (Okechukwu & Adebayo, 2021).

Often times, the vigilante and local hunters are mostly the first to respond in forest search and rescue missions. At times, they also escort farmers to farm to harvest crops. Vigilante and local hunters' networks are the backbone of community policing in Etsako West LGA. They patrol highways, escort farmers, and engage kidnappers and bandits in forest terrains. The establishment of the Edo State Vigilante Network (2020) has formalized these groups, aligning them with state security frameworks (Edo State Government, 2021). On the other hand, local hunters are people with deep knowledge of the forest's terrain. They provide tracking and rescue services and complement the police operations by tracing kidnappers' hideouts and supporting hostage rescue missions (Okoli & Aghedo, 2014).

Residents of communities along the hot-spots (Auchi, South Ibie Agbede, Avielle and Jettu) believe that community policing involving the vigilantes, local hunters, the youth associations and road transport workers union are more effective and reliable than the police in immediate response. Especially, the road transport workers unions (drivers) are also very effective in prompt report of missing commuters and suspicious kidnappers and bandits' forest-camp/ hideout corridors. Local communities are rich in informal intelligence networks. Therefore, Community policing leverages these networks through relationships with traditional rulers, youth leaders, vigilante, local hunters, market associations, road transport workers unions, and other grassroots actors. This improves the flow of real-time information on kidnappers, hotspots and forest camps/ hide-out (Okechukwu & Adebayo, 2021).

Community policing involving the vigilantes, local hunters and the youth associations often operate with locally sourced funding, lacking vehicles, firearms, and communication tools. Rivalries and lack of trust between the police and the vigilantes also hinder their effective operation. These vigilantes, local hunters and the youth associations have legal and ethical Issues especially because these groups have always been accused of extra-judicial killings and human rights abuses. They are frequently alleged of compromise with criminal elements thereby weaken their credibility. Another problem is the terrain difficulties. The vast forests in Etsako West LGA corridor provide natural hideouts, limiting the reach of community police patrol.

The residents of communities along the hot-spots (Auchi, South Ibie Agbede, Avielle and Jettu) have staged a number of protests over the increase in abductions and ransom demands of kidnappers and bandits along their corridors and over perceived lapses in the state policing and prosecution of apprehended kidnappers and bandits. For example, these protests have largely signified eroding confidence in the state security institutions. Especially, where rescue of victims fails or where life is loss after paying ransom, community protests and demands for action have always become immediate community response to the menace.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Etsako West LGA, located in Edo North Senatorial District, has in recent years witnessed a rise in kidnapping and banditry, especially along the major transit corridors such as the Auchi -Okpellai Road, Auchi-Benin Highway, Auchi-Okene-Abuja Highway, and other local roads and farm lands. Kidnapping and banditry in Etsako West LGA represent both a direct security threat and a driver of socio-economic deterioration of the affected communities. These incidences threaten trade, farming, and social life of the people thereby making security a central concern in the LGA. Social/economic impacts of this insecurity have resulted to loss of life, disruption of social life, schools and economic activities, especially farming.

State's response to kidnapping and banditry insecurity in Etsako West LGA includes the Nigeria police, Department of State Security (DSS) and sometime with Military interventions. But the inability of these conventional state policing structures to promptly address the insecurity challenges led to protests and growing demand for community policing. Community

policing in this context refers to the participatory security framework where the vigilantes, local hunters, youth associations, road transport workers union and traditional rulers collaborate with the Nigeria Police Force to enhance the security along Etsako West LGA corridor. Yet the insecurity persisted due to the rugged and forest terrains corridor along the major transit routes to the neighbouring Ondo, Ekiti and Kogi state forests corridor, where the kidnappers and bandits have their forest camps/hideouts

Following these, the study recommends the need to repair bad roads along the major hot-spots, Auchi-Benin highway; and Auchi-Okene-Abuja highway and other local roads networking communities in Etsako West LGA corridor, create permanent checkpoints and provide police patrol vehicles to enhance persistent police patrols with Military interventions especially on Auchi-Benin highway, Auchi-Okene-Abuja highway and other local roads networking communities within Etsako West LGA corridor, during the high-risk hours of dawn to dusk. To create and publicize emergency hotlines for travellers travelling along Etsako West LGA corridor for them to contact the police for emergency response. And above all, to use combined land and aerial surveillance gadgets where feasible to detect the forest camp/hideouts of the kidnappers and bandits to effectively curb kidnapping and banditry in Etsako West LGA.

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Spanned Sectoral Stock Returns Volatility on the Asset Pricing Conditions: Is there any significance?

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Abstract. The perception of sectoral stock return volatility carries meaningful information, especially for portfolio management, as its heterogeneity and periods of financial stress may alter the relevance of traditional asset pricing conditions. This raises the question of whether incorporating volatility into models improves their performance, particularly in emerging markets where risk dynamics are often unstable. Against this backdrop, this study analyses sectoral stock returns and their volatility dynamics in the Nigerian Stock Exchange using monthly data from periods before and after the global financial crisis. The study assesses the significance of spanning sectoral return volatility within asset pricing frameworks by evaluating the performance of the Capital Asset Pricing Model (CAPM) and the Arbitrage Pricing Theory (APT) through time-series and cross-sectional analyses. The findings indicate that while the CAPM explains expected returns through systematic risk (beta), the APT provides relatively stronger explanatory power when historical data are considered; however, no model consistently dominates across sectors. Incorporating sectoral volatility measures enhances the explanatory power of both models, indicating that volatility contains additional information relevant to asset pricing conditions. These results underscore the significance of time-varying risk and parameter uncertainty in explaining equity betas, and offer implications for sector-based portfolio selection in emerging equity markets. Accordingly, the study recommends that market regulators and policymakers should strengthen risk disclosure frameworks and promote volatility-sensitive pricing mechanisms to improve market efficiency in emerging equity markets.

Keywords: Capital Asset Pricing Models, Asset Pricing Theory, Nigerian Stock Exchange, Sectoral Stock Returns, Volatility

1. Introduction

Part of the role of the stock market is to assure investors of good market participation that can improve the overall economic well-being through stable stock prices. Chaudhary (1991) identified the availability of reliable information and accuracy in predicting market characteristics, especially price behaviour, as a significant constraint in investment management. The importance of pricing mechanisms to optimal investment decisions and resource allocation can never be overemphasized, which impacts the monetary policy of any nation (Caines & Winkler, 2021). The optimal allocation of capital depends on the efficient performance of stock market pricing and pricing methods. It also serves as a driving force for moving excess funds for investment management, which implies that an appropriate price mechanism reveals sustainable investment opportunities to both actual and potential investors (Zhang et al. 2024). Investors within the stock exchange need to identify factors affecting these returns to support their decision-making, and in most cases, such expected returns are often deduced from asset pricing models.

However, the theory has also shown that different investors are prone to different kinds of sentiments with special preferences for the particular sector(s) (Sakariyahu et al., 2023). In fact, investors would simply demand stocks that have the bundle of salient characteristics compatible with their sentiment (Baker & Wurgler, 2006; Chen et al., 2013) argued that

sectoral returns react in different ways to market returns viz a viz global market returns which implies that movements of aggregate stock market volatility could be different from sectoral perspective with the focus on developed economies like the US and the European stock markets as demonstrated in (Sadorsky, 2001; Boyer & Filion, 2007). It is important for rational investors by nature to be regarded as risk averse, and the need to understand the volatility of such expected sectorial returns is paramount to them (Oke, 2013). The direction of measuring such uncertain returns is volatile even though the past stock prices reflect the future stock price, as in the case of most African Stock Exchange markets (Olowe et al., 2011). In line with the portfolio theory, proper investment management depends on efficient portfolios, and each investor will select efficient portfolios based on the degree of aversion from each sector (Treynor, 1961; Sharp, 1964; Lintner, 1965).

The input and output patterns of each sector are important and spur a deep understanding of returns and volatility dynamics among sectors within the Nigerian Stock exchange market to enable policy focus closely on smoothening out the effects of shocks on the transmission channel (Kpughur, Yila, & Chidozie, 2017). Selection of financial assets depends on the information readily available, and the asset allocation decision is the choice among broad asset classes known as sectors, while the security selection decision is the choice of which particular securities to hold within the portfolio. The important characteristics of each sector may interest investors in the persistence, endogeneity and conditional heteroscedasticity effects in the investment process, which may have implications on the forecast results (Dutta et al., 2017). The change in economic variables that affected stock returns may react to sectoral sensitivity, meaning the performance and correlations of sectors for portfolio diversification need to be discovered.

Hence, the essence of the study is to examine the predictive ability of the asset pricing models with volatility series for each sector of the Nigerian stock market.

2. Literature Review

Asset pricing theory provides the analytical foundation for understanding the relationship between expected returns and risk under conditions of market equilibrium. The Capital Asset Pricing Model (CAPM) posits that expected returns are determined solely by exposure to systematic risk, as measured by beta, under the assumptions of frictionless markets, rational investors, and a mean–variance efficient market portfolio (Chen et al. 2013). Despite its simplifying assumptions, CAPM remains central to finance theory and continues to serve as a benchmark for evaluating alternative asset pricing models. However, extensive empirical evidence questions the model's ability to fully capture return dynamics, particularly in emerging markets characterised by structural breaks, market imperfections, and information asymmetry.

In response to these limitations, the Arbitrage Pricing Theory (APT) relaxes several restrictive assumptions of CAPM by allowing multiple systematic risk factors to influence asset returns. By linking expected returns to macroeconomic and financial factors, APT offers greater flexibility in explaining cross-sectional return variation. This multi-factor structure is particularly relevant for sector-based analyses, where differences in production technology, exposure to macroeconomic shocks, and leverage structures result in heterogeneous risk profiles across industries.

Building on these theoretical developments, a substantial body of empirical research documents the importance of volatility and macroeconomic risk factors in explaining stock return behaviour. Numerous studies examine the relationship between oil prices and stock market returns using aggregate stock market indices across different countries (Ghosh et al., 2016; Lean et al., 2017; Salisu et al., 2017; Sharma, 2017; Tursol et al., 2017; Wel et al., 2017). Although the magnitude and direction of the effects vary across markets and periods, the consensus is that oil price fluctuations exert a significant influence on stock returns.

Firm and sector-level studies provide deeper insight into return dynamics. Using GARCH-type models, Dutta et al. (2017) and Khalifa et al. (2017) show that oil price shocks affect individual firm stock prices and contribute to return predictability, even during periods of global financial crisis and geopolitical instability in Asian economies. Similarly, Mohite (2015) examines the dynamics of volatility in the Indian banking sector and finds that risk factors significantly influence stock returns. Meanwhile, Mallikarjuna et al. (2017) document strong persistence in banking stock returns, highlighting the significance of lagged effects.

The relationship between risk and returns has also been shown to depend on prevailing market conditions. Messis et al. (2006) demonstrate that risk–return dynamics vary with the state of the market, reporting a positive association during market booms. In contrast, Benjamin et al. (2007), analysing the

Brazilian stock exchange, find an inverse relationship between changes in volatility and stock returns, challenging the traditional assumption of a uniformly positive risk–return trade-off.

Comparative studies further highlight the heterogeneous nature of volatility across markets and sectors. Uyaebo et al. (2015) compare stock market behaviour in Nigeria with that of Kenya, the United States, Germany, South Africa, and China, using the All-Share Index. Their findings reveal pronounced volatility clustering and persistence in Nigeria, coupled with relatively lower market performance. Consistent with this evidence, Osudina et al. (2016), focusing on Nigeria's manufacturing sector, show that accounting information exerts a strong and positive influence on stock return volatility, underscoring the role of sector-specific factors beyond those emphasised in traditional asset pricing theory.

Additional empirical evidence underscores the role of volatility in investment decision-making and its interaction with broader financial variables. Rolle et al. (2014) find that stock return volatility has a significant influence on investment decisions and is closely linked to other stock market factors. Fapetu et al. (2017) document strong interdependencies among stock market volatility, oil price volatility, and exchange rate volatility, emphasizing the interconnected nature of financial risks. In a broader African context, Ismaila et al. (2017) show that portfolio returns depend not only on macroeconomic and microeconomic risks captured by risk-augmented CAPM models but also on equity mispricing.

Further theoretical and empirical research challenges the assumption that stock returns are normally distributed. Lewellen (2000) argues that asset pricing models provide more appropriate testing frameworks under realistic market conditions. The determinants of stock returns are also shown to vary across macroeconomic environments. Interest rates affect stock prices through their role as the cost of capital and their influence on investment decisions (Obura & Anyango, 2016; Olweny & Omondi, 2010). Meanwhile, the money supply acts as a key indicator of future stock market performance by shaping liquidity conditions (Barnor, 2014). Sirucek (2013) further notes that excess liquidity often flows into financial markets, driving stock prices when productive investment opportunities are limited.

Exchange rate movements constitute another important macroeconomic transmission channel, affecting relative prices, firm competitiveness, and export performance, with direct implications for stock returns. Currency appreciation may reduce export competitiveness and negatively affect domestic stock markets, while depreciation can stimulate exports and support stock prices, assuming elastic demand (Kirui, Wawire & Perez, 2014; Kuwornu, 2012). Consequently, exchange rate volatility has important implications for firm performance and overall stock market stability (Obura & Anyango, 2016).

In oil-dependent economies such as Nigeria, the response of stock returns to oil price shocks is particularly pronounced. Oil price fluctuations influence government revenue, fiscal policy, investor sentiment, and expected returns, largely through demand and supply shocks driven by global economic conditions (Cui et al., 2023). While stock market reactions are shaped by firm-level risk considerations (Yu et al., 2023), oil prices may respond differently due to global demand dynamics (Xiuzhen et al., 2022). Moreover, sectoral responses to oil price changes are heterogeneous, reflecting differences in fiscal exposure, production structures, and policy regimes (Lou et al., 2024).

Despite the extensive literature on volatility, macroeconomic risk, and asset pricing, there is a limited research explicitly examining whether sectoral stock return volatility spans asset pricing conditions, particularly in emerging markets such as Nigeria. Existing studies often address volatility modelling and asset pricing tests separately, without assessing whether volatility provides additional explanatory power beyond conventional pricing factors. This study seeks to fill this gap by integrating sectoral volatility measures into asset pricing frameworks to evaluate their significance in explaining expected stock returns.

3. Data and Methodology

The stock price data used for the study were sourced from Nigerian Stock Exchange which house data for Nigerians firms across all sectors that are listed on the Exchange, while the data on selected exogenous variables such as consumer price index, treasury bill rate, and market price of stocks were sourced from the Central bank of Nigeria Statistical Bulletin (2019) and the Nigerian Stock Exchange. The data employed are monthly data covering the period from January 2007 to December 2021, which cater for shocks from the period before and after the 2008 financial crisis.

The sectoral stock returns are captured based on the Nigerian Stock Exchange's classification of sectoral stock indices, which consist of eleven primary stock sectors: Agriculture, Conglomerates, Construction, Consumer Goods, Financial Services, Health Services, Information and Communication Technology, Industrial Goods, Natural Resources, Oil & Gas, and Services. The firms' daily data, freely downloadable

from www.cashcraft.com/plistorder.php, was averaged to form each sector. The selection was based on the consistency of data from the selected firms used to form each sector, as not all data met the range from 2007 to 2021 under study.

The sectoral stock prices are denominated in the domestic currency, naira. On the other hand, the consumer price index and market price (which is proxied by the All-Share Index) are in basis points, while the Treasury bill rate is expressed as a percentage. Meanwhile, since volatility analysis is usually done on the return's series, the required returns from the obtained data are computed as follows:

$$r_t = \left[log\left(\frac{P_t}{P_{t-1}}\right)\right] * 100 \quad \text{.....(1)}$$

Where P_t^i is monthly stock price at the end of the day while P_{t-1}^i is the one-period lag stock price.

$$sr_t = \left[log\left(\frac{SP_t}{SP_{t-1}}\right)\right] * 100 \quad \text{.....(2)}$$

Where SP_t is monthly sectoral stock price at the end of the month while SP_{t-1} is the one-period lag sectoral stock price.

The market returns (Rm_t) is calculated thus:

$$R_m = \left[log\left(\frac{Im_t}{Im_{t-1}}\right)\right] * 100 \quad \text{.....(3)}$$

Where Im_t^i Monthly market index at the end and Im_{t-1}^i is the market index at the last day of operation of each sector.

The **Capital Asset Pricing Model** returns constructed for the study is computed thus:

$$(r_i - r_{ft}) = \alpha_i + \beta(R_t - r_{ft}) \quad (4)$$

Where r_i is determined from equation (1) and/or (2) above, r_{ft} is the monthly treasury bill rate (3 months), R_t is the stock market return determined in equation (4). The above equation (3) is examined on selected stocks listed on the NSE and β_i shall be generated for consideration.

On the other hand, the Arbitrage Pricing Model constructed for the study takes the form below:

$$(r_i - r_{ft}) = \alpha_i + \beta_1(R_t - r_{ft}) + \beta_2(cpl) + \beta_3 \log(Mkvol_t) \quad (5)$$

Where r_i is determined from equation (3) above, r_{ft} is the treasury bill rate (3 months), R_t is the stock market returns determined in equation (4), *cpl* is the consumer price index under the period of consideration, and mkvol is the market volume. Since only the impact of returns is needed, only β_i (stock market returns factor) would be needed here, although cpl and mkvol are introduced in the model as other potential influencers of the dependent variable, following the doctrine of the Arbitrage Pricing Model. The selections were based on the literature that required both macroeconomic variables and market variables that could affect the expected returns other than the market premium.

The two asset pricing models were tested in two stages of regression. The first stage of regression is time series regression, in which the beta of each security from each sector is calculated by regressing the return of security on both returns of the market and the volatility series of stock returns.

$$(R_{at} - R_f) = \alpha_1 + \beta_1(R_{mkt} - R_f) + \beta_2(V_{at}) + \varepsilon_t \quad (6)$$

$$(R_{at} - R_f) = \alpha_1 + \beta_1(R_{mkt} - R_f) + \beta_2(cpl_{at}) + \beta_3(Mktvol_{at}) + \beta_4(V_{at}) + \varepsilon_t \quad (7)$$

Equations (6 & 7) explain the first stage regression equation of CAPM & APT where is the return of individual assets and R_{mkt} is the market return of time "t" period of time, V_{at} is the volatility series of the asset at the time "t". α_1 and β_1, β_2 are intercept and slope coefficient of the regression equation. ε_t is the error term of the equation.

The second stage involved cross sectional regression using result from stage 1 slope ($\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$) that was also regressed with the average excess returns of portfolio that is derived from each sector. The slope coefficient in this regression is the market risk premium of the portfolio. The equation goes thus:

$$\hat{R}_j = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1\beta_{mj} + \gamma_2\beta_{vj} + \mu_t \quad (8)$$

From the equation (7) created for both models meant for second stage regression of asset pricing, $\check{R}_j$ is the mean excess returns of portfolio from each sector while γ_0 is the intercept term, γ_1 is the market risk premium, γ_2 is the risk premium of volatility, β_{imj} and β_{vj} are estimated betas from the time series analysis which are systematic risk of portfolio with respect to each sector.

The decision rule is if the intercept term is equal to zero from result $\gamma_0 = 0$ and γ_1 is equal to average return of the market, ($\gamma_1 = \check{R}_m$ then the asset pricing

is verified. In the case of the theory of the one or more one factors or zero beta model implies that, instead of the intercept α being equal to zero, the study verify with the hypothesis of $\varepsilon(\check{R}_z) = 0$ meaning if the expected excess return on the beta factor is equal to zero, the verification would prove a consistency with the standard unconditional asset pricing models.

4. Results and Interpretation

Factor Spanning Regressions of Volatility Series on the Asset Pricing Model

Table 1: Long-run Determination of Sectoral Returns from Asset Pricing

Sectors	ARDL Models	CAPM				APT					
		Level Equations			Adj R-Sqrd	Level of Equations					Adj R-Sqrd
		C	EMR	SRV		C	EMR	CPL	MTKvol	SRV	
Agriculture	1	-0.012	0.322***		0.269	3.105***	0.363***	0.001	-0.239***		0.309
	2	-0.020	0.295***	0.031	0.368	0.531	0.3722***	-0.0002	-0.0399	0.0568	0.410
Conglomerate	1	0.027	0.347***		0.287	-0.246	0.390***	0.001	0.017		0.360
	2	0.035	0.347***	-1.098	0.283	-0.303	0.390***	0.001	0.022	-0.439	0.356
Construction	1	-0.0007	0.370***		0.312	-0.350	0.4252***	-0.0005	0.0324		0.370
	2	-0.024	0.371***	1.326	0.308	-0.8759	0.4235***	-0.0003	0.0744	1.7909	0.371
Consumer goods	1	0.011	0.342***		0.331	-0.036	0.4290***	0.0005	0.0015		0.403
	2	-0.0434	0.337***	13.671	0.334	-0.124	0.4220***	0.0005	0.0043	13.3770	0.407
Financial Service	1	-0.0294	0.484***		0.353	-0.1404	0.5615***	0.0004	0.0064		0.416
	2	0.024	0.428***	-1.52***	0.381	0.6587	0.5085***	0.0007	-0.0449	-1.575***	0.447
Health Service	1	0.0138	0.343***		0.288	-0.454	0.439***	0.001	0.034		0.391
	2	-0.0655*	0.336***	9.606***	0.359	0.706	0.383***	0.001	-0.068	8.873***	0.444
ICT	1	0.0232	0.348***		0.241	-0.0052	0.3947***	0.0007	-0.0002		0.305
	2	-0.0002	0.346***	0.839**	0.264	0.951	0.396***	0.001	-0.085	0.838**	0.326
Industrial goods	1	0.0040	0.351**		0.268	-0.9063	0.4612***	-0.0001	0.0750		0.372
	2	0.0647	0.355***	-11.098	0.280	-0.608	0.4656***	-0.0005	0.0589	-14.5916	0.376
Natural service	1	0.040	0.329***		0.271	-2.049	0.424***	0.001	0.172		0.357
	2	-0.0057	0.323***	1.962***	0.313	-1.226	0.406***	0.001	0.095	1.176**	0.381
Oil and Gas	1	-0.0019	0.294***		0.260	-1.4395	0.3909***	-0.0001	0.1168		0.364
	2	0.0797*	0.270***	-10.09***	0.292	-0.2102	0.3774***	-0.0001	0.0231	-9.0653**	0.381
Services	1	-0.0203	0.357**		0.290	-1.0003	0.3937***	0.0006	0.0792		0.357
	2	0.0344	0.361***	-4.760**	0.308	-1.0554	0.3951***	0.0008	0.0853	-4.517**	0.372

****, **, * imply significant at 1%, 5% and 10% significance level respectively, in parenthesis are standard errors*
ARDL Model 1 & 2 = Model without volatility series and Model with volatility series respectively. ESR= Expected Sectoral Stock Return (R_{st} - R_{ft});, EMR= Expected Market Return (R_{Mt} – R_{ft}), SRV= Sectoral Stock Return Volatility

Table 1 shows a regression for both CAPM and APT where volatility is included as part of factors explaining returns that produced that Agriculture, Natural resource, Oil and Gas, Financial service, ICT, health and Service sectors improved after incorporating returns volatility in the CAPM & APT framework. Though Adjusted R-Square will always increase with the inclusion of more factors, the intercept of *(R_{st} - R_{ft});* is statistically significant for both models across sectors, a unit change in the expected stock return in the previous year for all the considered sectors results in more than a unit inverse change in the expected return in the present year. This implies sectoral stock returns by themselves are recursive as present expectations about return negatively impact future expectations, while that of volatility series are not the same with Conglomerate, Financial Services, Industrial goods, Oil & Gas and Services that are negative, meaning volatility factor would not hurt the mean-variance-efficient tangency produced by combing the remaining factor in the long run (level equation).

Furthermore, it is revealed that a positive relationship exists between the expected stock returns of all the sectors considered and the expected market returns under the CAPM framework in both short-run (see Table 2) and long-run and not only is the relationship contemporaneous alone, while the positive influences of the overall stock market return's variation extend into the following year. It is being revealed that a shock to aggregate stock market return exerts a positive but inelastic impact on all sectors' stock return both in the short-run and long-run. Specifically, the table shows that a unit increase (decrease) in the expected market return causes a positive but less than a unit increase (decrease) in each of the sectors' stock return both in the short-run and long-run. Likewise, a unit change in the one-year lagged value of the expected stock market return causes positive but less than a unit change in the expected stock returns of each of the selected sectors.

Factor Spanning Regressions of Volatility series on the application of Asset Pricing Model

Table 2: Testing results of Asset pricing models on sectoral portfolio with intercept

SECTORS	Asset Pricing Models	CAPM (1) & APT (2)					Adj R-Sqrd	F Stat.
		C	MRP	VOL	CPL	MTKvol		
Agriculture	1	-0.0282	0.6470	-0.0628	-	-	-0.301	0.420
	2	-0.01789	0.470**	-0.0797**	250.47**	-1.5298**	0.977	54.942
Conglomerate	1	0.2361	-0.5612	0.0040	-	-	-0.582	0.080
	2	0.6477	-0.9385	0.0152	-481.15	-0.2644	-0.191	0.799
Construction	1	0.0089	-0.017	0.0067**	-	-	0.819	10.063*
	2	-0.0327	0.0427	0.0109	159.87	0.0468	-0.395	0.645
Consumer goods	1	0.0283	-0.0556	0.0028	-	-	-0.097	0.242
	2	0.0474	0.0455	0.0025	-51.49	-0.5280*	0.103	1.489
Financial Service	1	-0.0434	0.2553	7.17E-06	-	-	-0.012	0.774
	2	0.0302	0.2089	-0.0015	-130.62*	-0.1124	0.076	1.767
Health Service	1	0.0988	0.0578	-0.0540	-	-	0.183	1.675
	2	0.0052	0.0263	0.0051	61.72	0.3428	0.083	1.136
ICT	1	1.1501	-2.5228	-0.2102	-	-	-0.898	0.290
	2	-0.2248	0.7261	-0.0381	292.56	-1.4699	0.887	12.778*
Industrial goods	1	-0.0752	0.4881**	0.0013***	-	-	0.726	10.317**
	2	-0.2117	0.5344*	0.0014**	84.08	-0.2742	0.777	7.100*
Natural service	1	-0.4043	1.1492	0.0251	-	-	0.182	1.556
	2	1.2234	-1.9997	0.0245	-521.97	0.2623	0.398	1.829
Oil and Gas	1	-0.1446	0.5687	-0.0018	-	-	0.003	1.009
	2	0.2947	-0.6309	-0.0003	532.65	0.1540	0.036	1.047
Services	1	0.0864	-0.0546	0.0005	-	-	-0.398	0.003
	2	-0.4805	1.2292	-0.0100	-49.22	-0.1070	-0.790	0.227

****, **, * imply significant at 1%, 5% and 10% significance level respectively, in parenthesis are standard errors*

γ_j MRP= Beta from Market Risk Premium; γ_j VOL= Beta from Volatility of stock returns, γ_j CPL= Beta from Consumer Price Index; γ_j MTKvol = Beta from Log of Market volume

Both asset pricing models were tested significantly in the Nigerian Stock Exchange using two stages of regression of CAPM and APT on 11 different sectors created in each period separately. The first stage generated the beta of each sector, which was used as the independent factor in the second stage, which was a cross-sectional regression. The slope of cross-sectional regression is the market risk premium for the portfolio. The result of the second stage of both models is given in the table 2

The two models are correct with the inclusion of volatility if the intercept term must be zero, which is not from table 2 as the Agricultural and Industrial Goods sectors resulted in less than zero while Construction, ICT and Services sectors are negative under APT while financial service, natural goods and Oil & Gas are negative under APT with all statistically insignificant even at 10% level.

However, the coefficient of beta for market risk premium is marginally negative for both models (Conglomerate) and negative value in the Construction, Consumer Goods, ICT and Services sectors for CAPM, while natural services and oil and gas for APT models and positive in the remaining sectors for both models implying that all coefficients of beta are either more significant to or less than to average excess market returns which is expected to zero. The result is the same with beta from the coefficient of volatility that ICT and Oil & Gas are both negative under both models, and Health service for CAPM and Financial Service and Service sectors are APT are negative value while the remaining sectors of both models are positive value but not equal to average excess volatility series.

From the macroeconomic and stock market factors affect the expected returns of all sectors with much significant from the consumer price indices (CPL). For example, CPL has negative coefficient for Conglomerate, Consumer Goods, Financial Services, Natural Services and Services and positive for remaining sectors. Meanwhile, much negative impact from Natural goods and Financial Services with the consumer goods with lower negative response. Virtually, market volume (MTKvol) has negative response to all sectors except Construction, Health service, Natural service and Oil & Gas with little response that is not more than 0.3.

Apriori, variance of the error term in first pass must not be other than zero in second pass cross-sectional regression. Here, the estimated value of the coefficient is either less than zero or greater than zero.

Table 3: Testing results of Asset pricing models on sectoral portfolio without intercept

SECTOR	CAPM			APT				
	MRP	VOL	Adj R-Sqrd	MRP	VOL	CPL	MTKvol	Adj R-Sqrd
Agriculture	0.5399	-0.0584	0.0116	0.4361**	-0.0805***	250.58***	-1.5352***	0.9884
Conglomerate	0.1253	0.0151	-0.233	0.2249	0.0261	-400.87	0.0772	-0.2760
Construction	0.0011	0.0066	0.9101	-0.0082	0.0091	150.97	0.0366*	0.2907
Consumer goods	0.0133	0.0023	0.0315	0.1289	0.0018	-41.51	-0.5319	0.1621
Financial Service	0.1572***	-1.52E-05	0.0089	0.2608***	-0.0014	-123.69**	-0.1201	0.1022
Health Service	0.2478**	-0.0352	0.2056	0.0364	0.0052	60.84	0.3442	0.3889
ICT	0.8282	-0.1409	0.0727	0.1805	-0.0505	324.35	-1.0626	0.7457
Industrial goods	0.2860***	0.0010***	0.6945	0.1965**	0.0009**	52.82	-0.3755	0.6318
Natural service	0.2069	0.0012	-0.0749	0.2481	0.0296	-259.28	0.5935	-0.2761
Oil and Gas	0.2867*	-0.002	0.1820	-0.1243	-0.0004	469.91	0.4173	0.3546
Services	0.1507	-9.00E-05	-0.1810	0.1898	-0.0053	-68.49	0.0246	-0.4989

****, **, * imply significant at 1%, 5% and 10% significance level respectively, in parenthesis are standard errors*

γ_j MRP= Beta from Market Risk Premium; γ_j VOL= Beta from Volatility of stock returns, γ_j CPL= Beta from Consumer Price Index; γ_j MTKvol = Beta from Log of Market volume

Except for F-statistics that are not available for model without intercept, the Adjusted R-Square value was used to make valid comparism to bring economic judgment. From Table 3, only 3 sectors (Conglomerate, Natural services and Service with negative adjusted R-squared value are present for both models while the rest are positive though with some the small percentage ranging from 0. 0089 to 0.9101 for CAPM and 0.2780 to 0.9884 for APT. However, the table has higher adjusted R. squared in most sectors in the study, meaning that without intercept the specific performance of each sector could be identified when compare with table 2 with differential representation to justify each sector as against the unconstrained model which is not the econometrically correct model and gives poor performance.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

According to the literature, if the intercept term is not zero or it is significant, then the model does not hold in that case. Only in the Construction and Industrial goods sectors were the F-statistics significant, and the rest of the sectors were not significant, implying that the modification of asset pricing models with volatility series is not important in the computation of stock expected returns from a sectoral perspective. Prima facie, both asset pricing models could not support the modification in the market despite the justification in Table 2 of Section 3

From the information and historical evidence found, it can be concluded that it seems that the models are never really testable. It seems that the Capital Asset Pricing Model is able to explain the relationship between the expected returns of an asset and the assets beta, but the use of Asset Pricing theory gives better results when observing historical figures. All models seem to be sufficient to prove the relationship between the return of an asset and the asset beta, but none of them shows superiority between the two, and with the introduction of the volatility series, they perform better off. The Capital Asset Pricing Model and the Arbitrage Pricing Theory give some explanations that would be sufficient to understand the differences but do not explain them in depth. Hence, the study highlights the importance of parameter uncertainty in understanding the determinants of equity beta and the performance of levered firms with a behavioural explanation.

Spanning stock returns volatility series with asset pricing models that involve estimation and implementation in security valuation which intuitive

has no validation and does not confirm with the hypothesis. The expected value-beta relationship found nonlinear and does not validate the asset pricing theory with this inclusion.

From the outcome of the study, investors and traders of investment in Nigerian Stock market are advised to take utmost interest in sectoral performance when policy prescriptions concerning portfolio decision are looked into as Investors should be well educated on the gross and net spillover of each sector and implication of decision to be taken for proper portfolio decision. Spanning volatility series with asset pricing models to show significant improvements in the model but was not validated for direct relationship with expected returns but could have indirect relationship, indicating the fact that understand the specific qualities associated with each sector that improves in better portfolio selection as priority is given to some sectors over others.

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Community-Centered Security and Human Rights: The Role of Civil-Military Cooperation in Nigeria's Counter-Terrorism Strategy

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Abstract. Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy, particularly in the Northeast, has been marked by an overreliance on military force, which while weakening Boko Haram and ISWAP, has simultaneously deepened distrust between security forces and local communities due to recurring reports of human rights violations. This study interrogates the prospects of a community-centered security model that foregrounds civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) as a means of reconciling state sovereignty with humanitarian imperatives. Anchored in Human Security Theory, Social Contract Theory, and Institutional Theory, among others, the paper situates Nigeria's counter-terrorism challenge within broader debates on people-centered security and legitimacy. Drawing on case studies from Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States, alongside comparative lessons from Kenya and Niger, the research examines how participatory approaches such as community-led intelligence gathering, inclusive policing, and post-conflict reintegration can enhance operational effectiveness while reducing abuses. The findings highlight that where trust-building mechanisms and civil-military dialogue have been institutionalized, communities have provided more reliable intelligence and shown greater willingness to cooperate with state forces. However, structural weaknesses, poor accountability, and entrenched militarization continue to limit outcomes. The paper contributes to methodological literature in political science and development studies by proposing a framework for participatory counter-terrorism in fragile states. Policy recommendations emphasize rights-based engagement, institutional reform, and multi-stakeholder collaboration as prerequisites for sustainable peace and security in Nigeria.

Keywords: Counter-terrorism, Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC), Insurgency, Human Security.

1. Introduction

Nigeria's security landscape has been transformed over the past decade by an insurgency that originated in the country's northeastern provinces and has reverberated across the Lake Chad basin and the wider Sahel. What began as a locally rooted movement opposing Western-style education and weak governance in Borno State has evolved into a complex, adaptive jihadist insurgency that has inflicted profound humanitarian and state-capacity costs (Thurston, 2017). Estimates vary, but scholars and international agencies agree that the Boko Haram phenomenon including its splinter factions, has been responsible for tens of thousands of deaths, the displacement of millions, and widespread destruction of infrastructure, livelihoods and civic trust in the region (International Crisis Group, 2024; O'Connor et al., 2021). The scale, geographic diffusion, and endurance of the insurgency mark it as one of the most consequential security challenges facing Africa in the twenty-first century. Boko Haram's trajectory has been neither static nor singular. Scholarly research has traced its roots to charismatic preaching, local grievances, and weak state presence, and has emphasized the group's ability to exploit networks of grievance, patronage and economic marginality in northern Nigeria (Thurston, 2017; Ahmad, 2017). From the mass protests and violent confrontations of 2009 through successive waves of violence, the movement reinvented itself—splintering, shifting tactics, and increasingly adopting transnational jihadist linkages. In 2015–2016 a major schism produced two principal strands: the faction loyal to Abubakar Shekau (commonly referred to as JAS or Shekau's group) and the faction that aligned with the Islamic State, operating as the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Each has pursued different operational logics, targeting patterns, and relations

with local communities, complicating Nigeria's response options (International Crisis Group, 2024; UN Security Council, 2020).

The regionalization of the conflict spreading from northeastern Nigeria to parts of Niger, Chad and Cameroon around Lake Chad, has multiplied the humanitarian and security implications. International observers and humanitarian agencies emphasize the combined effect of climate stress, livelihood collapse around Lake Chad, porous borders and weak multi-national coordination in creating a permissive environment for armed groups (New Yorker, 2017; International Crisis Group, 2024). Furthermore, Boko Haram's use of widespread atrocities including abductions (notably the 2014 Chibok kidnappings), forced recruitment of children, sexual violence, and the deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure, has created long-term social trauma that complicates stabilization and reconciliation efforts (Human Rights Watch, 2019; O'Connor et al., 2021). Nigeria's official counter-terrorism posture has been dominated by kinetic military responses and a securitized approach framed around restoring territorial control. The Federal Government has developed formal strategies, including the National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST), and relied heavily on conventional armed forces, special task forces, and multinational military cooperation to degrade insurgent capabilities (NCTC, 2016). These operations achieved tactical successes—dislodging insurgent territorial control in parts of the region and degrading command centres, but have often fallen short of producing durable security or addressing the root causes that sustain violence (Campbell, 2014; International Crisis Group, 2024).

A persistent and worrying feature of Nigeria's counter-insurgency has been the recurrent allegations of human rights abuses by security forces and pro-government militias. Major international human rights organizations and investigative reporting have documented instances of extrajudicial killings, unlawful detention, torture, and abuses directed at women and children alleged to have links with armed groups (Human Rights Watch, 2015, 2019; Reuters reporting citing Amnesty International, 2024). These practices not only raise serious legal and ethical concerns but also undermine legitimacy, erode community trust, and in many instances fuel cycle of grievance that insurgents exploit thereby creating strategic blind spots in Nigeria's campaign against violent extremism. Compounding the problem is the uneven capacity of state institutions at the subnational level. Weak public service delivery, limited rule of law, corruption, and the absence of credible local governance have left communities reliant on non-state actors for security and basic services. In certain areas, community self-defence groups such as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) emerged as de facto security providers; while they have played important roles in local defense, they have also been implicated in abuses and operate with varying degrees of state oversight, further complicating civil-military relations (The Guardian, 2019; International Crisis Group, 2024).

Contemporary analyses stress that military victory alone will not deliver sustainable peace. Leading authorities including practitioners at International Crisis Group, scholars such as Alexander Thurston and Aisha Ahmad, and policy analysts at Brookings and CFR emphasize that long-term stabilization in Northeast Nigeria requires a rebalancing of counter-terrorism policy toward approaches that combine security, governance, development and human-rights protections (Thurston, 2017; Ahmad, 2017; Campbell, 2014; International Crisis Group, 2024). In particular, community-centered security models that build trust between security forces and local populations, integrate local knowledge into intelligence and policing, and prioritize protection of civilians are increasingly seen as critical complements to military operations (UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy; International Crisis Group, 2024). This study responds to that policy and scholarly imperative by examining how civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) and community-centered approaches can be structured to reduce abuses, enhance intelligence gathering, and support reintegration and resilience in Nigeria's Northeast. It seeks to probe the institutional barriers and enabling conditions for effective CIMIC, evaluate comparative lessons, and propose concrete, rights-based models for participatory intelligence, local policing, and post-conflict reintegration. By situating analysis at the intersection of security effectiveness and human rights protection, the study aims to contribute empirically grounded recommendations that can help reorient Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy toward sustainable, community-anchored security.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's long war with violent extremist groups, chiefly Boko Haram and its offshoots such as the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), has produced a security policy paradigm dominated by kinetic responses and military-centered counter-insurgency campaigns. While military operations have been central to denying territorial control and degrading insurgent capabilities, they have also been associated with repeated allegations of excessive

force, unlawful detention, and other human-rights violations (Human Rights Watch, 2015; International Crisis Group, 2024). These patterns create a fundamental dilemma: operations intended to protect citizens and restore state authority can at the same time undermine the legitimacy of the state by alienating the very communities whose cooperation is essential for sustainable counter-terrorism outcomes (Campbell, 2014; Thurston, 2017). A growing body of evidence indicates that heavy-handed security measures and impunity for abuses corrode local trust in state actors and push communities toward non-state security arrangements or passive accommodation of armed groups (Human Rights Watch, 2019; Ahmad, 2017). Notably in Nigeria's Northeast, the emergence of local self-defense groups such as variants of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) and informal protection networks reflects both community resilience and a loss of confidence in formal security institutions (International Crisis Group, 2024). Where security forces are perceived as threats rather than protectors, civilians withhold intelligence, disengage from formal cooperation, or even sympathize with anti-state actors, dynamics that directly impede counter-terrorism effectiveness (Thurston, 2017). These dynamics raise three interrelated methodological and policy problems for Nigeria's counter-terrorism architecture. First, there is the operational problem of intelligence scarcity: reliable, timely human intelligence from local communities is indispensable for locating and neutralizing insurgent cells, but such information flows depend on trust and protection from reprisals, conditions often absent where abuses have occurred (Campbell, 2014). Second, there is the legitimacy problem: repeated allegations of unlawful conduct by state forces delegitimize the government's monopoly on force and weaken the social contract that underpins citizens' cooperation with security institutions (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Third, there is the sustainability problem: military success without parallel investments in rights-respecting civil-military relations, community policing, and reintegration initiatives risks creating short-term tactical gains but long-term instability (International Crisis Group, 2024; UN, 2006).

Against this backdrop, the promise of community-centered security and structured civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) warrants rigorous evaluation. International practice and doctrinal guidance (IASC, 2008; UN, 2006) suggest that civil-military coordination, when grounded in humanitarian principles, respect for human rights, and local participation can improve protection outcomes, facilitate access to populations, and enable more credible intelligence partnerships. In the Nigerian context, a rights-based CIMIC approach would aim to (a) strengthen mechanisms for accountability and civilian protection, (b) institutionalize channels for community input into operational planning, and (c) build joint civilian–security platforms for prevention, response, and post-conflict recovery (Campbell, 2014; International Crisis Group, 2024). However, important questions remain unanswered or under-researched. There is limited systematic evidence on what specific CIMIC modalities are practicable and effective in Nigeria's sociopolitical environment, and how these can be designed to minimize human-rights risk while preserving operational security. The Nigerian National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) and other policy instruments identify civil–military coordination and community engagement as priorities, yet implementation gaps persist, stemming from institutional fragmentation, weak oversight, and inadequate human-rights training for security personnel (NCTC, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2019). Additionally, scholarship has yet to produce robust comparative frameworks that translate international CIMIC doctrines into actionable, culturally-attuned models for the Northeast Nigerian theatre (Thurston, 2017; Ahmad, 2017).

This study addresses these gaps by evaluating how community-centered approaches and CIMIC can be operationalized in Nigeria to rebuild trust, enhance human-sourced intelligence, and reduce rights abuses without compromising sovereignty or operational efficacy. The research will examine institutional barriers (command structures, legal frameworks, oversight mechanisms), socio-cultural dynamics (local authority structures, gendered experiences of violence), and operational constraints (force protection, information security), and will propose a set of participatory models for intelligence-gathering, community policing, and reintegration consistent with human-rights obligations (Bayley, 2006; IASC, 2008). By situating civil-military cooperation within a human-security and rights-based paradigm, the study aims to demonstrate that protecting civilians and building trust are not ancillary to counter-terrorism but central to its success. The evidence will inform policy prescriptions that reconcile Nigeria's duty to uphold sovereignty and territorial integrity with the equally compelling obligation to protect human rights and rebuild state–society relations in the Northeast. If properly designed and systematically implemented, CIMIC and community-centered security can transform the operational landscape, turning distrust into cooperation, information deficits into actionable intelligence, and ephemeral military gains into durable stability (UN, 2006; International Crisis Group, 2024).

1.2 Research Questions

- How has the overreliance on military force in Nigeria's Northeast affected the relationship between security forces and local communities in the counter-terrorism context?
- What are the key features and benefits of a community-centered security model in addressing terrorism threats in Nigeria?
- How does civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) and approaches such as community-led intelligence gathering and inclusive policing play in enhancing operational effectiveness against Boko Haram and ISWAP?
- What institutional and structural challenges hinder the institutionalization of trust-building mechanisms and civil-military dialogue in Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy?

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it addresses the critical gap between military-centric counter-terrorism approaches and the need for human rights-centered, community-engaged security strategies in Nigeria's Northeast. By applying Human Security, Social Contract, and Institutional theories, the research offers a theoretically grounded framework for civil-military cooperation that balances security and humanitarian imperatives. The study provides empirical insights from Nigeria, supported by comparative analysis from Kenya and Niger, thus enriching academic literature on participatory governance and security sector reform in fragile states. Practically, it informs policymakers on how to build trust, improve intelligence sharing, and reduce human rights abuses through inclusive and institutionalized civil-military partnerships. The findings advocate for reforms that could lead to sustainable peace and security, ultimately contributing to more legitimate and effective counter-terrorism strategies that protect human rights and foster community resilience.

2. Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this paper, the researches adopted a multi theory approach.

2.1 Human Security Theory

The Human Security paradigm emerged in the 1990s, with its most authoritative articulation in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report of 1994. *Proponents* such as Amartya Sen (1999) and Sakiko Fukuda-Parr (2003) argue that security should not be defined solely in terms of protecting state sovereignty or borders, but in safeguarding individuals from threats to survival, dignity, and livelihood. The human security framework emphasizes "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want", shifting attention from military strength to people's well-being (UNDP, 1994). This study employs human security theory to critique Nigeria's predominantly militarized counter-terrorism approach, which has often prioritized territorial control over civilian protection. By focusing on individuals' safety, trust, and dignity, human security provides a normative justification for community-centered and rights-based counter-terrorism, aligning security with humanitarian imperatives (Newman, 2010). It underscores why civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) must place civilian protection and community resilience at its core.

2.2 Social Contract Theory

Rooted in the works of Thomas Hobbes (1651), John Locke (1689), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762), social contract theory posits that the legitimacy of political authority is derived from a tacit agreement between citizens and the state. Citizens surrender certain freedoms in exchange for the state's provision of order, protection, and justice. When the state fails to provide security or abuses its powers, the social contract is eroded, leading to disobedience, conflict, or alternative governance structures. In Northeast Nigeria, widespread human-rights abuses by security forces and persistent insecurity have strained the social contract (Thurston, 2017; Campbell, 2014). Communities lose faith in the state when security operations victimize rather than protect them, thereby legitimizing insurgents or informal militias. By situating Nigeria's counter-terrorism challenge within the framework of social contract theory, this study demonstrates why civil-military cooperation and participatory security models are critical to rebuilding state legitimacy and restoring citizens' trust in government institutions.

2.3 Civil-Military Relations Theory

The field of civil-military relations is shaped by scholars such as Samuel P. Huntington (1957) in *The Soldier and the State*, and Morris Janowitz (1960) in *The Professional Soldier*. Huntington advanced the concept of objective civilian control, arguing that a professionalized, autonomous military subject to civilian oversight preserves democratic governance. Janowitz, by contrast, emphasized the "constabulary

concept," where the military adapts to societal norms and engages in cooperative roles, especially in peacekeeping and low-intensity conflicts. Contemporary scholarship (Cottey et al., 2002) extends these ideas to contexts where militaries are involved in internal security operations, counter-insurgency, and post-conflict stabilization. Nigeria's counter-terrorism experience reveals tensions between military autonomy and civilian oversight. Allegations of abuses suggest weaknesses in both accountability and societal integration. Applying civil-military relations theory enables this study to evaluate how CIMIC can serve as a corrective mechanism, fostering professional conduct, human-rights compliance, and cooperative engagement between the armed forces and civilian populations in counter-terrorism contexts.

2.4 Community Policing and Participatory Security Theories

The notion of community policing was pioneered in the 1970s by scholars and practitioners such as Herman Goldstein (1979), who advocated "problem-oriented policing." The framework emphasizes decentralization, trust-building, and collaboration between police forces and communities to prevent crime and enhance legitimacy (Skogan & Hartnett, 1997). Later, participatory security models expanded the concept beyond policing, stressing the role of local communities in shaping security priorities, contributing intelligence, and co-managing reintegration processes (Bayley, 2006). Applied to counter-terrorism in Nigeria, participatory security theory underscores the necessity of building bottom-up security partnerships. Local communities in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa often possess invaluable intelligence on insurgent movements but are reluctant to cooperate due to mistrust. Integrating community policing principles into CIMIC strategies can bridge intelligence gaps, reduce abuses, and enhance legitimacy, making counter-terrorism operations more effective and rights-compliant.

2.5 Conflict Transformation Theory

Conflict transformation theory is most closely associated with John Paul Lederach (1997), who stressed that sustainable peace requires addressing the root causes of conflict, transforming relationships, and empowering local communities. Unlike conflict resolution, which seeks to end immediate violence, conflict transformation focuses on building long-term structures for reconciliation, inclusion, and justice. In Nigeria's Northeast, insurgency is rooted not only in extremist ideology but also in governance failures, poverty, and marginalization (Agbiboa, 2013). Conflict transformation theory suggests that counter-terrorism cannot succeed without reintegration, rehabilitation, and local empowerment. Thus, CIMIC must go beyond military cooperation to include socio-economic programs, community dialogue, and transitional justice mechanisms that address grievances fueling insurgency.

The theoretical frameworks employed in this study provide a multidimensional lens through which Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy can be critically examined. The human security paradigm underscores the primacy of civilian protection, emphasizing that the safety and dignity of individuals must remain central to any security operation. In contexts such as Nigeria's Northeast, where Boko Haram and ISWAP have deeply disrupted communities, this framework highlights that the legitimacy of counter-terrorism depends not merely on defeating insurgents but also on safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of ordinary citizens. Equally important is the social contract theory, which offers a conceptual basis for understanding how state legitimacy is eroded when security operations are associated with abuses, neglect, or violations of rights. When the state, through its armed forces, fails to uphold its obligations to protect citizens, it risks weakening the very trust upon which governance and stability rest. This theory is particularly relevant in Nigeria, where cycles of mistrust between local populations and security actors have undermined counter-terrorism effectiveness. Civil-military relations theory provides another crucial perspective, clarifying the need for professional, accountable, and rights-based engagement by security forces. It draws attention to the balance between civilian oversight and military effectiveness, while stressing the importance of building cooperative relationships between armed forces and local populations. When integrated with the principles of community policing and participatory security, this framework operationalizes trust-building and intelligence-sharing by emphasizing inclusive approaches that empower communities as active stakeholders in their own security. Conflict transformation theory extends the analysis by insisting that counter-terrorism strategies must move beyond immediate security measures to address root causes of insurgency such as poverty, inequality, marginalization, and weak governance. By incorporating this perspective, the study recognizes that sustainable peace requires structural reforms and social reintegration mechanisms that dismantle the drivers of violent extremism. Together, these frameworks establish a strong normative and analytical foundation for assessing how community-centered security and civil-military cooperation can

reconcile Nigeria's sovereignty imperatives with its human rights obligations in the ongoing fight against Boko Haram and ISWAP.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, case study research design, which is particularly well suited for exploring complex social and political dynamics such as civil-military cooperation and community-centered security. By focusing on specific cases such as Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states, the research provides in-depth insights into localized experiences of counter-terrorism that may be obscured by broader quantitative analyses. A case study approach allows the investigation of how theoretical frameworks, such as human security and civil-military relations, manifest in practice within Nigeria's counter-terrorism context (Yin, 2018). Data will be drawn from multiple sources to ensure triangulation and enhance validity. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a diverse range of actors, including military and police officers, members of the CJTF, traditional and religious leaders, representatives of women's and youth groups, and officials from NGOs and humanitarian agencies. In addition, policy documents, official reports, and secondary literature will be analyzed to provide institutional and historical context. The combination of primary and secondary data will enable a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play.

Analytically, the study will employ thematic analysis, coding the data to identify patterns and themes aligned with the study's theoretical frameworks. Specifically, the concepts of human security and civil-military cooperation will guide the categorization of findings, ensuring that the analysis captures both the protective dimensions of security and the relational aspects of trust, legitimacy, and dialogue. This approach will not only illuminate how community-centered strategies are being implemented in practice but also evaluate their effectiveness in enhancing Nigeria's counter-terrorism framework.

4. Literature Review

This literature review explores the scholarly and policy debates on counter-terrorism, civil-military cooperation (CIMIC), and community-centered security in fragile states, with a focus on Nigeria. To critically evaluate Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy and its human rights implications, the review is in part structured around four guiding research questions: (1) the impact of overreliance on military force on security–community relations; (2) the features and benefits of community-centered security models; (3) the role of CIMIC, intelligence-sharing, and inclusive policing in enhancing counter-terrorism effectiveness; and (4) the institutional and structural barriers to embedding trust-building mechanisms in Nigeria's security architecture. To contextualize these questions, the review draws on global experiences (Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia), regional African cases (Kenya, Mali, Niger), and Nigeria-specific literature, highlighting conceptual frameworks, debates, and knowledge gaps.

4.1 Military Reliance and Community–Security Relations in Nigeria

Globally, scholarship shows that overreliance on military solutions in counter-insurgency often generates unintended consequences, particularly in contexts of fragile state–community relations. In Afghanistan and Iraq, U.S.-led campaigns relied heavily on kinetic operations, which alienated local populations and undermined long-term stabilization (Kilcullen, 2009; Jones, 2012). Similar dynamics have been observed in Somalia, where AMISOM's military offensives against al-Shabaab frequently resulted in civilian casualties that eroded trust (Williams, 2018). In Africa, militarized responses to violent extremism have produced mixed outcomes. In Mali, for instance, French-led counter-terrorism operations achieved short-term battlefield gains but failed to dismantle insurgent recruitment, largely because of persistent human rights violations (Cold-Ravnkilde & Albrecht, 2019). These lessons suggest that military overreach without community consent risks perpetuating insurgency cycles.

Nigeria reflects these patterns. The military has been central to countering Boko Haram and ISWAP since 2009, but evidence consistently points to abuses that undermine legitimacy. Human Rights Watch (2014) and Amnesty International (2018) report widespread extrajudicial killings, torture, and sexual violence committed by security forces in the Northeast. Scholars argue that this reliance on military force has created a "legitimacy gap" between the Nigerian state and communities, limiting intelligence cooperation and deepening grievances (Onuoha, 2014; Agbiboa, 2021).

4.2 Community-Centered Security Models

Literature on community-centered security emphasizes shifting from state-centric to participatory approaches. Globally, Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan and community policing initiatives in Iraq illustrate the potential of empowering local populations to shape security outcomes (Perito, 2005). Though uneven in execution,

these initiatives highlight the importance of legitimacy and cultural sensitivity in counter-terrorism. In Africa, Kenya's community-policing model after the Westgate Mall attack exemplifies the benefits of involving local actors in early warning systems and intelligence gathering (Botha & Abdile, 2019). In Niger, peace committees provided dialogue platforms that defused tensions and reduced extremist recruitment (Agbiboa, 2020). Such models show that participatory security builds resilience by addressing grievances and fostering ownership of counter-terrorism processes.

For Nigeria, a community-centered model would mean integrating local leaders, traditional institutions, and youth groups into intelligence structures, reinforcing humanitarian protection, and creating reintegration pathways for repentant fighters (Aghedo & Osumah, 2014). Research highlights that communities, when empowered, are better placed to identify threats early and to resist extremist narratives (Higazi, 2015).

4.3 The Role of Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC)

Civil-military cooperation is defined as the coordination between military forces, civil authorities, and communities to support stabilization and security objectives (NATO, 2003). International scholarship emphasizes that CIMIC strengthens intelligence flows, humanitarian access, and legitimacy (Sheeran & Bailey, 2012). In Somalia, CIMIC-enabled dialogues between AMISOM and local elders improved operational effectiveness against al-Shabaab (Williams, 2018). In the African context, CIMIC has been employed in peacekeeping and stabilization, notably in Mali, where community dialogues moderated tensions, albeit inconsistently (Cold-Ravnkilde & Albrecht, 2019). However, weak institutionalization often limits CIMIC's sustainability.

In Nigeria, CIMIC has taken forms such as humanitarian assistance, military–community forums, and partnerships with the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). While these efforts have enhanced local intelligence and disrupted Boko Haram networks, they also carry risks. The CJTF, though effective, has been implicated in abuses, highlighting accountability gaps (Higazi, 2015). Scholars argue that structured CIMIC, anchored in transparency and inclusivity, could enhance Nigeria's operational effectiveness by institutionalizing dialogue and trust-building (Akinola, 2019; Agbiboa, 2021)

4.4 Institutional and Structural Barriers

Finally, the literature highlights institutional and structural challenges that undermine participatory counter-terrorism in Nigeria. Globally, weaknesses such as fragmented command structures, limited oversight, and poor coordination between military and civilian agencies hinder the sustainability of CIMIC (Jones, 2012). In Africa, state fragility, corruption, and politicization of security institutions constrain inclusive approaches (Agbiboa, 2020). Nigeria exemplifies these challenges. Despite adopting the National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) in 2014, implementation has remained highly militarized, with insufficient attention to community participation (Abdulaziz, 2020). Structural problems include underfunded reintegration programs, weak accountability for security abuses, and poor interagency collaboration (Akinola, 2019). Moreover, deep-seated mistrust between communities and security forces makes institutionalization of dialogue difficult (Onuoha, 2014). These barriers underscore the difficulty of embedding trust-based approaches into Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy.

4.5 Kinetic Approaches to Counter Terrorism

One of the dominant critiques of Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy is the overreliance on kinetic approaches, which has often alienated local communities rather than winning their cooperation. The military's heavy-handed tactics, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and forced displacements, have exacerbated distrust between civilians and the state (Amnesty International, 2015; Human Rights Watch, 2022). This erosion of trust undermines intelligence-sharing and complicates efforts to dismantle terrorist networks. As scholars like Kalyvas (2006) have argued, civilian collaboration is central to counter-insurgency success, since it is the population that often controls critical information about insurgents' movements and support structures. In this regard, the Nigerian case illustrates the tension between short-term tactical gains through force and the long-term need for legitimacy and community cooperation.

Global evidence also suggests that militarized responses, if not accompanied by community engagement, tend to produce cycles of violence. For example, research on Afghanistan and Iraq shows that civilian casualties and rights violations by security forces often fueled insurgent recruitment and radicalization (Kilcullen, 2010; Biddle, 2021). In Somalia, the African Union Mission (AMISOM) faced similar challenges, with community-centered

initiatives such as involving clan elders proving more effective than purely military campaigns (Williams, 2018). These comparative insights underscore the relevance of Nigeria shifting towards models that prioritize human rights, dialogue, and participatory security frameworks. Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) offers a pathway to bridging the gap between military imperatives and humanitarian obligations. Scholars of security sector reform argue that CIMIC, when properly institutionalized, enhances mutual trust by creating channels of dialogue, enabling humanitarian access, and facilitating joint problem-solving between soldiers and civilians (Fitz-Gerald, 2011; Olonisakin, 2020). However, in Nigeria, CIMIC remains underdeveloped and largely ad hoc, with coordination often limited to elite-level negotiations rather than grassroots inclusivity (Okoli & Ugwu, 2021). The failure to integrate traditional leaders, women's groups, and youth associations into these mechanisms further reduces their legitimacy and impact, especially in diverse communities of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa.

A key gap in the literature lies in the relative neglect of participatory counter-terrorism models in Nigeria. While studies have examined the military's shortcomings and the rise of vigilante formations such as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), fewer works have systematically evaluated structured approaches to community engagement within counter-terrorism strategy (Hoffmann et al., 2022). Existing accounts often treat local communities as passive victims or sources of intelligence, rather than as active stakeholders capable of shaping the trajectory of peace and security. This overlooks the potential of models drawn from Kenya's community policing initiatives and Niger's peace committees, which emphasize sustained dialogue, early-warning systems, and reintegration of defectors (Botha & Abdile, 2016; Aghedo & Osumah, 2014).

Finally, the literature highlights institutional and structural barriers that complicate the institutionalization of trust-building mechanisms in Nigeria's counter-terrorism framework. Bureaucratic fragmentation, lack of accountability in the security sector, and political interference weaken CIMIC and prevent the scaling of community-centered strategies (Adebajo, 2021). Moreover, the absence of coherent post-conflict reintegration policies means that former combatants and traumatized communities are left in limbo, perpetuating cycles of insecurity (Okoli & Agbiboa, 2021). Addressing these gaps requires a fundamental reconceptualization of counter-terrorism not merely as a military campaign but as a governance and legitimacy project rooted in local participation, rights protection, and long-term conflict transformation.

4.6 Knowledge Gap

Across global, African, and Nigerian scholarship, a consensus emerges: military dominance in counter-terrorism erodes community trust, while participatory approaches enhance legitimacy and intelligence. However, the literature also reveals major gaps. First, structured studies on community-centered models in Nigeria remain limited. Second, while CIMIC is discussed in peace operations, few studies evaluate its systematic integration into Nigeria's counter-terrorism framework. Third, institutional challenges such as accountability and coordination require more empirical exploration. Addressing these gaps, this study appraises the potential of community-centered security and CIMIC as transformative tools in Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy.

5. Case Studies

Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, provides an instructive example of how community-based initiatives can complement formal counter-terrorism measures. The emergence of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in 2013 marked a turning point in the fight against Boko Haram, as thousands of young men and women organized to assist the military with intelligence gathering, patrols, and protection of neighborhoods (Agbiboa, 2015). While the CJTF's contribution has been critical in reclaiming territory and reducing insurgent infiltration, their involvement has also raised questions about accountability, long-term sustainability, and the risk of human rights abuses. The Maiduguri experience thus underscores both the opportunities and challenges of incorporating grassroots actors into Nigeria's counter-terrorism framework. Beyond Maiduguri, community dialogue programmes in Adamawa and Yobe States have shown promise in fostering trust between local populations and security forces. These initiatives, often facilitated by NGOs and supported by international partners, bring together traditional leaders, religious authorities, women's groups, and security personnel to address grievances and develop locally tailored peacebuilding strategies (Okoli & Ugwu, 2021). Such forums have improved the flow of information between civilians and the military, reduced the stigma surrounding surrendered insurgents, and provided platforms for early-warning mechanisms. However, their reach has been uneven, often limited to pilot projects without systematic integration into the national counter-terrorism strategy.

Comparative lessons from other African contexts provide further insights into the relevance of community-centered approaches. Kenya's community-policing model, developed in response to terrorist threats from al-Shabaab, emphasizes partnership between police and local communities through neighborhood watch schemes and regular dialogue forums (Botha & Abdile, 2016). In Niger, local peace committees have played a vital role in preventing extremist infiltration by mediating disputes, fostering dialogue between state representatives and marginalized groups, and promoting collective responsibility for security (International Crisis Group, 2017). Both cases highlight how structured, inclusive platforms can enhance intelligence gathering, reduce mistrust, and strengthen state legitimacy, all lessons highly applicable to Nigeria's Northeast.

6. Findings and Recommendations

The study highlights recurring patterns of deep-seated community distrust of military operations, largely fueled by incidents of human rights abuses and heavy-handed tactics. This erosion of trust has often undermined the legitimacy of counter-terrorism operations in the Northeast. However, opportunities exist where Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) initiatives have created pathways for mutual understanding. In cases where dialogue and humanitarian assistance have been prioritized, trust has been rebuilt, and the quality of local intelligence has improved significantly, enhancing operational outcomes. Despite these gains, several challenges persist, including institutional resistance within the security sector, endemic corruption, inadequate resources, and cultural divides that limit effective collaboration. The implications of these findings underscore that participatory security approaches rooted in community engagement not only strengthen intelligence networks but also enhance Nigeria's broader legitimacy in its counter-terrorism strategy.

To address these gaps, counter-terrorism strategies should prioritize strengthening human rights training for security forces, ensuring that military conduct aligns with democratic and humanitarian norms. Institutionalizing community policing models in conflict-affected areas can provide a framework for participatory security and sustainable collaboration. Furthermore, the formalization of civil-military dialogue platforms in conflict zones would help foster trust and reduce friction. Reintegration programs must also be designed with sensitivity to local traditions and justice mechanisms, promoting acceptance of rehabilitated individuals. Finally, effective counter-terrorism requires multi-stakeholder collaboration, bringing together NGOs, religious leaders, and international partners to create inclusive and comprehensive responses.

7. Conclusion

The overall conclusion reinforces the need to balance state sovereignty, human rights, and community engagement in Nigeria's counter-terrorism efforts. Civil-Military Cooperation remains central to rebuilding trust and fostering durable peace in the Northeast, especially in areas long scarred by insurgency. Looking ahead, future research should explore under-examined dimensions such as the role of gender in CIMIC and the long-term effectiveness of reintegration strategies. By adopting a community-centered and rights-based approach, Nigeria can transform its counter-terrorism framework into one that is both legitimate and sustainable.

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N-Power Programme and Poverty Reduction: A Post Beneficiaries Exploration in Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study investigates the impact of the N-Power programme on poverty reduction in Niger State, with a specific focus on the 2020 Batch A, B, and C beneficiaries. The objectives were to assess the employment status of post-beneficiaries, examine changes in income and living standards, and explore the challenges encountered after exiting the programme. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and employed a quantitative research approach. A sample of 354 respondents was selected from a population of 3,091 beneficiaries using stratified random sampling. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired t-tests, and multiple regression analysis with the aid of Stata 17. The findings revealed that 61.9% of beneficiaries were employed after the programme, with a statistically significant improvement in their income levels and living standards. However, key challenges such as lack of startup capital, difficulty securing permanent employment, and absence of post-exit support were identified. Regression results indicated that employment status, income, skill utilization, and ability to save were significant predictors of poverty reduction. The study concludes that while the N-Power programme has positively influenced the economic conditions of many young Nigerians in Niger State, its long-term impact can be strengthened through post-programme support, access to finance, and improved policy implementation. Recommendations include the provision of soft loans or grants, establishment of mentorship structures, private sector engagement, and development of a beneficiary tracking system to ensure sustainability and continued poverty alleviation.

1. Introduction

The N-Power program represents one of Nigeria's largest social intervention initiatives, specifically designed to address the persistent challenges of youth unemployment and poverty across the country. Introduced as part of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), N-Power targets young Nigerians between the ages of 18 and 35 by offering them skills acquisition, vocational training, and temporary employment to enhance their productivity and economic independence (Aminu&Aliyu, 2024; Uche&Ozovehe, 2022). In regions like Niger State, where poverty and unemployment remain deeply rooted, such programs play a vital role in the government's broader poverty alleviation framework (Ebegbulem et al., 2022; Aminu&Aliyu, 2024).

Niger State, located in Nigeria's North Central geopolitical zone, faces unique socio-economic challenges despite various government interventions. The state's high poverty and unemployment rates disproportionately affect its youth population, leading to long-term social and economic vulnerabilities (Adetona et al., 2023; Mohammad & David, 2019). Although several programs have been implemented to mitigate these issues, the impact has often been uneven, with studies reporting fluctuating poverty levels across local government areas (Robert et al., 2023; Sudaryantoet al., 2023). The N-Power program, with its components such as N-Teach, N-Agro, and N-Health, offers a targeted approach by equipping participants with skills and stipends intended to help them achieve self-reliance and improve their standard of living (Yakubu et al., 2023; Uche&Ozovehe, 2022).

This study aims to critically examine the effectiveness of the N-Power program in reducing poverty in Niger State by focusing on the post-beneficiary outcomes of the 2020 batch. Specifically, it seeks to: (1) assess the employment status of N-Power post-beneficiaries; (2) examine changes in income and living standards of these beneficiaries; and (3) explore the challenges they face after exiting the program. The goal is to determine whether the intervention results in long-term socio-economic improvements and contributes to breaking the cycle of poverty (Ezekiel & Faith, 2023; Aminu&Aliyu, 2024).

Prior studies have often centered on the immediate gains of social programs, but there is a growing need for post-intervention assessments that evaluate whether the acquired skills translate into sustained livelihoods and economic growth. By shifting focus to post-beneficiary experiences, this study highlights the broader, long-term implications of N-Power, identifies existing gaps in program implementation, and provides policy-relevant insights. The findings will not only contribute to a more understanding of youth empowerment strategies but also offer actionable recommendations for improving poverty reduction efforts in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Poverty

Poverty is a multifaceted phenomenon characterized by deprivation in income, access to basic services, and inability to meet minimum standards of living. The World Bank (2022) defines poverty as a condition where an individual lives on less than $2.15 per day, encompassing not only low income but also lack of access to health, education, and decent living conditions. In Nigeria, poverty remains a persistent challenge, with significant regional disparities and a high incidence in rural and northern regions like Niger State (NBS, 2020). Poverty manifests in various forms, including food insecurity, lack of employment, poor health, and low educational attainment.

2.2 Poverty Reduction Strategies

Poverty reduction involves deliberate policies and programmes aimed at improving the well-being and economic empowerment of the poor. These strategies often include job creation, access to education and healthcare, social safety nets, and financial inclusion. According to Olowookere and Adegbite (2019), effective poverty reduction efforts must be people-centered, sustainable, and inclusive. In Nigeria, key strategies include the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), of which N-Power is a major component, aimed at empowering youth through skills development and job placement.

2.3 Overview of the N-Power Programme

The N-Power programme was launched in 2016 by the Federal Government of Nigeria under the NSIP to tackle youth unemployment and poverty. It targets Nigerian youth between the ages of 18 and 35 and aims to provide them with vocational skills, work experience, and stipends over a fixed period. N-Power components include N-Teach, N-Agro, N-Health, N-Tech, N-Creative, and N-Build. According to the National Social Investment Office (NSIO, 2021), over 500,000 youths have been enrolled across Nigeria since inception. The programme is expected to boost human capital development, encourage entrepreneurship, and increase employability.

3. Theoretical Review

3.1 Human Capital Theory

The Human Capital Theory, advanced by Becker (1964), posits that investment in education, skills, and health enhances individuals' productivity and economic potential. In the context of N-Power, the programme's training and work placement components are investments that equip participants with skills needed to increase income and reduce poverty. This theory underpins the rationale for using skill acquisition as a pathway to poverty alleviation.

3.2 Empowerment Theory

Empowerment Theory, as described by Zimmerman (2000), emphasizes enhancing individuals' ability to make choices and transform those choices into desired outcomes. The N-Power programme, by providing participants with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to improve their economic conditions, aligns with this theory. Empowerment economic, social, and psychological is central to sustained poverty reduction.

3.3 Empirical Review

The body of empirical research on the N-Power programme presents a nuanced picture of its contributions to poverty alleviation and youth empowerment in Nigeria. Collectively, the studies reviewed converge on several key themes positive impacts on income and skills development, programmatic and administrative challenges, and regional variations in effectiveness. Several studies (e.g., Adesina, 2020; Eze & Nnadi, 2021; Ojo & Salawu, 2021; Abdullahi, 2018) consistently report that the N-Power programme led to tangible

improvements in beneficiaries' income levels, financial independence, and entrepreneurial capabilities, particularly through skill acquisition and vocational training. For instance, Adesina (2020) recorded a 30% increase in household income, while Adewale and Olagunju (2020) documented a 25% reduction in poverty among rural beneficiaries. Similarly, Aliyu (2018) and Mohammed et al. (2023) affirmed the relevance of the programme in equipping participants with in-demand skills in ICT, agriculture, and health, contributing to local economic development.

However, despite these positive outcomes, many studies highlight significant implementation gaps that weaken the programme's overall impact. For example, Odalonu and Adigu (2023), Agbaje and Kolawole (2020), and Aminu and Aliyu (2024) all reported challenges including irregular payment of stipends, inadequate training materials, corruption, and political interference. These operational inefficiencies often undermined beneficiaries' motivation and restricted their ability to transition into sustainable employment after exiting the programme. The issue of post-program sustainability also emerged as a consistent concern. Studies by Ibrahim & Usman (2021) and Ojo & Salawu (2021) underscore the lack of job placement or business start-up support after training, which hampers long-term poverty reduction. Kayode et al. (2024) and Dauda et al. (2019) further emphasized that, while some participants gained temporary economic relief, many were left without stable means of livelihood after the programme ended.

Gender and regional disparities were also noted. Eze and Nnadi (2021) and Adewale & Olagunju (2020) showed that rural women particularly benefited from N-Power through increased economic participation and asset ownership. However, cultural barriers and regional inequalities, especially in conservative or underserved areas, limited women's participation and access to programme benefits (Eze & Nnadi, 2021; Amanie & Elenwa, 2024). Moreover, macro-level analyses such as those by Balogun (2019) and Robert et al. (2023) provided a broader economic evaluation. While Balogun noted a modest contribution of N-Power to GDP growth and employment, Robert et al. found no statistically significant reduction in national poverty levels, suggesting that the programme's effects may be more localized or short-term in nature. Overall, while the N-Power programme has shown potential in short-term poverty relief, human capital development, and youth empowerment, the literature agrees that structural reforms including improved monitoring, transparent fund disbursement, structured exit strategies, and broader access to capital are essential for sustained impact. These insights underscore the need for context-specific adjustments and greater policy coherence to ensure that social investment programmes like N-Power can fully meet their objectives of inclusive poverty alleviation across Nigeria.

4. Research Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology adopted to examine the impact of the N-Power programme on poverty reduction among beneficiaries in Niger State, focusing on the 2020 Batch A, B, and C cohorts. The study adopted a descriptive survey design using a quantitative approach. This design is appropriate for systematically collecting and analyzing data related to post-beneficiary outcomes. Primary data were obtained using a structured questionnaire, which was administered directly to selected N-Power beneficiaries. The questionnaire was divided into sections that captured demographic and socio-economic information, employment status after the programme, changes in income and living standards, and the challenges faced after exiting the scheme. The instrument included both closed-ended questions (e.g., Likert scale and multiple-choice) and a few open-ended questions to provide richer contextual insight. To enhance reliability and clarity, a pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents who were not included in the final sample. Feedback from the pilot phase was used to revise the questionnaire to ensure it was appropriate and user-friendly.

The population of the study consisted of all N-Power Batch A, B, and C beneficiaries of the 2020 cycle in Niger State. According to records from the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), a total of 3,091 beneficiaries were deployed across various sectors such as N-Teach, N-Agro, and N-Health during that period. These beneficiaries form the sampling frame for the study. To determine the appropriate sample size, Yamane's (1967) formula for a finite population was applied at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Using this formula, the calculated sample size was approximately 354 respondents. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed. In the first stage, beneficiaries were stratified by batch (A, B, C) and programme component. In the second stage, local government areas were randomly selected from each senatorial zone (North, South, and East). In the final stage, proportionate random sampling was used to select individual respondents from each stratum to ensure balanced representation based on batch, sector, and geographical distribution.

The study's dependent variable is *poverty reduction*, which was assessed through indicators such as employment status, income change, savings ability, and improvements in living conditions after

participation in the N-Power programme. The independent variables include employment status (measured as a binary variable: employed = 1, unemployed = 0), monthly income (measured in naira), skill utilization (binary: 1 = using acquired skills, 0 = not), savings capability (measured as average monthly amount saved), and educational qualification (categorized into secondary, tertiary, postgraduate, etc.). Control variables such as age, gender, marital status, and family size were also considered, as these may influence post-programme outcomes.

To evaluate the relationship between these variables and poverty reduction, a multiple regression model was specified as follows:

$$Y = \alpha 0 + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2X2 + \beta 3X3 + \beta 4X4 + \beta 5X5 + \beta 6X6 + ui$$ ----------eqt1

Where Y represents the poverty reduction outcome (proxied by income level); X1 = employment status, X2 = monthly income, X3 = skill utilization, X4= savings capability, X5 = education level, and X6 = family size. α0 is the constant term, and ui represents the stochastic error term. This model helps to estimate the degree to which post-programme conditions influenced the economic empowerment of N-Power beneficiaries. Data analysis was conducted using Stata version 17. Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize demographic characteristics and post-programme experiences of the respondents. For inferential analysis, paired t-tests were used to compare income and living standards before and after participation in the programme. Logistic regression was applied to estimate the probability of beneficiaries securing employment post-programme, while Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression was used to assess the impact of independent variables on beneficiaries' income and savings levels. Data were screened for accuracy, missing values, outliers, and coding errors. Diagnostic checks for normality, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were also performed to ensure the validity of the regression models.

5. Result

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	202	57.1%
	Female	152	42.9%
Age Group	18–25	74	20.9%
	26–35	178	50.3%
	36–45	72	20.3%
	46 and above	30	8.5%
Marital Status	Single	157	44.4%
	Married	187	52.8%
	Divorced/Widowed	10	2.8%
Educational Qualification	SSCE	28	7.9%
	OND/NCE	92	26.0%
	HND/BSc	184	52.0%
	MSc and above	50	14.1%

Employment Status of Post-Beneficiaries

The employment status of respondents after exiting the N-Power program was analyzed. As shown below:

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Employed	219	61.9%
Unemployed	135	38.1%

Out of 354 respondents, 219 (61.9%) reported being employed after the program, while 135 (38.1%) remained unemployed. This suggests that the N-Power program positively influenced employment outcomes for many beneficiaries.

Changes in Income and Living Standards

Monthly Income Before and After N-Power Participation

Monthly Income (₦)	Before N-Power (%)	After N-Power (%)
Less than ₦20,000	48.9%	12.1%
₦20,000 – ₦50,000	42.3%	44.4%
Above ₦50,000	8.8%	43.5%
t stat (353)	9.63	p<0.001

A paired sample t-test comparing income before and after N-Power showed a significant improvement. This indicates that the N-Power program had a statistically significant positive effect on income levels among participants.

Changes in Living Standards

Living Standards	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Improved	217	61.3%
No Change	108	30.5%
Worsened	29	8.2%

More than 60% of beneficiaries reported an improved standard of living after the programme, reflecting positive welfare outcomes.

Challenges Faced After Exiting the Programme

Respondents were asked to identify the key challenges they encountered after completing their N-Power engagement. Results were as follows (multiple responses allowed):

Challenges Faced	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of startup capital	252	71.2%
Difficulty securing permanent job	193	54.5%
Business failure or lack of market	107	30.2%
No access to mentorship or support	89	25.1%

The most common post-exit challenge was lack of capital (71.2%), which hindered many beneficiaries from utilizing their acquired skills for entrepreneurship or self-employment.

Regression Analysis: Determinants of Post-Program Poverty Reduction

A multiple linear regression was performed to assess the effect of key variables on poverty reduction, measured by income change and ability to save.

Regression Results (OLS Model)

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
Employment Status	0.421	0.075	5.61	0.000
Monthly Income (Log)	0.319	0.092	3.47	0.001
Skill Utilization	0.236	0.084	2.81	0.005
Savings Capability	0.401	0.069	5.81	0.000
Education Level	0.118	0.063	1.87	0.062
Family Size	-0.094	0.051	-1.84	0.067
Constant	1.104	0.112	9.86	0.000
R-squared	0.562			
F-statistic (p-value)	48.23 (0.000)			

The model shows that employment status, income, skill utilization, and ability to save have significant positive effects on poverty reduction. Education and family size are borderline significant.

6. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that the N-Power programme has had a positive impact on poverty reduction among beneficiaries in Niger State, particularly for the 2020 Batch A, B, and C. With over 61.9% of respondents securing some form of employment after the programme and a statistically significant increase in income levels, the data affirms that N-Power played a meaningful role in enhancing economic opportunities. This is consistent with the work of Adesina (2020) and Mohammed et al. (2023), who found that N-Power participation led to measurable improvements in income, financial independence, and livelihood stability due to stipends and vocational training. The study further reveals that over 61% of beneficiaries experienced improved living standards, reinforcing the programme's short-term value in mitigating poverty. These findings support earlier empirical results by Adewale and Olagunju (2020) and Eze and Nnadi (2021), who documented similar outcomes, especially among rural and female beneficiaries who gained financial autonomy through skill acquisition and income growth.

However, the results also expose key limitations. A substantial number of beneficiaries (71.2%) identified lack of startup capital as a critical barrier to transitioning from programme support to sustainable self-employment. Likewise, over half (54.5%) reported difficulty securing permanent employment. These challenges mirror those highlighted by Odalonu and Adigu (2023) and

Agbaje and Kolawole (2020), who emphasized that inadequate access to credit facilities, absence of structured exit plans, and weak linkages to employment or entrepreneurship opportunities undermine the long-term goals of the programme. The regression results in this study further underscore that employment status, income level, skill utilization, and savings capacity are significant predictors of poverty reduction, which aligns with findings by Ibrahim and Usman (2021) and Aliyu (2018). These studies emphasized the transformative role of technical and entrepreneurial training in boosting employability and income. Yet, the marginal significance of education and family size in the regression model also reflects contextual socio-economic pressures as noted in Dauda et al. (2019) where larger family responsibilities and limited education may still constrain the programme's effectiveness for some participants.

Importantly, the study also supports observations by Kayode et al. (2024) and Aminu and Aliyu (2024) that many post-beneficiaries hold negative perceptions of programme sustainability, especially due to irregular stipend payments, poor monitoring, and political interference. These issues echo national concerns documented by Robert et al. (2023) and Balogun (2019), who found that although N-Power has made localized economic impacts, its overall contribution to national poverty reduction remains statistically insignificant without major administrative reforms. Furthermore, gender and regional disparities continue to influence the programme's reach. While rural women experienced notable improvements, as noted by Eze and Nnadi (2021), access and participation were often limited in more conservative regions due to socio-cultural barriers, confirming the findings of Amanie and Elenwa (2024).

7. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that the N-Power programme has made a meaningful contribution to poverty reduction among beneficiaries in Niger State, particularly the 2020 Batch A, B, and C cohorts. The programme enhanced the employment prospects of many youths, improved their income levels, and positively impacted their standard of living. However, despite these gains, a significant number of post-beneficiaries still faced challenges such as lack of access to startup capital, difficulty securing permanent jobs, and limited post-programme support systems. These obstacles have the potential to erode the short-term benefits of the intervention if not adequately addressed. In light of these findings, it is recommended that the government provide post-exit financial support, such as grants or soft loans, to help beneficiaries start or sustain income-generating ventures. Additionally, integrating a mentorship and monitoring component into the programme will help guide beneficiaries toward productive outcomes. There is also a need for stronger linkages with private sector employers and business incubation centers to promote job placement and entrepreneurial development. To sustain the impact of the N-Power initiative, beneficiaries with outstanding performance could be considered for permanent absorption into government services, while future programme designs should ensure better alignment between acquired skills and deployment sectors.

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Decentralizing Power: Empowering Local Communities in Development Decision-Making in Nigeria

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Abstract. This study critically examines decentralization and local community empowerment within Nigeria's governance framework through theoretical and documentary analysis. Drawing on Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969) and Sen's Development as Freedom (1999), the research analyzes the gap between constitutional guarantees of local government autonomy and centralized power realities. Despite Section 7 of the 1999 Constitution guaranteeing local government existence, political, institutional, fiscal, and socio-cultural barriers impede genuine community empowerment. The 2024 Supreme Court judgment affirming local government financial autonomy represents a watershed moment, yet implementation challenges persist. This research contributes actionable recommendations for constitutional reform, institutional strengthening, and enhanced participatory mechanisms, arguing that meaningful decentralization is essential for sustainable development and democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Keywords: Decentralization, local government autonomy, community empowerment, participatory governance, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Nigeria confronts a profound development paradox where vast natural resources coexist with widespread poverty and inadequate infrastructure, particularly at the grassroots levels. At the heart of this paradox lies excessive concentration of power and resources at the federal and state levels, leaving local communities marginalized in decisions directly affecting their lives. Section 7 of the 1999 Constitution guarantees the existence of local government councils, yet their effectiveness is significantly hindered by lack of genuine autonomy, with state governments exercising overwhelming control over local affairs, elections, and finances. This constitutional contradiction has created what scholars describe as "grassroots governance without grassroots power." The consequences of centralization are profound. Development initiatives designed at distant capitals often fail to address local realities. Community members remain excluded from meaningful decision-making despite possessing intimate knowledge of their challenges. Resources intended for grassroots development are diverted through opaque channels, fueling cynicism and undermining democratic legitimacy. Against this backdrop, decentralization and community empowerment become imperative for more responsive, accountable, and effective governance.

This study emerges at a particularly opportune moment. On July 11, 2024, the Supreme Court delivered a landmark judgment granting financial autonomy to Nigeria's 774 local government councils, ruling that allocations should be paid directly rather than through state governments, and declaring the practice of state governors dissolving democratically elected councils and installing caretaker committees as unconstitutional. This judicial intervention represents the most significant affirmation of local government rights since the return to democracy in 1999. This research pursues four primary objectives: to critically examine theoretical frameworks of decentralization and empowerment and assess their applicability to Nigeria; to analyze constitutional provisions regarding local government autonomy, identifying contradictions between legal frameworks and institutional realities; to comprehensively map barriers impeding effective decentralization; and to develop actionable policy recommendations for strengthening local government autonomy and

enhancing community empowerment. Employing theoretical and documentary analysis, this study synthesizes scholarly literature, constitutional provisions, and empirical case studies from Lagos and Oyo states, analyzed through thematic content analysis and philosophical inquiry.

2. Theoretical Framework

Understanding decentralization and community empowerment in Nigeria requires robust theoretical foundations illuminating both universal principles and context-specific dynamics. Decentralization encompasses multiple interconnected dimensions with distinct governance implications. Political decentralization involves transferring political authority to subnational elected bodies, representing the most extensive form, as it devolves genuine decision-making power. Administrative decentralization redistributes responsibilities from central to local administrative structures. Fiscal decentralization assigns expenditure responsibilities and revenue-raising powers to subnational governments, requiring not only revenue allocation but also local capacity to generate own-source revenues. In Nigeria, these dimensions are unevenly developed, creating what scholars describe as "decentralization without devolution."

Sherry Arnstein's seminal 1969 article presented a typology showing participation ranging across eight rungs in three categories: non-participation (manipulation and therapy), tokenism (informing, consultation, and placation), and degrees of citizen power (partnership, delegated power, and citizen control). Arnstein's central argument remains provocatively relevant: genuine citizen participation requires power redistribution. In Nigeria, manifestations of lower rungs are disturbingly common, where community consultations are staged to rubber-stamp predetermined decisions and development projects are announced as fait accompli. Most Nigerian local governance operates between manipulation and consultation, rarely reaching partnership or citizen control. While the 1999 Constitution promises elected local councils, state governors routinely dissolve democratically elected representatives and replace them with appointed caretaker committees, preventing true representative government.

However, Arnstein's framework requires contextual adaptation for Nigeria. The framework presupposes relatively stable institutional environments and clear distinctions between powerholders and have-nots, while Nigerian reality is more complex with traditional authorities wielding significant informal power, ethnic and religious identities crosscutting class divisions, and federal, state, and local governments engaging in intricate power struggles. Moving toward authentic participation requires institutional safeguards including legal rights to information and participation, independent facilitation of participatory processes, community control over some participation mechanisms, and genuine consequences when officials ignore citizen input.

Amartya Sen's Development as Freedom (1999) fundamentally reconceptualizes development not as rising GDP but as expanding people's substantive freedoms to lead lives they have reason to value. Sen identifies five interconnected instrumental freedoms essential for development: political freedoms enabling participation and expression; economic facilities providing opportunities for economic participation; social opportunities through education and healthcare access; transparency guarantees enabling trust and informed citizenship; and protective security providing safety nets against severe deprivation. These freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, with Sen famously observing that no famine has ever occurred in a functioning democracy.

For Nigerian local governance, genuine local government autonomy enhances all five instrumental freedoms. Proximity enables more effective citizen participation in decisions affecting their lives. Autonomous local governments can tailor economic policies to local conditions and create employment through local procurement. Local governments constitutionally responsible for primary education and healthcare can respond more rapidly to local needs than distant bureaucracies. Smaller scale facilitates transparency as citizens can more readily monitor local expenditures. Local governments are best positioned to identify vulnerable populations and target social protection effectively.

Sen's most profound insight is reconceptualizing development itself through the capability approach, which assesses what people can actually do and be rather than income alone. For Nigerian local communities, this means evaluating development not by oil revenue allocated but by expansion of substantive freedoms: Can children attend functioning schools? Can families access clean water and healthcare? Can farmers obtain credit and market their produce? Can women participate equally in community decisions? Decentralization matters because it potentially expands capabilities when communities control resources and decisions, prioritizing investments that expand local capabilities rather than serve distant political interests.

Beyond Arnstein and Sen, African philosophy emphasizes ubuntu—communal solidarity and

interdependence captured in "I am because we are." These values can both support and complicate participatory governance, supporting it by providing cultural foundations for collective action while complicating it when invoked to justify hierarchical decision-making potentially excluding women, youth, or minority voices. Nigerian decentralization must navigate tensions between communalist traditions and democratic principles, creatively synthesizing both by drawing on communalist values of solidarity while ensuring inclusive, rights-respecting participation.

3. Constitutional Framework and Historical Context

Nigeria's 1999 Constitution provides legal foundations for local government, yet constitutional provisions have been systematically undermined. Section 7 guarantees that the system of local government by democratically elected councils is guaranteed, requiring state governments to ensure their existence under law providing for their establishment, structure, composition, finance, and functions. However, this formulation simultaneously recognizes local government while placing it under state legislative authority, creating critical ambiguity about whether state responsibility grants authority to control or suffocate local autonomy. The Constitution's Fourth Schedule enumerates local government functions including economic planning recommendations, revenue collection, establishment of cemeteries and markets, construction and maintenance of roads and drains, refuse collection and disposal, registration of births and deaths, and assessment of properties for rating purposes. These functions position local government as primary provider of essential grassroots services, yet constitutional allocation of functions without corresponding resource allocation and genuine autonomy creates responsibilities without capacity.

More controversially, Section 162(6) requires each state to maintain a State Joint Local Government Account into which all allocations to local government councils from the Federation Account and state government must be paid. While introduced to address problems of local governments failing to pay teachers and workers in the 1990s, the Joint Account mechanism has become the primary instrument of state control over local finances. State governments routinely retain substantial portions of local government allocations, releasing funds piecemeal and often with conditions, enabling governors to starve local councils financially and render them entirely dependent on state largesse.

Pre-colonial Nigeria comprised diverse political systems with indigenous governance structures suited to local conditions. The Sokoto Caliphate featured hierarchical emirate systems, Yoruba kingdoms combined monarchical authority with councils of chiefs, and Igbo communities operated through decentralized republican systems. Despite diversity, common features included close leader-community connections enabling responsiveness, integration of political and religious authority, accessible dispute resolution mechanisms, and resource mobilization through self-help traditions. British colonial administration's indirect rule policy fundamentally disrupted indigenous governance, transforming traditional rulers from accountable community leaders into colonial agents and creating Native Authorities serving extraction and control rather than community development.

Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 promised renewed local government autonomy, yet constitutional promises have been systematically undermined by state interference. The landmark 2024 Supreme Court judgment sought to curtail state interference by ordering direct federal payments to local governments and declaring caretaker committees illegal. However, exactly one year after the ruling, state governors have retained control of council allocations totaling ₦4.5 trillion through various bureaucratic maneuvers, with the federal government channeling allocations through state governments and governors securing moratoriums that have become indefinite delays. This demonstrates that constitutional text alone, without political will and enforcement mechanisms, cannot guarantee autonomy.

4. Barriers to Effective Decentralization

Despite constitutional guarantees, Nigerian local governments face formidable barriers to autonomy across multiple interconnected dimensions. Politically, elite capture and godfatherism undermine democratic accountability, wherein wealthy, politically influential individuals sponsor candidates for office expecting reciprocal benefits once elected. At local government level, godfathers often control council chairs, dictating policies, appointments, and resource allocation. This system fundamentally undermines democratic accountability as elected officials answer primarily to godfathers rather than constituents, with development priorities reflecting godfather interests rather than community needs.

Perhaps the most significant political barrier is entrenched state government opposition to genuine local autonomy. Governors possess powerful incentives to maintain control: economically, the State Joint Local Government Account enables

access to substantial resources financing state-level projects, political patronage, and sometimes personal enrichment. Politically, control over local governments provides extensive patronage networks, with appointing local government chairs strengthening political machines and extending gubernatorial influence to grassroots levels. Governors routinely dissolve democratically elected councils and install caretaker committees, with the practice becoming normalized despite constitutional illegality. State governments also control State Independent Electoral Commissions responsible for conducting local government elections, manipulating elections through delayed elections, predetermined results, electoral violence, and regulatory manipulation that disqualifies opposition candidates.

Institutionally, capacity constraints severely limit effectiveness even with full autonomy. Local governments often lack qualified personnel for planning, budgeting, financial management, and project implementation, as skilled professionals gravitate toward federal and state governments offering better remuneration. Continuing professional development opportunities are limited, and when training occurs, it's often generic rather than tailored to local government needs. Many local governments operate with outdated administrative procedures, poor record-keeping, inadequate information technology systems, and inefficient workflows. Nigerian bureaucracy exhibits strong centralist tendencies accumulated over decades of military rule, with civil servants accustomed to hierarchical, top-down decision-making resisting participatory approaches viewed as time-consuming or threatening to bureaucratic authority.

Fiscally, Nigerian local governments derive overwhelming majorities of revenues from monthly Federation Account Allocation Committee distributions, creating dependence on external funding that makes them vulnerable to manipulation. Revenue volatility from fluctuating oil prices creates unpredictability undermining planning. Despite the 2024 Supreme Court judgment, the State Joint Local Government Account remains the primary mechanism of fiscal control through arbitrary deductions, delayed releases, conditional releases dictating spending, and opacity where local governments often don't know allocations or deductions. Local governments possess constitutional authority to generate revenues through property taxes and various fees, yet internally generated revenue remains disappointingly low due to limited tax bases in economically marginal areas, collection inefficiencies from weak capacity and corruption, political resistance to aggressive taxation, and economic informality making most activity difficult to tax.

Socio-culturally, Nigerian local governance must navigate complex relationships between modern democratic institutions and traditional authorities who carry significant legitimacy, particularly in rural areas, performing valuable conflict resolution, cultural preservation, and community mobilization functions. However, tensions arise when traditional and democratic authority conflict over competing legitimacy claims, gender and age hierarchies in traditional systems contradicting democratic principles, elite domination by traditional leadership disconnected from ordinary members, and resistance to reforms threatening traditional status. Many Nigerian citizens lack detailed understanding of governance structures, constitutional rights, or participation mechanisms due to limited formal education, information gaps about government plans and budgets, and genuine governance complexity. Years of governance failure have generated widespread cynicism, with many Nigerians viewing politics as irredeemably corrupt and participation as futile. Nigerian governance systematically excludes women facing cultural norms restricting public roles, youth dismissed as immature despite Nigeria's median age of approximately 18, persons with disabilities facing physical and social barriers, and ethnic and religious minorities marginalized in heterogeneous local governments.

Technically, increasingly digital governance and participation face severe digital divides from infrastructure gaps with many areas lacking internet connectivity or electricity, device access remaining unaffordable, digital literacy deficits, and language barriers with platforms operating in English excluding non-English speakers. Effective participation requires information about government plans, budgets, and performance that is systematically unavailable through non-disclosure citing confidentiality, incomprehensible technical formats, language barriers, and delayed release too late for citizen influence. Even when citizens attempt engagement, feedback and accountability mechanisms are weak with no response channels, toothless monitoring bodies, and impunity where officials face no consequences for non-performance. These barriers interact and reinforce each other, with political manipulation depending on fiscal control, fiscal control depending on institutional weaknesses, institutional weaknesses exploited by cultural barriers, and all sustained by information asymmetries.

5. Case Studies from Nigerian States

While barriers are formidable, Nigerian experience offers examples of innovation and partial success.

Lagos State, though smallest in land area, is Nigeria's economic nerve center and most populous state, with governance innovations offering insights into possibilities and limitations. Community Development Associations represent formalized structures for community organization and participation, with the Lagos State Community Development Associations Law of 2008 providing legislative backing. As of 2023, Lagos boasts over 4,000 registered CDAs organizing at neighborhood level, electing executive committees, conducting regular meetings, and mobilizing for self-help projects. CDAs perform multiple functions including initiating infrastructure projects, organizing environmental cleanup campaigns, establishing neighborhood security, advocating for government services, and mediating resident conflicts.

Lagos State government actively cultivates CDA partnerships, with over 3,900 vibrant CDAs providing platforms through which government tests viability of plans and policies while obtaining public feedback. However, CDAs face significant challenges including elite domination where leadership skews toward wealthier, more educated residents underrepresenting renters and economically marginal members. Sustainability depends on volunteer effort that waxes and wanes, with leadership turnover devastating institutional continuity. Not all residents participate or recognize CDA authority, raising questions about whose interests CDAs represent. Close government-CDA ties raise concerns about co-optation, with CDAs potentially becoming government cheerleaders rather than critical voices, evidenced by over 4,000 CDAs endorsing Governor Sanwo-Olu for second term.

Oyo State, nicknamed the Pace Setter, offers contrasting context as one of Nigeria's most urbanized states with Ibadan metropolis while maintaining extensive rural areas combining urban dynamism with traditional governance structures. The Community and Social Development Agency, established in 2008 to comply with World Bank requirements, adopts Community-Driven Development approaches emphasizing participatory planning and implementation. A 2013 impact assessment showed significant progress with 930,529 people gaining increased social services access. CSDA innovations include establishing desk offices in relevant ministries for coordination and serving as secretary to synergy bodies eliminating duplication. The agency received recognition as best reform among Oyo State reforms and represented the state at governance innovation conferences.

Remarkably, Adamawa State Governor Ahmadu Fintiri granted local governments autonomy before the 2024 Supreme Court judgment, demonstrating that political will can overcome legal ambiguities. The Adamawa State Chairman of Association of Local Governments confirmed councils receive federal allocations directly, with the Commissioner of Finance noting Adamawa was first to implement local autonomy because Governor Fintiri believes in rule of law and separation of powers. Adamawa's example demonstrates local government autonomy is achievable when governors prioritize it, raising questions about why other governors resist.

Internationally, India's Panchayati Raj system following 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments devolved substantial powers to village councils with constitutional protection, reserved seats for women and marginalized groups, constitutionally mandated elections, and State Finance Commissions determining revenue-sharing. Brazil pioneered participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre enabling citizens to directly decide municipal budget priorities through neighborhood assemblies. Kenya's 2010 Constitution established 47 counties with substantial devolved powers and resources, though experience has been mixed with devolution bringing government closer while also generating new corruption and capacity challenges. These international experiences demonstrate that constitutional entrenchment matters, fiscal transfer mechanisms are critical, inclusion mechanisms like quotas can substantially increase participation, capacity-building is essential, and context adaptation is necessary as what works elsewhere must be adapted to Nigerian realities.

6. Framework for Enhanced Community Empowerment

Comprehensive reforms require coordinated interventions addressing multiple dimensions. Constitutionally, immediate priorities include full financial autonomy through explicit abolition of State Joint Local Government Accounts, mandating direct federal payments, prohibiting state deductions except those explicitly authorized, establishing independent monitoring mechanisms, and providing legal remedies for violations. Electoral independence requires reforming State Independent Electoral Commissions, potentially establishing Regional Electoral Commissions covering multiple states to reduce gubernatorial control, requiring National Assembly confirmation of members, providing secure federal funding, mandating INEC oversight, and imposing automatic consequences for fraudulent elections. Protecting elected officials requires prohibiting arbitrary dissolution, limiting removal grounds to impeachment for gross misconduct following due process, establishing independent tribunals, guaranteeing full constitutional term tenure, and providing federal

intervention authority when states violate tenure rights.

Long-term constitutional reforms should review federal-state-local revenue allocation formulas, increasing local government allocation to at least 25-30% of federation account from current 20.60%, establishing constitutional minimum allocations for poorest local governments, creating equalization funds addressing disparities, and including oil-producing communities in derivation benefits. Fourth Schedule functions should be expanded and clarified, granting concurrent authority over primary education and healthcare, clarifying land administration authorities, providing environmental regulation enforcement authority, and enabling contracts, borrowing, and partnerships without state approval. Constitutional recognition of traditional institutions should provide advisory roles, prohibit executive or legislative functions, establish consultation mechanisms on cultural heritage matters, and ensure leadership selection respects human rights particularly gender equality.

Institutionally, capacity building requires establishing a National Local Government Training Institute providing pre-service training for newly elected officials, continuing professional development, specialized training in financial management and participatory planning, executive leadership programs, and exchange programs enabling cross-learning. Professionalizing local government civil service requires merit-based recruitment, competitive salary structures, career paths enabling progression, and Local Government Service Commissions insulating personnel decisions from political interference. Strengthening planning and budgeting capacity requires mandating multi-year development plans, providing technical assistance for evidence-based planning, establishing standardized formats enabling performance comparison, creating dedicated budget offices, and implementing program-based budgeting linking resources to outcomes.

Fiscally, revenue enhancement requires expanding local government revenue sources through clarifying taxing authority over property and business premises, enabling user fees for services, granting authority to levy development charges, allowing retention of fines, and enabling municipal bonds for infrastructure financing. Strengthening collection capacity requires establishing professional Revenue Agencies, implementing technology-enabled collection, conducting comprehensive property enumeration, establishing taxpayer databases, partnering with banks, and implementing public education campaigns. Transparent budgeting requires mandating publication of annual budgets and quarterly reports, requiring accessible online information, establishing internal audit units, subjecting all to annual independent external audits, and publishing audit reports publicly. Federal support beyond statutory allocations should establish performance-based grants, conditional grants for priorities, capacity-building grants, equalization grants for poorest local governments, and innovation grants supporting pilot programs.

Participatorily, institutional structures should include statutory Ward Development Committees in every ward with 15-20 elected diverse representatives identifying priorities, reviewing projects, monitoring implementation, and providing feedback with formal consultative roles. Sectoral stakeholder forums should create Health Facility Management Committees, School-Based Management Committees, Market Traders Associations, Water Users Associations, and Agricultural Extension Committees. Community Development Councils should be formalized through legal frameworks, registration processes ensuring accountability, federal grants for self-help projects, partnerships between local governments and organizations, and ensuring inclusion of marginalized groups.

Participatory processes should implement participatory budgeting dedicating 15-30% of capital budgets to participatory processes through neighborhood assemblies proposing and prioritizing projects, citizen budget committees evaluating proposals, voting on final selections, and requiring implementation with citizen oversight. Public hearings should mandate quarterly ward town halls, hearings on major projects, annual State of Local Government addresses, live-streaming meetings, and providing advance notice with accessible venues. Social audits and community scorecards should train community monitors, provide access to project documents, conduct participatory reviews of implementation quality, develop scorecards rating service delivery, and require public responses to findings. Citizen feedback mechanisms should establish SMS-based platforms, local government mobile apps, suggestion boxes, citizen service centers, and guarantee timely responses with escalation procedures.

Civil society organizations should conduct civic education on local government functions and citizen rights, support formation of community groups and cooperatives, campaign for constitutional reforms and policy changes, and conduct budget tracking and expenditure monitoring publishing research on performance. Traditional institutions should receive formal recognition as cultural and advisory institutions, collaborate with local governments on community mobilization and conflict resolution, and

champion education, health, and development while evolving toward more inclusive practices. Development partners should provide technical and financial assistance for reforms, fund innovation and rigorous evaluation, engage in policy dialogue, and support civil society enabling effective monitoring and advocacy.

7. Conclusion

This study reveals substantial gaps between constitutional promises and political realities in Nigerian local governance. Nigeria's 1999 Constitution guarantees local government existence and assigns specific functions, yet provisions have been systematically undermined through State Joint Local Government Accounts, arbitrary dissolution of elected councils, fraudulent elections, and state interference. The 2024 Supreme Court judgment represents the judiciary's most robust affirmation of local government rights, yet implementation remains contested, demonstrating that constitutional text alone cannot guarantee autonomy without political will and enforcement mechanisms.

Effective decentralization is impeded by interconnected barriers operating across political, institutional, fiscal, and socio-cultural dimensions. Politically, elite capture, godfatherism, and state government resistance driven by economic and political motivations prevent genuine democratic local governance. Institutionally, capacity constraints, centralized bureaucratic cultures, and coordination failures limit effectiveness. Fiscally, dependence on federal allocations, State Joint Local Government Account manipulation, and weak internal revenue generation create financial vulnerability. Socio-culturally, tensions between traditional and modern authority, low civic literacy, political apathy, and exclusion of marginalized groups limit meaningful participation. These barriers reinforce each other, creating systemic challenges requiring comprehensive, coordinated interventions.

Despite formidable obstacles, Nigerian experience demonstrates possibilities. Lagos State's CDAs show urban communities can organize and partner with government though challenges of elite domination and sustainability persist. Oyo State's CSDA demonstrates Community-Driven Development approaches can increase service access and build local capacity. Adamawa State's voluntary local government autonomy proves political will can overcome legal ambiguities. Supreme Court interventions show judicial authority can constrain executive overreach. These examples, while limited and fragile, indicate change is possible when political will, institutional innovation, and community mobilization converge.

Applying Arnstein's Ladder and Sen's capability approach illuminates Nigerian realities, revealing that most local governance operates at lower and middle rungs of manipulation, consultation, and placation, rarely reaching partnership or citizen control. Moving toward higher rungs requires genuine power redistribution, not merely improved consultation. Sen's framework reveals decentralization's potential to expand all five instrumental freedoms while highlighting current unfreedoms constraining local communities. Development must be reconceptualized from GDP growth to capability expansion, with communities defining what constitutes flourishing.

Priority actions emerge for different stakeholders. Federal government must enforce the 2024 Supreme Court judgment, initiate constitutional amendments, establish support programs, and strengthen monitoring. State governments must respect local autonomy, conduct credible elections, support capacity building, and enable revenue generation. Local governments must assert constitutional rights, strengthen internal governance, engage communities meaningfully, and build coalitions. Civil society must conduct civic education, advocacy, capacity building, and accountability monitoring. Development partners must support reforms, fund innovation and research, engage in policy dialogue, and support civil society. Traditional institutions must embrace partnership, champion inclusive development, evolve progressively, and facilitate conflict resolution.

Future research should capture community-level perspectives through primary research, conduct systematic comparative state-level analysis, evaluate specific intervention impacts rigorously, examine traditional-modern governance integration, analyze political economy factors, track reform implementation longitudinally, and investigate youth and gender engagement, technology and participation, and climate change implications for local governance.

Meaningful decentralization and genuine community empowerment are achievable but not inevitable. They require political leaders relinquishing illegitimate power, civil servants serving citizens rather than patrons, communities organizing and demanding accountability, traditional leaders championing inclusive development, civil society persevering despite obstacles, and researchers producing evidence informing reform. The vision is clear: Nigerian local governments functioning as genuine, autonomous, democratically accountable institutions serving their communities with citizens actively participating in decisions affecting their lives, development priorities reflecting community needs, resources

managed transparently, services delivered equitably, and marginalized groups included meaningfully.

This vision is not utopian fantasy but constitutional requirement and practical necessity. Nigeria's Constitution already guarantees local government autonomy; the task is implementation. The 2024 Supreme Court judgment provides legal foundation. Civil society provides mobilization capacity. Communities provide local knowledge and legitimate authority. All pieces exist. What remains is assembling them into coherent, sustained reform effort. The stakes are high: Nigeria's democratic consolidation, development trajectory, and ultimately the wellbeing of over 200 million Nigerians depend substantially on getting local governance right. Nigeria can do better. The journey toward genuine decentralization will be long and difficult with setbacks and resistance, but the destination—responsive, accountable, effective local governance serving empowered communities—is worth every effort.

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Government-Sponsored Training Programs and Sustainability of Small Businesses in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are key drivers of economic growth, employment and innovation, particularly in developing areas like Nigeria. In the commercial nerve centre of Nigeria, Lagos State, SMEs generate income for many and form a substantial share of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Realising that small enterprises have significant roles to play, the Nigerian governments have embarked on several interventions in terms of capacity building and these they do through training in management techniques, technology of production and management of operations. Despite the intuitive appeal and the high prevalence of these programs, their effectiveness at the long-run survival of small businesses is not clear. The government supported training programmes and sustainability of small businesses in Lagos State, Nigeria This study examines the nexus between government sponsored training programmes and sustainable small businesses in Lagos State. Utilising a correlation research design as a survey approach, 174 small business owners in Lagos provided responses to structured questionnaires. The analysis shows a positive but statistically non-significant ($p > 0.05$, $r = 0.20$) relationship between government-sponsored training participation and business sustainability. These results indicate that current training interventions may not be successful enough in embedding business growth in Lagos. The research also suggests that training programs should be customised according to industry demands, disseminated through digital channels in order to reach a wider audience and be accompanied by ongoing mentoring, financial and market support aimed at maximising impact. Enhancement of the relevance and support functions of these programs would help to enhance the resilience and long-term survival of small businesses in Lagos State.

Keywords: Small Businesses, Government Training, Business Sustainability, Lagos State, Capacity Building.

1. Introduction

Small firms play a crucial role as drivers of economic growth, employment creation and innovation in the global economy (World Bank, 2020). They represent a large share of firms across developed and emerging economies, employing millions of people and accounting for a large share of gross domestic product (GDP). However, the survival of small businesses is one of the most daunting problems with many factors contributing to this phenomenon: lack of access to credit, poor management capability, technological gap and regulatory burden (Ayyagari, Beck, & Demirguc-Kunt, 2007). The authorities, in many countries around the world, have realised the importance of small business and various policies and programmes have been formulated to promote their survival and growth. Within these measures, training programs supported by the governments of the different levels have been identified as a strategy to provide small business owners with the competences and know-how to adjust to a dynamic market, to innovate and to establish sustainable businesses (OECD, 2019).

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are generally considered as the engines of economic development. They are an important source of economic diversification and regional development and help to reduce poverty (Beck, Demirguc-Kunt, & Maksimovic, 2005). Their adaptable nature promotes fast response to changes in the market environment and competition and increases innovative activity (Acs & Audretsch, 2003). Nevertheless, although small businesses are vital, many are within high failure rates in their first several years of operation (U.S. Small Business Administration [SBA], 2020). Service delivery failures arise from poor leadership and management, lack of strategic direction, weak financial management, and limited access to relevant skills and technology. In view of these challenges, the

governments have initiated various support sets such as financial assistance, tax incentives, and regulatory reforms, as well as capacity development programs. Its training programs are critical as they target directly, skill deficits and managerial weaknesses that are often cited as major causes of small business failure (Klapper & Love, 2010). They are designed to help develop entrepreneurial ability, increase efficiency of operation and encourage innovation in an effort to help the venture survive and grow.

One of the key pathways through which government training programs impact the sustainability of small businesses is to increase the technical skills of business owners and their staff. Greater managerial ability, financial knowledge and operations skills increase the capability to make better decisions and manage resource allocation (Brinckmann et al., 2010). For instance, Kauffmann and Rousset (2017) also showed a study of SMEs found that those who participated in government-sponsored management training programs in France were more likely to survive at five years than those who did not. Technology transfer and innovation training programs promote a more competitive U.S. small business community. The introduction of new innovation can be gainfull in terms of rising productiveness, product quality and access to new markets (OECD, 2019). For example, the government sponsored ICT training in Kenya has resulted in more digital entrepreneurship and business development (Kariuki &Mugo, 2018).
Many of the training programmes are linked to other support services which facilitate the creation of networks between entrepreneurs, financial institutions, and government bodies. These networks provide access to finance, are sources of mentorship, and are conduits for market information, which is essential for guiding businesses to growth and resilience (World Bank, 2020). In the U.S., for instance, the Small Business Administration (SBA) not only offers training programs for startups but has ancillary mentorship and capital programs that enhance smaller firms' success rates.

Without ongoing support or follow-up, skills learnt may decline over time (Lichtenstein & Lyons, 2001). The literature on the long-term sustainability of business training offers a mixed picture. A positive relationship is found in some research while other work emphasizes the role of supporting factors such as access to finance and market conditions (Klapper & Love, 2010). For instance, the study of de Mel, McKenzie, and Woodruff (2009) in Sri Lanka reveals that while training enhanced managerial skills, its impact on business survival was much higher when combined with credit. Robust need assessments are also needed for effective programming, and to ensure relevance of content to the unique difficulties in different industry sectors and geographies in which small businesses operate (OECD, 2019). Personalization translates into relevance and engagement.
Variety of means of delivery formats such as face-to-face workshop, e-modules online and through mobile phone training enables content to be accessed with flexibility (Kariuki & Mugo, 2018). Using online platforms also lowers costs and increases reach. Ongoing assistance through the use of mentorship, coaching, or refresher sessions also serves to maintain and promote the use of skills (Lichtenstein & Lyons, 2001). These processes are intended to support the integration of new competencies and practices into day-to-day working routine. Strong M&E frameworks are needed to measure progress, identify bottlenecks and to feed in learning. Measures like survival, growth, growth of sales, or creation of further jobs are the most frequently used (Klapper & Love, 2010). Training programmes must be embedded in an enabling environment that offers the tools of finance, technology and markets. The whole should be greater than the sum of the parts –synergies increase the overall effectiveness (OECD, 2019). Private sector partners, industry associations and educational establishments can enhance the program quality and its sustainability (World Bank, 2020). In view of the quick changes, technology is undergoing-hence the need for small businesses to be future fit by focusing more on innovation and digital literacy (Kariuki& Mugo, 2018). Consideration should be made to marginalized segments of the population such as women, youth, and rural enterprise owner/operators to promote equal benefit from training programmes (Acs & Audretsch, 2003).

1.1 Hypothesis

Government-sponsored training programs have no significant sustainability of small businesses in Lagos State.

2. Research Methodology

The research adopted a Correlational Study, which is an important research method in social science. This approach is especially valuable for exploring possible correlations among different factors, which can inform subsequent experimentation or policy design. Correlational research Non-experimental method used to measure the degree of relationship between two or more variables to see if one variable change when another variable changes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The survey report of the National Bureau of Statistics in Nigeria, 2021, affirmed that there were 1,320 registered small businesses in Lagos State,

which is the area of this research. Using Hair et al.'s method for calculating sample size, and 174 was calculated as the sample size. To have true representation of the sample size. The di-stage sampling procedure was adopted for this study. That is, stratified sampling technique and simple random sampling technique was adopted. Stratified sampling technique was to divide Local Government Areas into stratum. That is, The Lagos State has 20 Local Government areas. By this, an average of 8 small business owners are expected to participate in the survey from each of the local government areas making 174 participants. While dip bowl simple random sampling technique was to select the respondent for the study.

The context of study is Lagos State, Nigeria the commercial hub of the country. Being the former capital of Nigeria, it is heavily populated with big markets, traders, business people, and big companies including banks and multinationals. Lagos State has also urged and encouraged the sustainability culture and lifestyle (Gbonegun, 2022). Small businesses are very germane to the economy of Lagos State as it serves the grassroot as well as serve as intermediary to other big businesses. This is seen in the valuable contribution small businesses make to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as well as in the number of persons engaged in terms of employment (SMEDAN, 2021). This makes Lagos state a viable option and area of study for the research.

The process began with seeking for access from the small business owners about permission to conduct research with them. When such approval is granted, further clarification was sought on when it can be conducted before commencing research with a research instrument. Collecting data from the target sample were completed within four (4) weeks.

In this study, the questionnaire is divided into several sections to comprehensively cover various aspects of the research. Section A covers the personal and business data of small business owners, including Local Government Area, gender, age group, staff composition, customer strength, highest educational qualification, business line, and business age. Section B addresses government tax incentives, while section C seek information on sustainability of small businesses. The study employs a 5-point Likert scale for responses, which is a widely used approach in social science research for measuring attitudes and perceptions (Joshi et al., 2015). Reliability analysis involves assessing the consistency of the questionnaire items. This is typically done using Cronbach's alpha, which measures internal consistency. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 was confirmed.

The data collected for this study will be analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentage to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents and mean and standard deviation will be used to answer the research questions. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test hypothesis, at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

3. Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Gender		**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
Valid	Male	82	47.1
	Female	92	52.9
	Total	174	100.0
Age		Frequency	Percent
Valid	18 – 25	15	8.6%
	26 – 33	30	17.2%
	34 – 41	46	26.4%
	42 – 49	68	39.1%
	50– Abo	15	8.6%
	Total	174	100.0
Staff Status		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Perm	101	73.2%
	Temp	73	26.8%
	Total	138	100.0
Educational Qualification		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No Education	12	8.7%
	O'Level	32	23.2%
	ND/NC	60	43.5%
	Degree	70	50.7%
	Total	138	100.0
Business Age (In Years)		Frequency	Percent
Valid	10-15	22	12.6%
	16-20	99	57.0%
	21 Above	53	30.4%
	Total	174	100.0

Table 1: explanation the demographic characteristics of the respondents give insights into the sample population's gender, age, staff status, educational qualifications, and business age. The sample comprises a slightly higher percentage of females (52.9%) compared to males (47.1%), indicating a relatively balanced gender representation. The majority of respondents are concentrated in the 42-49 age bracket (39.1%), suggesting that most small business owners in this sample are likely to be more experienced entrepreneurs. This age cohort may possess significant insights into the sustainability of their businesses and can provide a wealth of knowledge on how government initiatives impact their operations. The lower representation of younger respondents (8.6% in the 18-25 and 50 years and above categories). A significant majority (73.2%) of the respondents are permanent staff members. This suggests stability and potentially greater job security within these businesses, which may positively influence their approach to sustainability practices. The presence of temporary staff (26.8%). The educational qualification data indicates that the majority of respondents (50.7%) hold a degree, while 43.5% possess a National Diploma or Certificate. This suggests a relatively educated sample with a significant proportion of respondents having at least a tertiary education background. A higher level of education may correlate with greater awareness of sustainability practices and government support initiatives. However, the 8.7% with no formal education underscores a need for inclusive programs that cater to all educational backgrounds. The majority of businesses represented in this sample (57.0%) fall within the 16–20-year age range, indicating that many respondents are operating established businesses rather than start-ups. This stability can suggest resilience and a certain level of expertise in navigating the challenges faced within the market. The significant percentage of businesses with more than 21 years of experience (30.4%) may indicate a depth of experience that could positively influence conversations around sustainability. Conversely, only 12.6% fall in the 10–15-year range.
Government-sponsored training programs have no significant sustainability of small businesses in Lagos State.

Table 2: Summary of Person Product Moment Correlation on Government-sponsored training programs and sustainability of small businesses in Lagos State

Variables	Mean	SD	n	df	r	Prob	decision
Government-Sponsored Training Programs	3.50	0.90	174	172	0.20	0.15	accepted
Sustainability of Small Businesses	3.60	0.78					

Table 2, which presents the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis regarding the relationship between government-sponsored training programs and the sustainability of small businesses in Lagos State. Government-Sponsored Training Programs have mean 3.50, this score suggests that, on average, respondents have a moderately positive perception of the government-sponsored training programs available to them. A mean of 3.50 indicates a neutral to favorable sentiment about the usefulness and accessibility of these training initiatives. Standard Deviation (SD) of 0.90, This standard deviation shows that there is a notable level of variability in perceptions among respondents about the government-sponsored training programs. Some may perceive these programs positively, while others may see them as less beneficial. Sustainability of Small Businesses have mean of 3.60. A mean score of 3.60 indicates that respondents generally regard the sustainability efforts of small businesses positively, suggesting that many businesses implement sustainability practices to a reasonable extent. Standard Deviation (SD) of 0.78. A standard deviation of 0.78 suggests there is also some variability in perceptions of sustainability among small businesses, though it is slightly less than that for government-sponsored training programs. Correlation Coefficient (r) is 0.20. This value indicates a weak positive correlation between government-sponsored training programs and the sustainability of small businesses. An r value of 0.20 suggests that there is a slight tendency for small businesses that participate in these training programs to implement better sustainability practices; however, the strength of this relationship is minimal. Prob (p-value) is 0.15. The p-value indicates that the correlation observed is attributable to chance. A common threshold for statistical significance is 0.05. Since the p-value of 0.15 is greater than 0.05. This means the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, Government-sponsored training programs have no significant impact on the sustainability of small businesses. The results summarized in Table 12 indicate that there is no significant relationship between government-sponsored training programs and the sustainability of small businesses in Lagos State. While a weak positive correlation exists ($r = 0.20$), it is not statistically significant (p-value of 0.15), leading to the conclusion that these training programs do not significantly affect small businesses' sustainability efforts. This calls for a reevaluation of such programs to make them more impactful and relevant in promoting sustainable practices among small enterprises.

4. Discussion

Small businesses are drivers of the economy, employment, and innovation worldwide (World

Bank, 2020). But despite their importance, a large proportion of small firms fail, often due to leadership deficiencies, lack of exposure to advances in technology and poor strategic planning (U.S. Small Business Administration, 2020). To support small businesses governments globally have established a number of instruments, with public funded training programs taking a significant role as it can strengthen the ability and resilience of small firms (OECD, 2019). Managerial and technical competence One of the key mechanisms by which government training programmes impact on small business sustainability is through the enhancement of managing and technical skills. Most small business owners do not have formal business education and hence cannot effectively plan, manage finances, and respond to market changes (Klapper & Love, 2010). Government-facilitated livelihoods skills-programmes attempt to compensate for this lack by providing focused training sessions. A case in point is the government sponsored entrepreneurship training in Nigeria, it not only increased the managerial competences but also enhanced the survival of micro enterprises (Olowu & Ojo, 2019). These programs directly impact operational efficiency and decision making by providing entrepreneurs with necessary skill sets, thereby mitigating the risk of early-stage firm failure.

At a time of digitalisation and global competition, innovation and technology adoption are what small businesses need in order to survive (OECD, 2019). Railway training supported by the state is focusing on technological understanding, digital marketing and management of innovation. For example, in Kenya, the Government sponsored Digital Literacy Program that enabled the small business sector to access ICT tools, leading to market expansion and revenue growth (Kariuki & Mugo, 2018). Training in technology lessens the technological barriers to innovation, the enhancement of productivity and survival, indicators of longer-term viability for small firms. Most curriculums will have some type of competition training, self-promotion/marketing and networking instruction to them. These factors are vital for expansion of new markets and critical partnerships for small businesses (World Bank, 2020). There is usually government intervention that connects them to banks, providers and customers to allow business to grow'. In addition, participation in training programs may facilitate peer networks, where entrepreneurs can exchange best practices and assist one another by means of mentorship and joint ventures (Lichtenstein & Lyons, 2001). This social capital helps construct businesses that are resilient in the face of economic shocks. While they work, the range and effect of government training programs depend on tackling a number of hurdles. Poor access, especially in rural or marginalized areas, may result in a restricted access aspect for many microenterprises (Klapper & Love, 2010). Furthermore, content tailored for different sectors or stage of business may not be useful if it is not well-tailored (OECD, 2019).

5. Conclusion

The study's findings clearly demonstrate that, within Lagos State, government-sponsored training programs do not have a statistically significant impact on the sustainability of small businesses. Although respondents generally perceive these programs as moderately beneficial, the weak positive correlation ($r = 0.20$) and the p-value (0.15) exceeding the conventional significance threshold (0.05) indicate that participation in such training alone is insufficient to guarantee long-term business survival.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations were based on the findings and related literature to strengthen the effectiveness of government-sponsored training programmes and the sustainability of small businesses in Lagos State:

- Training plans need to be adapted to the peculiar constraints that entrepreneurs in diverse industries and stages of their firm's life face. Modules that are sector specific and practical case studies may improve relevance and application.
- To narrow the gap in rural and urban underserved settings, harness digital venues with mobile training units for more accessible dissemination. Adding online courses, mobile training applications and local community workshops can support universal inclusion.
- Training is not a single event. Institute mentorship, coaching and refresher courses to perpetuate skills acquisition and respond to market signals. Continued engagement is necessary to impact the splicing cascade and maintain the effects over time.
- Pair training programs with affordable financing, access to markets and technology support. Combining them into an integrated package has greater sustainability effect in the business.

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Yoruba Women in Clothing: Textiles as a Bridge to Memories and Identity.

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Abstract. Yoruba women's clothing and fashion are not only artistic expressions but also living records of cultural heritage, communal identity, and social values passed from one generation to another. A theoretical approach was adopted for the study. This paper investigates the pivotal role of Yoruba women in Southwestern Nigeria in the cultural utilization of textiles as fashion items, emphasizing their significance as a medium for collective memory and cultural identity for future generations. Through a critical analysis of the continuous use of textile materials such as adire (resist-dyed fabrics including Adire Eleko, Oniko, and Alabere) and Aso Oke (handwoven cloths such as Etu, Sanyan, Alaari, and Shanishani) among Yoruba women in Southwestern Nigeria, these textiles have become enduring cultural hallmarks. The paper also highlights their symbolic functions in fashion and ceremonies such as: funerals, naming ceremonies, traditional festivals, chieftaincy installations, and other social celebrations, where they signify status, spirituality, and communal values. Drawing from historical, ethnographic, and anthropological frameworks, the study explores the evolution of textile use in Southwestern Nigeria by tracing the intersection of textiles, fashion, memory, and identity. The study concludes that textiles are indispensable elements of material culture and symbolic cultural heritage, appreciated beyond local boundaries.

Keywords: Yoruba women, textiles, cultural identity, fashion, memory, material culture, heritage.

1. Introduction

Yoruba women have been custodians of rich textile traditions for centuries. Cloth serves as a medium of expression for Yoruba women, allowing them to display their individuality and communal ties. They command a profound respect for their contributions to the social, economic, and political growth of their society. In Yoruba cultures, fabric is a major part of wealth, status, and cultural identity. Different patterns, colours, and types of cloth can signify various social status, roles, and affiliations. In the past, in some Yoruba communities, Ondo town as a notable example, Alaari hand-woven cloth has been long associated with royalty and high social status (Adepeko, 2009) Every colour and pattern combination has its own meaning and is used for different things. For instance, the Ikat and Omolangidi designs are writings that can be used to send messages and show social rank. Textiles are a big part of African culture, and Sylvanus, 2007 named it "Africanity" to show how the western perception of African textiles may be seen as a way of thinking about authenticity. Traditionally, textiles play a significant role in expressing cultural, social, and power status that is employed in the reinforcement of authority and unity as well as the commemoration of momentous events or identification of a group of people. Each piece of textile carries significance, with patterns and symbols that reflect Yoruba proverbs, societal values, and life experiences, thereby acting as visual narratives that bridge past and present (Ojo, 2007).

Throughout history, Yoruba women have played a significant role in the production and transmission of textiles, utilizing their craft as a means of economic empowerment and cultural expression. Clothing in Yoruba culture performs iconic and symbolic functions, Over the centuries, each locality where weaving is done in Southwestern Nigeria has reserved the right to produce its own style of clothing. The woven fabrics differ characteristically from one ethnic group to another. The general name for the type of fabrics they all produce is Aso-Oke

which is the traditional cloth of the Yoruba southwestern Nigeria.
This study explores the intersection of roles of the Yoruba women in textile production and its cultural application, focusing on how textile serves as a bridge to memories and identity, while maintaining essential connections to ancestral practices and knowledge.

Figure 1 Adire eleko
Source: Eicher 1976

This is an example of Adire Eleko, produced in the 70s as documented by Eicher 1976. It captures symbols of items used by Yoruba women. For example, the traditional wooden comb, used by women for combing and parting their hair while plating it. The half-moon is also drawn on the dyed fabric. It is pertinent to note that, then, months and years were counted as the moon appeared, thirteen Luna months makes a year. There are also pictures of leaves, baskets and birds depicting what was common in their environment and what they do for a living. These symbols and shapes were made on the fabric as recorded memories of their daily activities and preserving the memories for generations yet unborn.

Figure 2
Source: Eicher 1976

Figure 3
Source: Author

The young lady in Figure 2, dyeing a fabric was an attestation that textile dyeing was a traditional craft passed down from one generation to the other. Then as a family craft, the younger generation were involved both in the production and use of Adire. No wonder the craft endures till now and has become a major source of income for those who engage in it. Abeokuta and Osogbo Adire dying centres attest to this fact (Saheed, 2013).

Figure 3 captures another young lady in the production of Adire, a visual essay of how the craft continues to be passed down from one generation to the next ensuring the continuity of a valued cultural heritage, even in contemporary times. Her work reflects the preservation of cultural memory and identity, as adire remains a significant marker of Yoruba womanhood. By learning this skill, young women not only sustain an important heritage but also gain economic empowerment, enabling them to build their own livelihoods.

Figures 2 and 3 both depict young ladies engaged in the art of dyeing, yet their appearance clearly shows that the photographs were taken decades apart. In Figure 2, the young lady is dressed in the typical style of the 1970s. She wraps an Adire Eleko cloth around her chest, without a blouse, revealing the strap of her bra. Her hairstyle also reflects traditional grooming practices for young girls of that period. By contrast, the l in Figure 3 is dressed in contemporary clothing, a pair of jeans and an Adire top.

The dyeing methods also highlight changes over time. The woman in Figure 2 immerses the fabric directly into an indigo dye pit with her bare hands, a common practice in the past when natural dyes were used. However, the woman in Figure 3 works with synthetic dyes, which are more corrosive, and so she wears protective nylon gloves and works on a spread of nylon placed on the floor instead of in a dye pit.

The adire itself demonstrates evolution in style and technique. Earlier forms of tie-dye typically appeared in single colours such as deep blue from indigo. Contemporary Adire, as seen in Figure 3, comes in a wider range of colours: red, blue, pink, green, reflecting modern experimentation and expanding aesthetic preferences.

Together, the two images document significant changes in fashion, technique, and cultural practice within Yoruba dyeing traditions. They preserve memories of how young ladies once went to work simply wrapped in cloth, compared to the widespread use of trousers and more elaborate tops among today's younger generation. These photographs therefore serve as visual records of changing identities, evolving practices, and the continuity of the cultural heritage of adire production across generations.

Context of Yoruba Textiles.

The Yoruba are heavily concentrated in the settlement of Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti, and Ondo states of Southwestern Nigeria. Big Yoruba groups also live in Kwara and some parts of Kogi state. Beyond Nigeria, Yoruba are found, much in similarities, in other West African countries such as: Benin Republic, Port-Novo, Togo, Ghana, Sierra-Leone and Cote d'Ivoire. These states have a rich Tradition of weaving, and each is home to a different group of Yoruba which has maintained unique features of dialect and culture. The making of the fabric, like other traditional crafts, has been of both economic and cultural value among the Yoruba people all over the world. Aso-Oke has been popular both at home and abroad, and it has been the main source of apparel for numerous events. The prescription of Aso-Oke has long been integral to the visual language of Yoruba sociocultural events.

With the colonization and touch with Western life through increase in travel and social media in contemporary times, Yoruba women use other forms of synthetic fabrics like: lace, damask, velvet etc., to sew iro, buba, gele and are also lavishly used for the commendation of both social and traditional events.

Figure 4
Source: Author

The woman in Figure 4 created some memories with her outfit. Her outfit was made of Damask and lace. Damask for iro and gele, and lace for buba, all three were tied in a style called Oleku. Oleku style is a shortened form of iro and buba, worn in contrast to the longer traditional versions. The mini wrapper is tied above the knee instead of the usual long Yoruba wrapper. The woman in the picture likely took the photograph to preserve memories of how fashion looked in the 1970s. Her accessories: the earrings, necklace, handbag and even the wristwatch complement her beautiful attire. This was how young ladies, especially those considered ripe for marriage, often wore their iro and buba within Yoruba communities.

There has been a resurgence of the Oleku style in contemporary times. Without the above picture, it would have been difficult to fully appreciate that Oleku existed, flourished, and was a dominant fashion trend in the 1970s. In recent years, young ladies have been seen wearing the Oleku style at different occasions. This corroborates the fact that textile is a bridge between generation in terms of fashion and material culture.

Figure 5
Source: Author

Figure 5 is a photograph of five ladies taken at a wedding ceremony. These ladies served as bridesmaids. The bride chose them and requested that they dress in Yoruba attire because a wedding is a memorable occasion. As a Yoruba woman who cherishes her tradition, she asked her bridesmaids to

appear in the Oleku outfit. These bridesmaids are wearing gele made of synthetic fabric and lace blouses in the same white colour, also made from synthetic material. The iro is made of African print (Ankara), tied in the Oleku style, reflecting the popular fashion trend of the 1970s. The ladies appear radiant and joyful in their outfits, visibly proud of their identity as Yoruba women.

Figure 6
Source: Author

In April 2016, when the creation of Ondo State clocked 40 years, it was a grand celebration. This picture captures the ushers who officiated at the event. They are all dressed in a synthetic type of Ankara, tied in the Oleku style. It was a beautiful way to celebrate culture and to showcase what the people of Ondo State represent in terms of material culture, fashion and clothing. All the ushers were young girls. Their iro and buba were also styled in the Oleku fashion. Even their shoes were of the same colour, and their earrings were identical in shape. It was indeed a significant celebration in Ondo State; one that future generations will see and appreciate. The display of the Oleku style by the ushers at the ceremony further demonstrates how clothing remains an integral part of Yoruba culture. Yoruba women continue to dress in expressive and elaborate ways to record memories and mark important events.

Figure 7
Source: Author

This Yoruba woman in Figure 7 wearing a traditional attire looks gorgeous and elegant. She was celebrating a memorable event, her 60th birthday. The picture reflects her happiness and pride in her complete traditional outfit. She wore a matching bùbá that complemented her wrapper, gele, and iborun. The fabric, known as Alaari, is a handwoven Aso-oke traditionally worn by Yoruba women during significant occasions such as birthdays, weddings, and festivals. Her beautifully arranged neck beads further enhance the outfit, adding a touch of cultural grace and sophistication.

Figure 8
Source: Author

Yoruba women have a culture of encouraging the younger generation to embrace their traditions. The picture of the young girl in Figure 8, fully dressed in Yoruba attire, confirms this. It was taken during a wedding ceremony where she followed the example of the elderly Yoruba women. She is wearing iro and buba, with a gele and iborun. The gele and iborun are made from damask, a prestigious fabric among the Yoruba people, often used to celebrate important and memorable events. The iborun is tied in a stylish manner that was fashionable at the time of the celebration. These clothing traditions represent material culture being passed down from one generation to another. Despite her young age, she already understands the importance of dressing traditionally for memorable occasions such as weddings.

Figure 9
Source: Author

This is another Yoruba woman in Figure 9, dressed in iro and buba made from fashionable Adire fabric. The Adire features a contemporary design created with synthetic dyes. The picture was taken during a housewarming celebration, serving as a keepsake of the joyous occasion. The woman is seated comfortably in her living room, radiating the satisfaction and pride of owning a new home.

Such occasions are often marked with Yoruba cultural expressions, as memories are intentionally preserved for future generations. Notably, the throw pillows on the floor are also made from Adire, further emphasizing the owner's deep appreciation for this indigenous textile. This scene demonstrates how Adire continues to function not only as a symbol of Yoruba identity in clothing but also as a material for home decoration and interior aesthetics.

Figure 10
Source: Author

This is a beautiful Yoruba woman relaxing at her daughter's wedding reception. Although other guests can be seen in the background, she stands out as an elegant icon at the event. She is dressed in exquisite lace adorned with matching Aso-oke, iborun, and gele. Her accessories: the necklace, hand beads, bag, and wristwatch are tastefully coordinated to complement her attire. Yoruba women often dress beautifully for memorable occasions such as weddings, which hold great cultural significance within the community. This photograph was taken as a keepsake, allowing the bride's children to one day see how their grandmother appeared on their mother's wedding day. In Yoruba culture, women's fashion and the preservation of memories are deeply intertwined acts that reflect pride, identity, and continuity.

Figure 11
Source: Author

The picture shows an array of women in woven fabrics during a wedding reception. They are all clad in Alaari and other hand-woven textiles. Here Alaari was used as aso-ebi which literally means 'clothing for family' originally symbolising unity within family on special occasions. However, aso-ebi has evolved into broader cultural and societal makers, now adopted by various social classes and age groups across Yoruba communities (Olugbamigbe, 2023) Most of them are wearing the traditional iro, buba, gele and iborun. Alaari, as mentioned earlier, is a favourite among the Ondo people. Since the wedding took place in Ondo, the use of Alaari reflects a sense of solidarity and cultural identity within the Yoruba community. It also affirms the fact that during memorable events, Yoruba women consistently appear in their traditional attire as a way of showcasing and preserving their cultural heritage.

Figure 12
Source: Author

The woman on the right in Figure 12 is dressed in a matching lace buba paired with Aso-oke, with her

iborun tied around her waist, a distinctive and traditional way of styling it. She also wears another iborun on her shoulder, showcasing the versatility of Yoruba fashion. Her beaded necklace adds to her regal appearance, as beads remain important accessories in Yoruba women's dressing. The woman on the left wears a beautifully woven aso-oke adorned with intricate motifs that reflect both traditional and contemporary design elements. This photograph captures how Yoruba women's clothing continues to embody cultural pride, artistry, and continuity through ceremonial dress. The horse-tail held by the woman on the right attenuates the situation they are celebrating-chiefancy ceremony, a remarkable traditional event among the Yoruba people.

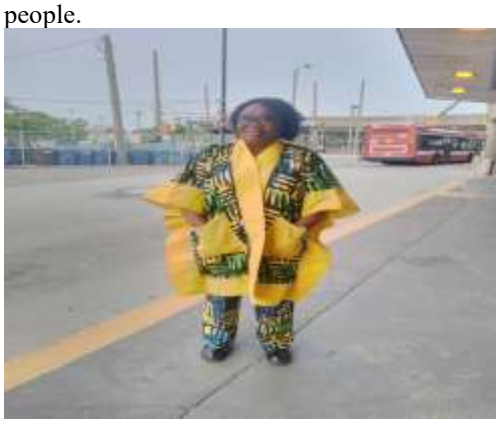

Figure 13
Source: Author

The woman in this picture is fashionable, moving with current trends in style. In the near future, the image will remain as a memory to show the younger generation that, at one time, a style like this was in vogue. It is both contemporary and traditional. The outfit could perhaps be used for ceremonial purposes, due to its combination of modern trends and traditional fabric- aso-oke. The Aso-oke itself is over ten years old, while the African print (Ankara) is more recent. This represents a blend of past and present. In this way, the photograph serves as a means of documenting memories for future generations.

2. Reviewed Literature

Scholarly opinions hold that the origin of textiles is unknown. Archaeological evidence suggests that cotton cultivation and weaving technologies have existed in Yoruba land since at least 11th century CE. Ojo, 2007 explains, "The development of weaving among the Yoruba can be traced to at least the 11th Century, with evidence suggesting that textiles were closely tied to political authority and spiritual practices. "Archaeological findings from Ancient Ile-Ife reveal that textile production was already sophisticated by the 12th Century, with distinct patterns and Techniques indicating social stratification and specialised guild structures. By the 15th century, Yoruba textile centres had established extensive trade networks that facilitated the exchange of raw materials and finished textiles across west Africa (Byfield, 2002). The city of Oyo emerged as a prominent textile production Hub, with specialized quarters dedicated to spinning, dyeing, and weaving.

In many places in Yoruba land, both sexes weave, several characteristics differentiate the cloth woven by men from women, but women's weaving is giving much prominence. Traditionally, men wove on a horizontal narrow loom that produced a strip of cloth of a few inches wide, while women wove on a vertical broad loom that produced cloth wider in breath but much shorter in length than those produced by men. In areas such as Oyo, Saaki, and Iseyin where men's weaving is very prominent, the cloth produced, namely Aso- oke, is often used as a symbol of political and social prestige. In these areas, a small percentage of the women also weave (Lamb and Holmes, 1980).

For Yoruba women, weaving textiles isn't just functional; it carries deeper meanings. Previous academic beliefs suggested that Yoruba women's weaving was limited to the household, but in truth, they produced textiles for important ceremonies, economic activities, and spiritual rituals. According to Asakitikpi's 2007 study, women's weaving efforts play a crucial role alongside men's labour, resulting in textiles that are essential to the fabric of Yoruba social life, marking significant moments like marriages and funerals.

2.1 Textiles as a Medium of Memory and Identity.

The concepts of memory and identity are closely linked, influencing how a community understands its cultural and historical roots. In Yoruba land, textiles play a significant role as expressive mediums that help shape, maintain, and showcase both shared memories and social identities. When we talk about memory in a cultural sense, it is not just about what one person remembers; it is really about the collective stories, symbols, and rituals that help people connect with their history and maintain ties to their forebears (Assmann, 2011). For the Yoruba, memory is inscribed materially and symbolically into cloth, particular in traditional fabrics like Aso-oke (woven cloth) and adire (indigo-dyed textiles) which embody historical references, spiritual meaning, and ancestral wisdom (Aero and Kalilu, 2013). However, Assmann, 2011 defines memory as a faculty that enables the formation of self-awareness that enables us to live in groups and communities, and living in groups or communities enables us to build memory. These are two forms of memories, including cultural memory

and communicative memory. Cultural memory is based on imprecise recollections of the past that are normally unpreserved but cast in symbols and convey a collective cultural identity history, meanwhile, communicative memory is non-institutional that lives in everyday people's interactions and communication.

Identity, on the other hand, is understood as a socially constructed sense of self, shaped by history, culture, kinship, and language. It encompasses both individual identity and one sees oneself and group identity and how individuals align with larger cultural or ethnic communities (Hall, 1996). Identity is dynamic and performed, often communicated through dress, symbols, and rituals.

In contemporary Yoruba society, the memories of the past have been presented to the next generations using textiles that are different archived of diverse cultural memories crucial in shaping cultural identity. Stuart Hall (1996), in his theory of cultural identity, notes that identity is both rooted in historical experiences and constantly in process, formed through memory, language, and representation.

Textiles such as Aso oke and adire functions as mnemonic and identificatory tools that merge memory and identity into visual, tactile, and wearable forms. These fabrics function as cultural script: they preserve oral histories, spiritual narratives, and genealogical ties, while also signalling social belonging or family identity. As Aero & Kalilu 2013 explains, the visual motifs of adire cloth are deeply semiotic, communicating Yoruba proverbs, cosmology, and generational knowledge. These textiles are not passive objects; they are living archives through which the Yoruba people narrate who they are, where they come from, and what they remember.

Both Assmann and Dodnar's conceptualisation of memory is important in the understanding how memory is constructed, unpacked, and transmitted from one generation to the next in the form of symbols or text embedded in artifacts including textiles to substantiate cultural memory and identity.

Textiles, as semiotic artefacts and mnemonic devices, function as a potent mediator of collective memory and identity construction with the Yoruba cultural praxis. By inscribing memory onto cloth, the Yoruba textile tradition materializes identity as both performative and situated, affirming Hall's (1996) concept of identity as a fluid, dialogue process. Thus, textile becomes not just a medium, but an active agent in the preservative and articulation of cultural subjectivity.

According to Perani and Wayne as cited in (Akinbileje, 2014), clothes are mirrors of local cultures as they possess the potential to unpack various information embedded in weaving about self and personal worth, occupation, social status, and standard of economic value, as well as political power. In some societies, clothes are communicative tools used to display class distinction and strength through which elites establish, maintain, and reproduce positions of power and dominance over the weak and poor, which Assmann, 2011 referred to as communicative memory; with patterns and motifs telling stories of folklore, daily life, individuals, ruling class and proverbs.

In essence, as each thread binds past and present, Yoruba women's textiles stands as a perfect example of how artistic expressions and cultural memory and identity can coexist and in doing so, bring people together in celebration of a shared and renewing heritage. This phenomenon validates Assmann's understanding of cultural memory as a living, evolving system and supports conceptualisation of identity as processual and performative. As each thread continues to bind past and present, Yoruba textiles remain powerful examples of how artistic expression can simultaneously preserve cultural heritage and facilitate contemporary identity formation.

2.2 Contemporary Relevance and Adaptation

Today, Yoruba textile traditions continue to evolve while experiencing appreciation. Contemporary Nigerian designers are reinterpreting traditional techniques from modern contexts, creating innovative fashion that bridges traditional craft and contemporary design. New innovations in terms of style, texture and colour can be seen in the Yoruba Clothing and Textiles. Meaning the traditional weaving style has been improved upon. New innovations in terms of style, texture, and colour combinations are increasable visible. In Yoruba clothing and textiles, demonstration that traditional weaving methodologies have been significantly enhanced and modernized (Adebayo, 2021). This evolution reflects what (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) term "invented tradition" practices that appear traditional but are actually recent adaptations to contemporary circumstances. This cultural transition among the Yoruba is deeply rooted with apprenticeship and lineage, which continue as cornerstone of knowledge transfer even in contemporary settings.

As the world becomes increasingly globalized, Yoruba women continue to innovate while honouring their traditions. Contemporary designers are merging traditional fabric with modern styles, appealing to younger generations who seek to

connect with their roots while embracing new fashion trends. This intergenerational dialogue ensures that traditional knowledge remains dynamic rather than static, allowing for creative reinterpretation without losing essential cultural meaning. This fusion of traditional textile knowledge with global fashion trends not only preserves the cultural significance of Yoruba cloth but also ensures its relevance in today's fashion landscape.

3. Conclusion

In this study, The Yoruba textile tradition demonstrates the profound capacity of material culture to preserve memory and identity across generation and geographic boundaries. The contemporary Yoruba textile renaissance exemplifies successful cultural preservation through creative adaptation rather than static conservation. By embracing both traditional significance and contemporary expression, younger generations ensure the continued validity of Yoruba textile traditions while establishing new forms of cultural memory for future generations. This is captured in the thirteen pictures displayed in the text.

This phenomenon validates Assmann's understanding of cultural memory as a living, evolving system that conceptualizes identity as processual and performative. As each thread continues to bind past and present, Yoruba textiles remain powerful examples of how material culture can simultaneously preserve cultural heritage and facilitate contemporary identity formation.

In addition, the study highlights how Yoruba clothing traditions have evolved while still retaining core culture significance. Future investigations might examine how diaspora communities and global influences are reshaping and reimagining the symbolic meaning traditionally encoded in Yoruba clothing.

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Part Two
Social Philosophy

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Social Media and the Historical Trajectory of Political Violence in Aramoko-Ekiti, Ekiti State

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Abstract. The intersection of communication networks and political violence has a long history in the Nigerian nation, where practices of information sharing have often informed collective action and conflict. In the Aramoko-Ekiti community, Ekiti State, Nigeria, community narratives, rumour networks, and partisan mobilisation have traditionally influenced political violence. The older channels have now gained new forms and terms with the emergence of social media, which has redefined the nature of political contestation. This paper is a critical assessment of how social media has contributed to the current phenomenon of political violence in Aramoko-Ekiti, especially with emphasis on the youth. Using a qualitative historical method, the study integrates oral interviews of sampled youth and political stakeholders, as well as the examination of secondary data in the form of online resources and digital communications. This approach situates the modern experience within the broader historical context of political agitation and violence in society. Social media platforms have altered the magnitude, pace, and intensity of mobilization, while also reproducing prior trends of competition and factionalism in the political trajectory of Aramoko-Ekiti, as revealed by the findings of this paper. The paper suggests encouraging historical consciousness, digital literacy, and responsible Internet use as measures to mitigate the adverse impact of violence and facilitate peaceful participation in the online space. Furthermore, it highlights the need for further research in this area to fully comprehend the intricate dynamics of social media and political violence.

Keywords: Social media, Political violence, Youth, Aramoko-Ekiti, Digital Communication.

1. Introduction

The relationship between communication, politics, and violence is a historical question in the study of societies. Over time, the flow of information and the medium through which people communicate have greatly influenced the behaviour of political actors, mass mobilization, and the eruption of conflicts (Amit, 2017). In Nigerian society, people used to organize political communication based on oral traditions, kinship groups, communal meetings, and rumour mills, which were regarded as the lifeblood of political activity. These more traditional forms of exchange often carried within them the seeds of distrust, competition, and even violence, particularly in cases where political rivalry became intense (Adeshina, 2022). With the introduction of digital technology, these dynamics have changed, bringing both new opportunities to mobilise and new dangers to social disintegration. Social media has become a powerful tool in influencing and shaping the global political dialogue, with the ability to disseminate information rapidly, unite diverse communities, and circumvent traditional media regulations. However, in a society like Nigeria, where political contests are characterized by high stakes, weak institutions, and a youth-driven population, social media platforms have become venues for incitement, rumour spread, and mobilisation to commit violence (Alade and Victoria, 2018).

The post-civilian time of 1999 in Nigeria has recorded a history of patterns of electoral violence, factional tussles, and disputes that often escalate into violence. These tensions have not been caused by social media, but have been frequently aggravated by the amplification of divisive narratives, the facilitation of misinformation, and the mobilisation of previously inactive groups of people into confrontation cycles (Apuke and Tunca, 2018). Under this national image, Ekiti State stands out for its rich political culture and frequent cases of

political violence. A town with a rich history of political participation, community-based unity, and a young demographic, Aramoko-Ekiti presents an attractive microcosm in which these processes can be analysed. Electoral contests in Aramoko-Ekiti are generally considered tough, and political parties utilise both traditional methods and new technologies to their advantage. Social media has transformed this competition, and young people have begun to utilise social media tools to express their views, recruit followers, or criticise opponents by engaging with platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter. Although this online engagement has enhanced the level of engagement, it has also given rise to new conflicts, particularly when misinformation, propaganda, and incitement spread freely. The fact that political violence persists in Nigeria even after decades of democratic practice is a concern, and Aramoko-Ekiti is not immune. Although the issue of political violence is a national problem, the given research is limited to the case study of Aramoko-Ekiti. The town provides a practical yet insightful background on the analysis of the congruence between social media and political violence within local communities.

Aramoko-Ekiti is one of the prominent ancient towns in Yoruba land and in Ekiti state. It is the Headquarters of Ekiti West Local Government in Ekiti State. It is a nodal town with access roads to all parts of Ekiti and Osun States. It is situated in the middle of the western hemisphere of Ekiti State. It is approximately 26 kilometers to Ado-Ekiti, the capital of Ekiti State, 15 kilometers to Ijero-Ekiti, 15 kilometers to the warm spring at Ikogosi Ekiti, and about 42 kilometers to Ilesa in Osun State. According to history, Aramoko-Ekiti, from time immemorial, has been a sovereign town. The founder and the first ruler was one of the sixteen Obas and foremost Paramount Rulers in Yorubaland with full traditional right and authority to wear without any harm or danger the Original Special beaded crown decorated with sixteen birds. (The Eiye Okin, 'Iyere Okin', symbolized it) was bestowed on him by the ODUDUWA (The progenitor of all Yoruba race) and other emblems of ruling Authority before they were sent out of Ile-Ife (The cradle of Yoruba Race) to search for suitable land on which they could set up their respective kingdoms independent of one another's control. According to Professor Ishola Olomola in his paper titled "The place of Aramoko in the history of the Yoruba race", the don revealed that Aramoko belongs to the royal blood of the Yoruba progenitor, Oduduwa. He said Aramoko, translated to mean people who belong to the patriarch of the house or the husband, is a land of people who are direct descendants of Oduduwa.

According to history, all of them journeyed towards various directions, including the first Alara, who was a maternal brother to Ajero and Orangun of Ila, respectively. As an ancient town, its history dates back many centuries. Aramoko Ekiti has a unique historical beginning, boasting a vibrant traditional and cultural heritage that is truly worth being proud of. In those olden days, the administration of the town was entirely in the hands of a council of sixteen high chiefs, which also constituted the kingmakers. However, in contemporary times, apart from the kingmakers, there now exist other prominent chiefs with lesser status than the kingmakers. Still, they all play significant roles in the community's affairs, especially in their respective quarters, where they are represented. The town is divided into four major traditional quarters: Isasa-Ijowa, Anaye-Ikunato, Oke-Oja, and Isao.

It is, however, essential to note that the kingship arrangement of the community is typically rotated among the three prominent ruling houses. The three Ruling Houses in the Aramoko Kingdom include: The OLOKUN, The OKINBALOYE, and The ARAKEJI ruling houses.

Due to the peaceful coexistence and traditional hospitality of the people of Aramoko, the community is a melting pot of cultures. Many individuals have come to the Aramoko Kingdom to settle and make a living, either as farmers, traders, professionals, or civil servants. It is interesting to note that some communities, such as the Igbos, Urhobos, Itsekiris, Hausas, Oyos, and Igbiras etc., have settled and intermarried with the indigenous people, adding to the diversity and warmth of the community.

Agriculture is not just the primary occupation of the community, but also a way of life. The farmers cultivate a wide range of food crops, viz.: yams, cassava, maize, rice, plantain, and banana. The cash crops are mainly cocoa, kola nuts, and timber. This dedication to farming and the land reflects the resilience and hard work of the people of Aramoko. The community is surrounded by fourteen farm villages or settlement villages, each with its own unique administrative structure. The administrative affairs of these settlements are typically managed by some of the prominent high chiefs from the community. These high chiefs, such as Elejofi and Olona, play a crucial role in maintaining peace and order in their respective villages, as well as in representing the interests of their villagers in the larger community.

Kajola – Administered by Odogun, Ajebamidele – Administered by Atiba, Ile-Egbe – Administered by Alafe, Surulere Odeyemi – Administered by Oisinkin, Orisunmibare – Administered by Okunato,

Temidire, Akola – Administered by Ogboni, Surulere – Administered by Sajowa, Olorunsogo – Administered by Asasa, Araromi Oke-Aro – Administered by Eleyingbo.

Aramoko is enriched with rich traditional institutions, which are very much alive to date. Special festivities for peace, good harvest, prevention of diseases, and the death of young people are staged or held annually and occasionally as they are due for such ancestral gods as OGUN, IJUKU, ALELE, ORISA OWARUNLA, ISEJANA, and all the five OSUNS of Ara. Two of the essential annual events that attract many visitors to the town are the Olokun festival and the Odun Egungun Ara festival, also known as Isagun. During these festivals, the community comes together to celebrate their cultural heritage, with activities such as traditional dances, music performances, and ritual ceremonies.

This paper presents a qualitative historical analysis of the intricacies of the interaction between communication and political violence in Aramoko-Ekiti. The research utilises three primary sources of data: oral interviews, secondary sources, and digital content analysis. Youths, political stakeholders, and community leaders, through oral testimony, offer a distinctive way of understanding the local past and outlooks that may otherwise not be documented in official sources. The young participants, with their unique insights and active engagement in social media and political matters, were the key focus of the research. They are a group of people who participate in most digital communication and forms of political violence. Local politicians and party officials also provide valuable input into how political elites utilise social media as a mobilisation, propaganda, and, in some cases, incitement tool. Elders and community leaders provide historical perspectives on the development of political violence in Aramoko-Ekiti, offering comparative interpretations of previous forms of mobilisation and the current digital environment. The interviews were semi-structured and flexible, although the presence of major themes that needed to be covered, including the use of social media, experience of political violence, and continuity with the past, would be addressed systematically. The secondary information is obtained through published literature, particularly research on political violence and social media in Nigeria, which helps to place the experience of Aramoko-Ekiti in the broader context. The combination of oral interviews, secondary sources, and digital content analysis enables a comprehensive exploration of the influence of various forms of communication on the historical development of political violence in Aramoko-Ekiti. The research employs a purposive sample to identify respondents who are most significant to the research goals, with a preference given to those with special insights. Analysis of the data is thematic in nature and will reveal patterns, contrasts, and stories across the various sources. It is an interpretive, rather than statistical, analysis that attempts to produce meanings, perceptions, and historical significance. Triangulation, cross-checking, and reflexivity are employed to ensure the credibility of the findings. The study is conducted in accordance with strict ethical principles, as the issue of political violence is a sensitive matter. Participation is undertaken with informed consent, and respondents are assured that their identities will be kept confidential. Moreover, ethical reflection applies to the digital content analysis process, which means that individuals are not revealed in a manner that may threaten them or jeopardise their political positions. These ethical considerations are integral to the research, ensuring the integrity and trustworthiness of the study.

2. Conceptualizing Social Media and Political Violence

Social media, in its most basic form, refers to online platforms that enable two-way communication, crowd-sourcing, and connection across long distances (Babaleye et al., 2020). Contrary to traditional media, which include radio, television, and print, and are unidirectional in nature, social media encourages immediacy, interactivity, and participatory involvement. The notable features of social media are speed, connectivity, and accessibility, which precondition strong mobilisation, information flow, and identity shaping (Suntai and Targema, 2017). These platforms have not only been used as campaign and political communication mediums but also the mediums through which rumours, hate speech, and incitement to violence circulate in Nigerian politics (Ekwueme and Folarin, 2017).

Political violence, in its turn, may be taken to mean the application or a threat of force to accomplish a political goal. It includes electoral violence, inter-communal strife of political overtones, political assassinations, violent demonstrations, and violent clashes between opposing groups (Okolo and Atiye, 2022). Political violence has served as a symptom of structural weaknesses, including poor governance, corruption, and weak institutions, as well as a strategy employed by elites seeking access to power or power consolidation in Nigeria (Tsegyu and Kelvin, 2021). The intersectionality of social media and political violence is evident in the fact that digital media can alter long-standing trends in political competition, facilitating quicker mobilisation, magnification, and dissemination of inflammatory content.

2.1 Communication and Conflict in Nigeria

The emergence of social media in Nigeria came with the strengthening of democratic contestation. Towards the end of the 2000s, Facebook and Twitter were used as a way of civic expression, campaign organization, and political debate. WhatsApp, with its closed, encrypted algorithms, was quickly becoming the most powerful tool, particularly at the local level, where smartphones and mobile data penetration were significant (Oluwagbohunmi, 2017). This marked the first instance in Nigeria's history where ordinary citizens, especially the youth, had the opportunity to bypass traditional gatekeepers and engage directly in the flow of political discourse.

The development had far-reaching implications for preventing political violence. On the one hand, there were opportunities to raise awareness, promote civic education, and facilitate peaceful mobilization through social media (Ekwueme and Folarin, 2017). Plans of action were implemented during the elections, where polling areas were monitored, irregularities were reported, and votes were mobilized. Conversely, the same platforms were turned into the means of distributing fake news, incitement, and the encouragement of violence. The viral spread of digital content means that fake or controversial messages can be transmitted across communities in just a few hours, and at times result in real-life confrontations. According to Olojede (2024):
"Nigeria's democracy has been under the siege of incessant crises, and these crises are a culmination of the country's successive years of corruption, human rights violations, and in recent times the misuse of social media (through the use of propaganda, cyber bullying, and cyber harassment) that heats the polity and generates bitter politics, hate, and bigotry. The implication of this is that it creates a ripe environment for continuous electoral violence and ethnic strife that consequently undermines democracy." (Olojede, 2024: 35)

On a national level, instances of electoral violence that have occurred since 1999 have become more and more marred by the mark of social media mobilization. The spread of misinformation in elections has frequently increased mistrust in election authorities and targeted anti-opponent campaigns at the grassroots level. The 2020 #EndSARS protests once again highlighted the duality of social media: it enabled millions of Nigerians to protest against police brutality collectively, but it also served as a platform where misinformation and counter-narratives led to violent confrontations in some areas (Akinyetun et al., 2021). The Nigerian state has been struggling with this fact by attempting to control online content, which is often seen as politically oriented, and this appears to be jeopardizing the practice of freedom of expression (Suntai and Targema, 2017).

3. Historical Context of Political Violence in Aramoko-Ekiti Since 1999

Since the return of democracy to Nigeria in 1999, the Ekiti terrain has been marked by intense electoral competition. Clashes between supporters of rival parties, destruction of property, and intimidation of voters have often been standard features of the political violence in the state. Social media has introduced a new and concerning dimension to these struggles. Local politicians and their supporters are increasingly coordinating campaigns, disseminating propaganda, and mobilizing young people with the aid of digital platforms (Agidigbi, 2022). WhatsApp groups, especially, are quite potent in Ekiti, as political debates, rumours, and mobilization activities occur in online town halls. Partisan expression is frequently a rallying point on the Facebook pages of political actors or community influencers. For young people, these social sites not only give them a sense of empowerment but also a feeling of active participation in shaping the future of Nigerian politics; yet, they are being manipulated by political elites who use digital platforms to benefit themselves (Fanu et al., 2022).

The history of the state in question, marked by disputable gubernatorial campaigns involving allegations of election fraud, vote-buying, and physical violence, is a rich field for investigating how social media has increased the stakes of political rivalry. The youthfulness of populations, local rivalries among towns such as Aramoko-Ekiti, and the digitization of local markets have created a setting where digital platforms mediate the historical and technological components of political violence (Agidigbi & Afolabi, 2024). This historical context is crucial to understanding the current state of political violence in Ekiti.

Although conflict in precolonial Aramoko-Ekiti was not common, it was usually associated with inter-town feuds, resource disputes, or succession struggles. Political violence in the contemporary sense was not extensive because there was no partisan organization that could lead to the development of organized violence. The working of chants, songs, and oral narratives as means of agitation, however, pre-empted how communication systems, both traditional and colonial, would be instrumentalized to political effects at a later time (Ajayi & Adesote, 2015).

The political landscape in Nigeria underwent significant changes as a result of the colonial encounter. As the indirect rule was enforced,

traditional rulers were integrated into the administrative systems of colonial rule, often sparking tensions between the customary and colonial governmental systems. This twin power had created rivalries and opposition in places such as Ekiti land, and was at times met with violent clashes. Local politics underwent further changes with the introduction of Western education and missionary activities. The elites began to develop and become educated, which provided new leadership that was difficult to topple, both for the colonial administrators and the traditional rulers. These elites shared their ideas through print media, petitions, and the church by connecting local issues to a nationalist course. The political parties, such as the Action Group (AG), gained influence in Ekiti by the 1940s and 1950s, mobilizing the people through newspapers and rallies (Agidigbi & Afolabi, 2024).

These nationalist and regional parties were very pronounced in Aramoko-Ekiti. The educated elites in the town were also actively involved in spreading party propaganda, usually through the use of print media and oral campaigns. Nevertheless, it was also a time when political violence became increasingly organized in the region. The Action Group and the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) regularly fought in the polls, which reached far into Ekiti towns. The violence was, in most instances, supported by rumour networks and inflammatory rhetoric that was propagated in the community meetings. These trends formed the basis of the ongoing communication, political, and violence intermingling in Aramoko-Ekiti (Agidigbi, 2022).

Political competition in Nigeria intensified following the country's independence in 1960. Political rivalries in Ekiti, as was the case elsewhere in the country, soon turned into violent conflicts. The First Republic was characterized by the bad blood between regional parties and violence usually spilled over to towns such as Aramoko-Ekiti. Electoral races were especially worrisome, as false electioneering, voter coercion, and property incineration became a staple.

The communication systems played a crucial role in all these confrontations. The newspapers, radio, and rumour networks were turned into sources of propaganda, and party stalwarts mobilized youths as a means of enforcing their superiority. The intense competition in politics was experienced in Aramoko-Ekiti as in other Yoruba towns because allegiance to regional parties was strong. The violence had become a regular part of the political process, as evidenced by reports of fights between opposing groups, especially during elections. The 1966 military coup and the civil war (1967-1970) brought about a shake-up in the political scenario but failed to eradicate the causes of violence. Even though geographically, Aramoko-Ekiti was far removed from the so-called theatres of war, the youth were not isolated by the bigger forces of militarisation and political revolution. Rumour networks were again formidable tools for political communication during this time, spreading news of betrayal, conspiracy, and ethnic separation. The mistrust that the stories created strengthened the relationship between communication and political confrontation, a precursor to the role that social media would play in the democratic era, where it would amplify these dynamics and make them more immediate and widespread (Agidigbi & Afolabi, 2024).

Between 1966 and 1999, Nigeria experienced a prolonged period of military rule, interrupted intermittently by brief periods of civilian rule. This era saw the repression and recasting of political life in towns such as Aramoko-Ekiti. The military regimes curtailed the freedom of political parties, as well as the freedom of the press, and attempted to depoliticize local governance. However, instead of eradicating the political conflict, these actions tend to divert it into the informal sphere. Political agitation in Aramoko-Ekiti during the military era was manifested in student movements, local resistance, and underground activism (Fanu et al., 2024). The communication was based on the rumour networks, face-to-face mobilization, and pamphlets. Although open violence was not as common as in the First Republic, sporadic confrontations occurred, particularly when the military attempted to bring about controlled transitions to civilian governance. For example, the political experiments of the late 1970s and early 1990s were characterized by new mobilisation in Ekiti towns, and violence erupted when transitions were declared invalid or deemed flawed.

The authoritarian influence of the military also influenced the minds of young people in Aramoko-Ekiti. Lacking official avenues of political expression, the youth resorted to informal groups, where rumours and stirrings flourished. Such experiences gave rise to a culture in which political engagement was strongly associated with confrontation, a culture that would subsequently resonate with social media during the democratic era. The military rule not only suppressed political freedom but also shaped the region's political culture, making it more confrontational and less trusting of one another. This culture would find a new platform in social media, where it would be amplified and spread more widely (Agidigbi & Afolabi, 2024).

Democracy was restored in 1999, marking the beginning of a new era of political contestation in Nigeria. In the case of Aramoko-Ekiti, this was a

revival of active engagement in multiparty politics, as well as an increase in political violence. The intensity of electoral competition in Ekiti State was soon to be popularly associated with the elections of governors, which were characterized by violence, vote-buying, and intimidation. The youngsters were at the centre stage of the struggles in Aramoko-Ekiti. Political parties often enlisted young men to serve as enforcers, mobilizers, or street-level campaigners. Rumour networks and community gossip continued to play a central role; yet, the relationship between communication technologies and mobilization was becoming increasingly dominated by the new. Mobile phones became ubiquitous by the mid-2000s, enabling the rapid coordination of large groups of people. In the 2010s, social media channels such as Facebook and WhatsApp were introduced, significantly expanding the scope of political communication and the speed of communication (Agidigbi, 2022).

The 2014 and 2018 Ekiti gubernatorial elections can be mentioned as such a decisive moment. Both of these elections involved extensive mobilization, utilizing social media platforms, propaganda, and counterpropaganda. Facebook pages in Aramoko-Ekiti operated by supporters of local parties turned into partisan arenas, and WhatsApp groups acted as an echo chamber to disseminate information, as well as misinformation. These platforms were immediate, and the rumours turned into confrontations within hours, which increased tensions during already tense elections (Olojede, 2022). Essentially, youths have been a characteristic of political violence in Aramoko-Ekiti both in the past and today. In the past, young men were mobilized through community networks and traditional institutions, as well as material incentives, to serve as foot soldiers for political parties. This trend continued into the digital era, where social media provides additional mobilisation tools. Social media is a platform where individuals can form their identity and engage in political life, something that is utilized not only by older people but also by young people living in Aramoko-Ekiti. WhatsApp groups help them to identify themselves in partisan groups, whereas Facebook provides expression of politics with visibility and recognition. Nevertheless, the same platforms put them in the hands of the political elite who access digital propaganda to provoke confrontations. The merger of historical trends in youth mobilization with digital technologies has, consequently, turned out to be a perilous blend, as contemporary communication systems amplify historical violence in a manner that generates repetitive conflict (Agidigbi & Afolabi, 2024).

4. Aramoko-Ekiti Social Media Usage Patterns

Among young people and political stakeholders in Aramoko-Ekiti, WhatsApp and Facebook have penetrated the sphere of political communication. WhatsApp groups, which are often divided along partisan lines, have become crucial venues for disseminating campaign messages, mobilizing supporters, and refuting opposing narratives. These organizations not only encompass the inhabitants of Aramoko-Ekiti but also the members of the diaspora in Lagos, Abuja, and abroad, thereby expanding the geographical dimension of the political discussion. In these WhatsApp groups, young people claim that various functions are fulfilled, such as coordinating campaigns, sharing information quickly, and spreading misinformation. Mobilizers are given directives on the places of rallies, how to distribute campaign materials and the techniques of persuading voters. To strengthen allegiance to the party or undermine the opposition, videos, voice messages, and memes are circulated without much verification. There is a rumour of an intended attack, malpractice, or scandals during elections, and these add to the complications of political violence.

By contrast, Facebook is used for public image-building, and candidates and their supporters maintain active pages that post achievements, promises, and symbolic images. The visual aspect of Facebook, such as photos of huge crowds at rallies, videos of speeches, or well-selected suggestions, produces the effect of momentum that can persuade undecided voters and strengthen the sense of group identity. While Twitter has a negligible impact on the political discussions of Aramoko-Ekiti due to its lower penetration, posts from national political discussions regularly penetrate local WhatsApp groups. This illustrates how the regional and national digital spaces are porous, thereby highlighting the interconnectedness of political communication in Nigeria. The results highlight the importance of social media in politically narrating, mobilizing, and potentially influencing political violence in Aramoko-Ekiti.

5. Attitudes of the Young on Political Participation

The voices of the youth in Aramoko-Ekiti reveal a dualistic approach to participation in politics, encompassing both feelings of disillusionment and a sense of agency. On the one hand, they are angry at mainstream politics due to corruption and its failure to deliver on promises, as well as its lack of engagement in decision-making processes. Social media, on the other hand, provides them with a sense of visibility and empowerment that they often lack in traditional methods of political organization.

Through platforms like WhatsApp, young people believe they can engage with politicians, challenge official discourses, and make themselves relevant in the political arena. Nevertheless, there are two-fold advantages to this participation in partisan online communities that foster polarization. Political mobilization is an aspect that attracts many youths, both online and offline, because it provides a means of accessing financial incentives offered by political elites. Here, social media serves as the channel through which the politics of transaction reach the digital space. The messages spread through the groups are often followed by promises of stipends, food, or other material rewards to people who attend rallies or threaten their opponents.

The situation here is indicative of a wider Nigerian paradox: as much as the youth have taken over digital platforms, their use is more frequently organized and exploited by political elites, which actually reinforces the cycles of clientelism, rather than breaking them. These views of the youths highlight the complexity of the relationship between economic vulnerability and political participation, where social media is not only an instrument used neutrally but also a platform managed and utilized by political elites to manipulate and control the youths. Finally, the convergence of social media, economic gain, and political action in Aramoko-Ekiti serves as a reminder of the intricacies of youth involvement in the political arena, as the need to become an agent and visible is often counterbalanced by the reality of exploitation and manipulation.

Dynamism of Digital Misinformation and Propaganda

The analysis of digital content provides insight into how misinformation pervades the formation of political perceptions in Aramoko-Ekiti. Gossips that could previously be shared at regular community meetings are now shared quickly via WhatsApp and Facebook, and can have profound effects in most cases. Rivalry is undermined by false statements about a candidate's health or eligibility, and, when compounded, fear and mistrust are heightened through reports of attacks or rigging. It is also typical to misrepresent facts by using fabricated photos and videos, which are designed to manipulate emotions and influence people's opinions. This effect reflects the long history of rumours and propaganda as instruments of political rivalry in Nigeria. Formerly, exaggerated claims were disseminated through pamphlets, leaflets, posters, and town criers to mobilize or demobilize supporters. Nevertheless, the digital communication process has transformed the situation, as information can now spread at unprecedented speed and reach a wider audience. In contrast, it is more challenging to trace its origin and hold actors responsible.

The cultural and symbolic resources used in social media propaganda are typically those familiar to the community, including images of a local masquerade or references to the warrior tradition of Ekiti. These signs are used to portray political conflicts as existential conflicts, thereby justifying violence. Such a dynamic points out that social media is not an imposed outside force but is instead a space onto which local histories, identities, and rivalries are pinned and enhanced. The convergence of digital communication and local culture narratives has formed a complex and frequently fluctuating political environment in Aramoko-Ekiti, where the role of misinformation and propaganda cannot be underestimated in shaping perception and influencing behaviour.

Rising political violence and Social Media

Social media can exacerbate existing tensions, rather than being the direct cause of violence. The tendency is exemplified by multiple events in Aramoko-Ekiti, where false information about ballot snatching or an imminent attack was spread on WhatsApp, motivating groups of young people to defend the polling points prematurely, and in some cases, causing confrontations. Facebook became the venue for heated words between fighting supporters, which sometimes escalated into real-life confrontations, with insults and threats becoming increasingly personalized. The rallies' mobilization frequently featured implicit promotion of conflict and postings of heroic defenders against their opponents. These trends indicate that social media erases the distinction between online and offline politics, often transforming symbolic contestation into corporeal mobilization, and strengthens the cycle of political violence in Aramoko-Ekiti. The social media dynamics observed in this situation emphasize the complex relationship between digital media, local dynamics, and political violence, emphasizing the need to consider the nuances of online and offline interactions in shaping political behaviour.

Correlation with Historical Modes of Mobilisation

There is a strong continuity between the dynamics of social media and previous political mobilization in Aramoko-Ekiti and Nigeria as a whole. Misinformation and rumours, among others, have long been used to create unrest, and now WhatsApp messages are the same thing, but much more effective. The youths also do not change their status in the political arena as political foot soldiers, where young men have always been mobilized as a tool for political parties in elections and rewarded with food,

money, or patronage. It has only recently been introduced to online platforms during the digital age. Another continuity is the prevalence of symbolic politics, a characteristic of Nigerian politics for decades. Since the campaigns of the 1960s, which utilized local masquerades, to present-day campaigns featuring memes of Ekiti identity, political communication remains filled with cultural symbols that justify partisan allegiance and sometimes lead to confrontation. Elites remain the most critical organizers of the mobilization, and the possibility of using a digital platform to engage a broader audience reduces the expenses of propaganda and increases its effectiveness to the maximum. Such continuities suggest that we cannot understand the role of social media in political violence in isolation from Nigeria's long history of political culture.

Nevertheless, some significant differences that characterize the social media age, as compared to previous eras, are also present. Examples include anonymity, where the content can be disseminated without any responsibility, as opposed to posters or oral propaganda that can be linked to particular agents. Social media has enabled the diaspora to be directly engaged in local political conversations, and it can influence the discourse remotely in ways never before possible. Digital technologies have also accelerated and become viral, thereby diminishing the chances of verification or mediation, as false information spreads within minutes. Additionally, the prevalence of videos, memes, and photos marks a departure from text-based or spoken propaganda, as images can be more emotionally charged and impactful.

These contrasts highlight how digital technologies not only increase violence in quantity but also in quality, and how politics are being reimagined and performed in Aramoko-Ekiti. Finally, the research highlights the importance of understanding social media as a continuation of an old drama, which multiplies existing practices rather than revolutionizing them. The intricate relationship between continuity and change would help us understand more clearly the role social media plays in influencing political violence in Nigeria.

The trends in Aramoko-Ekiti mirror broader trends in Nigeria, where WhatsApp and Facebook are the primary platforms for political communication, serving as instruments of mobilization and sources of misinformation. Youths are vulnerable to manipulation by the elite, both online and offline, due to their disenchantment with conventional politics and economic insecurity. Nevertheless, Aramoko-Ekiti also reveals the locality of digital politics, in which digital spaces become highly localized and are rooted in local rivalry, identities, and histories. This highlights the need to analyze political violence on a more specific level than the national level, focusing instead on a community level where larger trends are represented through local interactions, as observed in the study by Alade and Victorian (2018). This article highlights a paradox that social media in Aramoko-Ekiti has become both an instrument of empowerment and a source of political violence. On the one hand, it enables youths to voice their opinions and mobilise groups, contesting political elites in a manner that was previously difficult to do. Conversely, it magnifies disinformation, polarises, and, in most cases, results in physical confrontations, as a study by Adeshina (2022) also found.

Historically, communication systems have always mediated political violence in Aramoko-Ekiti. Rumours, posters, and verbal propaganda once served as mobilisation vectors, often positioning mobilization rivals as existential threats. Nowadays, these roles are dominated by WhatsApp and Facebook, and the fact that communication continues to be used to polarize and mobilize. Nevertheless, the break is in the pace, distance, and anonymity of digital services, which constrain the time necessary to verify or mediate and offer buffers against escalation. The results of this study also highlight the fact that social media is not a source of violence; rather, it exacerbates existing tensions by recreating traditional patterns of youth mobilization, elite manipulation, and cultural symbolism. However, amplification is a neutral process that can go in either direction, with messages of peace, civic responsibility, and solidarity in the community as easy to spread as any inflammatory message (Adeshina, 2022).

The fact that the digital and political space in Aramoko-Ekiti is centred on youths is a risk and an opportunity. The fact that they are economically vulnerable and opinionatedly partisan makes them susceptible to violent mobilization, while the fact that they are digitally savvy, creative, and numerically strong makes them a potential change agent. In the digital age, if youths are often seen as soldiers of violence, they can also be the carriers of peace. In a bid to do this, the digital literacy initiatives can be used to teach youths how to be critical when detecting misinformation and breaking the manipulation cycle. Peaceful political speech, enhanced by humour, music, and memes, can divert the creative forces away from aggressive propaganda. Digital spaces that promote youth civic education will empower young people to engage in peaceful political discussions.

It is also the responsibility of the elites, who are the main initiators of mobilization, to uphold the standard of digital ethics. This involves signing voluntary codes of conduct, funding fact-checking

projects, and supporting civic engagement campaigns rather than partisan propaganda. It is possible to reposition digital communication as a source of constructive interaction, rather than a source of hostility, to harness social media in preventing violence in Aramoko-Ekiti and facilitating peacebuilding. The problem with Aramoko-Ekiti is how to redefine politics, which is currently dominated by the concept that politics is a zero-sum game, in which victory justifies violence and defeat leads to exclusion. This story is an extension of Nigeria's history of political warfare. Social media, however, also provides the means of redefining politics as a civic space, in which engagement is not just appreciated in the context of securing electoral victory, but also in fostering community discourse. This was affirmed in the study by Akinyetun et al. (2021) and Olojede (2022).

The findings of this study underscore that social media is not inherently violent, but rather its usage that can prompt violence. Through social media applications such as WhatsApp and Facebook, civil societies, churches, and schools can showcase positive experiences of non-violent interaction, youth creativity, and political responsibility. This has the potential to transform digital spaces, shifting them towards peace and a culture of civic responsibility. By highlighting this potential, we can inspire our audience with a sense of possibility and the power of positive online experiences.

6. Conclusion

Nigeria has had communication systems that have varied between means of manipulation and means of liberation. Social media is no different. This paper examines the impact of social media on the incidence of political violence in Aramoko-Ekiti, Ekiti State, drawing on local experiences and the broader context of Nigeria's history of political contestation. The results indicate that social media has taken a central stage in mobilization in politics, particularly among youths, where messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Facebook have been at the center of campaigns, the spread of rumors, propaganda, and the organizing of followers. Nevertheless, the paper also shows that the violent dispositions of social media in Aramoko-Ekiti are indicative of long-standing traditions in Nigerian political culture, such as the use of rumors as a political tool, the recruitment of youths as political foot soldiers, and the control of communication channels by elites.

Meanwhile, social media introduces new dynamics, including anonymity, speed, virality, and diaspora participation, which alter the dynamics of political participation. These transformations have heightened the dangers of violence and also presented fresh spaces of dialogue, accountability, and civil participation. The case of Aramoko-Ekiti highlights that while social media may contribute to violence, it can also be a source of peace within the narrative constructed around it, considering the systems that determine usage and the agencies of those who occupy the space. By and large, this paper concludes that, although social media in Aramoko-Ekiti has been a catalyst for political violence, the same media can also become a source of peace. The course of violence is not predetermined; it can be prevented with the help of conscious actions. These actions include promoting digital literacy, encouraging critical thinking, empowering youth-led initiatives, and holding political elites accountable for their digital behaviour. These actions can use the beneficial potential of digital technologies to prevent violence.

7. Recommendations

In response to the issues presented so far, this article offers the following recommendations:

Misinformation and manipulation should be fought through the promotion of digital literacy and critical thinking. This can be achieved through the integration of digital literacy courses in schools, vocational centres, and non-governmental organisations, where youths will be taught how to detect false information, verify sources, and act responsibly when using the internet. Formal education can be supplemented with community workshops that focus on out-of-school youths.

It is also essential to empower young people to take the lead in initiating peace-oriented campaigns, as they are at the centre stage of digital media and politics. This empowerment is not just a strategy, but a powerful tool for inspiring change and promoting peace. This can be achieved through funding youth-led WhatsApp and Facebook groups focused on civic education and peaceful political discourse, providing small grants to youth organisations to develop digital campaigns promoting peace, and training young digital influencers in conflict-sensitive communication. Another essential action is to hold political elites accountable for their digital behaviour. This accountability is not just a suggestion, but a necessary step towards ensuring a peaceful online environment. Electoral bodies and civil society organisations should monitor online spaces in campaigns, and codes of digital ethics should be published and adopted by political parties to ensure that they engage online in a peaceful manner. Candidates or parties that encourage hate speech or misinformation should be reported. The use of digital spaces to promote peace by leveraging traditional and community structures can also be a practical approach. At the local level, community

leaders can moderate local WhatsApp groups, refute false information with official clarifications, and older individuals can record short audio or video messages promoting peace and harmony.

It is also necessary to develop localised fact-checking mechanisms. By having a community-based fact-checking team comprising youths, journalists, and civil society actors, false claims spread in local WhatsApp and Facebook groups can be identified and debunked, corrections can be disseminated swiftly, and awareness of the relevance of fact-checking can be raised through schools, churches, and community gatherings.

Violence can also be mitigated by establishing partnerships with social media companies. Such firms are encouraged to collaborate with Nigerian civil society organisations to identify and filter pernicious content. Pernicious content refers to harmful or destructive information that can incite violence or spread misinformation. By identifying and filtering such content related to elections, offering community-based digital literacy courses, and maintaining transparency in political advertising, social media companies can prevent insidious influence over local populations and contribute to peacebuilding.

Lastly, an early warning and rapid response mechanism can be put in place to avert tensions before they escalate into mayhem. In cooperation with local security authorities and community leaders, civil society organisations can monitor the rise in hostile rhetoric or social media threats and respond promptly with mediation, clarification, and preventive security measures.

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Traditional Rulers and Statutory Institutions: Dynamics of Cooperation and Competition in Land Conflict Management in Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract. The study explored traditional rulers and statutory institutions as dynamics of cooperation and competition in land conflict management in Osun state, Nigeria. The study was motivated by the facts that the frequency of land disputes in Osun State is caused by a number of reasons. The study was anchored on Conflict Transformation Theory and Collaborative Governance Theory, respectively. The study employed exploratory ethnographic research design, while purposive and snowballing sampling procedures were employed. Both Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were used to obtain information of the sampled participants. The obtained data were content analysed. The results indicated that the major historical role of traditional rulers to include land custodianship and land allocation, mediators in conflicts among others. Greed of individuals, including the traditional rulers, ambiguity in land boundaries, increase in the value of land, among others contributed to the causes of land conflicts among the respondents in the study location. The study recommended that the traditional rulers should institutionalize community-based land governance councils that include youth, women, family heads, and elders. These councils should oversee land allocation, documentation, and conflict resolution to ensure transparency and inclusive participation in decision-making processes.

Keywords: Traditional rulers, statutory institutions, land conflict management in Osun State, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Land is widely acknowledged as a fundamental resource for human progress and survival. In addition to providing a physical area for agricultural and habitation, land is a representation of identity, authority, and socioeconomic stability all over the world. Access to land determines economic opportunity, cultural preservation, and food security in the majority of nations. It is closely linked to both personal and collective livelihoods, especially in agrarian economies where social status and wealth are significantly correlated with land ownership [1].

In Nigeria, land is extremely important base on an economic, political, and spiritual level. It is a fundamental component of traditional wealth systems, especially in rural and peri-urban areas where it is essential to housing, agriculture, and communal identity. Customs and traditional institutions continue to play a significant role in governing land access and ownership, even though the Land Use Act of 1978 consolidated property ownership under government supervision. Formal legislation and indigenous practices coexist and frequently compete in the complicated governing system that has been formed by this dichotomy. Traditional leaders continue to hold sway over communal lands in many places, serving as guardians and facilitators of land-related disputes [2].

A "global land rush" has been attributed to the increased demand for land around the world, particularly in the wake of the food and energy crises of 2007–2008 [3]. Besides, expanding global populations, expanding biofuel usage, increased food insecurity, and wealthy countries' strategic investments in foreign agricultural land all contributed to this surge. As a result, transnational firms and foreign governments frequently targeted millions of hectares in low- and middle-income nations for large-scale acquisitions. Local inhabitants were marginalised and indigenous land rights were violated by these acquisitions, which were often made possible by opaque transactions [4].

The land rush was especially fierce in Africa. African governments frequently implemented pro-investor policies that marginalised local

communities and undermined traditional land tenure systems in an effort to attract foreign direct investment. Ndi, et al., [5] claimed that this led to an increase in land transactions that gave external players ownership of common lands while ignoring traditional ownership patterns. Wide-ranging effects included the uprooting of regional farmers, environmental damage, and escalation of social unrest. Land grabbing is the large-scale land acquisition by dubious legal and ethical means, frequently without the informed permission of local communities.

Nigeria, one of the most populous and economically significant countries in Africa, has not been immune to this trend. In a number of states, such as Lagos, Edo, Ogun, and Osun, the commodification of land has increased due to rapid urbanisation, industrialisation, and private real estate interests. These factors have not only upset traditional land tenure systems but also created an atmosphere in which land conflicts have become more frequent. Traditional rulers, who were once thought to be the guardians and stewards of communal land, are now frequently accused of supporting land grabbing by selling land to outside developers or allocating land without adequate community consultation [6,7].

The severity and complexity of Nigeria's land-related disputes are exemplified by the circumstances in Osun State. Land disputes are common in Osun because of its blend of growing cities, farming communities, and long-standing traditional institutions. According to reports from local courts and traditional councils, the bulk of civil lawsuits in the state involve land-related issues. Land according to Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies is one of the most divisive socio-legal issues in Osun State, accounting for around 60% of civil conflicts.

The frequency of land disputes in Osun State is caused by a number of reasons. First, overlapping claims and encroachments are made possible by the absence of thorough land documentation and boundary marking. Second, the fast growth of cities like Osogbo, Ilesa, and Ife has put more strain on the rural areas nearby, increasing their market value and developer appeal. Third, conventional land ownership claims have become even more complex due to intra family disagreements and succession disputes. Furthermore, traditional rulers' influence has become a double-edged sword, especially in Ijesa country. Although these leaders are supposed to resolve disputes and protect the interests of the community, there are rising questions over their objectivity and participation in land deals that put political or personal benefit ahead of the common good [8].

Traditional rulers in both developing and developed societies are saddled with an essential role in not only mitigating the effects of the insurgency including conflict but also in contributing to the peacebuilding process [9]. Their enduring influence in some of local communities has made it possible for them to serve as successful mediators, promoting communication between the participants to the conflict—including impacted communities, government forces, and insurgents [10].

Traditional leaders typically use their cultural power to encourage tolerance and social cohesiveness by planning gatherings and rituals that help people heal and reconcile. To avert retaliatory violence and promote peaceful coexistence among varied groups, traditional authorities attempt to address the ethnic and religious divisions that the conflict has deepened [11]. By working with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to make sure aid reaches those in need, especially internally displaced people (IDPs), and by giving them access to necessities like food, medicine, and shelter, they also support humanitarian initiatives and aid in community stabilisation [12].

Furthermore, by supporting local development projects, traditional leaders help address the underlying reasons of the violence, including social marginalisation, unemployment, and poverty [13]. By doing this, they assist in lessening the allure of insurgent organisations and provide vulnerable groups and young people with alternate routes. By fusing traditional leadership with contemporary peacebuilding techniques, their partnership with NGOs enhances the effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives by creating culturally relevant solutions for economic recovery and conflict resolution. Traditional leaders in Northeast Nigeria play a vital role in the long-term peacebuilding process and the restoration of stability by participating in these multifaceted initiatives [14].

Additionally, the study is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN, which are imperatives for global development. By addressing land conflicts that threaten livelihoods and worsen poverty, especially in rural areas, it advances SDG 1 (No Poverty). By promoting sustainable land governance techniques that improve resilience and inclusivity in local communities, it advances SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). By analysing how traditional leaders might serve as mediators to enhance societal stability and justice while encouraging institutional accountability and openness, it also advances SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

This study is further supported by the substantial vacuum in the literature on the changing

responsibilities of traditional leaders in land disputes [15,16,17,18, 19, 20]. Few studies have examined the dual role of traditional rulers as possible peacemakers and, occasionally, conflict contributors, despite the fact that several have examined land conflicts in Nigeria. This study closes this gap by presenting empirical insights from the Ijesa territory, enabling a detailed understanding of the dynamics at play and adding to the body of knowledge on conflict resolution and governance. In the end, legislators, conventional institutions, community leaders, and academics can all benefit from this study. It aims to improve the efficacy of land governance institutions and promote sustainable peace and development in Nigeria and abroad by providing practical suggestions based on thorough study.

In Ijesa land, Osun State, land snatching has become a crucial and divisive issue that undermines not just the legitimacy and authority of traditional rulers but also the socioeconomic well-being of communities. Urbanisation, elite capture, and growing land commodification have all contributed to the alarming increase in land-related disputes in Ijesa territory, which includes towns like Ilesa, Esa-Oke, Ijebu-Jesa, and Iloko. Traditional leaders, who have traditionally protected communal lands and arbitrated disputes over land, are currently at the centre of controversy after being charged with illicit land sales, border manipulation, and cooperation with developers and speculators.

1.1 Research Questions

The research questions below guided the study

- What is the history of traditional rulers in land management and conflict resolution in the Ijesa land?
- What are the causes and consequences of land conflicts in the Ijesa land of Osun State?

1.2 Objective of the Study

The study's broad objective was to explore the dynamics of cooperation and competition of traditional rulers and statutory institutions in land conflict management in Osun State, Nigeria, while the specific objectives were to:

- investigate the history of traditional rulers in land management and conflict resolution in the Ijesa land; and
- determine the causes and consequences of land conflicts in the Ijesa land of Osun State.

2. Theoretical Framework

The two main theories that underpin this research are Collaborative Governance Theory and Conflict Transformation Theory, which are pertinent to cooperation, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution. These theories offer a fundamental perspective for comprehending how traditional leaders contribute to peace and stability in the study area.

2.1 Conflict Transformation Theory

John Paul Lederach developed this theory in 1995. The goal of the Conflict Transformation Theory is to address the structural, relational, and cultural roots of conflict rather than just putting a stop to violence. Through interpersonal transformation, the advancement of justice, and the reconstruction of conflict-affected communities, the theory places an emphasis on long-term, sustainable solutions. This idea is especially pertinent to Ijesa Land, Osun State, Nigeria, because it emphasises the necessity of comprehensive peacebuilding strategies that include dependable community members like traditional leaders. They may arbitrate conflicts, encourage reconciliation, and restore confidence in communities split apart by violence and insurgency because of their strong cultural ties and moral authority.

2.2 Collaborative Governance Theory

The Collaborative Governance Theory offers yet another crucial perspective for examining how various players, such as NGOs and established institutions, might cooperate to accomplish shared objectives. The approach places a strong emphasis on mutual trust, shared responsibility, and cooperative decision-making when addressing difficult societal problems. Collaboration between official institutions (such as NGOs) and informal traditional systems is crucial for effective peacebuilding in Nigeria, particularly in areas devastated by war.

Traditional leaders provide legitimacy and cultural awareness, while non-governmental organisations frequently offer programming support, financial assistance, and technical know-how. This cooperative partnership is essential to attaining long-term peace and progress and is consistent with the ideas of collaborative government. All of these theories contribute to the knowledge that inclusive, context-sensitive, and locally led peacebuilding is more successful than those that rely solely on outside assistance.

3. Role of Traditional Rulers in Peacebuilding

In Nigerian history, traditional rulers have acted as cultural guardians, peacemakers in local conflicts, and symbols of solidarity. Their role has expanded to include mediating between armed actors, encouraging community peace, and assisting government and non-governmental organisation initiatives in modern conflict settings such as Ijesa land in Osun State, Nigeria. In regions impacted by the Boko Haram insurgency, traditional leaders are crucial players in fostering communal discourse and rebuilding trust because of their moral authority and grassroots legitimacy [21]. Their participation has an especially significant effect in rural areas where official institutions are either non-existent or very weak. Traditional institutions are perfect for fostering reconciliation and re-establishing community cohesion since they are firmly ingrained in the social fabric [22].

3.1 Collaboration between NGOs and Traditional Rulers

There is hope for inclusive and context-sensitive peacebuilding at the nexus of traditional authority and NGO activity. Technical soundness and local acceptance of peacebuilding interventions are guaranteed when these actors work together. Non-governmental organisations that involve traditional leaders in the planning and execution of projects have a higher chance of gaining the support and sustainability of the community [23]. NGOs may not have the necessary access, legitimacy, and cultural mediation that traditional rulers offer, particularly in conflict-prone areas [24]. When properly managed, these collaborations ensure fair resource distribution, build trust, and have a greater influence on peacebuilding initiatives.

4. Materials and Methods

This study used an exploratory ethnographic research design. Understanding the social environment and culture of the issue under study is the aim of the ethnographic method. This method combines fieldwork and participatory observation to examine the traditions, values, and behaviours of a certain group or community. Ethnography allows researchers to fully and thoroughly document and portray social reality by focusing cultural description and contextual understanding [25].

The ethnographic research approach is highly relevant to the study of traditional rulers in Ijesa region, Osun State, Nigeria, as either peacemakers or perpetrators, because it allows for a comprehensive analysis of the social dynamics and cultural context that underpin land grabs and disputes. Through community immersion, interviews, and participant observation, ethnography provided profound insights into the perspectives and experiences of community members as well as the roles, behaviours, and intentions of traditional rulers. The power dynamics, cultural norms, and historical legacies that impact conflicts and peacebuilding efforts were revealed by this approach, which shed light on the complex issues at hand.

The researcher, who was also an ethnographer, spent a significant amount of time observing and interacting with traditional rulers in Ijesa land, Osun State, Nigeria, to learn how their roles and behaviours are influenced by the cultural structures and relationships of the community. The researcher also looked at the rulers' roles as either peacemakers or as perpetrators of land grabbing and conflicts. This prolonged involvement enabled the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of the intricate dynamics of power, tradition, and social norms that influence conflict and peacebuilding processes in the study area. It also allowed the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of the complex issues surrounding land grabbing and the roles traditional rulers play in these conflicts.

The study's population comprises important traditional players who either directly or indirectly participate in dispute resolution or land governance. These actors include chiefs, Baales, and traditional rulers (Obas). Other stakeholders include community leaders, young adults, and landowners; local subsistence farmers who have been impacted by land conflicts or who have taken part in grassroots peace processes; and elders who have a deep understanding of the land crises in the Ijesa land. Their participation guarantees that a range of viewpoints and experiences on land disputes and governance procedures are included in the study.

The study used purposive and snowballing sampling procedures. These procedures were appropriate due to the qualitative and exploratory nature of the research, which required the intentional selection of individuals who possess direct, in-depth knowledge and lived experiences relevant to the research questions. These include traditional rulers (Obas), chiefs, Baales, community leaders, youths, residents, and elders with firsthand knowledge of land conflicts and governance practices in Ijesa land.

The purposive sampling technique allowed the researcher to focus on key informants whose roles and social positions within the traditional and administrative hierarchies provided rich insights into the nuanced dynamics of land grabbing, customary authority, and conflict resolution processes. The snowball sampling was employed to

reach hidden or hard-to-identify participants, particularly in cases involving sensitive or controversial land conflicts where individuals may be reluctant to speak openly. Participants who were initially contacted were asked to refer others who met the study's inclusion criteria, thereby expanding access to insider voices and enabling a deeper exploration of underlying power structures and contestations.

The sample size comprised 41 key informant interviews and 3 focus group discussions. This size was considered sufficient for a qualitative study guided by the principle of data saturation the point at which no new themes or relevant information emerge from additional data collection. The richness of the qualitative data, rather than statistical representativeness, was the guiding principle in determining the sample size.

The decision to select participants from six representative communities across the six local government areas of Ijesa land (Ilesa East, Ilesa West, Oriade, Obokun, Atakunmosa East, and Atakunmosa West) was based on both geographical spread and socio-political relevance. These communities: Ilesa, Ijebu-Jesa, Esa-Oke, Iloko-Ijesa, Osu, and Erin-Ijesa were chosen because they reflect varying degrees of traditional authority involvement in land governance, different histories of land conflicts, and diverse interactions with formal governance institutions.

This study adopts a qualitative method of data collection, relying primarily on Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to explore the complex and sensitive dynamics of traditional rulers' involvement in land grabbing and conflict resolution in Ijesa land, Osun State, Nigeria. The data collected during fieldwork was analysed using content analysis, a qualitative research technique that enables the systematic identification, organization, and interpretation of themes and patterns within textual data.

5. Results

Research Question 1: What is the history of traditional rulers in land management and conflict resolution in the Ijesa land?

For a long time, traditional leaders in the Ijesa territory have served as essential land custodians and mediators in conflicts involving land. Their functions have both persisted and changed since pre-colonial times as a result of the pressures of legal reform, modernization, and sociopolitical dynamics. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) analysis reveals intricate and nuanced viewpoints on these roles among demographic categories such farmers, artisans, religious leaders, community leaders, and traditional chiefs between the ages of 30 and 70.

5.1 Traditional Roles in Land Management and Allocation

In the past, traditional rulers in the Ijesa land were given vital responsibilities in land distribution and administration. These duties were carried out through a complicated network of practices that included lineage, religious ceremonies, community discussion, and moral stewardship. Their power ensured that land was fairly distributed, conserved for future generations, and utilized in a manner that promoted community harmony.
Although modernization and legislative land changes have changed these dynamics, many community members, particularly in rural and peri-urban lands where ancestral ties to land remain strong, continue to respect and refer to traditional land governance systems. Obokun, and Oriade. One of the respondents, for example, said that the traditional procedure was one "*where the ruler, through his chiefs, identified families with unoccupied land, and consent was sought before any allocation was made" (KII R1, 63 years, Male, Traditional Ruler, Atakunmosa East)*. This suggests that authority is structured hierarchically, with lineage heads frequently holding operational control and the ruler serving as a final arbiter or caretaker.
"Traditional ruler primarily maintained peace by facilitating land sharing among families, especially when conflicts arose," said one respondent. In some instances, they *functioned more as mediators than regulators, only stepping in when lower levels of traditional authority (such compound or village chiefs) were unable to settle a conflict" (KII R3, 67 years old, male, traditional medical practitioner, Atakunmosa West).*

In addition, it was stressed that *"traditional monarchs had the power to lease, mortgage, or sell communal lands as long as they did so in consultation with elders and other appropriate traditional institutions"* (KII R2, 58 years, Male, Theologian, Atakunmosa West). This custodianship, he noted, was not solitary but communal, frequently necessitating several levels of discussion.

One of the respondents emphasized another important traditional practice, stating that *"land allocations traditionally required symbolic gestures such as offering a hen, ram, or small monetary gift to the Oba and relevant compound chiefs to show appreciation and recognize authority*" (R4, 65, Male, Clergyman, Oriade). These practices fostered community ties and transparency in a land tenure system that was not written.

A different observer said, "Traditionally, rulers were accountable for not only distribution but also ensuring sustainable and equitable use of land.″ *They oversaw how the allotted land was used and stepped in if it was left vacant or used improperly*" (KII R5, 64, Male, Traditional Ruler, Obokun). Their function in advancing environmental stewardship was also highlighted in his account.

(KII R11, 52, Female, Businesswoman) and (KII R9, 60, Male, Businessman) noted that "*the roles were shared between the king and the family units*" in several communities, most notably Ilesa East and Ilesa West. In cases of boundary determination and land inheritance, the king often had the last say, even if the family owned the property.

The respondent also described the customary practice of land distribution on an "*Isakole basis, which refers to a traditional annual tribute or rent paid by the landholder to the original landowning family or king" (KII R13, 59, Female, Trader, Ilesa East)*. This behavior supports the idea that, under traditional tenure, land is held more in trust than in ownership.

However, the traditional system was not praised by everyone without reservation. Although many respondents emphasized its fairness and communal focus, some, such Respondent 31 (KII R31, 54, Female, Civil Servant, Ilesa East), claimed that *"traditional rulers sometimes exploited their position by favoring certain families or using land to reward loyalty, thereby sowing seeds of inequality*." In the past, traditional rulers in the Ijesa land were given vital responsibilities in land distribution and administration. These duties were carried out through a complicated network of practices that included lineage, religious ceremonies, community discussion, and moral stewardship. Their power ensured that land was fairly distributed, conserved for future generations, and utilized in a manner that promoted community harmony. Although modernization and legislative land changes have changed these dynamics, many community members, particularly in rural and peri-urban lands where ancestral ties to land remain strong, continue to respect and refer to traditional land governance systems.

5.2 Evolution of Traditional Rulers' Roles with Modernization and Urbanization

In the Ijesa land, the traditional responsibilities of rulers in conflict settlement and land administration have changed significantly as a result of the forces of modernization and urbanization. Historically seen as the supreme keepers and mediators of land within their communities, these rulers have seen their traditional authority steadily diminish and their roles change due to the development of formal legal systems, legislative land reforms, increasing population pressure, and economic shifts. Respondents from many municipal government districts, including Atakunmosa East, Atakunmosa West, Ilesa East, Ilesa West, Obokun, and Oriade, agreed that the functions of traditional monarchs in land administration have changed, albeit not consistently throughout all communities. The way traditional authority is used in locations like Ilesa East and Obokun has been greatly impacted by urban development, rising land prices, and the establishment of documentation and title registration systems.

For instance, Respondent 2 observed that modernization has encouraged land grabbing and weakened the traditional ruler's unilateral authority. He explained that, "*in the past, kings had the final say in land matters, but now their influence is increasingly challenged by legal requirements, government regulations, and even the courts" (KII R2, 58, Male, Theologian/Health Technologist, Atakunmosa West*).

Also, respondent 3 echoed a similar sentiment, stating that the growth of urban settlements has encouraged opportunistic behavior, even among traditional elites, thereby compromising customary processes. In his words, "*modernization has fueled the greed behind land conflicts," making rulers' mediation roles more complicated (R3, 67, Male, Traditional Healer, Atakunmosa West)*.

Respondent 5 described a dual system where modern legal procedures now coexist with customary norms. He acknowledged that "*while his authority is still respected, his decisions must align with broader legal expectations, especially in towns where land values have escalated due to urbanization and infrastructural development*" (*KII R5, 64, Male, Traditional Ruler, Obokun*).

Some respondents observed that modernization introduced tools that helped strengthen accountability among traditional rulers. Respondent 8, for instance, noted that "*modern land transactions now involve formal agreements and documentation, which reduces ambiguity and the risk of exploitation by any party, including traditional rulers" (KII R8, 61, Male, Farmer, Oriade)*.

However, not all communities experienced the same degree of transformation. In more rural or peri-urban areas like Iperindo and Erin-Ijesa, traditional rulers reportedly retain substantial influence. Respondent 7 stated that "*traditional methods of land allocation and conflict resolution remain largely intact, as modernization has not deeply penetrated those areas*". He added that "*the king is still widely seen*

as the final arbiter in land matters, especially among older community members" (*KII R7, 60, Male, Farmer, Atakunmosa East*).

Meanwhile, in highly urbanized centers like Ilesa township, younger residents and elites increasingly rely on legal documentation and courts, often bypassing traditional rulers entirely. "*Urbanization has contributed to mistrust of traditional processes, especially where transparency and fairness are in question*" *(KII R11, 52, Female, Trader, Ilesa West).*

Another respondent also highlighted the impact of urbanization on the commercialization of land. *"Modernization has emboldened some traditional rulers to act outside customary boundaries, turning land into a political and economic commodity rather than a communal heritage*" *(R13, 59, Female, Businesswoman, Ilesa East)*

A contrasting viewpoint was provided by respondent 4 who insisted that modernization and urbanization have had minimal impact in some quarters. "*Traditional rulers continue to play the same roles as they did in the past, though now with some consultation from local government structures*" *(KII R4, 65, Male, Clergyman, Oriade).*

The transition of traditional rulers' roles in the Ijesa land as a result of modernization and urbanization has been characterized by a change from unquestioned customary authority to a more debated and hybrid position. Traditional rulers are still respected for their wisdom, cultural knowledge, and conflict resolution abilities, but they now function within a larger institutional framework that includes legislation, politics, and public accountability. Their influence over land issues has grown more symbolic and consultative in urbanized environments, but traditional norms continue to hold strong in more rural lands. In order to ensure both cultural legitimacy and legal security in land governance, this development necessitates a clearer integration of traditional and statutory systems.

5.3 Conflict Mediation and Conflict Resolution by Traditional Rulers

Using their established power, community trust, and understanding of indigenous laws and histories, traditional rulers in the Ijesa land have historically acted as mediators and peacemakers in conflicts involving land. Their role in conflict mediation is still valued and pertinent in many communities in Atakunmosa East, Atakunmosa West, Ilesa East, Ilesa West, Obokun, and Oriade, despite the erosion of some traditional powers as a result of modernization and legal reforms.

The Key Informant Interviews' respondents disclosed that traditional chiefs are essential in settling land conflicts using culturally ingrained methods that prioritize conversation, community engagement, and indigenous wisdom. Respondent 1 described how conflicts are typically brought before the Oba-in-council, where both parties are given an opportunity to state their cases. "*The council, comprising chiefs and elders, deliberates based on communal memory, land boundaries, family histories, and oral evidence" (KII R1, 63, Male, Traditional Ruler, Atakunmosa East)*.

Respondent 2 explained that conflict mediation often involves summoning the affected parties and tracing the land's history through elders and family heads. In his words, *"we don't just listen to stories; we examine how the land came into their possession." (KII R2, 58, Male, Theologian/Health Technologist, Atakunmosa West).* This process is deeply consultative and seeks reconciliation rather than punishment, thereby preserving social harmony.

The communal aspect of conflict resolution was emphasised by respondent 3, who noted that many conflicts are settled by gathering parties on a "*peace mat," where discussions occur face-to-face, guided by elders, and concluded with traditional prayers or sacrifices" (KII R3, 67, Male, Traditional Healer, Atakunmosa West)*. This approach emphasizes emotional resolution, honor, and the reintegration of parties into the community, rather than adversarial outcomes.

Respondent 11 also shared that "*the palace is often the first port of call when land conflicts arise in her area*" *(KII R11, 52, Female, Trader, Ilesa West)*. She praised the process for being culturally familiar and less intimidating than court procedures, especially for elders and women who may lack formal education or legal literacy.

Interestingly, respondent 10 highlighted that while traditional rulers still mediate conflicts, their neutrality is sometimes questioned due to alleged favoritism or external influence. *"Some rulers are perceived to lean toward influential families or individuals, which undermines confidence in the process" (KII R10, 56, Male, Artisan, Ilesa East)*.

Despite such concerns, many respondents continued to affirm the effectiveness of traditional mediation, particularly in cases involving inheritance, boundary demarcation, and overlapping land claims. Respondent 5 explained that *"traditional rulers often rely on a combination of oral testimony, site visits, and witness accounts from elders or neighboring landowners to arrive at decisions" (KII R5, 64, Male, Traditional Ruler, Obokun)*. The

emphasis is not just on ownership but on fairness, peaceful coexistence, and moral accountability.

Respondent 13 remarked that *"the traditional conflict resolution process is typically quicker and more accessible than going through formal courts, which can be slow, expensive, and disconnected from local realities" (KII R13, 59, Female, Businesswoman, Ilesa East).* However, she noted that when rulings from the palace are not accepted, parties often escalate the case to the modern legal system.

Some respondents emphasised that traditional rulers' effectiveness in conflict resolution depends on their integrity and historical knowledge. Respondent 8 stated, "*a king who knows the stories of our ancestors and is not greedy will always bring peace." (KII R8, 61, Male, Farmer, Oriade)*. Others such as respondent 6 confirmed that "*where the ruler is widely respected, their word is final, and their decisions are upheld by the community without resistance" (KII R6, 60, Male, Farmer, Obokun)*.

Nonetheless, modernization has introduced new complexities. Respondent 31 noted that *"cases involving land sales, especially those influenced by modern contracts or real estate developers, are increasingly being taken to statutory courts" (R31, 54, Female, Civil Servant, Ilesa East)*. In such cases, traditional rulers may act as witnesses or cultural interpreters rather than final arbiters.
"Kings and chiefs play a crucial role in resolving land conflicts... I trust them to make a fair and just decisions." "While some kings and chiefs are genuinely interested in resolving land conflicts, others are more interested in lining their own pockets." "Kings and chiefs need to be accountable and transparent, and they should respect everyone's right." Chiefs and Kings should be mediators, but some are biased. If they were more transparent, people would trust them more." (FGD 2, Youth, Ilesa West)

In the Ijesa land, traditional rulers are still involved in mediating land conflicts through culturally-based approaches that prioritize reconciliation, communal memory, and respect for elders. Their function remains essential, especially in rural and semi-urban lands, even if modern legal systems and changing social norms have questioned their authority. Integrating traditional mediation into the larger land governance framework, reinforcing their capabilities, and guaranteeing their impartiality may improve legitimacy and efficacy in settling land conflicts.

5.4 Existence of Customary Rules and Practices in Land Management in the Ijesa Land

Traditional norms and procedures, which predate official land legislation and written documentation, historically constitute the cornerstone of land management in the Ijesa land. These conventional systems are firmly established in communal norms, cultural history, and ancestral lineage, even if they are mostly unwritten. They continue to have an impact on land allocation and conflict resolution, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas. Key Informant Interviews conducted across the six local government areas of Ijesa land Atakunmosa East, Atakunmosa West, Ilesa East, Ilesa West, Obokun, and Oriade revealed that, despite a potential lack of documentation, traditional laws governing land use and transfer are well known and consistently upheld within families and communities. Traditional leaders, elders, and family heads, who serve as cultural repositories of land tenure history, frequently pass down these rituals orally through generations.

According to respondent 3, *"Customary rules are not written in books, but everyone born in the land knows them. They are part of our upbringing." (KII R3, 67, Male, Traditional Healer, Atakunmosa West)*. This underscores the unwritten but widely accepted norms that guide land ownership, inheritance, and transfer.

Respondent 13 described the customary practice of land tenure known as "*Isakole, where individuals or families granted land are expected to pay annual tribute usually in the form of farm produce, poultry, or small sums of money to the original land-owning family or the traditional ruler" (KII R13, 59, Female, Businesswoman, Ilesa East).* This payment is not considered rent in the modern legal sense but a token of loyalty and acknowledgment of authority.

Respondent 5 noted that the allocation of land typically followed clan and lineage structures, with each extended family having recognized boundaries known only to elders. *"Before a parcel of land is allocated or sold, it is customary for the consent of the family head and, in some cases, the ruler or Baale, to be obtained" (KII R5, 64, Male, Traditional Ruler, Obokun)*. This process is both symbolic and procedural, aimed at preventing intra-family conflicts.

In addition, Respondent 4 stated that *"traditional land allocation often involved ritual or symbolic acts such as handing over a cutlass, kola nut, or white cloth to signify transfer of land rights" (KII R4, 65, Male, Clergyman, Oriade).* These rituals served as culturally binding contracts, witnessed by community members and preserved in oral memory.

However, several respondents acknowledged the absence of documented rules as a major weakness of the customary system, particularly in the face of modernization and external land pressures. Respondent 10 remarked that "*many conflicts happen today because there are no written records. Some families come later to claim what was already given out" (KII R10, 56, Male, Artisan, Ilesa East)*

Despite this limitation, customary practices are still preferred by many residents for their perceived transparency, speed, and moral grounding. Respondent 11 shared that "*trusted customary land processes more than the modern legal system because the traditional heads are familiar with ancestral boundaries and would not allow injustice within the community" (KII R11, 52, Female, Trader, Ilesa West)*.

There were also variations in understanding and application of customary rules depending on geography and generational knowledge. In urban areas like Ilesa township, younger respondents, such as respondent 21 expressed concern that *"the erosion of customary knowledge was creating confusion, as younger family members were unfamiliar with traditional land procedures" (KII R21, Youth Leader, 37, Male, Ilesa East)*.

Interestingly, respondent 20 noted that "*customary rules were effective in earlier times but have become vulnerable to manipulation in recent years due to the rising value of land" (KII R20, Teacher, 51, Male, Atakunmosa West)*. He argued for the documentation and formal recognition of customary rules to ensure consistency and protect community rights.

In contrast, a few respondents questioned the existence or relevance of customary rules altogether. Respondent 31 stated that "*customary rules now depend on who is in charge*," suggesting that the authority of those rules is sometimes influenced by personality or political connections rather than established norms (*KII R31, 54, Female, Civil Servant, Ilesa East*).

Despite such criticisms, the consensus across most interviews is that customary rules though unwritten remain a living and functional system of land governance in the Ijesa land. They offer continuity, moral authority, and social legitimacy that formal institutions have not fully replaced. As respondent 8 aptly put it, "*our land system is like our language; even if not written, it is still spoken and understood." (KII R8, 61, Male, Farmer, Oriade)*

In the Ijesa land, there are actual and long-lasting traditional norms and procedures for managing land. These customs continue to govern property transactions, settle conflicts, and uphold community peace. Although the absence of documentation presents difficulties in today's legalistic context, the efficacy of these methods is based on their cultural legitimacy and historical ties to community life. In order to establish a land governance system that is more equitable and responsible, attempts should be made to codify important elements of traditional land law without compromising their native character.

Impact of Colonial and Post-Colonial Land Reforms on the Authority of Traditional Rulers in Land Management

Through legislative tools like the 1978 Land Use Act, colonial and post-colonial land reforms have brought about significant changes in the authority of traditional rulers over land administration in the Ijesa land. Prior to colonial intervention, land in Ijesa land was held communally and managed by a strong indigenous system in which traditional leaders and family heads regulated access, allocation, and use in accordance with customary rules. The introduction of colonial legal frameworks, and their persistence in post-independence Nigeria, however, established a central land tenure system that gradually reduced the functions of traditional rulers as guardians of ancestral land. Respondents from the six Ijesa local government districts of Atakunmosa East, Atakunmosa West, Ilesa East, Ilesa West, Obokun, and Oriade expressed a profound understanding of how these reforms have undermined traditional authority, upset community control, and caused uncertainty in land administration.

According to respondent 5, "*colonialism replaced the spiritual and communal understanding of land with bureaucratic and individualistic models*". He emphasised that traditional rulers once had "*total moral and spiritual control over land, but now their authority is mostly ceremonial because the government, through legal reforms, has taken over legal control*" *(KII R5, 64, Male, Traditional Ruler, Obokun).*

Similarly, respondent 2 pointed to the introduction of government land registries and courts as a turning point. He noted that "*even though traditional rulers are still consulted in some land matters, their decisions can be easily overturned by court rulings, thereby reducing their power and relevance" (R2, 58, Male, Theologian/Health Technologist, Atakunmosa West)*.

One of the most cited reforms was the Land Use Act of 1978. Several respondents explained that the Act centralized all land ownership in the hands of the state governor, thereby stripping traditional

institutions of legal ownership or authority over land. Respondent 13 expressed concern that "*this reform disrupted the historical connection between land and lineage, allowing external actors and political elites to intervene in local land affairs without due regard for tradition*" *(KII R13, 59, Female, Businesswoman, Ilesa East)*.

Respondent 4 described the reform as "*colonial inheritance passed to Nigerian leaders*," arguing that post-independence governments merely replaced colonial authorities without restoring land control to its traditional custodians. He stressed that these legal changes have opened the door to abuse and exploitation by people who lack historical or spiritual ties to the land *(KII R4, 65, Male, Clergyman, Oriade)*.

On the other hand, a few respondents acknowledged that while the reforms weakened traditional power, they were introduced to reduce land conflicts and promote standardized land transactions. Respondent 10 noted that "*the formalization of land ownership through legal titles reduced fraudulent claims and made land more secure for development and investment*". However, he also conceded that these benefits mostly favor the educated elite and often exclude grassroots community members *(KII R10, 56, Male, Artisan, Ilesa East)*.

Respondent 31 also expressed that land reforms were necessary to curtail the unchecked powers of some traditional rulers, especially those who began to treat communal land as private property for personal enrichment. She stated, "*before the Land Use Act, some Obas were selling land indiscriminately and creating confusion*." *(KII R31, 54, Female, Civil Servant, Ilesa East)*

Nevertheless, most traditional leaders and community elders viewed the impact of reforms as largely negative. Respondent 3 explained that the reforms undermined the moral and ancestral foundations of land management, creating a disconnect between community identity and land rights. He lamented that "*we now have strangers allocating what they don't understand." (KII R3, 67, Male, Traditional Healer, Atakunmosa West)*

A nuanced perspective was provided by respondent 8, who advocated for a hybrid model that blends customary law with statutory recognition. He proposed that "*the government should legally recognize the roles of traditional rulers in land allocation and conflict resolution, while also establishing regulatory frameworks to prevent abuse*" (*KII R8, 61, Male, Farmer, Oriade*).

In rural communities where formal land reforms are not effectively enforced, traditional rulers still wield considerable influence. Respondent 7 shared that in such areas, "*the king's decision on land is final, and land allocation continues to follow customary norms regardless of formal legal statutes"*. However, this influence is fragile and may not withstand external pressures, especially from government agencies or private investors with legal backing *(KII R7, 60, Male, Farmer, Atakunmosa East).*

In the Ijesa land, land reforms under colonial and post-colonial rule have had a significant impact on the power of traditional monarchs in land management. These reforms shifted land ownership from a spiritual and communal approach to a centralized, state-controlled one. Although the goal may have been to regulate and standardize land administration, the outcome has frequently been the erosion of communal identity related to land and the marginalization of indigenous institutions. Future reforms to policy and constitutional recognition might integrate traditional roles into the official legal structure, thereby reestablishing balance, improving accountability, and safeguarding cultural integrity in land governance.

Research Question 2: What are the causes and consequences of land conflicts in the Ijesa land of Osun State?

The Ijesa land is seeing a rise in land conflicts as a result of a combination of historical, socioeconomic, legislative, and political causes. Using information provided by important informants from the six local government lands of Atakunmosa East, Atakunmosa West, Ilesa East, Ilesa West, Obokun, and Oriade including traditional rulers, chiefs, farmers, clergy, artisans, youth leaders, traders, and community elder this chapter examines the underlying causes and far-reaching effects of land conflicts, as well as the people involved in either resolving or making them worse.

5.5 Main Causes of Land Conflicts in the Ijesa Land

A complex mix of traditional customs, socioeconomic strains, and institutional shortcomings are the main causes of land conflicts in the Ijesa territory. In the past, land was managed communally under the supervision of family heads and traditional rulers, with boundaries defined by natural landmarks and local agreements. However, the once-stable customary system has become a source of conflict and conflict as the worth of land has risen as a result of urbanization, population expansion, and market demands.

Conflicts over intra-family inheritance, according to the respondents, are one of the most common reasons for land conflicts. Disagreements over who

has the legal right to own or manage inherited land are common in many extended family or polygamous family arrangements. Respondent 3 explained that "*conflicts typically begin when one family member sells a piece of family land without consulting the others" (KII R3, 67, Male, Traditional Healer, Atakunmosa West)*. This action often results in open disagreement, legal tussles, or even violent confrontations, particularly when the other members discover the transaction after the land has changed hands.

Another frequently cited issue is the lack of proper land documentation and boundary clarity. Respondent 2 emphasised that "*many people in the land still rely on oral agreements and ancestral memory to determine land boundaries*" *(KII R2, 58, Male, Theologian/Health Technologist, Atakunmosa West)*. This informal method, while once sufficient, has become unreliable in a context where land is increasingly seen as a valuable commodity. Conflicts now arise over overlapping claims, with different parties providing conflicting accounts of ownership based on oral history.
"Conflicts around land are often caused by greed and selfishness. Some individuals and even traditional rulers are willing to do whatever it takes to acquire, even if it means displacing communities or ignoring traditional rights." "Some families sell the same land multiple times to different buyers." "Conflicts around land are also caused by corruption and poor governance. When officials are bribed or have personal interests in land deals, it can lead to unfair and unjust outcomes." (FGD 2, Youths, Ilesa West)

The economic transformation of land into a source of wealth and investment has further exacerbated tensions. Respondent 8 observed that "*the commodification of land has awakened interest from people who never previously claimed ownership*". With land prices reaching unprecedented levels, even distant relatives now assert dubious claims to parcels of land that were left fallow or unused for decades *(KII R8, 61, Male, Farmer, Oriade)*

Commercialization has also encouraged land speculation and fraudulent transactions. As respondent 11 noted, "*cases abound where a single plot is sold multiple times by different individuals, each claiming to be the rightful owner" (KII R11, 52, Female, Trader, Ilesa West).* These multiple sales often lead to physical confrontations and litigation, undermining trust within communities.

Boundary conflicts between families, and sometimes between entire communities, are also common. Respondent 7 recounted "*cases where traditional boundaries have been forgotten or distorted, resulting in violent clashes when farming or building activities encroach on conflictd land" (KII R7, 60, Male, Farmer, Atakunmosa East).*

Compounding these issues is the increasing breakdown of traditional structures and disregard for the authority of family heads or community elders. Respondent 31 noted that *"younger generations often bypass elders and traditional rulers, opting instead to deal directly with lawyers or real estate agents" (KII R31, 54, Female, Civil Servant, Ilesa East)*. This shift has not only created confusion but has also eroded communal oversight and respect for customary land allocation processes.

Migration and demographic changes have also intensified competition for land. Respondent 10 explained that "*as outsiders move into Ijesa towns seeking land for residence or business, tensions rise between indigenous families and newcomers" (KII R10, 56, Male, Artisan, Ilesa East).* This competition often leads to contestations, particularly when settlers claim land that locals believe to be under customary ownership.

External interference from government agencies and politically connected individuals has contributed significantly to the problem. Respondent 29 pointed out that *"land is sometimes reallocated by government officials without consulting the traditional authorities or rightful customary owners" (KII R29, 40, Male, Artisan, Oriade)*. Such decisions, especially when enforced with state backing, can create deep resentment and long-standing legal conflicts.

The primary factors contributing to land conflicts in the Ijesa territory are deeply ingrained in shifting family dynamics, economic avarice, legal uncertainty, and the erosion of traditional institutions. The stakes have changed and the conflict has grown more intense as a result of the transition of land from a community resource to a commercial item. Land conflicts are likely to continue and put more pressure on the social structure of communities in the land without clear documentation, inclusive decision-making, and greater coordination between the statutory and traditional systems.

5.6 Economic Factors and Rising Land Value as Drivers of Land Conflicts

The rising monetary value of land and economic transformation have become key factors exacerbating land conflicts in the Ijesa territory. Land in the area has historically been valued for its subsistence utility, which was mainly utilized for agriculture, the construction of family complexes, or the performance of religious and ancestral rituals. However, as real estate markets grow and cities

become more urbanized, land has gone from being a shared resource to a valuable economic commodity. This change has increased rivalry, generated new conflicts, and exacerbated old resentments, particularly within families and between communities.

The economic redefinition of land that causes disagreements was made plain by several participants in the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). Respondent 8 observed that *"once land began to fetch money, everybody wanted to claim it even those who had never worked or farmed on it." (KII R8, 61, Male, Farmer, Oriade)*. His comment captures a widespread concern that land is increasingly viewed as a commodity to be exploited for personal gain rather than as a shared heritage managed by lineage heads or traditional authorities.

Several informants linked rising land value to greed, dishonesty, and fraudulent land sales. Respondent 11 explained that "*the prospect of making quick money leads individuals to sell family land without consensus*". In many cases, "*a single parcel is sold to multiple buyers, or land is sold secretly, only for the rest of the family to discover it too late*" *(KII R11, 52, Female, Trader, Ilesa West)*. Such unauthorized sales, motivated by financial desperation or opportunism, often ignite protracted conflicts within and between families.

This trend was also emphasised by respondent 13, who noted that "*greedy siblings now act as land agents within their families," cutting out other relatives and triggering hostility*" *(KII R13, 59, Female, Businesswoman, Ilesa East) "I think conflicts around land are also caused by a lack of clear policies and regulations." (FGD2, Youths)*. In the past, decisions around land allocation or sales were made collectively or through family heads, but the growing financial appeal has undermined that process.

The influx of private developers and land speculators has also contributed to escalating tensions. As communities around Ilesa and other urbanizing parts of Ijesaland attract real estate investors, traditional communal lands are being sold off often without the informed consent of the original owners or the broader community. Respondent 6 lamented *that "farmers are being pushed out by people who don't even live here,"* describing how long-held farmlands are now being fenced off for construction by outsiders *(KII R6, 60, Male, Farmer, Obokun).*

Another respondent, Respondent 31, stressed that the monetary allure of land has led to "*a rush to sell, claim, and re-sell*" plots sometimes by unqualified or unscrupulous individuals, including lower-level traditional functionaries *(KII R31, 54, Female, Civil Servant, Ilesa East)*. She explained that even some community members who formerly respected lineage-based land ownership are now questioning ancestral rights if they see an opportunity to profit.

The issue is not just individual but also institutional. Respondent 3 warned that "*some traditional rulers or chiefs, driven by economic pressure or greed, have been implicated in questionable land sales" (KII R3, 67, Male, Traditional Healer, Atakunmosa West)*. In such cases, the economic value of land overrides customary caution, resulting in overlapping claims and erosion of trust in traditional authorities.

Respondent 10 added that land conflict is now common even among close relatives. *"Everyone now sees land as their pension. They don't care if it divides the family,"* he said, reflecting how the commodification of land disrupts family unity and traditional landholding values *(KII R10, 56, Male, Artisan, Ilesa East)*.

The rapid rise in land value, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas of the Ijesa land, has drastically altered how land is viewed, utilized, and contested. A context in which land grabbing, intra-family betrayal, and dishonest transactions flourish has been created by the desire for profit, combined with inadequate documentation and ineffective enforcement procedures. Economic development and urban growth have brought prospects, but they have also turned land from a shared inheritance into a commodity, leading to novel patterns of conflict. According to responses from all across the Ijesa communities, the growing value of land is not just fostering conflict but also eroding trust, displacing traditional authority, and endangering social harmony. To balance economic growth with fairness, accountability, and peace, land commodification must be approached in a more regulated and culturally sensitive manner.

5.7 Role of Government Agencies and Private Investors in Land Conflicts

The dynamics of land conflicts in the Ijesa land have been heavily influenced by the participation of government organizations and private investors in land governance. These performers have frequently been viewed as intrusive, politicized, or exploitative, even though they are meant to give structure, uphold the law, and promote growth. In many cases, government officials and private investors have exacerbated land conflicts by ignoring conventional channels, disregarding established procedures, or supporting influential interests to the detriment of marginalized community members, rather than acting as impartial regulators.

Respondent 7 voiced deep frustration with government agencies, accusing them of allocating land without consulting indigenous owners. He recalled instances where *"bulldozers and security personnel arrived to demolish farms,"* claiming legal backing from state land allocations, yet ignoring the voices of those who had cultivated the land for generations *(KII R7, 60, Male, Farmer, Atakunmosa East).*

Similarly, respondent 4 explained that private investors often exploit legal ambiguities by sidestepping customary protocols. According to him, "*these investors negotiate directly with politicians or officials, rather than community leaders, thereby triggering community backlash when landowners discover that their ancestral land has been sold or taken" (KII R4, 65, Male, Clergyman, Oriade)*.

Several respondents pointed to political interference and elite capture of land processes. Respondent 29 stated that "*politicians use their power to allocate land to their allies," even when the land has historical ties to local families"*. He noted that such actions not only breed resentment but also destabilize the legitimacy of both government institutions and traditional structures *(KII R29, 40, Male, Artisan, Oriade)*.

Respondent 19 highlighted how the promise of development such as "*the construction of roads, estates, or markets often leads to the displacement of local farmers without adequate compensation or community dialogue*" (*KII R19, 51, Female, Farmer, Atakunmosa West*). She stressed that while development is necessary, its implementation should respect community interests and traditional authorities.

On the other hand, a few respondents offered a more nuanced view. Respondent 10 acknowledged that "*government regulation and private investment can help streamline land administration and reduce chaos, especially in urban areas" (KII R10, 56, Male, Artisan, Ilesa East)*. However, he insisted that these benefits are often undermined by corruption, favoritism, and lack of transparency.

Respondent 31 also noted that "*while government authorities are supposed to help regulate and formalize land ownership, they sometimes complicate matters by issuing certificates of occupancy (C of O) to people with no historical claim to the land*" *(KII R31, 54, Female, Civil Servant, Ilesa East)*. These official documents, when issued in disregard of customary claims, tend to override traditional decisions, leading to prolonged legal conflicts.

Respondent 5 emphasised the marginalization of traditional rulers in land governance. He lamented that local chiefs are now "treated as figureheads," consulted only after major land decisions have been made *(KII R5, 64, Male, Traditional Ruler, Obokun)*. This not only reduces their relevance but also makes conflict resolution more difficult when they are brought in after the damage is done.

Respondents also pointed out that private investors sometimes intentionally create confusion by negotiating with multiple parties, especially when there is no centralized or codified ownership structure. Respondent 13 remarked that land speculators often "*play families against each other*," exploiting intra-family tensions to acquire land cheaply and quickly (KII R13, 59, Female, Businesswoman, Ilesa East).

In rural communities, displacement without resettlement or compensation was a recurring theme. Respondent 6 recounted how several farmers lost their land to "*projects that never materialized," yet the government has done little to restore their livelihoods or offer alternatives (KII R6, 60, Male, Farmer, Obokun)*.

Despite these challenges, some respondents, including respondent 11, recognized the potential of collaboration between government and traditional institutions if proper frameworks are put in place. "*Community consultations and stakeholder forums be made mandatory before any land project is approved" (KII R11, 52, Female, Trader, Ilesa West).*

Land conflicts in the Ijesa land are influenced in a double-edged way by the involvement of government organizations and private investors. Although these actors have the resources and capacity to formalize and advance land systems, their actions, which are frequently marred by corruption, insensitivity, and exclusion, have made a major contribution to conflicts over land. The respondents favor a more inclusive, open, and culturally sensitive strategy in which traditional authorities are not just consulted but also given the power to co-manage community land. In the absence of such collaboration, government and private sector actions are likely to continue to spark conflicts and erode social harmony in the country.

5.8 Social and Economic Consequences of Land Conflicts on Local Communities

Land conflicts in the Ijesa land have far-reaching social and economic repercussions that have a significant impact on community stability, development, and livelihoods. Land, which was previously a source of shared identity, inheritance,

and economic survival, has now turned into a source of conflict that breaks up families, weakens communal trust, and hinders socioeconomic advancement.

Interpersonally, land conflicts have weakened family harmony and intergenerational ties. Conflicts frequently occur between siblings, cousins, or in-laws, typically over the illegal sale or distribution of inherited property. Respondent 3 lamented that land conflicts "turn brothers into enemies" and have led to "*lifelong grudges and spiritual disconnection*" within extended families *(KII R3, 67, Male, Traditional Healer, Atakunmosa West).* As land is increasingly seen as an economic asset rather than a shared heritage, mutual trust among family members is eroded, and long-established lines of authority within families are challenged or disregarded.

Respondent 13 shared similar experiences, explaining how families become fractured when one member sells land without the knowledge or consent of others. She emphasised that "*this betrayal often results in permanent rifts, legal conflicts, and even physical altercations, which ripple across generations*" *(KII R13, 59, Female, Businesswoman, Ilesa East).*

At the community level, the breakdown in trust and increased suspicion have weakened social ties. Respondent 5 noted that "*land conflicts reduce the effectiveness of traditional authorities and community elders, who are often accused of bias or corruption*". In such situations, "*the palace once seen as a place of refuge and justice is viewed with skepticism, leading to reduced communal harmony and respect for customs*" *(KII R5, 64, Male, Traditional Ruler, Obokun)*.

On the economic front, the consequences are equally devastating. Land serves as the primary economic asset for farming, building, and inheritance in the Ijesa land. When conflicts arise, these activities are disrupted, sometimes for years. Respondent 10 highlighted how families lose income when they are unable to farm conflicted land or are forcefully evicted by court injunctions or rival claimants. He noted that in many instances, "*families exhaust their savings pursuing legal redress, often without resolution" (KII R10, 56, Male, Artisan, Ilesa East).*

For many households, land conflicts translate into increased financial burdens. Respondent 31 (KII R31, 54, Female, Civil Servant, Ilesa East) explained that "*land-related court cases demand legal fees, transportation costs, and even bribes, placing a strain on families who may already be economically vulnerable*". She added that *"women, especially widows and single mothers, are disproportionately affected, as they are frequently sidelined or cheated during inheritance distribution and land conflicts"* (*KII R31, 54, Female, Civil Servant, Ilesa East*).

Respondent 19 emphasised that land conflicts threaten food security, particularly when productive farmlands are left unused or when community members are too afraid to access land due to threats or ongoing legal conflicts. She noted that such "disruptions reduce food supply, drive up local prices, and push younger people to migrate in search of alternative livelihoods" (*KII R19, 51, Female, Farmer, Atakunmosa West).*

Furthermore, land conflicts can undermine local development and deter external investment. Respondent 11shared that "*investors often pull out of land deals when they sense unresolved ownership issues or local tension*" *(KII R11, 52, Female, Trader, Ilesa West)*. This hampers infrastructural projects, commercial expansion, and employment opportunities within the land.

Respondent 6 also pointed to economic displacement, stating "*that families who lose land to conflict are often forced to relocate to urban slums or become dependent on others" (KII R6, 60, Male, Farmer, Obokun).* This not only affects individual dignity but also increases social pressure on already struggling relatives or local welfare systems.

Families and communities in the Ijesa territory bear significant social and economic expenses due to land conflicts. They hinder agricultural output, discourage investment, destroy family ties, undermine traditional trust and governance structures, and exacerbate societal instability. These repercussions are closely connected, and sometimes they feed into one another. For example, a damaged livelihood can make social tensions worse, while a weak social infrastructure can prolong conflict. The combined insights from respondents highlight the critical need for comprehensive reforms that integrate legal recognition of traditional rights, enhance transparency and documentation, and reestablish community-based conflict resolution frameworks rooted in fairness, inclusion, and cultural integrity.

5.9 Impact of Land Conflicts on the Relationship Between Traditional Rulers and their Subjects

Traditionally, the Ijesa land has revered the institution of traditional rulership, with monarchs and chiefs playing crucial roles in land allocation, conflict resolution, and community leadership. Nonetheless, the increasing frequency of land conflicts has put a strain on this connection by eroding confidence, eroding power, and making the role of traditional monarchs as impartial protectors of land more difficult. The perception of bias or

corruption among traditional chiefs, especially in matters of land distribution and conflict resolution, is a recurring topic in the interviews. Many members of the community think that certain leaders have broken with tradition by selling land unlawfully or by siding with affluent elites and outsiders at the expense of regular families.

Respondent 2 captured this concern succinctly: "*The people no longer see our kings as fathers to all they now see them as businessmen who sell land for their own benefit "(KII R2, 58, Male, Theologian/Health Technologist, Atakunmosa West).* His comment reflects growing cynicism, especially where traditional rulers are accused of secretly allocating communal or family lands without consultation or equitable distribution.

Similarly, Respondent 11 observed that "*once a land case enters the palace, the outcome is often determined by who can offer the bigger gift*." (*KII R11, 52, Female, Trader, Ilesa West)*. This perception of partiality undermines the traditional ruler's role as a trusted mediator and drives disputants toward litigation or violence, rather than local conciliation.

For some, the perceived commercialization of land by traditional rulers has transformed the palace from a center of cultural stewardship into an administrative hub of land speculation. Respondent 29 (KII R29, 40, Male, Artisan, Oriade) noted that "*some monarchs now act like land agents, prioritizing profit over peace"*. This shift has made it difficult for the community to accept their rulings, especially when conflicts involve relatives of palace officials or land that was previously communally owned.

Respondent 8 (KII R8, 61, Male, Farmer, Oriade) acknowledged that the involvement of some rulers in land transactions has diluted their moral authority. "*People now challenge the king in open meetings," he said, adding that such public dissent was rare in the past"*. This open defiance signals a breakdown in the traditional structure that once guaranteed order, respect, and peaceful conflict resolution.

However, not all traditional rulers are perceived negatively. Respondent 7 *(R7, 60, Male, Farmer, Atakunmosa East)* emphasised that traditional rulers who uphold fairness, avoid personal enrichment, and involve community stakeholders in land decisions still enjoy respect and support. He stated, "*If the ruler follows the customs and treats everyone equally, the people will protect his name even in times of conflict*." This view suggests that the erosion of trust is not universal but linked to the conduct and accountability of individual rulers.

Several respondents, including respondent 31 (KII R31, 54, Female, Civil Servant, Ilesa East), expressed disappointment that the traditional leadership no longer holds the same moral weight or spiritual authority it once did. She pointed out that in many cases, "*community members bypass the palace and head straight to the police or courts because they no longer believe in the impartiality of traditional channels*".

This loss of faith in traditional rulers has broader implications for communal cohesion. When monarchs are perceived as compromised, they become less effective in mediating not just land conflicts, but other social matters as well. Respondent 5 *(KII R5, 64, Male, Traditional Ruler, Obokun)* acknowledged this challenge, noting that some rulers are caught between cultural expectations and modern economic pressures. "*People expect us to protect the land, but they also pressure us for money and influence," he said, highlighting the difficult balancing act faced by today's traditional leaders*.

In some cases, the tension has resulted in outright protests and petitions against traditional authorities. Respondent 13 *(KII R13, 59, Female, Businesswoman, Ilesa East)* cited a case where "*community members demanded the dethronement of a chief accused of selling communal land to outsiders*". Such actions were previously unthinkable but are becoming more common as communities seek greater transparency and accountability.

6. Discussion

Results showed some of the major historical role of traditional rulers to include land custodianship and land allocation, mediators in conflicts, while the historical roles of traditional rulers as we know it have evolved due to modernization and changes that have happened over the years. Thus, there seems to be challenges in trusting the decisions and intentions of traditional rulers in discharging their duties, while the enactment of land laws after the colonial rule has also affected the roles of traditional rulers.

This result is consistent with that of Hassan, [26] who discovered that the legal systems of colonial and post-colonial legal systems sporadically eroded traditional land governance in many African countries, especially Nigeria and Ghana. In the same vein, Oomen [27] found an overlapping between traditional institutions and statutory laws, thereby leading to low level of trust in the authorities of traditional rulers. The perception of trust erosion is further worsened by the perception that traditional rulers decide and operates to favour their personal interests above collective benefits.

Conversely to this result, Logan [28] opined that traditional rulers in many African communities still command respect. This is especially so where the institutions of state and government are weak. Differences in the result in this regard may be due to the peculiarity of locations (i.e., urban and rural locations), exposure to modern law and power relations in different contexts and locality.

Results further showed that the greed of individuals, including the traditional rulers, contributes to the causes of land conflicts among the respondents. Ambiguity in land boundaries, increase in the value of land, external individuals and systems such as political figures and wealthy individuals contribute to the causes of land conflicts in the study area. This result is consistent with that of Alden Wily [29] found that commercialization of land and capture by elites as potent factors leading to land conflict in African communities. The study of Chigbu [30] found that traditional rulers in many communities have shifted their focus from being custodians of the communities to economic actors, leading to land conflicts. These findings suggest that the more the commodification of lands, the more the traditional norms regulating land allocation are undermined.

Also, some of the consequences of such conflicts include economic and social instability, lack and reduction of trust in traditional rulers and authorities. This result is in line with the findings of Boone [31] claimed that land conflicts usually lead to displacement, livelihood destruction and distrust. Such negative consequences arise from lack of transparency and favouritism perceived by community members in the way traditional rulers handle land issues.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study revealed that historically, traditional rulers were regarded as the custodians of land and mediators in communal and other conflicts, especially in relation to and matters. Their influence has however declined as a result of rise in statutory laws, modern structures of governance and distrust from community members. Also, land conflicts are fueled by greed, ambiguities in boundaries, economic values of land and interference from political and wealthy elites, leading to consequences such as economic instability, social conflict and unrest and lack of trust in traditional authorities. Therefore, the following recommendation are raised.

Traditional rulers should institutionalize community-based land governance councils that include youth, women, family heads, and elders. These councils should oversee land allocation, documentation, and conflict resolution to ensure transparency and inclusive participation in decision-making processes.

The government, in collaboration with customary institutions, should develop legal guidelines that clearly define the role, limits, and responsibilities of traditional rulers in land governance. There must also be sanctions and enforcement mechanisms for misuse of authority, including legal prosecution or deposition in cases of misconduct or land grabbing.

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Benin-Urhobo Relations Under Colonial Rule: Genesis of Conflicts over Land Resources and Use

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Abstract. This study focuses on Benin-Urhobo relations under colonial rule. Both groups have had long periods of contact with mutual benefits. However, British colonial rule adversely altered that cordial relationship and incorporated them into the world market over which they had no control. This paper aims to show how the Binis and Urhobos responded to the opportunities and crises generated by internal development challenges and by external political and economic forces, stimulated by British colonial rule in the general area. The paper depended on primary and secondary sources. It deploys the historical method of descriptive analysis to address the subject. The findings indicate that the struggle over access to and control of forest and water resources, and their use, engendered conflict in Benin-Urhobo relations during the colonial dispensation and was followed by steps taken by the colonial government to reduce the power and influence of the Benin Oba over the Urhobo group. Underneath this was the British determination to ensure free trade between the Urhobo and the European trading firms. It concludes that the struggle over land resources occasioned by the colonial policy had far-reaching implications on their relationship under colonial rule and beyond.

Keywords: Benin-Urhobo, Inter-Group Relations; Colonial Dispensation, Resources Use, Free Trade, The Genesis of Crisis.

1. Introduction

One of the areas in which European imperialism in Africa had a far-reaching impact was the local economies of the character territories. The first step in this direction was evident in the deliberate characterized and reorientation of the traditional economic systems of various character African societies towards serving the interests and profit needs of European capitalist enterprises. To sustain these developments, European capitalists constantly pressured local people, gradually altering the nature of traditional social relations.

As Nwauwa (2000, pp. 15-30) has observed, it manifested in their attitudes towards resources and people. In this case, the Europeans placed much greater value on resources and their use than the character peoples, who were merely used to exploit them. The changes resulting from European imperialism in Africa not only affected social relations within various Nigerian groups and elsewhere but also led to the development of a new consciousness, which created struggles among groups (Opone, 2013, pp. 154-168). That further led to ethnic conflict, which continued even in the post-colonial period (Folami, 2017)). That development has made the task of nation-building and national integration in Nigeria difficult. The Bini and Urhobo ethnic nationalities were victims of this development, as this paper will show in due course, beginning from 1897 when the British imperial forces conquered the Benin kingdom to 1953, with significant implications on Benin's traditional political power over its neighbours, including the Urhobo, which was characterized by changing relationship patterns between the Benin kingdom and the Urhobo group. The Bini and Urhobo peoples struggled to maintain their African identities within British international economic politics (Abumere, 2022). As with some other groups, these changes were a direct product of the ambitious European imperial project in Africa.

1.1 Land and the people

Benin and Urhobo ethnic nationalities are part of the larger Edo-speaking community in the Western Niger Delta of Nigeria. East of the Benin River, west of the Niger River, and north of Warri are the territories of the Binis and Urhobo, commonly known as Issobos or Sobos. The Niger Delta in Nigeria is recognised as one of the areas in the world with the largest crude oil reserve, and the Urhobo people live in the southern portion of the Benin lowlands. The Urhobo region is distinguished by its evergreen forests and profusion of palm trees. The produce, which requires specialised technology for harvesting, is the foundation of their economy. During British colonial rule, Urhobo's unique technology for using palm trees to produce oil and kernels for local consumption and coastal trade with Europeans fostered interactions between the two groups. Benin and Urhobo are the two main ethnic groups in the administrative regions of Edo and Delta States, respectively, and they share a common boundary.

The Binis established a great kingdom and later an empire that covered their neighbours, including the Urhobo. As a result, the Benin kingdom exerted heavy influence over the Urhobo. The Binis and Urhobos are heterogeneous peoples and claim a common origin. Their socio-political organisations are based on cultural units. A report from the Intelligence Division of the British War Office in England (Darwin, 1890) described the Urhobo as a shy and timid race, given to agriculture rather than trade and being more or less under the suzerainty of the king of Benin. Moloney (1890: pp. 596 - 614) further described them as industrious agricultural and oil manufacturers, and their language as having a strong affinity with the Benin language in many ways. That suggests how closely the Bini and the Urhobo have been culturally from the beginning.

Results

Apart from the examined intelligence and annual reports, the data from field respondents consistently indicate that colonial rule played a significant role in transforming traditional interactions between Benin and the Urhobo people. That helped the Urhobo people undermine the power that the Benin monarchy had previously used to rule over them. The British colonial authority wanted total control over domestic and international trade. Therefore, it took this action. The following debate demonstrates how the Benin kingdom never fully recovered from it.

1.2 Relations before colonial rule

The relationship between Benin and the Urhobo was cordial, at least until the eve of the British conquest of Benin in 1897. That period was characterised by constant cross-migration between the two peoples, with occasional conflict with some Urhobo clans over political sovereignty and increasing economic interdependence for mutual benefits. Such relationships were also beneficial, as Benin and the Urhobo had much to trade for each other. Apart from trade and social contacts, such as inter-group marriages, cultural transfer via exchanged products promoted their relationships. One such was pepper soup, known in Benin as *Ehien*-Urhobo, meaning Urhobo soup. This soup was popular among the Binis.

Besides, the Benin Oba (king) was a trendy figure among the Urhobo before the coming of the Europeans. Benin was an empire based on military might, subjugating many neighbouring groups, including the Urhobo, through military or cultural means. At any rate, the Benin kingdom and later empire were famous, much of the fame deriving from its kings' political sagacity and military prowess. The Urhobo group developed origin stories linking their dynasties to the Benin Kingdom to avoid conquest and align with its prestige. For example, Salubi (1958, pp. 67-85; 2008, p. 248) noted that the Urhobo had always known and spoken of two *Akpor.* The first and only recognised by them before the advent of colonial rule was *Akpo r' Oba*, meaning the era of Oba (referring to the regime of Oba of Benin). The second, distinct from the first and which ousted the first was *Akpo r" Oyinbo*, meaning the era of white men, thus making the era of Oba sovereignty an epochal magnitude of the world view of the Urhobo. In the Urhobo-dominated settlements along the Benin borders, later known as Jesse district following the colonial administrative reorganisation, the people even invited Benin chiefs to settle disputes.

Some Urhobo chiefs held Benin titles such as Ezomo, Iyase, and others, purchased from the Benin, and their installations were usually approved by the Oba of Benin (Oseghe, 2012, p. 16). All these indicate Benin's control over the Urhobo people. It is important to emphasise that before the advent of British colonial rule in Nigeria and particularly the fall of Benin to

British imperial forces, "the entire Urhobo land was under Benin rule" (Edebiri, 2017, Personal communication). Some of them came under Benin's influence through military conquest, and others willingly accepted Benin's political dominance because of the prestige and security it offered.

One way to show their loyalty to the Oba of Benin was that all Urhobo chiefdoms and kingdoms paid annual tributes to recognise his authority. They made these tribute payments to maintain their connection with the Oba. Moreover, it is mentioned that upon the death of an Urhobo Ovie (Urhobo ruler), their crown was sent to the Oba of Benin, indicating its origin. During the installation of a new Ovie, the heir apparent (as a custom) was made to identify the skull of his ancestor before the Oba in Benin (Eweka, 1992, 46). This practice lasted until the colonial period. Historical evidence indicates that the Oba of Benin had been receiving the head of the deceased Ovie, leader of Uvwie (Effurun), up to 1934 (Ikime, 1977, p. 35). Furthermore, it is mentioned that before the Oba of Benin confirmed his title, the Oharisi, also known as the Ovie of Ughelli, used to visit Benin for a certain period (Idapho, 2021, personal communication). In 1953, the Orogje of Okpe (Okpe Urhobo in Urhobo Western Division) obtained a traditional ceremonial sword from the Oba of Benin in just the same way as the Ovie of Oghara did during the same period.

However, imperial sources indicate that Europeans on the coast or elsewhere knew little about the Urhobo until the colonial period. For instance, Moloney (1890, pp.596-614), then as Governor of Lagos, told a London audience what at best was hearsay that in addition to the Binis, Jakrymen (referring to the Itsekiris), and Ijohs, much was heard in these parts of the Issobos who were described as people tributary (they have been so for generations) to Benin. However, all these gradually changed with the advent of colonial rule. British military and political officials made a concerted effort to weaken the Benin Oba despite their awareness of the Oba's significance. The intention was to loosen his political grip on the Urhobo to create free trade to the advantage of the British colonial government. By so doing, as will be revealed subsequently in this paper, they altered the pattern of Benin-Urhobo pre-colonial relations.

1.3 Urhobo Migrations into the Benin Land during the Colonial Period

The British imperial forces' invasion of Benin in 1897 resulted in its conquest and colonisation. The deposition of the Benin monarch, Oba Ovoramwen, followed this. The subsequent exile of Oba Ovoramwen to Calabar was primarily motivated by British fear of the Oba's ideological influence, which was believed capable of undermining colonial administration across the whole area, including Urhobo land (Aviomor, 2023, personal communication). As a strategy to reduce the influence of the Oba and Benin on the Urhobo, the British went to the ridiculous extent of taking Oba Ovoramwen in chains to Sapele and invited Urhobos to view him (Granville, Roth & Roth, 1899). The criminal-like exposition of the Oba of Benin to the Urhobo by the colonial political officers was a slap in the face of the hitherto respected and highly revered monarch and the kingdom.

It will be recalled that before the fall of the Benin kingdom to the British in 1897, the Oba of Benin was sacred and highly revered not only by the Binis but also by all the subject peoples, vassal kingdoms, and chiefdoms, including the Urhobo (Idjakpor, 2023, Personal communication). To some extent, many subject peoples saw the Oba as a mystery because of his enormous political and ritual powers. Therefore, the last ridiculous act by the British against the Oba of Benin was to demystify what they (the Urhobo) considered as his *juju*(supernatural) power and made them realise that, after all, the so much dreaded Oba was a human being like they (Urhobo) are and powerless in the face of colonial rule. As a result, the Urhobo became more assertive, and over time, they developed a new consciousness of independence and a struggle with the Binis over land. That was to be achieved through migrations to Benin to tap available resources and trade directly with Europeans, without the usual fear, tributes, and control by the Oba.

To the British political officers in Benin, the exiling of the Oba Ovoramwen and the earlier deposition of Nana Olomu of Itsekiri finally removed the last obstacles to the free flow of European trade with the Urhobo people, who had been brought under British rule without difficulty. It also freed some of them (Europeans and the Urhobos) from tributary obligations and payment of rents to the Oba. Since the British were more concerned with expanding trade, they encouraged people outside Benin to move in, settle, trade, and

exploit the area's natural resources for British interests. In some instances, they invited groups like the Itsekiri, who were already in control of trade in the area, to move in and settle along the inland rivers, such as the Siluko, to trade. In particular, the British initially encouraged the Urhobo migrants to collect oil palm products, for which they were specialists, and later to farm on a taungya basis on Benin land (National Archives, 1905).

The Urhobos and Itsekiris exploited their mastery of the waterways to establish a monopoly over waterborne trade and palm oil production in the Benin Division, much to the detriment of the Benin intermediaries and the kingdom. That is attested to by the annual report of the Benin Division for the year ending 31/12/1921. According to it, "in Benin division, trade is almost entirely in the hands of Jekris (Itsekiri) and Sobos (Urhobos) who live alongside the waterways (National Archives, 1921). This monopoly against Benin's interest continued into the 1930s and 1940s when the worldwide depression made the business less profitable, and produce from the plantations began competing with the Urhobos' wild palm production.

The monopoly of the Urhobos and Itsekiris was mainly due to the catastrophic effect of the British conquest of Benin, from which the Benin people did not recover quickly and easily. The results were still evident in the mid-1920s when a colonial official observed that Benin City was still "…slowly recovering from the paralysis which followed British conquest in 1897" (National Archives, 1925). That can be explained by the extensive destruction of Benin City during the British military expedition. That event was not helped by the subsequent pursuit of the Oba and his chiefs, and by the continued resistance of some Benin chiefs, who found it challenging to accept British colonial authority over Benin territory and its people at the time. It was not until 1899 that they finally succumbed to the reality of colonisation. All these resulted from British brutality and violence in Benin, especially in the rural areas, and compelled more people to take flight into the heart of the Benin kingdom forest for safety.

Coupled with the above were the demands and extractions of the colonial authority and its agents for labour and tributes from the local people. Such requests in the new dispensation further drove many people away from their communities, leading them to seek refuge in the forest. The evidence indicated that some of these communities, particularly "in Benin City District…", were gradually settled by migrants from other places, predominantly Urhobo (National Archives, 1897). The Ijaws and Itsekiris, however, concentrated more around the Benin River, intent on continuing their role as middlemen. The Urhobo population gradually grew in the Benin Kingdom's forest. That later led to conflict between the Binis and the Urhobos over ownership of the forest, not because of the colonial government's attitude toward it.

Initially, Benin chiefs protested against the unrestrained movements of Urhobo migrants into the Benin forest and demanded their expulsion between 1897 and 1898 (National Archives, 1913a). However, the colonial administration saw nothing wrong with the continued movements. It was more interested in the extraction of forest products by the migrants and the revenue derived from them than in the complaints of the Benin chiefs. In response to the Urhobo group's increased migration into Benin land and the need to make exploitation sustainable and generate more revenue from forest resources, the colonial administration imposed various fees on migrants for exploiting the forest. The action of the colonial administration only helped to legalise Urhobo migrants' exploitation activities in the forest and, by so doing, encouraged them to increase production for the British.

On the realisation that their earlier request to British political officers in Benin to officially put a stop to the continued migration of the Urhobo group into Benin land was not granted, the chiefs seized the opportunity presented by the visit of and meeting with Hon. F.S. James, the Lieutenant Governor of Southern Nigeria in 1913, to present their case to him directly. At that meeting, the Benin chiefs again stated their opposition to the influx of the Urhobo migrants into the Benin forest. They requested its immediate stoppage to prevent a conflict in the near future (National Archives, 1913b). They argued that such unrestrained movements of the Urhobos into Benin land and the indiscriminate exploitation of its natural resources without control by the Benin traditional authority had gradually and deliberately stripped them of ownership of the land in favour of the Urhobo strangers.

Arguing further, they reminded the visiting Lieutenant Governor that the Urhobos had been their subjects and should remain under their control, even in the new dispensation, if the colonial government was to enjoy peace and cooperation from the Bini people. Despite this second request by the Benin chiefs, the colonial

administration still did not take the necessary action to stop the continued movement of the Urhobo migrants into Benin land, which had easy access to available resources, because it was mainly beneficial to British economic interests. As a result of colonial policy, communities in Benin gradually lost control over forest land. Reports from 1913 indicate that Urhobo migrants, along with a small number of settlers from Kwale and Itsekiri countries, were taking over the land. They were said to have been forced to leave their places, having exhausted their virgin land and cut down their palm trees, their principal means of economic survival. Indeed, the Urhobos are known for their expertise in palm fruit cutting, collection, and the production of palm oil. Following the widespread destruction of palm trees across various Urhobo settlements, particularly those near Benin territory, Benin inevitably became a destination with abundant palm trees. For instance, the Forestry Annual Department Report of 1913 stated that:

...Sobos have farmed their virgin land, cut down their palm trees, and are now on the lookout for both in other districts…These settlers' farms increased rapidly…the chiefs owning the land did not visit these places, and when they heard of them, they charged rent yearly or periodically; they would not cooperate with the forestry department in restricting farming (National Archives, 1913b).

On the other hand, the colonial administration was more interested in restricting the Oba's authority and influence over the Benin people and opposed the restoration of the old empire characterised by multi-ethnic vassals, including the Urhobo. The indirect rule system introduced by Fredrick Lord Lugard, which facilitated the restoration of the Benin monarchy, operated on tribalism in close connection with the chiefs and customary laws (Lugard, 1920). Hugh Clifford, the governor of Nigeria from 1919 to 1925 and Lord Lugard's successor, emphasised that the "tribes" should not be subservient to one another in native administration, further solidifying this strategy. Benin implemented a stringent system of enforcing tribe-based administration. As demonstrated by Igbafe (1978, pp. 148–50), the government rejected attempts by non-Benin groups to honour the Oba, as was customary in pre-colonial times. As a result of this policy of maintaining tribalism, the political officers considered how best to control Urhobo migrants, especially along the provincial border, to prevent them from paying rent to the Oba of Benin.

2. Struggle Over Land Resources

The struggle between the Urhobo migrants and the Benin people over land resources had far-reaching implications on their relations. The aspiration of the Oghara (one of the Urhobo communities closest to Benin geographically) was more in line with colonial policy. It did not share the vision and ideas of Oba Eweka II of the Benin kingdom. Having become accustomed to not paying tributes and exploiting Benin land without hindrance since the colonial administrative reorganisation placed them in Warri Province in 1897, the Oghara-Urhobo migrants sought to achieve this through land colonisation in the Benin forest at the expense of neighbouring Idjerhe, settled by both Binis and Urhobo in Benin Province. That resulted in a land dispute with Mosogar, which was settled in the Warri Appeal Court in 1917 (National Archives, 1936a). This development was intended to sow the seeds of discord and future conflict, continuing to determine relations along the Benin-Oghara-Urhobo border area.

Except for the Mosogar-Jesse land dispute, until the 1920s, Urhobo migrants in the Benin border area maintained cordial relations with the Benin people. The evidence shows that both groups intermarried, and some Urhobo migrants even integrated into their host communities in Benin. Such was the case that an Urhobo policeman was reportedly seduced and eloped with a Bini woman named Iyare, who happened to be one of the wives of Oba Eweka II in 1923/4. Before this incident was known, the Oba was accused of using her (Iyare) for human sacrifice until the woman was found with her new lover in Effurun, Warri province (National Archives, 1923). That occurrence demonstrates how close the Urhobos were to the Benin people and the Benin royal dynasty, even though it would have been criticised at the time due to its unusualness.

It also makes abundantly evident that regular Beninese citizens and Urhobos had intermarried; the pinnacle of the relationship was that of an Urhobo man and a Bini woman of that calibre. Until the early 1920s, the area known as the Jesse district was of mixed origins, comprised a few old Benin villages and many new migrants' settlements of Benin, Itsekiri, Kwale and Urhobo. Some of the Idjerhe and Mosogar-Urhobo settlements in districts such as Boborokun, Shoko, and Ekuobodo had Benin people as their village heads (Oseghe, 2012, p. 43). The colonial administration adopted the Urhobo name, Jesse, for the district

when it was created in 1921, possibly to foster a sense of belonging among the Urhobos and to help them claim ownership of the area with the backing of the colonial government. In the entire region, originally Benin land, the Urhobos established their farms without seeking permission from the Benin kingdom authority. That development brought the Urhobos into conflict with the host Benin communities, who saw no reason to alienate them from their land.

The situation was not helped by the worldwide economic depression of 1929, when the prices of oil palm products crashed again and increased land hunger, owing to the large expanse of land required for palm produce extraction in Warri Province. Some Urhobo groups, mainly the Oghara migrants who had obtained their first farming permit in the Sakpomba forest reserve in 1932, were reported to have violated their farming permit and forestry regulations. They started making false claims to the farms and gradually refused to pay dues. These developments brought the Urhobos into conflict with the forestry and political departments when they took action against them (Urhobos). That was because the Benin Timber Industry was a primary revenue earner for the Benin Division, accounting for four-fifths of Nigeria's timber exports and contributing to Nigeria's annual revenue.

In Jesse, the political department, through the native administration, reacted to this situation by restricting Urhobo farming activities to fifty yards behind their houses (National Archives, 1913c). This restriction came at a time when the Urhobo economy had seriously worsened. That was so bad that the Urhobos refused to collect oil palm produce despite a 50% reduction in permit fees offered by the colonial government. The goal was to compel the colonial administration to hold talks with them. The Urhobos were aware that the more trading activities were disrupted against the interests of the European trading businesses, the longer the crisis persisted. The restriction on the Urhobos' farming activities in Jesse was not well received, and they renewed their agitation for transfer to Warri Province. They also witnessed anti-tax uproar in Warri, part of Benin and the eastern province. All these were quelled by the colonial administration by subtle force and negotiations. By 1914, Prince Aiguobasimwe had installed the Oba (Akenzue 11) of Benin with the assistance of the British colonial officers after a severe contest with Chief Agho, the Obaseki of Benin. The colonial administration persuaded the newly installed Oba Akenzua II to allow the transfer of 103 sq miles of land occupied by the Jesse district to Warri Province, on an annual rent of €50, in 1957/8 (National Archives, 1936b). At least, the Oba of Benin granted this request to show appreciation for the British colonial government's support that saw him regain his father's throne.

In implementing this policy, they sacrificed the feelings of some Benin and Urhobo settlements that chose to remain in Benin Province, and transferred them, along with the agitators, to Warri Province (National Archives, 1936c). Although the British colonial officers contrived this policy at the time to save their necks, it has proven, over time, not just a tenant-landlord agreement but the beginning of a legal stamp on Benin kingdom's perpetual loss of parts of its ancestral inheritance. By 1940, as expected, the representative of the Warri division in the legislative council demanded that the Oba of Benin pay rents to the Urhobos for the land. As if that was not enough, the representative also asked that the Urhobo be recognised as a guarantor of the land. This would have broken the agreement to transfer the land area to Warri Province (National Archives, 1936d). The same territory was identified as belonging to Benin under the previous deal, and before it was moved to Warri Province, the Oba's consent was obtained in exchange for an annual lease rate. That meant the British colonial officers had to accept the status quo, if only temporarily.

The consequence of this land transfer was the encouragement of the Oghara and Jesse-Urhobo to continually seize more land from Benin. This development influenced the Oghara-Urhobo to start laying false claims to Benin forest reserve lands, which Benin had granted them to farm on a permit and taungya basis in 1932. The Oghara and Jesse-Urhobo groups continued to indulge in forestry violations to the extent that by 1941, they had illegally removed reserve boundary beacons to justify ownership. In addition, the Oghara chiefs went so far as to lay claim to some of the lands in the Sakpomba forest reserve in the Benin division (National Archives, 1914, 1915). That was the beginning of land disputes and the resultant unease that characterised relations between the Binis and the Urhobo along the provincial border areas. Another consequence was that the Native Administration became disinclined to grant free land for farming to Urhobo migrants in its border areas of the division. This was to avoid the Urhobo claiming Benin land after they had been permitted to farm, which could escalate into direct conflict between the Urhobo

migrants and their Benin hosts. But this was only for a time before the colonial authority fell under Urhobo pressure, against the interests of the Benin kingdom.

Apart from struggling to expand their land resources at the expense of the Benin kingdom in an attempt to solve their economic problems, the Urhobos in Benin also joined their relatives in other provinces in collective resistance to European firms' control over the palm produce trade. During the depression of the 1920s and 1930s, the Urhobo palm produce collectors organised themselves as producers and refused to make and sell oil palm products to European trading firms and their middlemen agents. This collective action was not new to some Urhobos, as they had employed similar tactics in the past, and they had worked for them. For instance, they used it to cripple Nana Olomu's Governorship of Benin River in the late 19th century (Ekeh, 2012, p.24). This was because the Urhobo did not only see Nana Olomu as an Itsekiri (a non-Urhobo) but also worked for the interest of the Europeans at the time.

This time, however, it was spread throughout the four provinces of Benin, Ondo, Ijebu, and Warri, where they had a monopoly on the extraction of palm produce. The goal of this action was to harm European imperialist companies that had banded together to set low prices for African goods, endangering the survival of Urhobo producers who were unable to recoup their wage costs. Thus, the Urhobos holding back supplies of palm produce (oil and kernel) for some time to create artificial scarcity was the only means of forcing the European firms to negotiate prices. The produce hold-up persisted for several months and had a damaging effect on the respective interests of the export firms and the colonial state, by crippling the export business and hindering tax collection (Olukoju, 2000, p. 5). At the same time, government officials were to give freedom to those who wished to trade (National Archives, 1934-1935).

But despite all government requests and even a slight price increase, the Urhobo producers maintained the hold-up, encouraged by the conviction that their strike had induced a slight improvement in the prices of goods. They held out until the price rose to at least € 7.10 per ton (National Archives, 1938). Available sources are silent on the circumstances surrounding the break-up of the produce hold-up. However, it was not because the producers secured the price level (€7:10 per ton) they had demanded. The prices were probably set to facilitate bargaining. By the end of 1934, when the strike was over, the cost of palm oil was in the range of € 5:15 and that of palm kernel in the region of € 4 to €4:5 (Olukoju, 2000, pp.5-13). There were, however, fears that this was merely a truce; rumours persisted that the resumption of trade was only temporary and had been arranged to produce enough money for tax payment.

By 1938, the Urhobo palm oil producers rejected the prices offered to them, resulting in the boycott. It began in May and was reportedly fairly solid within a fortnight. Throughout the Benin and Warri provinces, the Urhobo and Isoko producers participated in the boycott to press home their demands. During the boycott period, trade was affected as European trading firms could not purchase palm produce. This strategy continued well into the late 1940s and early 1950s, leading to fluctuations in the volume of trade in palm products such as palm kernel and palm oil shown in the Urhobo and Benin areas as shown below: This strategy continued well into the late 1940s and early 1950s leading to fluctuation in the volume of trade in palm products as shown in Urhobo area below.

Table 1:1948 Returns of Palm Kernel and Palm Oil for October and November

	Palm kernel		**Palm oil**		
Station	Bags	Tons	Casks	Drums	Tons
Warri	9,676	774	313	1	196
Okpari	3,360	268	10	105	51
Otedo	448	36	-	-	-
Umolo	385	31	-	-	-
Ganagana	2,991	239	40	10	24
Frukama	3,384	271	26	-	17
Sapele	10,802	864	422	-	264
Koko	1,378	110	131	-	82
Ajagbodudu	1,147	92	-	803	335
Sanubi	947	76	-	25	10
Asagba	1,806	145	26	-	17
Kokori	254	101	2	156	68
Obiaruku	1,340	107	4	-	1
Okpara	2,180	175	-	-	2

Source: *National Archives War. Prof. 1 File 547 Vol. 2, 1948.*

Table 2:1949 Returns of Palm Kernel and Palm Oil for October and November Record

	Palm kernel		**Palm oil**		
Station	Bags	Tons	Casks	Drums	Tons
Warri	72,294	5,803	6,284	90	3,840
Okpari	29,520	2,377	292	4,451	2,098
Otedo	1,787	1,441	22	59	-
Umolo	2,153	167	42	-	42
Ganagana	25,457	2,035	1,087	61	685
Frukama	19,027	1,523	461	-	332
Sapele	76,235	6,099	4,373	6	2,560
Koko	9,215	738	1,706	-	1,066
Ajagbodudu	11,135	890	-	8,440	3,407
Sanubi	7,750	616	194	1,677	847
Asagba	3,532	284	131	28	92
Kokori	8,219	706	102	1,976	942
Okpara	14,818	1,183	63	-	40
Igbuku	4,936	396	-	345	139
Patani	26,449	2,122	-	2,406	912

Source: *National Archives War. Prof. 1 File 547 Vol. 1, 1949.*

The tables above for the records of the 1948 and 1949 trade show a significant increase in the production and supply of oil products by the Urhobos. Comparatively, palm kernel supply was the most improved in many stations, with Warri and Ukpari having the highest in the Warri Province in 1949.
The 1950 record in Table 3 shows some fluctuation in the volume of palm products traded in the Warri Province, as shown below for the Urhobo area.

Table 3: 1950 Returns of palm kernel and palm oil

Station	**Palm kernel**		**Palm oil**		
	Bags	Tons	Casks	Drums	Tons
Warri	72,877	5,830	4,877	311	2,190
Okpari	19,684	1,504	298	4,784	2,261
Umolo	2,664	213	-	12	-
Ganagana	26,763	2,126	2,775	138	578
Frukama	19,646	1,572	708	25	663
Otedo	-	-	-	-	-
Sapele	88,128	6,354	2,996	369	1,895
Ajagbodudu	8,149	653	-	4,392	2,262
Koko	7,547	605	2,342	1	1,456
Sanubi	1,012	501	266	1,488	796
Kokori	6,994	579	129	1,918	929
Okpara	12,546	1,071	129	69	52
Asagba	3, 081	268	163	-	102

Source: *National Archives War. Prof. 1 File 547 Vol. 2, 1950*

However, Warri, Umolo, Ganagana, Frukama, and Sapale stations recorded a slight increase in palm kernel and oil supplies. The record indicates no supply at all at Otedo station in 1950. An investigation into the non-supply of palm produce in Otedo in 1950 revealed that attention shifted to cocoa production, which enjoyed relative price stability (National Archives, 1949, 1950). Tables 4 and 5 below show fluctuations in the volume of palm kernel supplied in the Benin area between 1949 and 1950, but a significant improvement in the importance of palm oil in 1950 (Eghagha, 2023, Personal communication).

Table 4: 1949 Returns of Palm Kernel and Palm Oil in the Benin Area

	Palm kernel		**Palm oil**		
Station	Bags	Tons	Casks	Drums	Tons
Benin	66,354	5,491	59	2,243	
Ekiadolor	3,115	247	-	-	-
Akologbo	9,239	661	328	605	-
Siluko	11,807	945	154	838	-
Ogbesse					

Source: *National Archives War. Prof. 1 File No. 547 Vol. 1, 1949.*

Figure 5: 1950 Returns of palm Kernel and Palm Oil in Benin area

	Palm kernel		**Palm oil**		
Station	Bags	Tons	Casks	Drums	Tons
Benin	62,048	4,960	38	2,102	
Ekiadolor	3,475	416	-	-	-
Akologbo	8,407	672	171	863	
Siluko	9,065	739	292	957	
Ogbesse					

Source: *National Archives War. Prof. 1 File 547 Vol. 2, 1950.*

This may not be unconnected with improvement in prices. This was possible because of the effectiveness of the Urhobo organisers and their sanctions on erring individuals.

The tables show that trade was relatively stable from the late 1940s to the early 1950s. Although the trade crisis of the early 1920s to early 1930s affected all Urhobos involved in palm produce collection monoculture, the conflicts and intolerance amongst the Urhobos along the Benin-Warri provincial border were not replicated in other parts of the division, where the Urhobos also had camps, owing largely to security reasons. In a confrontation with the Binis, the Urhobos could not easily be prevented from escaping to their homeland as before along the borderlines. They were primarily outnumbered and encircled by the Binis elsewhere. With this in mind, the Urhobo people had to find a more peaceful way to resolve their problems with the Binis.

Some Urhobo people gradually integrated into the neighbouring Benin village communities and negotiated land for farming on a rent basis. As members of the communities, the Urhobos actively participated in the affairs of these villages and even held titles in them. They also ventured into "illicit" food processing for gin distilleries, mainly starch and garri. This set of Urhobos has maintained its tenancy and done everything to avoid conflicts with its Benin landlords. That was possible at the time of the departure of British colonial rule in Nigeria. For instance, it is interesting that up to 1923, the Urhobo settlers in Jesse were paying land rent to the Benin Native Authority. The Government reforms of 1938 led to the transfer of Jesse from the Benin Area to the general administration of the Urhobo area under Warri Province (Eweka, 1992, p. 46). That was how the Benin kingdom permanently lost some of its lands, initially allowing the Urhobo migrants to settle on a tenement basis, as in Idjere. To give an Urhobo identity, the colonial officials changed the name from Idjere (the original Bini name of the settlement) to Jesse (Ikpesu, 2023, personal communication).

In addition, the colonial political officers did everything to free the Urhobos from the grip of the Benin Empire, and what remained after 1953 was a loose political relationship between Benin and the Urhobo country. The Urhobo kingdoms became more assertive, and their *Ovie* refused to pay the usual annual tribute to the Benin Oba. Apart from the *Ovie* of Oghara (closest to Benin), other Ivies (plural of Ovie), such as those of Uvwie and Abraka, stopped paying yearly homage to the Benin Oba (National Archives, 1949, 1950). That was mainly due to the colonial administrative arrangement, which further prevented the Urhobo land from falling under Benin's dominance. Evidence suggests that, upon his death, sending an Urhobo Ovie's head to Benin was discontinued, and the Oba no longer installed the Ivie in Benin (Iyasere, 2023, Personal communication). The new practice was for the Oba to send representatives to observe the coronation of Urhobo Ovie and report back to the Oba. Thus, the usual annual tributes to the Oba of Benin by the Urhobo Ivie are no longer compulsory. The Oba can hardly enforce them; he could not punish a defaulting Ovie. Those who continued to observe the yearly tribute to the Oba of Benin did so of their own volition and based on a personal relationship with the Oba.

3. Conclusion

From the preceding discussion, it is clear that access to land and water resources increasingly shaped Benin-Urhobo relations in the 19th century and thereafter. The struggle started in the wake of the fall of Benin to the British colonising forces in 1897 and was followed by steps taken by the colonial government to reduce the powers of the Benin Oba on the Urhobo group. As the paper has shown, all these were self-serving; the British colonial political officers carried out the policy to cut off the Benin kingdom's power and influence over the Urhobos, to ensure a direct and free flow of trade between the Urhobos and the European trading firms in both the Benin and, later, the Warri Provinces. By so doing, the British altered the pattern of the pre-colonial relationship. That action encouraged the

Urhobos to continually tug at the Benin kingdom for access to forest and water resources.

Consequently, the once peaceful relationship between the Benin kingdom and the Urhobos was significantly altered by the British colonial government to the extent that conflict came to dictate the tone, much to the discomfort of the Binis, whose territory was the centre of the competition. The damage done to the Benin kingdom, especially the loss of some of its ancestral inheritance, such as Idjere (now Jesse), to the Urhobo tenants, continues to be a talking point about British colonial policy in the general area. Following this, Benin's relations with the Urhobos during this period became loosely knit as the Urhobos became assertive and have remained so in post-colonial Nigeria, even though Benin has left an indelible imprint on the socio-political life of the Urhobo people. On the whole, and despite considerable difficulties, the Binis and Urhobos responded to the opportunities and crises generated by both the challenges of internal development and the external political and economic forces stimulated by British colonial rule in the general area.

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Revisiting the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) Hypothesis: Empirical Evidence from Selected Sub-Saharan African Economies in the Context of Sustainable Development

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Abstract. This study revisits the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) hypothesis within the context of sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), focusing on the relationship between economic growth, financial development, and environmental degradation. Drawing on panel data from seven purposively selected SSA countries—Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, and South Africa—spanning the period 1993 to 2021, the study employs the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) approach using Pooled Mean Group (PMG) estimation to capture both short-run and long-run dynamics. Environmental degradation is measured through three proxies: carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions per capita, ecological footprint per capita (EFPC), and the ecological footprint index (EFPI). Control variables include energy consumption, foreign direct investment (FDI), urbanisation, and secondary school enrolment. Panel unit root and Pedroni cointegration tests confirm the presence of long-term relationships, while Granger causality tests explore the direction of causality between GDP per capita and environmental indicators. The findings support a cubic (N-shaped) EKC relationship across all three measures of environmental degradation, indicating that environmental quality initially worsens with rising income, improves after a threshold, but may deteriorate again at higher income levels. Additionally, energy consumption significantly contributes to CO_2 emissions and EFPC, while FDI and urbanisation exert mixed effects depending on the environmental metric. The error correction models show significant adjustment toward long-run equilibrium for CO_2 and EFPC, but not for EFPI, underscoring the persistent nature of broader ecological stress. Based on these findings, the study recommends region-specific policies that prioritize renewable energy investment, green urban infrastructure, and sustainable FDI flows, along with human capital development through expanded access to quality education, to ensure environmentally sustainable growth in SSA.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, environmental degradation has emerged as one of the most pressing global challenges, drawing considerable scholarly and policy attention. Central to this issue is the increasing emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs), particularly carbon dioxide (CO_2), which is the most significant contributor to anthropogenic climate change, accounting for over 60 percent of the enhanced greenhouse effect (Acaravci & Ozturk, 2010). The fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2014) documented a significant rise in CO_2 emissions per unit of GDP since the 1970s, indicating that economic expansion has often come at the cost of environmental sustainability. Consequently, a growing concern for policymakers has been how to reconcile environmental protection with sustained economic development (Bacon & Bhattacharya, 2007; Majeed & Mazhar, 2019).

One prominent framework for exploring this complex relationship is the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) hypothesis, originally derived from Kuznets' (1955) income-inequality curve. The EKC posits an inverted U-shaped relationship between environmental degradation and income per capita, suggesting that environmental degradation initially rises with economic growth but begins to decline after surpassing a certain income threshold. The theoretical underpinnings of this relationship are attributed to the scale effect (early industrial growth increasing pollution), composition effect (structural shifts from manufacturing to services), and technique effect (adoption of cleaner technologies at higher income levels) (Grossman & Krueger, 1995). This hypothesis has been widely tested across economies with varying results, with some studies

confirming its validity (Shahbaz et al., 2012; Tiwari et al., 2013; Sinha & Sen, 2016), while others reject it, arguing that economic growth continues to degrade environmental quality (Dogan & Ozturk, 2017; Nassani et al., 2017; Sinha et al., 2017).

Despite this wealth of literature, much of the empirical testing of the EKC hypothesis in Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries remains limited and inconclusive. Previous studies suffer from various methodological limitations, including reliance on CO_2 emissions as the sole indicator of environmental degradation, use of polynomial specifications prone to multicollinearity, and estimation techniques that ignore parameter heterogeneity across countries (Al-Mulali et al., 2015; Gao & Zhang, 2014; Egbetokun et al., 2019). CO_2 emissions alone provide a narrow view of environmental harm, failing to capture the broader ecological footprint that encompasses resource consumption and waste generation (Majeed & Mazhar, 2019). Furthermore, polynomial models, which include squared and cubic GDP terms to test the EKC, often result in spurious relationships due to high multicollinearity, thus undermining the reliability of policy implications derived from such models.

This study addresses these gaps by employing a robust and parsimonious empirical framework to test the EKC hypothesis in selected SSA countries using both carbon dioxide emissions per capita and ecological footprint per capita as indicators of environmental degradation. Ecological footprint provides a more comprehensive measure of human pressure on the environment, capturing not only emissions but also land and water use, thereby offering a broader view of environmental sustainability (Al-Mulali et al., 2015; Khuky, 2021). Methodologically, the study adopts the Auto-Regressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) framework within a panel setting using both the Pooled Mean Group (PMG) and Mean Group (MG) estimators (Pesaran, Shin & Smith, 1999). These techniques are superior to conventional fixed and random effects models as they account for cross-country heterogeneity and provide reliable long- and short-run parameter estimates. In line with the non-polynomial specification proposed by Narayan & Narayan (2010), the study infers the presence of an EKC if the short-run income elasticity of emissions is positive and the long-run elasticity is negative and statistically significant.

By applying these methodological advances and utilizing a broader set of environmental indicators, this study contributes to the literature by generating more reliable and policy-relevant insights into the income-environment nexus in Sub-Saharan Africa. The findings have critical implications for environmental sustainability strategies in the region, particularly in light of global efforts to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the climate targets under the Paris Agreement.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the literature review. Section 3 outlines the methodology and model specification. Section 4 discusses the empirical results, and Section 5 concludes with conclusion and recommendations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Environmental Degradation

Environmental degradation refers to the sustained deterioration of the environment through the depletion of natural resources, disruption of ecosystems, and loss of biodiversity, leading to reduced environmental quality and sustainability (Brown et al., 1987; Johnson et al., 1997). It encompasses phenomena such as soil erosion, desertification, deforestation, air and water pollution, loss of flora and fauna, and rising global temperatures due to greenhouse gas emissions. The process is both a cause and consequence of unsustainable human activities, particularly in the context of rapid industrialization and urban expansion (Malcolm & Pitelka, 2000; Maurya et al., 2020).

In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), environmental degradation poses a unique challenge. Despite contributing only about 4% of global CO_2 emissions (Ayompe, Davis & Egoh, 2020), the region is disproportionately affected due to its high dependence on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture and forestry, low adaptive capacity, and persistent socioeconomic vulnerabilities (World Bank, 2012; Babatunde, 2014). Rapid population growth, increasing urbanization, and unsustainable land use practices exacerbate the environmental crisis in many SSA countries (Neumayer, 2002; Osabuohien et al., 2014).

According to Aduebe (2013), environmental degradation results from the unsustainable exploitation of biotic and abiotic elements of the environment ranging from soil and water to wildlife and atmospheric gases. This conceptualization is further extended by Chopra (2016) and Conserve Energy Future (2020), who define degradation as any anthropogenic change in the environment considered undesirable or harmful, particularly those associated with unsustainable resource use and pollutant discharge.

There are various measures of environment degradation, including Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) Emissions, and Ecological Footprints.

Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) Emissions

Carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions are widely regarded as a core indicator of environmental degradation due to their pivotal role in climate change. CO_2, a colorless and odorless gas, is primarily emitted through the combustion of fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas), industrial production, and land-use changes such as deforestation (IPCC, 2018; Gasser & Luderer, 2018). According to Eurostat (2017) and the World Bank (2018), CO_2 emissions also include those generated from cement manufacturing and gas flaring and are typically measured in metric tons per capita.

The centrality of CO_2 in discussions of environmental degradation lies in its characterization as the most significant anthropogenic greenhouse gas. While other gases such as methane (CH_4), nitrous oxide (N_2O), and ozone also contribute to the greenhouse effect, CO_2 accounts for approximately 74% of global greenhouse gas emissions (Climate Watch, 2021). The Kyoto Protocol and subsequent international agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, have institutionalized CO_2 reduction targets to mitigate climate-related risks (Brander, 2012).
To facilitate comparison of various greenhouse gases, the concept of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2e) is used. This metric expresses the amount of CO_2 that would have an equivalent warming effect as other greenhouse gases, thus standardizing emissions data and improving policy responses (Mackay, 2008; Brander, 2012). For example, one kilogram of methane (CH_4) is approximately equivalent to 25 kilograms of CO_2 in global warming potential.

Ecological Footprint

The ecological footprint is a broader and more systemic indicator of environmental degradation that complements emission-based metrics. It measures the biologically productive land and water area required to produce the resources consumed and absorb the waste generated by a population, given prevailing technology and resource management practices (Al-Mulali & Sheau-Ting, 2014; Jović et al., 2018). It includes multiple components such as cropland, grazing land, forest products, fishing grounds, built-up land, and the carbon footprint.
This measure is particularly relevant for SSA, where high levels of dependence on natural resources for livelihoods, combined with inadequate infrastructure and poor waste management systems, lead to overexploitation and environmental strain (Uddin et al., 2017; Majeed & Mazhar, 2019). The ecological footprint is expressed in global hectares (gha) per person and serves as a benchmark for comparing natural resource consumption against the Earth's regenerative capacity (Charfeddine & Mrabet, 2017; Aydin et al., 2019).
Unlike CO_2 emissions, which focus on air pollution, the ecological footprint provides a holistic view of human demand on ecosystems. As such, it is increasingly adopted in sustainability assessments to capture the cumulative environmental pressures of development processes.

2.2 Economic Growth

Economic growth refers to the sustained increase in a country's capacity to produce goods and services, driven by technological progress, institutional evolution, and broader economic development. As described by Kuznets (in Todaro, 1985), it involves not just quantitative expansion, but also qualitative transformation in production and distribution. Scholars such as Burda and Wyplosz (2005), Todaro and Smith (2006), and Olowofeso et al. (2015) emphasize that economic growth manifests through rising GDP, per capita income, and overall improvements in national productivity and the capacity to meet consumer demand, often achieved through innovation and scaling up of production.

However, the process of economic growth can have complex implications for environmental quality. Initially, growth may lead to environmental degradation due to increased input use and industrial expansion (scaling and composite effects). As economies shift from agriculture to industry and eventually to services, environmental pressures may decline, especially with the adoption of cleaner technologies (Stern, 1998; Stokey, 1998). Yet, in its early stages, growth tends to accelerate resource use and emissions, particularly in developing economies, leading to a decline in environmental health (Bloach, Zhang & Iqbal, 2019). In empirical analysis, GDP per capita remains a principal metric for assessing economic growth and its environmental consequences.

2.3 Theoretical Framework- The Environmental Kuznet Curve

The Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) hypothesis remains a central framework in analyzing the relationship between environmental degradation and economic growth. This hypothesis posits that at the early stages of economic development, environmental degradation intensifies as income rises, but after reaching a specific threshold—referred to as the turning point—further increases in

income lead to improvements in environmental quality. This relationship is commonly illustrated as an inverted U-shape, where environmental harm initially increases with per capita income but subsequently declines beyond a certain income level. Thus, in a nation's development trajectory, environmental conditions worsen before improving as income per capita continues to rise.

The EKC can also be understood through the lens of structural economic transformation. As shown in Figure 1, the progression from a pre-industrial to an industrial economy is typically associated with environmental decline due to the increasing dominance of capital-intensive industrial activities and the diminishing role of agriculture. This industrial shift fosters productivity, income growth, and higher levels of consumption. However, as economies evolve into post-industrial stages, a transition occurs in which the service sector expands, the share of industrial output declines, and societies begin to prioritize environmental health. At this juncture—the turning point represented in Figure 2.1—environmental degradation begins to recede as cleaner technologies and regulatory frameworks become more prevalent (UNCTAD, 2012).

Figure 1 also visually depicts the initial phase of development, where environmental degradation primarily stems from agricultural and resource-based subsistence activities, albeit at relatively lower levels of intensity. As industrialization accelerates, resource extraction and waste generation increase significantly, corresponding to the upward slope of the curve. In the later stages of development, technological advancements, service-oriented growth, and societal demand for improved environmental standards result in a downturn in environmental degradation. Hence, the downward slope of the EKC reflects the eventual decoupling of economic growth from environmental harm (Moomaw & Unruh, 1997; Panayotou, 2003).

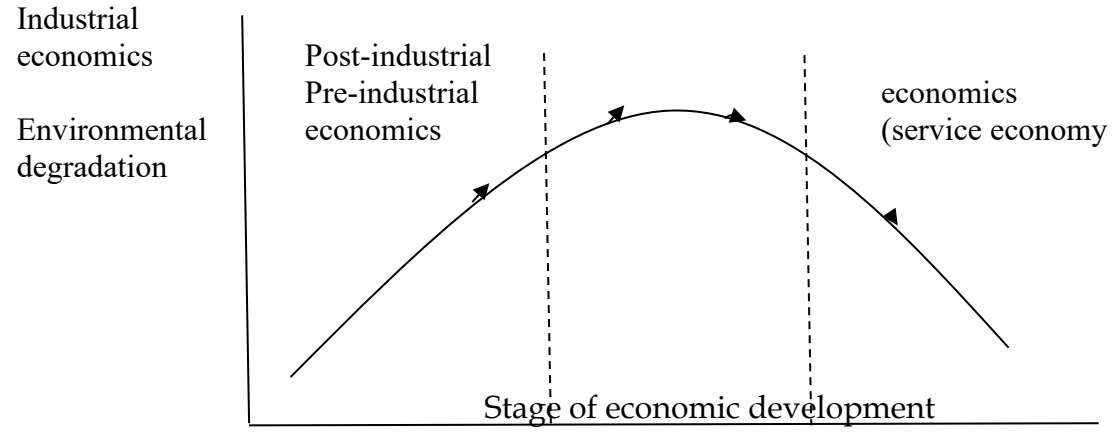


Figure 1: The shape of the EKC
Notes: The horizontal axis is income per capita.
Source: Panayotou (2003:46)

The notion that environmental quality functions as a luxury good influences the shape of the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC). At the early stages of economic development, individuals are less inclined to forego immediate consumption for investments in environmental preservation. As income levels rise and basic needs are met, societies begin to demand cleaner environments, leading to increased public and private investments in environmental quality. This shift in societal preferences results in a decline in environmental degradation beyond a certain income threshold, thereby creating the downward slope observed in the latter stages of the EKC (Moomaw & Unruh, 1997; Galeotti, 2003) as illustrated in Figure 1.

Another interpretation of the EKC's curvature is rooted in demographic and structural shifts associated with economic growth. As countries become wealthier, they typically experience demographic transitions marked by lower fertility rates and higher levels of education, which slow population growth and alleviate pressure on natural resources. Early stages of economic development are often associated with resource-intensive industrialization, contributing to environmental harm. However, as nations progress, they begin to adopt cleaner technologies and implement more stringent environmental regulations, ultimately leading to improvements in environmental quality (UNCTAD, 2012).

From a more optimistic perspective, the EKC hypothesis posits that economic growth may intrinsically resolve environmental issues. This view suggests that as nations become wealthier, policy

reforms and technological innovations will naturally arise to address environmental degradation, thereby making environmental improvement a byproduct of continued economic expansion (Roca et al., 2001; Perman & Stern, 2003). Nonetheless, this interpretation may be overly simplistic. Environmental quality is shaped not only by current levels of emissions or pollutants but also by the cumulative impact of past environmental stresses. As Arrow et al. (1995) caution, economic growth alone cannot guarantee environmental sustainability, nor should it be viewed as the principal mechanism for achieving ecological balance.

The Shape of the EKC

The conventional Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC), as depicted in Figure 1, has faced significant criticism both as a theoretical model and a practical policy guide. Critics argue that the model may inadvertently promote a 'pollute now, clean later' approach, especially in developing countries where immediate economic concerns like employment and income often overshadow environmental considerations (Dasgupta et al., 2002). The underlying assumption that wealthier populations inherently value environmental quality more than poorer ones is also not conclusively supported by empirical evidence (Martinez-Alier, 1995; Kriström & Riera, 1996). Consequently, this challenges the deterministic interpretation of the EKC and implies that effective environmental protection policies can be enacted at any development stage (Neumayer, 2002).

With increasing awareness and public concern about environmental quality, especially in developing economies, it is conceivable that countries may avoid the steep environmental degradation suggested by the original EKC. Through proactive environmental enforcement and policy innovation—potentially even without comprehensive regulatory frameworks—some countries may achieve higher income levels with minimal ecological harm. This implies a lower and flatter EKC trajectory than that predicted by the traditional model, indicating that environmental improvements could coincide with early stages of growth (Dasgupta et al., 2002). Therefore, the static nature of the EKC form is increasingly being questioned in recent literature.

Accordingly, the EKC framework now includes three major variants: the traditional EKC, the generalized EKC, and the updated EKC, with the latter assumed to be flatter. Emerging empirical evidence contests the foundational assumption of the original EKC—that low-income countries lack environmental governance capacity. Instead, revised models suggest that pollution levels begin to decline earlier in the development process due to better policy responses and technological adaptation. As illustrated in Figure 2, this version of the EKC shows environmental degradation peaking at a lower income threshold compared to the traditional model. Studies by Dasgupta et al. (2004), Piaggio & Padilla (2012), and Al-Sayed & Sek (2013) confirm this evolving EKC form, emphasizing the need for a more flexible, context-sensitive interpretation of the environment-growth relationship.

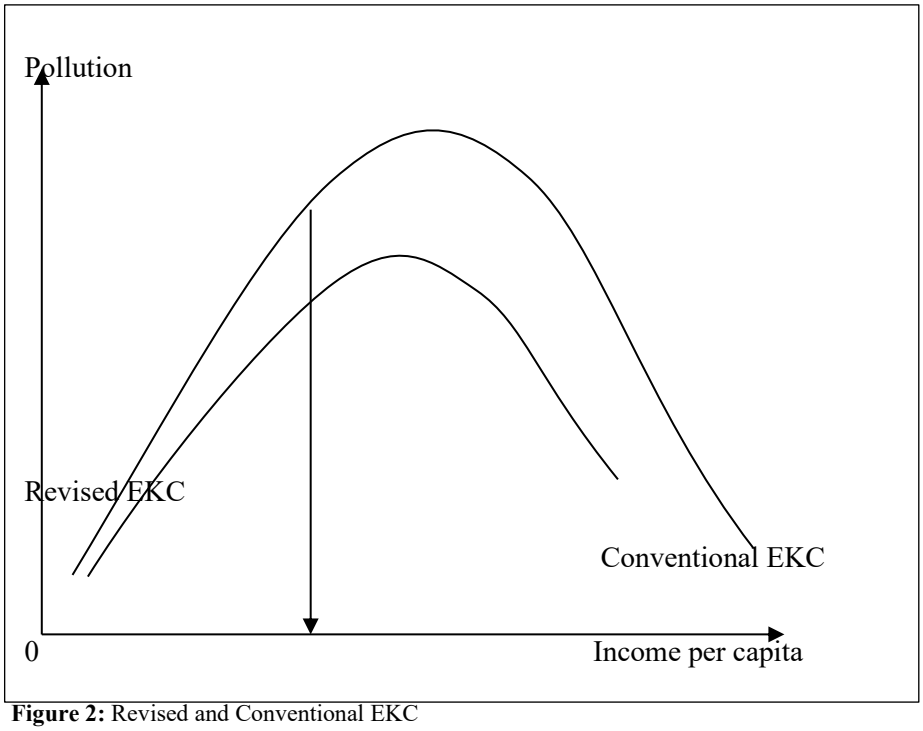


Figure 2: Revised and Conventional EKC
Source: Dasgupta *et al*. (2002:148)

Some researchers, such as De Bruyn et al. (1998), contend that the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) may not be valid over the long term. They argue that while the initial relationship between economic growth and environmental degradation may follow an inverted U-shape, this pattern does not persist indefinitely. At higher income levels, a new inflection point may emerge, causing environmental degradation to rise once again, thereby forming an N-shaped curve (Carvalho & Almeida, 2010). This implies that after initial improvements in environmental quality, further economic expansion could lead to renewed environmental harm.

This more complex trajectory is referred to as the "generalized EKC" by Moomaw and Unruh (1997). It captures the possibility of multiple turning points along the income-environment relationship. Figures 3 and 4, as illustrated by Moomaw and Unruh (1997) and Carvalho and Almeida (2010), respectively, depict this N-shaped dynamic. In this framework, each point where the direction of environmental impact shifts in response to income growth is known as a turning point.

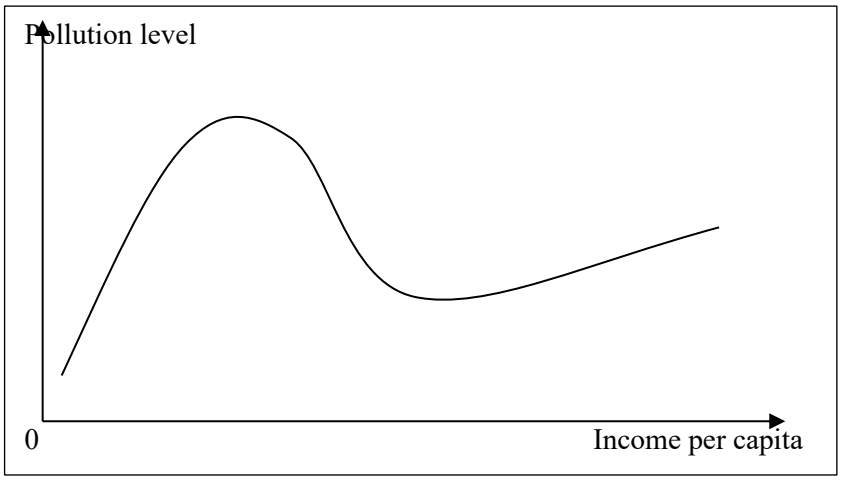


Figure 3: Generalised EKC
Source: Moomaw and Unruh (1997:3)

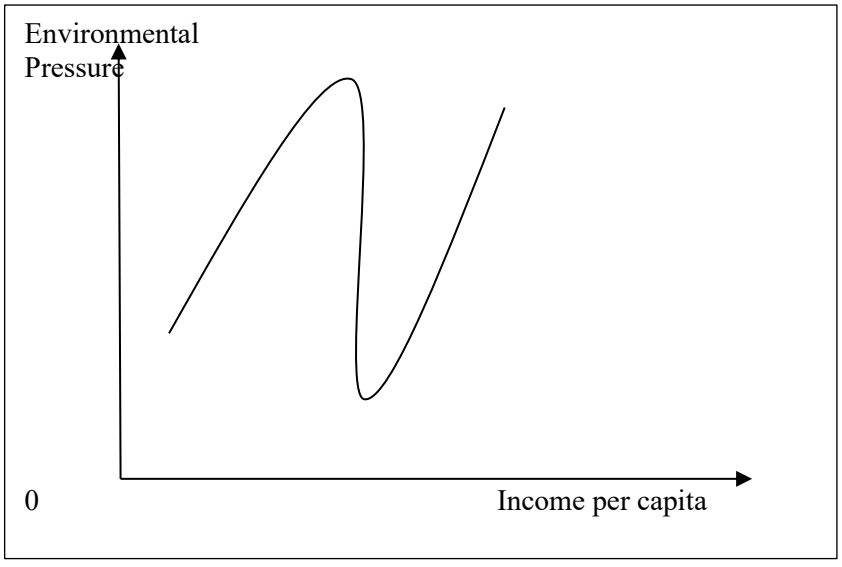


Figure 4: N-shaped curve
Source: Carvalho & Almeida (2010:4)

From an economic standpoint, carbon dioxide (CO_2) was historically not considered a waste product due to its colorless and odorless nature. However, modern scientific evidence confirms that CO_2 is indeed a byproduct of numerous anthropogenic activities. Global emissions of CO_2 resulting from human actions have increased significantly, with an annual growth rate rising from 1.1% in the 1990s to 3.8% between 2002 and 2011 (Granados & Carpintero, 2009; PBL & JRC, 2014). Unlike localized pollutants such as sulphur dioxide or particulate matter, CO_2 is a transboundary pollutant with global implications. This makes the social costs of climate change more complex, as they are distributed across both time and geography. Consequently, the Environmental Kuznets Curve

(EKC) hypothesis is generally seen as less applicable to CO_2 emissions compared to localized pollutants, primarily due to the pronounced free-rider problem associated with global pollutants (Galeotti, 2003; Carvalho & Almeida, 2010).

Empirical studies have presented mixed evidence regarding the EKC's applicability to CO_2. Some researchers, such as Shafik (1994) and De Bruyn et al. (1998), have observed a positive linear relationship between GDP per capita and CO_2 emissions, indicating no turning point, thus challenging the EKC hypothesis. Others suggest that the relationship might be N-shaped or cubic, as proposed by Holtz-Eakin and Selden (1995) and Moomaw and Unruh (1997), implying that CO_2 emissions may initially fall but rise again at higher income levels. Such findings cast doubt on the optimistic interpretation that economic growth naturally leads to environmental improvement (Friedl & Getzner, 2002).

Nevertheless, a number of studies have identified the EKC pattern even for CO_2 emissions. For instance, Sengupta (1996), Galeotti et al. (2001), and Pauli (2003) reported evidence of an EKC for CO_2. Schmalensee et al. (1998) also confirmed the EKC trend for CO_2 during 1950–1990 and projected its continuation into the future. However, similar inconsistencies have been observed in the case of local pollutants—while Panayotou (1997) validated the EKC for sulphur dioxide and particulate matter, Selden and Song (1994) reported an N-shaped pattern. These contradictions suggest that the EKC is not universally applicable, and it remains contentious whether sustained economic growth inherently leads to environmental improvement.

2.4 Empirical Perspectives on Testing the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) Hypothesis

The Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) hypothesis—which posits an inverted U-shaped relationship between environmental degradation and income per capita—has been subjected to rigorous empirical testing across various economic contexts. In developed countries, the evidence is mixed, with several studies confirming the EKC while others suggest more complex or even contradictory patterns. Grossman and Krueger (1991, 1993) were among the first to identify an inverted U-shaped relationship between economic growth and pollutants such as sulfur dioxide and suspended particulate matter in the United States, estimating turning points around $4,000–$5,000 (1985 USD). Similarly, Selden and Song (1994) identified turning points above $8,000, indicating that environmental improvements begin only at higher income levels. Moomaw and Unruh (1997) extended the analysis to 16 OECD countries and found a statistically significant N-shaped relationship, reflecting possible environmental degradation resurgence at high-income levels. Friedl and Getzner (2003) and Galeotti and Lanza (2003) also supported the EKC in Austria and other OECD nations, though highlighting the superiority of cubic over quadratic specifications. However, not all developed economies show conformity. Esteve and Tamarit (2012) found no EKC evidence in Spain, while Huang et al. (2008) demonstrated that compliance with the Kyoto Protocol did not uniformly validate the EKC among Annex II countries.

In developing countries, the EKC hypothesis exhibits even more heterogeneity. Narayan and Narayan (2010), using income elasticities, supported the EKC in 35% of 43 developing countries. For instance, Aduebe (2013) and Shahbaz et al. (2012) confirmed the EKC in Nigeria and Pakistan, respectively. Contrastingly, Akbostanci et al. (2009) and Alam et al. (2016) did not find support for the EKC in Turkey and India, respectively. Furthermore, several studies emphasized the role of trade openness and urbanization in mediating the income-environment nexus. For example, Saboori et al. (2012) and Tiwari et al. (2013) confirmed the EKC in Malaysia and India, attributing emissions mainly to trade and fossil energy use. Gao and Zhang (2014) found the EKC to hold in Sub-Saharan Africa using electricity consumption data, while Ben-Jebli et al. (2015) reported its absence using trade-adjusted models. Additional studies, such as Kwakwa and Adu (2016) and Hundie (2018), found evidence for EKC in some Sub-Saharan African countries but emphasized regional and sectoral disparities. Overall, the developing country literature suggests that the EKC may manifest under specific structural, institutional, and policy frameworks but is not universally applicable.

Beyond economic growth, empirical studies increasingly examine the EKC through the lens of financial development, which serves as both a driver of growth and an enabler of cleaner technology investments. In developed countries, results vary. Joe-Ming et al. (2015) found that financial development negatively impacted CO_2 emissions in eight OECD countries, while Ayeche et al. (2016) confirmed the EKC but found no direct causality between finance and emissions. Shahbaz et al. (2018) reported that financial development mitigated emissions in France, consistent with the pollution haven hypothesis. Similarly, Majeed and Mazhar (2019) demonstrated that private sector credit significantly reduced ecological footprints globally, although GDP and FDI increased them. However, studies such as Shahbaz et al. (2020) in the UAE and Ibrahim and Vo (2021) in 27 industrialized countries reveal nonlinear patterns—

U-shaped, N-shaped, or even W-shaped—highlighting the need for country-specific analysis. In developing countries, empirical outcomes are equally complex. Omri et al. (2015) validated the EKC in MENA countries but found finance-induced environmental degradation. Mesagan and Nwanchukwu (2018) and Musa et al. (2021) found bidirectional causality between finance and emissions in Nigeria, though the long-run impact was generally negative. Other studies, such as Zaidi et al. (2019) and Nyarkoa and Kaya (2021), supported the EKC while cautioning against generalizations, as the functional form of the EKC appeared to vary by country and context.

3. Methodology

This study employs a longitudinal panel data research design to capture the dynamic interactions among variables across both temporal and spatial dimensions. Panel data allows for the observation of multiple entities (countries) over time, thereby accounting for unobservable heterogeneity, controlling for omitted variables, and improving the efficiency of econometric estimates (Baltagi, 2005). The design is particularly suitable for investigating causality and long-run equilibrium relationships between financial development, economic growth, and environmental degradation.

The population for this study includes all 48 countries in the Sub-Saharan African region, as defined by the World Bank (2021). However, due to limitations in data availability and the requirement for consistency in the sample, a purposive sample of seven countries—Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, and South Africa—was selected. These countries were chosen based on three primary criteria: (i) completeness of data from 1993 to 2021; (ii) their relatively advanced financial systems and dynamic economies; and (iii) regional representation across West, East, Southern, and Central Africa.

Secondary data are sourced primarily from the World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI, 2021) and the Global Footprint Network (2021). These databases offer high-frequency, standardized macroeconomic and environmental statistics across countries. The panel data covers the period 1993 to 2021 and include variables on environmental degradation (carbon dioxide emissions and ecological footprint), financial development indicators, GDP per capita, energy consumption, foreign direct investment, urbanisation, and secondary school enrolment rates.

3.1 Model Specification

To test the EKC hypothesis in the selected SSA countries, the study adopts and modifies the models by Jiang and Ma (2019) and Dasuki and Olubusoye (2020). The dependent variables include carbon dioxide emissions per capita (CO2) and ecological footprint per capita (EFP), both serving as proxies for environmental degradation. The main independent variables include financial development indicators—credit to the private sector (CPS), liquid liabilities ratio (LLR), market capitalization (MKC), stock market turnover ratio (SMT), interest rate spread (IRS), and stock market total value traded (STVT)—and economic growth, measured by GDP per capita (GDPPC).

In addition, the study introduces control variables: energy consumption (ENC), urbanisation (URB), foreign direct investment (FDI), and secondary school enrolment rate (SER). These are included to capture the broader socio-economic and policy environment affecting environmental outcomes.

Essentially, to examine the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) hypothesis, the study applies the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) modelling technique for country-specific analysis. The ARDL model is well-suited for this investigation because it accommodates variables that are stationary at levels (I(0)) or first difference (I(1)) and avoids the issue of pre-testing bias associated with other cointegration techniques (Pesaran, Shin & Smith, 2001).

The EKC hypothesis proposes an inverted U-shaped relationship between income (proxied by GDP per capita) and environmental degradation (proxied by CO_2 emissions or ecological footprint). This implies that the sign of the coefficient on income should be positive in the short run and negative on its squared term in the long run, or that long-run elasticity is smaller than short-run elasticity (Narayan & Narayan, 2010).

General Form of the ARDL Model

Let ED_{it} represent the measure of environmental degradation (either carbon emissions or ecological footprint), and $GDPPC_{it}$ represent real GDP per capita. The unrestricted error correction model (UECM) form of ARDL used in this study is specified as follows for each country i:

Where:

$$\Delta \ln ED_t = \alpha_0 + \sum_{j=1}^{p} \alpha_j \Delta \ln ED_{t-j} + \sum_{j=0}^{p} \alpha_j \Delta \ln GDPPC_{t-j} + \sum_{j=0}^{p} \alpha_j \Delta (\ln GDPPC_{t-j})^2 + \theta_1 \ln ED_{t-1} + \theta_2 \ln GDPPC_{t-1} + \theta_3 (\ln GDPPC_{t-1})^2 + \varepsilon_t$$

Δ denotes the first difference operator,

α_0 is the constant term,

$\ln ED_{it}$ is the natural log of environmental degradation,

$\ln GDPPC_{it}$ is the natural log of GDP per capita,
$(\ln GDPPC_{it})^2$ is the squared income term to capture nonlinearity,
ε_{it} is the error term,
$\theta_1,\theta_2,\theta_3$ represent the long-run relationships,
$\alpha_1^j 1$, α_2^j, α_3^j capture the short-run dynamics.
This model allows for asymmetric short- and long-run relationships between GDP per capita and environmental degradation.

Inclusion of Control Variables

To control for other determinants of environmental degradation, we augment the ARDL model by including energy consumption (ENC), urbanisation (URB), foreign direct investment (FDI), and education (SER) as control variables:

$$\Delta \ln ED_{it} = \alpha_0 + \sum_{j=1}^{p} \alpha_1^j \Delta \ln ED_{it-j} + \sum_{j=0}^{q} \alpha_2^j \Delta \ln GDPPC_{it-j} + \sum_{j=0}^{r} \alpha_3^j \Delta (\ln GDPPC_{it-j})^2 + \sum_{j=0}^{s} \alpha_4^j \Delta \ln ENC_{it-j} + \sum_{j=0}^{u} \alpha_5^j \Delta \ln URB_{it-j} + \sum_{j=0}^{v} \alpha_6^j \Delta \ln FDI_{it-j} + \sum_{j=0}^{w} \alpha_7^j \Delta \ln SER_{it-j} + \theta_1 \ln ED_{it-1} + \theta_2 \ln GDPPC_{it-1} + \theta_3 (\ln GDPPC_{it-1})^2 + \theta_4 \ln ENC_{it-1} + \theta_5 \ln URB_{it-1} + \theta_6 \ln FDI_{it-1} + \theta_7 \ln SER_{it-1} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Where:
$\theta_1,...,\theta_7$ capture the long-run effects, and
$\alpha_1^j,..., \alpha_7^j$ represent short-run effects for each variable.

Error Correction Representation (ECM)

The error correction model derived from the above ARDL equation is given by:

$$\Delta \ln ED_{it} = \sum_{j=1}^{p} \delta_j \Delta Z_{it-j} + \lambda ECM_{it-1} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Where:
Z is a vector of the explanatory variables (GDPPC, $GDPPC^2$, ENC, URB, FDI, SER),
ECM_{it-1} is the lagged error correction term derived from the long-run cointegrating relationship,
λ is the speed of adjustment coefficient expected to be negative and statistically significant,
A significant λ confirms the existence of a long-run equilibrium relationship.

EKC Validation Criteria in ARDL

The EKC hypothesis is validated in the ARDL framework based on two criteria:
Coefficient Significance and Signs:
$\theta_2>0$ (GDPPC increases emissions),
$\theta_3<0$ (Squared GDPPC reduces emissions),
Together, this indicates an inverted U-shaped curve.
Narayan and Narayan (2010) Income Elasticity Rule:
If short-run elasticity of GDP is positive and significant, but long-run elasticity is negative and significant, the EKC hypothesis holds.

3.2 Measurement of Variables

Variable	Type	Measurement	Expected Sign	Sources
CO_2 Emissions (CO2)	Dependent	Metric tons per capita	-	Alabi et al. (2021)
Ecological Footprint (EFP)	Dependent	Global hectares per capita	-	Khuky (2021)
GDP per capita (GDPPC)	Independent	GDP divided by total population	+ (short), - (long)	Hasan et al. (2021)
Energy Consumption (ENC)	Control	Per capita energy use	+	Longe et al. (2020)
Urbanization (URB)	Control	Urban population as % of total population	+	Kwakwa & Alhassan (2020)
Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)	Control	Net inflows as % of GDP	+	Isiksal et al. (2019)
Secondary School Enrolment (SER)	Control	% of relevant age group enrolled in secondary education	+	Kwakwa & Alhassan (2020)

Author's Compilation (2025)

3.3 Estimation Techniques

To capture both long-run and short-run dynamics, this study employs the Pooled Mean Group (PMG) and Mean Group (MG) estimators within the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) framework as developed by Pesaran,

Shin, and Smith (1999). These techniques are suitable for heterogeneous panels with mixed order of integration (I(0) and I(1)).
Unit root tests will first be conducted using the Im, Pesaran and Shin (2003) (IPS) procedure to determine the stationarity properties of the variables. Once non-stationarity is established, the Pedroni (1999, 2001) panel cointegration test will be applied to examine the presence of a long-run equilibrium relationship among the variables.

Granger causality tests will also be performed within a panel vector error correction framework to identify causal directions between financial development, economic growth, and environmental degradation. This will help assess whether the relationships are uni-directional or bi-directional (feedback). The specific form of the Granger test used follows the model:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \sum_{k=1}^{m} \beta_k Y_{it-k} + \sum_{l=1}^{n} \alpha_j X_{it-j} + u_t$$

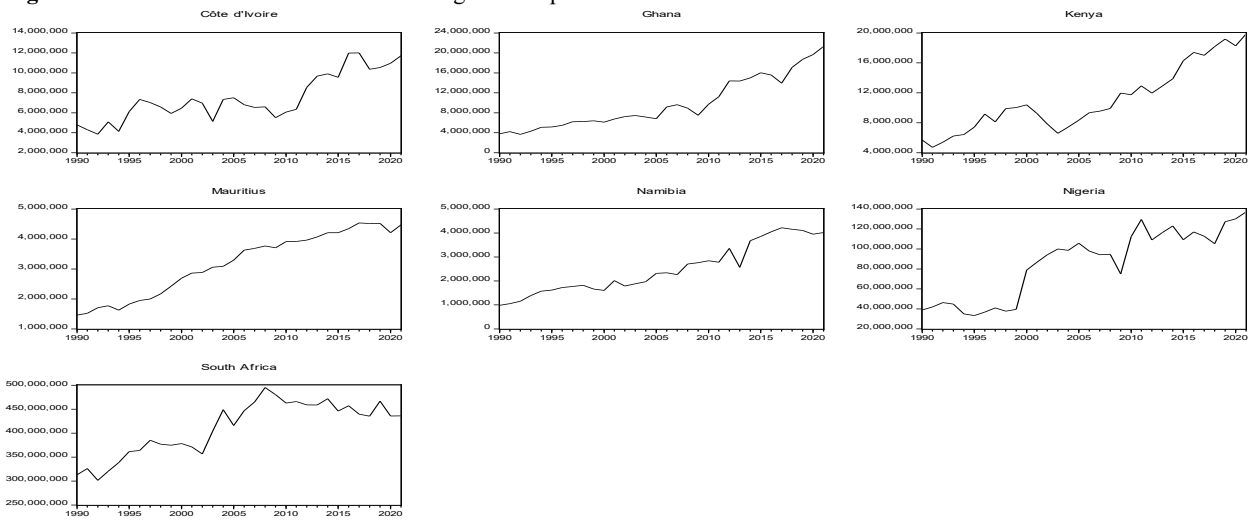
$$X_{it} = \gamma_0 + \sum_{k=1}^{m} \delta_k X_{it-k} + \sum_{l=1}^{n} \phi_j Y_{it-j} + \nu_t$$

Where Y denotes environmental indicators (CO2 or EFP), and X refers to financial development or GDP per capita.

4. Results and Discussions

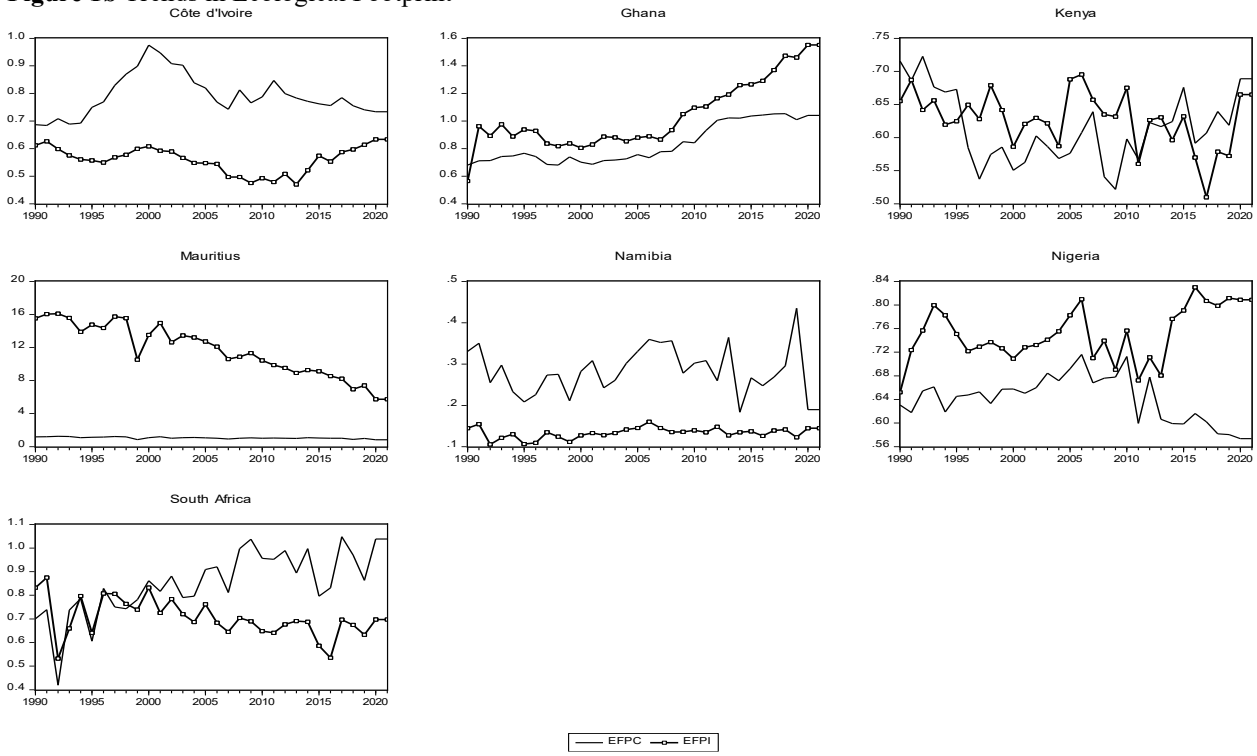
This section presents the empirical results of the study using several statistical tools, including trend analysis descriptive statistics, unit root tests, correlation analysis, cointegration tests, the ARDL model for long- and short-run estimates to test the existence of the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC), and Granger causality tests.

Figure 1a Trends in CO_2 Emissions and Ecological Footprint



Source: *Author's computation (2025) with the aid of E-view 9.0 econometric software*

Figure 1b Trends in Ecological Footprint



Source: *Author's computation (2025) with the aid of E-view 9.0 econometric software*

Figure 1 shows a steady rise in CO_2 emissions across the Sub-Saharan African countries studied, indicating a growing—though comparatively modest—contribution to global environmental degradation. For example, emissions in Côte d'Ivoire increased from 4 million tonnes in 1990 to over 10 million in 2022, while Nigeria's emissions rose from 40 million to 120 million tonnes. Figure 2 highlights ecological footprint per capita, disaggregated into cropland (EFPC) and built-up land (EFPI), with EFPC more prominent in Côte d'Ivoire, Namibia, and South Africa, and EFPI higher in Ghana, Nigeria, and Mauritius. Except for Mauritius, where a decline is noted, most countries exhibit flat or increasing ecological footprints, suggesting rising environmental pressure across the region.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Panel Data

Variable	Mean	Max.	Min.	Std. Dev.	Skew.	Kurt.	J-B	Prob.
GCO2	4.51	99.11	-26.23	13.39	2.12	14.71	1402.96	0.00
EFPC	0.73	1.24	0.18	0.25	-0.28	2.68	3.83	0.15
EFPI	2.20	16.08	0.11	4.00	2.35	7.05	348.42	0.00
FDI	2.23	10.66	-1.42	2.25	1.58	5.19	133.22	0.00
GGDPPC	1.59	12.28	-14.60	3.38	-0.75	5.81	91.92	0.00
URB	42.46	67.85	17.04	11.83	-0.19	2.64	2.47	0.29
SER	2.05	4.01	1.24	0.42	0.65	5.84	88.52	0.00
GENC	2.83	187.03	-31.43	18.01	6.48	62.24	33248.26	0.00

Source: *Author's computation (2025) with the aid of E-view 9.0 econometric software*

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 reveal substantial variability in the panel data, particularly for greenhouse gas emissions (GCO2), ecological footprint index (EFPI), and energy consumption (GENC). GCO2 has a high standard deviation (13.39) and a maximum value of 99.11, indicating wide disparities in emissions levels across countries and time, with strong right-skewness (2.12) and leptokurtosis (14.71), as confirmed by a significant Jarque-Bera (J-B) test ($p = 0.00$). EFPC is relatively stable, with a low mean (0.73) and standard deviation (0.25), and its distribution is near normal (J-B $p = 0.15$). EFPI, FDI, and GGDPPC all display significant skewness and kurtosis, suggesting non-normality in their distributions. The extreme kurtosis in GENC (62.24) and the highest J-B statistic (33,248.26) highlight the presence of outliers or volatility in energy use, which could significantly

influence regression estimates. Urbanization (URB) appears more normally distributed (J-B p = 0.29), indicating a relatively consistent demographic trend across countries.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Individual Countries

COUNTRY	GCO2	EFPC	EFPI
Côte d'Ivoire	4.32	0.79	0.56
Ghana	6.39	0.84	1.04
Kenya	4.72	0.62	0.63
Mauritius	3.79	1.06	11.66
Namibia	5.30	0.28	0.13
Nigeria	5.85	0.64	0.75
South Africa	1.21	0.85	0.70

Source: *Author's computation (2025) with the aid of E-view 9.0 econometric software*

Table 2 presents country-specific averages for carbon dioxide emissions (GCO2), ecological footprint per capita (EFPC), and ecological footprint index (EFPI) across seven Sub-Saharan African countries. Ghana and Nigeria exhibit the highest average CO_2 emissions at 6.39 and 5.85 metric tons per capita, respectively, indicating more intensive carbon outputs, possibly due to larger industrial bases and energy use. Conversely, South Africa, despite its advanced economy, reports the lowest average GCO_2 (1.21), which may reflect better energy efficiency or structural shifts toward less emission-intensive sectors. In terms of EFPC, Mauritius leads (1.06), reflecting a higher per capita demand on biological resources, while Namibia records the lowest (0.28), suggesting lower environmental pressure per person. Notably, Mauritius also displays a substantially higher EFPI (11.66), indicating a concentrated environmental footprint likely associated with its dense urban infrastructure and tourism-driven land use.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

Variable	CO2	EFPC	EFPI	GDPPC	FDI	ENC	URB	SER
CO2	1							
EFPC	0.21 (0.00)	1						
EFPI	-0.19 (0.00)	0.61 (0.00)	1					
GDPPC	0.35 0.00	0.32 0.00	0.54 0.00	1				
FDI	-0.16 (0.02)	-0.11 0.12	-0.07 (0.30)	0.09 (0.19)	1			
ENC	0.82 0.00	0.19 0.00	0.09 (0.20)	0.62 0.00	0.00 (0.94)	1		
URB	0.63 0.00	0.41 0.00	0.02 (0.73)	0.39 0.00	0.13 0.06	0.61 (0.00)	1	
SER	0.35 (0.00)	0.27 (0.00)	0.27 (0.00)	0.60 (0.00)	0.24 (0.00)	0.54 (0.00)	0.37 (0.00)	1

Source: *Author's computation (2025) with the aid of E-view 9.0 econometric software*

The correlation matrix in Table 3 reveals significant relationships between key variables of financial development, economic activity, and environmental degradation. CO_2 emissions (CO2) show a strong positive correlation with energy consumption (ENC, $r = 0.82$, $p < 0.01$) and urbanization (URB, $r = 0.63$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that rising energy use and urban expansion are major contributors to environmental degradation in Sub-Saharan Africa. A moderate positive correlation also exists between CO2 and GDP per capita ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that economic growth may exacerbate emissions. Conversely, CO2 is weakly and negatively associated with ecological footprint index (EFPI, $r = –0.19$, $p < 0.01$), reflecting possible divergences in how carbon and broader environmental pressures evolve. Notably, foreign direct investment (FDI) is negatively correlated with CO2 ($r = –0.16$, $p = 0.02$), potentially indicating that FDI in the region is not predominantly directed toward polluting

sectors, or that it may support cleaner technologies. Secondary school enrollment (SER) is positively correlated with most variables, including CO2 and GDPPC, implying that human capital development co-evolves with economic and environmental indicators.

Table 4a: Panel Data Unit Root Tests Results in Levels

Variables	*Common unit process*	*individual unit root process*		
	LLC	IPS	ADF	PP-Fisher
LCO2	-2.63**	0.37	10.31	9.72
EFPC	0.21	-0.52	17.31	33.82*
EFPI	2.06**	-0.60	28.41*	43.53*
ENC	-0.93	1.39	8.11	6.53
GDPPC	0.17	2.92	4.03	3.66
FDI	-2.25**	-3.56**	36.96**	52.69**
URB	0.07	3.60	4.61	27.41
SER	-1.80	5.72	4.87	0.64

Source: Estimated by the Author. *Note: ** and * indicate significant at 1% and 5 % levels respectively; IPS = Im, Pesaran & Shin; LLC = Levin, Lin & Chu*

Table 4b: Panel Data Unit Root Tests Results in First Differences

Variables	*Common unit process*	*individual unit root process*		
	LLC	IPS	ADF	PP-Fisher
LCO2	-7.60**	-8.61**	93.85**	176.2**
EFPC	-10.51**	-12.77**	132.8**	186.4**
EFPI	-7.13**	-13.28**	138.8**	209.4**
ENC	-6.67**	-6.79*	72.29**	165.7**
GDPPC	-4.00*	-3.28*	34.14**	69.85**
FDI	-7.49**	-10.75**	120.0**	189.4**
SER	4.03*	1.63	7.618	45.62**
URB	3.86*	3.56*	5.673	6.83

Source: Estimated by the Author. *Note: ** and * indicate significant at 1% and 5 % levels respectively; IPS = Im, Pesaran & Shin; LLC = Levin, Lin & Chu*

The panel unit root test results in Tables 4a and 4b indicate that most variables are non-stationary at levels but become stationary after first differencing, justifying the use of an ARDL modeling framework suitable for mixed integration orders. At levels, only CO_2 emissions (LCO2), foreign direct investment (FDI), and partially market indicators (e.g., EFPI in the ADF and PP tests) show signs of stationarity, while others such as GDP per capita (GDPPC), ecological footprint per capita (EFPC), and urbanization (URB) are non-stationary. However, in first differences, all variables—including EFPC, EFPI, GDPPC, FDI, and energy consumption (ENC)—are stationary at 1% significance across multiple testing approaches (LLC, IPS, ADF, and PP-Fisher), except for urbanization and school enrollment (URB and SER), which display mixed results. These outcomes validate the appropriateness of ARDL bounds testing and PMG estimation in analyzing long-run and short-run relationships among variables with differing integration properties.

Table 5: Cross-section Dependence Test Results

Equation series tested	**Pesaran CD**	**P-value**	**Abs corr**
CO2	0.635	0.516	0.144
EFC	1.123	0.239	0.195
EFPI	-0.692	0.488	0.170

Source: Author's computations (2025)

The results from the Pesaran cross-section dependence test in Table 5 show no significant cross-sectional dependence for CO_2 emissions, ecological footprint per capita (EFC), or ecological footprint index (EFPI), as indicated by p-values well above 0.05, suggesting that the panel units are sufficiently independent for reliable panel estimation.

Table 6: Results of Bounds Test of Cointegration

Country	F-statistic	I(0)	I(1)
Côte d'Ivoire	54.86	2.04	2.08
Ghana	3.72	2.04	2.08
Kenya	82.93	2.04	2.08
Mauritius	11.34	2.04	2.08
Namibia	13.44	2.04	2.08
Nigeria	5.12	2.04	2.08
South Africa	2.12	2.04	2.08

Source: *Author's computation (2025)*

The bounds test results in Table 6 indicate cointegration between financial development and environmental degradation in all countries except South Africa, as their F-statistics exceed the upper critical bound (I(1) = 2.08), confirming long-run relationships in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Namibia, and Nigeria.

Table 7: Short Run PMG Estimates

Variable	*LCO2*			*EFPC*			*EFPI*		
	Coeff.	t-ratio	prob.	Coeff.	t-ratio	prob.	Coeff.	t-ratio	prob.
Constant	3.172	2.934	0.00	0.030	0.140	0.89	0.510	0.423	0.67
ΔLGDPPC	0.135	0.247	0.81	1.490	2.342	0.02	8.579	1.285	0.20
$\Delta LGDPPC_{t-1}$	0.237	0.663	0.51	0.698	1.537	0.13	-5.896	-0.902	0.37
ΔLENC	0.330	1.236	0.22	-0.270	-1.156	0.25	-0.624	-1.213	0.23
$\Delta LENC_{t-1}$	0.277	1.491	0.14	-0.279	-1.068	0.29	0.152	0.164	0.87
ΔURB	3.655	1.501	0.14	0.678	1.241	0.22	-6.678	-1.009	0.32
ΔURB_{t-1}	-3.518	-1.450	0.15	-1.508	-2.048	0.04	-0.769	-0.729	0.47
ΔFDI	0.007	0.549	0.58	-0.011	-1.479	0.14	-0.039	-1.376	0.17
ΔFDI_{t-1}	0.000	0.020	0.98	-0.004	-0.925	0.36	0.027	0.774	0.44
ΔSER	3.688	1.238	0.22	3.774	0.998	0.32	27.358	1.100	0.27
ΔSER_{t-1}	4.828	0.990	0.33	-1.148	-0.299	0.77	-48.494	-1.109	0.27
ECM_{t-1}	-0.511	-2.882	0.01	-0.659	-4.042	0.00	-0.010	-0.153	0.88
S.E. of reg.	0.088			0.000			-0.047		
Mean dep. Var.	0.038			0.049			0.401		

Source: *Author's computation (2025)*

The short-run Panel Mean Group (PMG) estimates presented in Table 7 reveal mixed and largely insignificant effects of key explanatory variables on environmental degradation indicators across selected Sub-Saharan African countries. Specifically, changes in GDP per capita (ΔLGDPPC) have no significant short-term effect on CO_2 emissions (LCO_2), but significantly increase ecological footprint per capita (EFPC) ($p = 0.02$), suggesting that income growth in the short term may intensify resource use and environmental pressure—consistent with the early-stage dynamics of the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) hypothesis (Grossman & Krueger, 1995; Narayan & Narayan, 2010). The insignificant impact of GDP per capita on the ecological footprint index (EFPI) and CO_2 suggests delayed or context-specific responses, possibly reflecting lags in policy or technological adaptation. Energy consumption (ΔLENC) and urbanization (ΔURB) also display no statistically significant immediate effect, though lagged urbanization negatively and significantly impacts EFPC ($p = 0.04$), implying a possible adjustment effect where prior urban expansion moderates environmental pressure over time—a finding that aligns with the structural transition perspectives in EKC theory (UNCTAD, 2012).

Furthermore, the error correction terms (ECMt-1) are significantly negative for both CO_2 (–0.511, $p = 0.01$) and EFPC (–0.659, $p = 0.00$), confirming the existence of stable long-run equilibria and the system's ability to correct deviations from long-term environmental trends. The insignificance of ECM in the EFPI model indicates that broader environmental stresses captured by the index are less responsive to short-run shocks, reinforcing the idea that structural and policy reforms are required to address cumulative ecological pressures (Arrow et al., 1995). Overall, these results reflect the complexity of environmental dynamics in developing contexts, underscoring the limited efficacy of short-term economic growth in improving environmental outcomes and supporting the need for comprehensive, long-run sustainability strategies in line with revised EKC interpretations (Dasgupta et al., 2002; Majeed & Mazhar, 2019).

Table 8a: Long Run PMG Estimates

Variable	*LCO2*			*EFPC*			*EFPI*		
	Coeff.	t-ratio	prob.	Coeff.	t-ratio	prob.	Coeff.	t-ratio	prob.
LGDPPC	0.819	4.330	0.00	0.045	0.563	0.58	8.023	2.444	0.02
LENC	0.178	3.025	0.00	0.080	2.244	0.03	-4.659	-2.661	0.01
URB	0.076	4.063	0.00	0.028	8.209	0.00	0.142	1.595	0.11
FDI	0.004	0.389	0.70	0.003	2.220	0.03	-0.235	-2.759	0.01
SER	-0.417	-0.716	0.48	-0.687	-8.770	0.00	-10.572	-2.372	0.02

Source: *Author's computation (2025)*

The long-run PMG estimates in Table 8a provide robust empirical support for the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) hypothesis, particularly in relation to CO_2 emissions and the ecological footprint index (EFPI). Specifically, GDP per capita (LGDPPC) exerts a strong and statistically significant positive effect on CO_2 emissions (0.819, p = 0.00) and EFPI (8.023, p = 0.02), indicating that as income increases, environmental degradation also intensifies in the long run—consistent with the initial upward trajectory of the EKC. However, its non-significant effect on the ecological footprint per capita (EFPC) suggests that income-driven environmental impacts may not uniformly translate across all dimensions of ecological stress. This asymmetry aligns with previous findings that CO_2 emissions and broader ecological indicators may respond differently to economic growth (Friedl & Getzner, 2003; Majeed & Mazhar, 2019). Moreover, energy consumption (LENC) significantly increases CO_2 and EFPC, but notably reduces EFPI, reflecting the differentiated environmental effects of energy use depending on the specific metric assessed—a dynamic also observed in studies such as Saboori et al. (2012) and Tiwari et al. (2013).

Table 8b: Individual Country Long Run Results

Variable	***Cote d'Ivoire***		***Ghana***		***Kenya***		***Mauritius***		***Namibia***		***Nigeria***		***South Africa***	
	Coeff.	Prob.	Coeff.	Prob.	Coeff.	Prob.	Coeff.	Prob.	Coeff.	Prob.	Coeff.	Prob.	Coeff.	Prob.
LGDPPC	-2.113	0.106	4.138	0.136	2.988	0.081	-5.737	0.005	-1.151	0.138	-0.611	0.037	-1.563	0.179
LENC	0.798	0.323	-0.747	0.535	-3.227	0.010	0.612	0.027	-0.050	0.744	1.030	0.001	1.719	0.036
FDI	0.348	0.053	-0.171	0.006	0.081	0.031	0.001	0.933	-0.073	0.043	0.006	0.735	0.010	0.282
URB	0.335	0.258	0.850	0.001	2.143	0.016	-5.698	0.001	-0.032	0.395	-0.035	0.509	0.562	0.175
SER	0.717	0.937	-26.90	0.002	-15.003	0.027	-16.42	0.013	4.381	0.092	1.776	0.275	-0.071	0.565
Constant	16.869	0.069	1.048	0.893	17.428	0.155	341.2	0.007	17.095	0.047	16.09	0.000	-0.252	0.200

Source: *Author's computation (2025)*

The long-run country-specific estimates in Table 8b reveal significant heterogeneity in the relationship between economic growth and environmental degradation across the selected Sub-Saharan African countries, highlighting the context-dependent applicability of the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) hypothesis. For instance, Kenya and Mauritius demonstrate statistically significant results for GDP per capita (LGDPPC), with Kenya showing a positive and near-significant coefficient (2.988, p = 0.081), suggesting early-stage growth-induced environmental pressure, while Mauritius exhibits a significant negative coefficient (–5.737, p = 0.005), aligning with the EKC's post-turning point decline in degradation. Conversely, countries such as Nigeria (–0.611, p = 0.037) show modest but significant reductions in environmental degradation with rising income, reinforcing the idea that the EKC may be observable under certain institutional and developmental conditions (Narayan & Narayan, 2010; Shahbaz et al., 2012). Energy consumption (LENC) is a critical driver of environmental outcomes, with mixed signs across countries—significantly increasing degradation in Nigeria and South Africa, but reducing it in Kenya (–3.227, p = 0.010), suggesting divergent energy efficiency levels or renewable energy adoption.

Table 9: Results for Testing Kuznets Hypothesis

Variable	*LCO2*			*EFPC*			*EFPI*		
	Coeff.	t-ratio	prob.	Coeff.	t-ratio	prob.	Coeff.	t-ratio	prob.
Long Run Equation									
LGDPPC	254.7	8.540	0.00	24.08	2.995	0.00	-303.6	-10.266	0.00
LGDPPC2	32.06	8.489	0.00	2.957	2.880	0.00	39.31	10.338	0.00
LGDPPC3	-1.337	-8.434	0.00	-0.121	-2.783	0.01	-1.690	-10.436	0.00

LENC	0.921	7.119	0.00	-0.026	-1.259	0.21	-0.022	-0.365	0.72
URB	0.019	2.810	0.01	-0.005	-1.304	0.20	0.058	4.737	0.00
FDI	-0.014	-1.670	0.10	0.006	3.623	0.00	0.039	9.051	0.00
SER	0.105	1.477	0.14	0.167	1.845	0.07	-0.038	-0.196	0.84
Short Run Equation									
ECM_{t-1}	-0.517	-2.864	0.00	-0.887	-5.399	0.00	-0.560	-2.739	0.01
$\Delta LGDPPC$	1572.2	2.178	0.03	1968.1	0.838	0.40	2380.5	0.851	0.40
$\Delta LGDPPC_{t-1}$	--	--	--	-1385.2	-1.508	0.13	806.6	0.925	0.36
$\Delta LGDPPC^2$	-206.3	-2.159	0.03	-227.9	-0.830	0.41	-278.8	-0.844	0.40
$\Delta LGDPPC^2_{t-1}$	--	--	--	169.1	1.588	0.12	-86.74	-0.818	0.42
$\Delta LGDPPC^3$	9.043	2.137	0.03	8.816	0.825	0.41	10.996	0.846	0.40
$\Delta LGDPPC^3_{t-1}$	--	--	--	-6.903	-1.679	0.10	3.076	0.709	0.48
Mean dep. var	0.037								
S.E. of reg.	0.096								

Source: *Author's computation (2025)*

The results from Table 9 offer strong empirical support for a non-linear, cubic Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) relationship between economic growth (proxied by log of GDP per capita and its squared and cubic terms) and environmental degradation across all three indicators—CO_2 emissions (LCO_2), ecological footprint per capita (EFPC), and ecological footprint index (EFPI). Specifically, the signs and statistical significance of the coefficients for LGDPPC (positive), $LGDPPC^2$ (positive), and $LGDPPC^3$ (negative) confirm the existence of an N-shaped EKC, implying that environmental degradation initially increases with income, declines after reaching a certain threshold, but may rise again at higher levels of income (Moomaw & Unruh, 1997; Carvalho & Almeida, 2010). This supports the generalized EKC model, particularly relevant to long-term dynamics in developing regions like Sub-Saharan Africa where late-stage growth may reignite environmental stress without sustained green reforms.

Moreover, the error correction terms (ECMt-1) are negative and significant for all models, confirming the presence of stable long-run relationships and suggesting that any short-term disequilibrium in environmental degradation adjusts back toward equilibrium over time. The strong positive influence of urbanization and FDI on EFPI and EFPC, respectively, aligns with findings by Saboori et al. (2012) and Omri et al. (2015), which suggest that foreign investment and urban expansion can intensify ecological pressures if not managed with environmental safeguards. Additionally, the weak short-run significance of the GDP-related terms indicates that structural changes in environmental outcomes materialize primarily in the long run. These findings reinforce the critique of the simplistic EKC model and call for dynamic, policy-sensitive interpretations of the income–environment nexus (Arrow et al., 1995; Neumayer, 2002).

Table 10: Causality Test Result

Null Hypothesis:	W-Stat.	Zbar-Stat.	Prob.
LCO2 does not homogeneously cause LGDPPC	3.427	1.398	0.162
LGDPPC does not homogeneously cause LCO2	6.513	4.840	0.000
EFPC does not homogeneously cause LGDPPC	2.740	0.631	0.528
LGDPPC does not homogeneously cause EFPC	8.331	6.868	0.000
EFPI does not homogeneously cause LGDPPC	3.061	0.990	0.322
LGDPPC does not homogeneously cause EFPI	12.161	11.140	0.000

Source: *Author's computation (2025)*

The causality test results in Table 10 provide strong empirical evidence of unidirectional causality running from economic growth (proxied by log of GDP per capita) to all three measures of environmental degradation CO_2 emissions (LCO_2), ecological footprint per capita (EFPC), and ecological footprint index (EFPI) at a 1% significance level, confirming the proposition of income-driven environmental pressure articulated in the Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) literature (Grossman & Krueger, 1993; Shahbaz et al., 2012). Conversely, there is no statistically significant causality from any of the

environmental indicators to economic growth, which aligns with the notion that environmental degradation is largely a consequence, not a cause, of growth processes, especially in developing regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa (Narayan & Narayan, 2010; Kwakwa & Adu, 2016). These findings reinforce the imperative for sustainable development policies that integrate environmental safeguards early in the growth trajectory to mitigate the long-run ecological consequences of economic expansion.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study provides robust empirical evidence supporting a non-linear Environmental Kuznets Curve (EKC) relationship between economic growth and environmental degradation across selected Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. The cubic functional form of the EKC observed for all three indicators CO_2 emissions, ecological footprint per capita (EFPC), and ecological footprint index (EFPI) validates the presence of an N-shaped dynamic, wherein environmental degradation rises with income at early stages, declines after a threshold, and potentially rises again at higher income levels. The long-run results reveal that GDP per capita significantly increases CO_2 and EFPI, while energy consumption and foreign direct investment (FDI) show heterogeneous effects depending on the environmental indicator. The panel error correction model further confirms long-term equilibrium adjustment in environmental outcomes. Importantly, causality tests affirm that GDP per capita Granger-causes all three environmental degradation indicators, reinforcing the centrality of income growth in shaping ecological trajectories in SSA.

Given the confirmed N-shaped EKC pattern, policymakers in SSA should avoid over-reliance on economic growth alone as a means of environmental improvement. The potential for renewed environmental degradation at higher income levels underscores the need for proactive regulatory frameworks and investments in green infrastructure to ensure that development transitions into a sustainable trajectory. Governments should enforce environmental regulations, incentivize renewable energy adoption, and establish pollution taxes or emissions trading systems to decouple income growth from ecological stress. Moreover, given the differentiated impacts of FDI across environmental indicators, investment policies must prioritize sectors with low environmental externalities and integrate sustainability criteria in foreign investment approvals.

Education and technological innovation emerge as critical levers for long-run ecological resilience. Expanding access to quality secondary and tertiary education especially in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) can foster human capital capable of developing and applying eco-efficient technologies. Urbanization, while a potential environmental stressor, can be managed sustainably through integrated urban planning, investment in public transport, green spaces, and energy-efficient infrastructure. Energy policy reform is also essential: governments should implement energy diversification strategies that reduce reliance on fossil fuels and scale up solar, wind, and hydroelectric capacity, as seen in Kenya's relative energy efficiency gains. Collectively, these targeted strategies will allow SSA economies to navigate the EKC path toward sustained environmental and economic well-being.

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Comparative Analysis of Newspaper Framing of the Genres on Human Trafficking

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Abstract. The study examines ways in which the Nigerian newspapers often frame their reports and editorials on human trafficking. The objective was to clarify the media's narrative role in shaping public understanding and influencing policy discourse. The paper uses framing and priming model as its conceptual framework. The researchers used a sample comprising 346 Issues published by the Nigerian Guardian, Punch, and Vanguard to evaluate the manner in which the Nigerian newspapers often frame their reports on human trafficking. The findings revealed that the stories on human trafficking accounted for over 60% of the straight news stories published on trafficking in the period under review. The study noted the genres journalists used to frame the stories on trafficking tend to suggest to readers how they should interpret the stories on trafficking and meaning (what) they should infer from the stories on human trafficking, to underscore the fact that newspapers serve as both communication channels and ideological instruments. Consequently, the study advises the media to diversify their narrative forms beyond straightforward reporting by incorporating more features, editorials, and opinion articles to enrich contextual framing with a view to providing justice for the victims of human trafficking.

Keywords: Human Trafficking, Media Framing, Policy Discourse, Advocacy, Nigerian Newspapers.

1. Introduction

Human trafficking is a widespread global incident that manifests itself in various socio-cultural settings and sometimes formed the basis of media representations across cultural boundaries. The United Nations (2001), reported on the message given by the then Secretary-General Kofi Annan on human trafficking as the most egregious human rights violations of their time. He further said that human trafficking is rooted in social and economic conditions in the victim's country of origin which has grown lamentably widespread in recent years (UNDP, 2001). In Nigeria for example, the portrayal of human trafficking by newspapers often reflects the underlying journalistic ideologies and societal perceptions that influence much of political, economic, and institutional factors (Chukwuma, Uchenna, & Ibeh, 2021). The genre of news storytelling, whether narrative, expository, or sensationalist; plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding, discourse, and representation of the victims of human trafficking (Osisanwo, 2024). Journalistic news framing has been used in several ways by journalists, but media also reinforce the prevailing negative attitude of a section of the public towards the victims of human trafficking (Olley et al., 2023). Empirical evidence shows that thematic framing, as opposed to episodic reporting, enhances awareness of the structural causes of trafficking and encourages public engagement with the issues on human trafficking (Deckard, 2021).

The choice of the genres used by newspapers in writing their stories on human trafficking have significantly influenced the narratives and the different perspectives from which the public views the subject of human trafficking-whether they be on the need to criminalize the act, or they are on the prepositions to protect the victims, or they are rather on the argument on the need for advocacy-oriented reportage by the media to prosecute the stakeholders and beneficiaries of human trafficking (Akinwalere & Bello, 2021). In the Nigerian context, these

genres often fluctuate between advocacy journalism and sensational reporting, impacting policy framing and media-driven interventions (Kiss, Fotheringhame, Kyegombe, McAlpine, Abilio, Kyamulabi, Walakira, Devries & Tanton, 2022). Understanding how Nigerian newspapers construct the narratives on human trafficking is important. Yet, it has been observed that journalists framed their stories on human trafficking using different genres. The usage of genres by journalists is essential for assessing media's influence of government's policy on human trafficking and the impact of the policy in society. Recent studies indicate that the way and manner the media write and present their stories on human trafficking tend to shapes public perceptions and government's legislations on human trafficking (Amadasun, 2022). Upon these subsisting arguments on human trafficking, this paper conducts a comparative analysis of the genres often used by the Nigerian newspapers to influence public opinion and stance on human trafficking.

1.1 Earlier Studies of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a significant global incident. Arguably, Nigeria has been allegedly spotted as one of the major sources and transit routes for human trafficking. The way newspapers frame complex issues on trafficking play a crucial role in shaping public perception of human trafficking. However, existing empirical research has not sufficiently examined how Nigerian newspapers used various story genres, such as investigative reports, human interest angle, and straight news, to portray the incidences of human trafficking (Osisanwo, 2024; Acién, 2024). News framing has the potential to impact on citizens' understanding of human trafficking and elicits public empathy for the victims of human trafficking. Also, it facilitates state interventions in human trafficking. The research conducted by Olajimbiti & Osisanwo, (2024), show that media representations of trafficking often sensationalize or criminalize the victims of trafficking instead of humanizing or contextualizing their experiences. Similarly, the study carried out by Osisanwo (2024) found that the thematic framing of trafficking by the Nigerian print media tends to have undermined the root cause of human trafficking, which is partly attributed to poverty of the victims of human trafficking.

Despite the media's role as an agenda-setting institution, evidence however indicates elements of inconsistence and limited diversity of the usage of the appropriate genres by journalists to mitigate the practices of human trafficking (Osisanwo, 2024). Beside Olley et al., (2023) providing an empirical insight into human trafficking, their study also revealed the existence of an underutilization of investigative storytelling to identify the perpetrators of human trafficking. The lack of comparative analysis of the specific genres used by the Nigerian newspapers seems to have limited the chances of society developing a comprehensive policy framework aimed at preventing the occurrences of human trafficking. Understanding how different genres contribute to shaping public perception of the anti-trafficking measures taken by governments and non-governmental organizations, is essential on the progress of development-oriented journalism on human trafficking. Therefore, a nuanced and comparative exploration of story genres in the Nigerian newspapers is urgently needed to promote responsible journalism and guide strategic policy-decisions on human trafficking.

In spite of the growing scholarship and research activities on human trafficking, media coverage of the incident still trails behind the new inventions and measures to protect the victims of human trafficking. For instance, Akinwalere & Bello (2021) examined thematic emphases in Nigerian dailies, and yet they did not differentiate in their submissions the impact of genres and framing in the effort to reduce the incidences of human trafficking. Osisanwo (2024) investigated the scope of awareness created by the media on human trafficking. They also overlooked ways in which distinctive genres shaped audience's perception of the issue. Cho and Lee, (2023) conducted a discourse analysis of online news stories on human trafficking, and yet they did not include in their study a comparative analysis of the genres used by journalists in framing stories on trafficking. Olajimbiti & Osisanwo (2024) highlighted sensationalist tones in human trafficking reporting, but they did not consider how reporting styles vary depending on the purposes of the particular genres in the news story. Recently, Okorie and Okeja (2024) evaluated journalistic framing techniques, but their study seemed to have ignored the need for a systematic analysis of the usage of genres in the newspapers. Adeyeye (2025) identifies some specific frames used by selected newspapers in reporting about human trafficking, but the researcher did not compare the genres/frames used in reporting the issue. This perceived gap in knowledge stresses the need for one to have an empirical insight into how the Nigerian newspapers often frame their

stories on human trafficking. In light of the foregoing arguments, the researchers considered having expanded objectives to assess how the Nigerian newspapers often frame their stories on human trafficking. The study specifically aimed at: (1) Analyzing ways newspapers used story genres for framing of stories on human trafficking; (2) identifying the dominant frames used by each of the newspapers; and (3) examining the implication of genre-specific framing for policy advocacy and anti-trafficking interventions.

2. Constructs

The study uses framing and priming models as intellectual constructs to explain ways and manner journalists could frame newspaper content of the various genres of press coverage on human trafficking. It is pertinent to note that while priming involves the decision by the media to use whatever criterion or element to evaluate or judge the success and failure of a government, an organization or individual, framing on the other hand, relies on the ability of journalists to use words and phrases to frame the content and direction of media stories to elicit the kind of response which they had intended that the public gives to the given issue, an event or a phenomenon. The impact of the media in society, in a sense, is not consequent upon the number of stories they write or broadcast, but the manner the stories were prepared and presented to the public. Framing is embedded in the intention of journalists regarding the purpose they desire to achieve through an item of a news report or feature. It is arguable, though, that, two journalists are likely to report on the same event from two different perspectives. The differences in their stories are embedded in the manner in which the stories were framed and presented to the public. Framing posits that media not only report about events, but also actively shape audience's perception of the event by emphasizing specific aspects of reality and falsehood about the event (Entman, 1993).

Consequently, media reports on human trafficking cannot in themselves stop the spread of trafficking, except for frame the stories were framed to alter the predisposition and view of the target audiences on human trafficking. Using framing and priming models allow the media to choose what to write about on human trafficking and ways in which they should write and present the stories on trafficking to the public. Hence, it has become necessary for one conduct a comparative analysis of the framing on the genres on human trafficking. By comparing the different story genres used by journalists would enable the public to know some of the covert ways by which the media contribute to the reduction of the incidences of human trafficking in society. As earlier noted, much of the study that has been carried out by researchers on human trafficking seemed to have focused on the causes and remedies of trafficking; even a few the studies that examined media impact on trafficking, discussed some of the overt ways the media contribute to curtailing the spread of human trafficking. This study focuses on the framing of the genres of newspaper coverage of human trafficking. For instance, a feature story may humanize victims and elicit public empathy toward the victims, while a news story may focus on the statistics or the number of occurrences of human trafficking within a given period under review.

3. Literature

Part of the literature on human trafficking reveals a complex interplay of social, economic, and media dynamics that are essential for understanding how Nigerian newspapers portray human trafficking. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Human Trafficking in Nigeria (NAPTIP, 2003) has consistently confronted institutional barriers hindering the fight against human trafficking. Also, corrupt practices, such as bribery, impersonation, misuse of donations, and collusion with traffickers, were identified among several anti-human trafficking agencies (Agwu, 2025). It has been alleged that the body sometimes struggles validating eye-witness accounts on human trafficking (Okorie & Okeja, 2024; US State Department, 2024, Agwu, 2025). Studies on journalistic framing indicate that journalists write more of straight news when reporting on human trafficking (Adekoya, Okoro & Onyenankeya, 2022; Adeyeye, 2025). According to Adeyeye and Egbulefu (2022), the coverage of human trafficking has remain infrequently reported and even when reported about, the stories sometimes lack a considerable depth of evidence surrounding the incident, which perhaps impedes the public's knowledge and understanding of the causes and remedies of human trafficking. Also, Adeyeye (2025) examines specific frames used by selected newspapers in reporting on human trafficking, but their framing of the issue was somewhat too narrow a scope to bring about behavioral and attitudinal change of society towards the victims of human trafficking. These trends have significant policy implications: overly

simplified narratives on trafficking can hinder society from developing a comprehensive framework to prevent human trafficking, while on the other hand, weak institutional capacity and community barriers to anti-human trafficking measures, seems to have complicated the role of the media as advocates and enforcers of measures to curtail trafficking in society (Okorie & Okeja, 2024; Adeyeye & Egbulefu, 2022; Adeyeye, 2025).

International framing research emphasizes the importance of story genres in shaping public and policy discourse. Samuel (2014) demonstrates that media frames often depict victims as helpless, thereby creating dramatic dichotomies that influence societal response to trafficking. Sanford, Martínez, and Weitzer (2016) reviewed some of the US's newspapers and found that sensationalized framing often obscures the deeper socio-economic drivers of trafficking and reinforces gender related assumptions, and thereby limiting policy interventions on human trafficking. Gulati (2011) noted that society seems to reliance more on official sources for news and information on human trafficking, such as the Police and court reports, leaving little room to accommodate the privileged information from the grassroot or victims of child abuse. This official dependence syndrome on human trafficking has restricted the diversity of frames and marginalizes community voices on human trafficking. Osisanwo's (2024) corpus-assisted critical discourse study by Nairaland highlighted how online narratives utilize negative lexical framing to portray victims as defenseless and traffickers as exploitative, ritualistic, and criminal. This digital discourse has complemented the mainstream media analysis by illustrating how public sentiment and stigmatization are formed outside formal news channels, with significant implications for policy reception and community engagement. Building upon these findings, this study focuses on the story genres found in the Nigerian newspapers, making this research timely and significant. By examining how different genres, such as straight news, investigative reports, and feature stories, depict human trafficking, has enhances public understanding of ways in which journalists can support multisectoral policy responses. Diverse narratives used by journalists can foster greater empathy, policy awareness, and systemic solutions to human trafficking (Adeyeye & Egbulefu, 2022; Sanford et al., 2016). Consequent upon these findings, a more nuanced portrayal of human trafficking may help dismantle stereotypical description of human trafficking in society, and subsequently reveal the major causes of human trafficking.

4. Research Methodology

The study used the content analysis approach as its research design. The approach was particularly well-suited for analyzing the manifest content of the newspaper communications of the *Guardian, Punch* and *Vangaurd* on human trafficking. The study population comprised of 3,288 Issues published by the newspapers between January 1, 2016, and December 31, 2018. A sample size of 346 Issues of three newspaper editions was considered appropriate drawing on Krejci and Morgan (1970)'s sample size model. The study used systematic sampling technique to select the newspaper Issues which constituted the units of analysis of the paper. The sampling interval for the study entails selecting every 12th Issue of each edition within the sample interval of the paper. Data collection involved the use of coding sheets and coding guides, which were designed to record numerical representations of various content categories. The coded data were drawn from different story genres, including straight news, features, editorials, opinion articles, and letters to the editor. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Holst's (1969) formula, which yielded a coefficient of 0.86, above the acceptable thresholds of 0.70 as recommended by Wimmer and Dominick (2011). Validity was established through face validation conducted using research Assistants.

5. Data Presentation and Analysis

Objective 1: Analyzing story genres framing human trafficking narratives in Nigerian newspapers

The first objective of this study is to examine how Nigerian newspapers utilize various story genres to frame narratives about human trafficking in a comparative manner. This objective specifically investigates how *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* employ distinct story genres to frame human trafficking, revealing genre-specific patterns that affect public perception and policy discussions. By comparatively analyzing the data presented in Tables 1.1 and 1.2, this study uncovers narrative strategies that are crucial for informed and genre-sensitive interventions against trafficking in Nigeria.

Table 1.1: Story Genre Used in Reporting Human Trafficking in *The Guardian* Newspaper

	Editorial		Straight news		Opinion articles		Letters-to-editor		Features	
Year	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2016	3	8.8	21	61.8	6	17.6	0	0.0	4	11.8
2017	0	0.0	20	57.1	12	34.3	0	0.0	3	8.6
2018	0	0.0	19	52.8	10	27.8	6	16.7	1	2.8

Source: *Content Analysis (2025)*

The findings indicate that *The Guardian* newspaper predominantly frames human trafficking through the genre of straight news, which overshadows more interpretative formats such as features or letters to the editor. This preference for event-driven reporting over analytical discourse suggests a structural inclination towards episodic framing. As noted by Osisanwo (2024), such framing can limit public understanding of the systemic factors driving human trafficking. From 2016 to 2018, straight news articles dominated the coverage, while features and opinion articles were only marginally present. This pattern of framing aligns with the observations made by Adeyeye (2025), who argue that Nigerian media often simplify the complexities of human trafficking. Equally, Olley et. al., (2023) emphasize that this type of framing diminishes reader engagement with preventive policies. This critique resonates with the concerns raised by Adeyeye and Egbulefu (2022) regarding the oversimplification of narratives in media coverage.

Table 1.2: Story Genre Used in Reporting Human Trafficking in *Vanguard* Newspaper

	Editorial		Straight news		Opinion articles		Letters-to-editor		Features	
Year	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2016	0	0.0	23	71.9	1	3.1	0	0.0	8	25.0
2017	0	0.0	30	83.3	2	5.6	0	0.0	4	11.1
2018	0	0.0	23	76.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	23.3

Source: *Content Analysis (2025)*

The findings presented in Table 1.2 indicate that straight news consistently dominated the Vanguard's coverage of human trafficking from 2016 to 2018, comprising over 70% of the content each year, with feature articles appearing at a much lower rate. This prevalence of straight news suggests a tendency towards episodic framing, which may limit public engagement with the broader structural aspects of trafficking. Empirical studies, such as those by Uzochukwu, Eze and Obioma (2023), demonstrate that the genre of news influences audience interpretation and policy responses (*Journal of African Media Studies*). Similarly, Olley et al., (2023) emphasize that the way Nigerian newspapers frame issues affects anti-trafficking strategies. In line with the findings of Osisanwo (2024), the underuse of editorials and opinion articles represents a missed opportunity for effective policy framing.

Objective 2: Dominant framing patterns across Nigerian newspaper genres on human trafficking.

This objective examines how Nigerian newspapers frame the issue of human trafficking by analyzing the dominant narrative structures employed. It guides the analysis of prevalent frames within different genres. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 highlight the variations in framing between The Guardian and The Punch, demonstrating the media's role in shaping policy discourse and public perception regarding trafficking.

Table 2.1: Frames Used by *the Guardian* Newspaper in Reporting Human Trafficking

	Response frame		Human Interest frame		Economic frame		Attribution of responsibility frame		Conspiracy frame		Enforcement frame		legal frame		Rescue frame		Support frame		Social frame	
Year	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2016	5	14.7	1	2.9	1	2.9	2	5.9	1	2.9	7	20.6	5	14.7	2	5.9	8	23.5	2	5.9
2017	4	10.0	0	0.0	4	10.0	1	2.5	3	7.5	8	20.0	6	15.0	4	10.0	9	22.5	1	2.5
2018	8	22.2	0	0.0	1	2.8	2	5.6	2	5.6	5	13.9	3	8.3	4	11.1	10	27.8	1	2.8

Source: *Content Analysis (2025)*

The study indicates that The Guardian primarily used the support frame over the three years analyzed. This suggests a tendency to portray victims as needing aid rather than focusing solely on crime reporting. This finding aligns with observations by (Okorie & Okeja, 2024), who noted that Nigerian media often favors victim-centered narratives. In a similar vein, enforcement and legal frames were also prominent, indicating a secondary focus on state authority and judicial recourse, which is supported by Agwu, (2025). The decline of human interest and conspiracy frames suggests a deliberate avoidance of sensationalism, reflecting insights from Okorie and Okeja (2024). On the whole, The Guardian's choice

of genre appears to be inclined toward policy and reform, reinforcing the argument by Olley et al., (2023) that frame selection is indicative of the institutional editorial philosophy.

Table 2.2: Frames Used by the Punch Newspaper in Reporting Human Trafficking

	Response frame		Human Interest frame		Economic frame		Attribution of responsibility frame		Conspiracy frame		Enforcement frame		legal frame		Rescue frame		Support frame		Social frame	
Year	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2016	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	14.0	0	0.0	3	7.0	20	46.5	7	16.3	4	9.3	3	7.0	0	0.0
2017	3	9.7	3	9.7	2	6.5	0	0.0	2	6.5	13	41.9	0	0.0	5	16.1	3	9.7	0	0.0
2018	3	7.3	1	2.4	3	7.3	0	0.0	4	9.8	11	26.8	6	14.6	8	19.5	5	12.2	0	0.0

Source: *Content Analysis (2025)*

The study also reveals that The Punch newspaper predominantly focused on legal and enforcement frames in its coverage of human trafficking, especially between 2016 and 2018. This indicates a strong emphasis on criminal justice issues. In 2016, legal frames were the most prominent, comprising 46.5% of the coverage, followed by 41.9% in 2017. This focus on legal aspects overshadowed human-interest or rescue frames, which were only marginally featured over the years. This trend marginalizes the human-centered dimension of trafficking and aligns with previous research indicating that media in conflict zones tend to emphasize punitive narratives over empathetic ones (Umechukwu et al., 2023; Adeyeye & Egbulefu, 2022). Although economic and support frames did appear occasionally, they were not dominant, indicating a limited range of framing diversity. These patterns reflect a systemic editorial focus in Nigeria's press on institutional responses rather than on the socio-structural causes or the rehabilitation of victims.

Objective 3: Genre-specific framing implications for policy advocacy and anti-trafficking interventions in Nigeria.

This objective examines how genre-specific framing in Nigerian newspapers shapes public understanding of human trafficking. By analyzing narrative patterns in The Punch (2016) and The Vanguard (2017), it aims to uncover how different story genres influence policy discourse. The goal is to explore how framing can enhance advocacy efforts and drive targeted anti-trafficking interventions in Nigeria.

Table 3.1: Crosstabulation of Trafficking Frames across Punch Newspaper Sources, 2016

			The Punch, 2016						
			Government	NGOs/Human trafficking advocate	News agency/ reporters	Court personnel	Nigerian Armed Forces/Paramilitary	Others	Total
The Punch, 2016	Economic frame	Count	3	3	0	0	0	0	6
		% within The Punch, 2016	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	11.1%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	22.2%
	Conspiracy frame	Count	0	1	2	0	0	0	3
		% within The Punch, 2016	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.0%	3.7%	7.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%
	Enforcement frame	Count	0	0	1	3	10	4	18
		% within The Punch, 2016	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%	16.7%	55.6%	22.2%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	3.7%	11.1%	37.0%	14.8%	66.7%
Total		Count	3	4	3	3	10	4	27
		% within The Punch, 2016	11.1%	14.8%	11.1%	11.1%	37.0%	14.8%	100.0%
		% of Total	11.1%	14.8%	11.1%	11.1%	37.0%	14.8%	100.0%

Source: *Content Analysis (2025)*

The findings indicate that the framing of human trafficking in The Punch (2016) exhibits a genre-specific emphasis with significant policy implications. The predominance of the enforcement frame (66.7%), particularly from Nigerian Armed Forces (37%) and court personnel (11.1%), reflects a punitive and reactive approach that marginalizes preventive advocacy. Government and NGO sources primarily used economic frames, suggesting a fragmented narrative landscape. This divergence in genre risks hindering

unified policy advocacy, as recent empirical studies emphasize the importance of coherent media framing in influencing anti-trafficking policy (Osisanwo, 2024). When reporting focuses on enforcement-heavy discourse while neglecting structural causes, it limits public engagement and institutional response. Therefore, framing strategies must be intentionally aligned across genres to enable effective, multi-sectoral interventions.

Table 3.2: Crosstabulation of Human Trafficking across Vanguard Newspaper of 2017

			Vanguard, 2017						
			Government	NGOs/Human trafficking advocate	News agency/ reporters	Court personnel	Nigerian Armed Forces/Paramilitary	Others	Total
Vanguard, 2017	Response frame	Count	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
		% within Vanguard, 2017	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	5.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.7%
	Economic frame	Count	1	4	0	0	0	0	5
		% within Vanguard, 2017	20.0%	80.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	2.9%	11.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%
	attribution of responsibility frame	Count	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
		% within Vanguard, 2017	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.0%	5.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.7%
	Conspiracy frame	Count	0	1	1	2	0	0	4
		% within Vanguard, 2017	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.0%	2.9%	2.9%	5.7%	0.0%	0.0%	11.4%
	Enforcement frame	Count	0	0	0	4	5	0	9
		% within Vanguard, 2017	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	44.4%	55.6%	0.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.4%	14.3%	0.0%	25.7%
	legal frame	Count	0	0	0	0	4	0	4
		% within Vanguard, 2017	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.4%	0.0%	11.4%
	Rescue frame	Count	0	0	0	0	4	1	5
		% within Vanguard, 2017	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.4%	2.9%	14.3%
	Support frame	Count	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
		% within Vanguard, 2017	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.4%	11.4%
Total		Count	3	7	1	6	13	5	35
		% within Vanguard, 2017	8.6%	20.0%	2.9%	17.1%	37.1%	14.3%	100.0%
		% of Total	8.6%	20.0%	2.9%	17.1%	37.1%	14.3%	100.0%

Source: *Content Analysis (2025)*

The findings from the study highlight how specific genres shape the framing of human trafficking and influence policy advocacy in Nigeria. In 2017, the Vanguard Newspaper prominently featured enforcement frames (25.7%) and rescue frames (14.3%), primarily sourced from the Nigerian Armed Forces. This indicates a state-centric, securitized narrative that may downplay victim-centered policy approaches. In contrast, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) emphasized economic factors and frameworks of responsibility (17.1%), pointing to the systemic roots of trafficking. This divergence suggests a fragmented framing landscape that hinders the development of cohesive anti-trafficking policies. Empirical studies have also shown how dominant institutional frames can affect public and legislative attention (Olajimbiti, 2024), highlighting the need for multi-stakeholder harmonization of framing to promote comprehensive interventions.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study emphasize the crucial role that story genres play in shaping the framing of human trafficking within Nigerian newspapers. A comparative analysis of The Guardian and Vanguard reveals that while both newspapers heavily rely on straightforward news reports, particularly the Vanguard, where over 70% of coverage consists of straight news, The Guardian employs editorials, features, and opinion articles more frequently. This difference in genre distribution illustrates contrasting editorial strategies: The Guardian tends to adopt a discursive and analytical approach through editorials and features, while the Vanguard focuses more on factual reporting. These editorial choices significantly influence how human trafficking is understood, demonstrating that genre serves as an essential tool for framing narratives for diverse audiences, including policymakers, advocates, and civil society actors.

The variation in genre also corresponds with the dominant narrative frames employed by these newspapers. In The Guardian, legal, rescue, and social support frames are prominent in editorials and features, indicating a focus on systemic reform and victim rehabilitation. In contrast, The Punch, analyzed in the second objective, leans towards enforcement and legal frames in its straight news reports, framing trafficking primarily as a criminal justice issue that necessitates punitive action from the state. These differences show that genre-specific frames not only reflect editorial philosophies but also shape the emphasis placed on institutional accountability, victim support, or deterrence of criminal behavior. For instance, The Guardian's features and opinion articles often prioritize social and legal frames, encouraging long-term policy reflections. In contrast, The Punch's reliance on the enforcement frame directs attention to immediate operational responses by security agencies.

The implications of genre and framing dynamics are significant for policy advocacy. As demonstrated in the cross tabulated data for The Punch (2016) and Vanguard (2017), the sources of information, such as government agencies, NGOs, courts, and security forces, interact differently with specific frames. For instance, in The Punch, enforcement frames are primarily driven by reports that cite paramilitary forces and court personnel, presenting trafficking as a law-and-order issue. In contrast, Vanguard emphasizes rescue and support frames predominantly from military and civil society sources, indicating a collaborative yet uneven narrative focus. These patterns reveal that story genres are not neutral; they shape the visibility and legitimacy of anti-trafficking stakeholders. Therefore, enhancing media's strategic framing, particularly through diverse genres like feature articles and editorials, can highlight underrepresented policy areas such as victim reintegration, prevention, and international cooperation. Ultimately, this study shows that media storytelling is crucial in shaping the policy landscape surrounding human trafficking. When genre-sensitive framing is strategically applied, it can transform discourse from episodic reporting to comprehensive policy engagement. Thus, Nigerian newspapers should consciously utilize their genres to foster sustained, multi-stakeholder responses within national anti-trafficking frameworks.

7. Conclusion / Recommendation

This study posits that the genre-specific nature of human trafficking coverage in Nigerian newspapers, highlighting how different narrative forms influence public perception and policy awareness. The Guardian employs an editorial and opinion-driven approach that emphasizes institutional responsibility, whereas Vanguard primarily focuses on straightforward news reporting, reinforcing an enforcement-centric perspective. Both approaches reflect the socio-economic concerns of elites and contribute to reactive governance patterns. The genre of reporting functions as both a rhetorical tool and a lens for viewing policies, shaping not only how trafficking stories are presented but also how they are understood, acted upon, and legitimized within the national discourse. By examining these narrative structures, the research uncovers the intricate relationship between media format and policy development, demonstrating that framing plays a central rather than a peripheral role. Ultimately, the press emerges not merely as an observer but as a key player in Nigeria's anti-trafficking landscape, where various story genres delineate the parameters of state intervention, civic engagement, and the possibilities for justice.

In light of these findings, several recommendations emerge for enhancing anti-trafficking initiatives. Newspapers should intentionally diversify their narrative forms beyond straightforward reporting by incorporating more features, editorials, and opinion articles to enrich contextual framing (Objective 1). There should be a shift toward

frames that emphasize systemic issues and victim-centered narratives, particularly those relating to legal matters, rescue efforts, and support mechanisms, to humanize victims and highlight institutional responsibilities (Objective 2). Besides, policymakers and advocates should leverage insights from genre-specific framing to develop responsive, media-aligned campaigns, ensuring that messages resonate with both elite and middle-class audiences, who are particularly exposed to these narratives. This approach can improve policy effectiveness by aligning media framing with legal reforms, institutional accountability, and the reintegration of survivors (Objective 3).

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Demographic Drivers of Environmental Pollution Perception in Nigeria: A Quantitative Analysis

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Abstract. This study investigates the relationship between demographic factors such as age, education level, gender and geographical factors-location in terms of rural and urban, and people's perceptions of pollution in Nigeria, using data from Afro barometer Round 9. Employing descriptive and inferential statistical analyses (independent t-test, analysis of variance, and the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient), the study reveals significant regional disparities in pollution perception ($F(5,1599) = 26.676$; $p < .01$) with no notable age-based differences. Key findings include positive correlations between pollution concern and male gender ($r = .058$, $p < .001$), higher education levels ($r = .051$, $p < .001$), urban residence, and regions such as the Northeast and Southeast. Sanitation (26.1% and plastic waste (26.6%) emerged as the most pressing environmental issues. The study underscores the need for tailored policies and community-specific awareness campaigns to address pollution effectively in the country. The implications of the findings for better pollution management were highlighted, and necessary recommendations were made based on these findings

Keywords: Environmental Pollution, Demographic Factors, Public Perception, Regional Disparities and Nigeria

1. Introduction

Environmental pollution is a global crisis, with developing nations like Nigeria bearing a disproportionate burden due to rapid urbanization, industrialization, and population growth.

Nigeria's contribution to global plastic waste (2.7%) (UNIDO, 2021), highlights the urgency of addressing pollution at both local and national levels. This percentage of contribution of Nigeria makes it critical phenomenon that demands attention.

Chukwuone, Amaechina, and Ifelunini's (2022) study found that more than two-thirds (67.4%) of households in the coastal city of Lagos engage in illegal waste disposal. It also found that most (75.5%) households were willing to clean up road gutters/drainage channels. While Nigeria contributes significantly to global plastic pollution, accounting for 2.7% of ocean plastic waste, a critical gap exists in understanding how demographic factors influence pollution perception across its diverse population segments, regions and socioeconomic groups. The research highlights notable differences in how Nigerians perceive pollution, shaped by factors like gender and age. Findings indicate that men are more inclined than women to view pollution as a critical challenge, pointing to potential gender-based disparities in environmental awareness.

These findings are in tandem with Soares, et. al., (2021), remarks that public perception of pollution is shaped by demographic factors such as age, gender, education, and geographical location, which influence awareness, attitudes, and behaviours towards environmental issues. Understanding these dynamics is therefore, critical for designing equitable and effective pollution management strategies.

Again, Del-Pino-Casado, et.al. (2014) opined that Nigeria's large size and diverse demographics provide a unique case study for

analysing how individuals perceive and respond to environmental challenges, influenced by these factors. In order to create policies, raise public awareness, and manage the environment sustainably, it is crucial to comprehend how demographic factors affect people's views of pollution.

Previous research has explored the relationship between demographic factors and environmental attitudes (Steg et.al. 2014, Hadler et.al. 2022). However, a comprehensive examination of how these factors influence pollution perception within the Nigerian context is lacking. This study therefore examines how demographic and geographical factors shape pollution perception in Nigeria, a country characterised by diverse socio-economic and ecological contexts. By subjecting the data collected from Afrobarometer Round 9 (2022), the study provides insights into regional and demographic variations in pollution perception, offering a foundation for targeted interventions.

2. Conceptual Clarification

The United Environment Programme UNDRR (UNEP) (nd.) defines **pollution** as indirect or direct alteration of the biological, thermal, physical, or radioactive properties of any medium in such a way as to create a hazard or potential hazard to human health or the health, safety or welfare of any living species (Cialone, et.al., 2012)) Pollution involves the introduction of substances harmful to humans and other living organisms into the environment. Hazardous solids, liquids, or gases created at more than normal levels and degraded the quality of our surroundings are known as pollutants. Human activity damages the ecosystem by contaminating the soil where plants grow, the water we drink, and the air we breathe.

Plastic pollution, on the other hand, refers to t he adverse effects and emissions caused by the production and use of plastic materials and products over the course of their life cycle. In addition to poorly managed plastic waste (s uch as open burning and dumping in unregulat ed dumpsites), this term encompasses the build up and leaking of plastic particles and things th at can harm people and the living andnon-living environment. Every year, more than 8 million tonnes of plastic trash find their way into the world's oceans. Approximately, 8.9% of the plastic waste in the world comes fr om countries in Sub- Saharan Africa. Egypt, and Nigeria are the top contributors, with the East Asia and the Pacific areas, accounting for 3% and 2.7% of the total, respectively (Jambeck et al., 2015; Li et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2018).

Perception of pollution is how individuals or groups understand and interpret the pollution issue. Various factors, including personal experiences, knowledge, and values, can influence such perception. In this study, it is important to highlight the importance of correlation. C A positive correlation will indicate that the two variables tend to move in the same direction. In contrast, a negative correlation indicates that the two variables move in opposite directions.

In Portugal, Soares et al. (2021) studied the perceptions of plastic pollution and sociodemographic and psychological factors as predictors of individuals' pro-environmental behaviours. The knowledge that plastics degrade in the environment. The study participants perceived the bio-ecological impacts of plastics as a more significant threat than socioeconomic ones. The study's analysis showed that factors like a person's background (e.g., age, income, or education), combined with their awareness of plastic pollution's harms and how seriously they viewed its consequences, could help explain why individuals adopt eco-friendly habits. In other words, what people know about plastic waste—and how it affects their lives—shapes their willingness to recycle, reduce plastic use, or support environmental policies. Awareness about the impacts of plastic pollution (socioeconomic, health impacts and bio-ecological impacts) was highly associated with pro-environmental behaviour (Soares, et. al. 2021).

Demographic factors are population characteristics that can be used to describe its composition. Some common demographic factors include age, gender, education level (Hidalgo-Ruz et al., 2018), income level (Karak et al., 2012; Kolekar, 2016), urban or rural residence (Heidbreder & Lea., 2019; Zhiyong & Han, 2018), region of residence (Milfont & Markowitz, 2016), occupation, marital status, and household size. Demographic factors are an important tool for understanding and describing populations.

Bukasa et al . (2020) studied factors influencing plastic waste pollution reduction in Kinshasa. They reported that all factors (environmental factors, Government policy, and economic factors) significantly positively impact plastic

waste pollution reduction. Kombiok et al. 's (2021) study revealed that two-thirds (63.3%) agreed to dispose of their plastic waste poorly. Education level and household wealth were significant determinants of poor plastic disposal.

Another factor is age: younger people consiste ntly rated pollution as a top issue, whereas old er participants seemed less concerned, indicati ng that priorities or experiences vary between generations.
These trends highlight the ways in which indiv idual backgrounds— ranging from gender to stage of life affect public perceptions of environmental issues and provide useful guidance for developing inc lusive policies that appeal to Nigeria's various populations.

The findings are intended to guide resource all ocation and community involvement efforts where they are most urgently needed by identifying which groups perceive environmental dangers more a cutely (or underestimate them).

3. Theoretical Framework

In order to investigate how demographic factors influence environmental pollution perceptions in Nigeria, the study combines the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) with the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory (Stern et al., 1999). These theories provide complementary understandings of the normative, valuative, and cognitive processes by which people develop attitudes and intentions toward environmental challenges.

According to TPB, intentions and behaviours are influenced by three fundamental elements: - Attitudes (individual assessments of environmental activities), subjective norms (social pressures to act in a pro-environmental manner), and perceived behavioural control (self-efficacy in carrying out acts). Demographic factors like age, income, and education may influence these elements in Nigeria:
Age: Younger people may have greater pro-environmental sentiments since they have been exposed to climate education and internet activism more frequently (Lee et al., 2020).
Higher literacy levels are associated with a better understanding of the effects of pollution, which improves perceived behavioural control (e.g., adopting waste management methods).
Income: Even among people with good attitudes, perceived control (such as the affordability of renewable energy) may be limited by financial restrictions.
Ajzen (1991) however observed that in contrast to metropolitan settings where collective environmental action is more normative, rural people may prioritize immediate subsistence requirements over pollution concerns due to subjective norms affected by traditional traditions.

The Theory of Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) highlights how values (biospheric, altruistic, and egoistic) and moral norms influence environmental behaviour, VBN theory enhances TPB. It asserts that people who appreciate nature and have biospheric values are more likely to perceive human-caused environmental concerns and to activate personal standards to lessen harm.

This pathway is mediated by demographic fact ors:
Education: By promoting environmental litera cy, higher education increases perceptions of p ollution danger and cultivates biospheric value s.
Religion/Culture: In Nigeria, religious doctrin es or cultural beliefs (such as indigenous societies' peace with environment) may reinforce altruistic values and thereby infl uence how people perceive pollution.
Gender: Because they are frequently the prima ry caretakers, women may place a higher priori ty on the health effects of pollution (altruistic v alues), which heightens their sensitivity to envi ronmental cues (Xiao & McCright, 2015).

A combination of these two theories offers a multifaceted perspective.
According to TPB, the ability (control) and inc entive (attitudes/norms) to manage pollution ar e influenced by demographic characteristics.
VBN on the other hand, clarifies how moral and ethical drivers (values/beliefs) that underli e perceptions are shaped by demographics. For example, despite comparable subjective norms, educated urban youth may view pollution as crucial (biospheric values +strong perceived co ntrol), while rural elders may place a higher priority on economic survival (egoistic values + low control).
Diverse perceptions of pollution are produced by demographic factors moderating the TPB and VBN pathways.
Quantitative testing of these relationships will provide information about specific policy approaches, including adj usting climate messaging to age-specific sentiments or using religious norms to promote environmental causes.

4. Methodology

The research design which is similar to the one used by Gilmour et.al. (2014) was a cross-sectional survey using the Afrobarometer Round 9 data collected in 2022. Afro barometer is a Pan-African research network that collects data on various social, political, economic, and environmental issues which affect the people on the continent (www.afrobarometer.org). The Afrobarometer data is a representative cross-national survey conducted since 1999, using a multi-stage, stratified, random probability sampling technique to sample the respective populations.

4.1 Data source and sampling

The study utilised data from the Afrobarometer Round 9 collected in 2022. A multi-stage stratified random probability sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 1,600 respondents aged 15 and above, stratified by subnational units (State, and Region) and geographical location (urban and rural). The stratification was first on subnational units of government (state, province, region), then by location (urban or rural).

4.2 Variables and measures

The dependent variable of the study was respondents' perception of pollution as an overnment and location (urban/rural).

environmental issue. This was measured by determining respondents' views on whether pollution is a problem in the community and if plastic bags is a significant source of pollution. They were also asked if they considered the reduction of pollution as their own responsibility or that of government, as well as the role of the government in the control of pollution.

4.3 Validation of Instrument

The research instrument's construct validity was assessed with confirmatory factor analysis. Pilot testing was conducted, a reliability analysis and confirmatory factor analysis assessed the construct validity using Cronbach's alpha which revealed a 0.76 value. Descriptive and inferential statistics including independent t-test, Analysis of Variance, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis were employed to analyse the collected data.

5. Results

The study utilises data from the Afrobarometer Round 9 survey, conducted in Nigeria in 2022. The survey employed a multi-stage, stratified random probability sampling techniques to ensure representativeness. The sample comprised 1,600 respondents aged 15 and above, stratified by subnational units of g

Demographic Correlations and Regional Variations

The demographic characteristics of the subjects used in the study are presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Distribution of study participants by sex and academic level.

	Frequency	**Percent**
Gender		
Male	830	51.9
Female	770	48.1
Total	1600	100.0
Age		
18-30yrs	744	46.5
31-40yrs	413	25.8
41-50yrs	221	13.8
51-60yrs	152	9.5
61-100yrs	70	4.4
Total	1600	100.0
Education		
No formal Education	314	19.6
Primary Education	222	13.9
Secondary	693	43.3
Post-secondary	266	16.6
University degree	105	6.5
Don't know	1	.1
Total	1600	100.0
Location		
Urban	685	42.8
Rural	915	57.2
Total	1600	100.0

Geo-Political Zone		
South-South	247	15.5
North-East	203	12.7
North-West	389	24.3
North-Central	229	14.3
South-East	188	11.7
South -West	345	21.5
Total	1600	100.0

Eight hundred and thirty (830) (51.9%) of the respondents were male, and seven hundred and seventy (770) (48.1%) were female. Forty-six per cent were within the age group of 18-30 years, 25.8% were in the 31-40yrs. The age distribution shows a relatively young/youthful sample. On educational background, 43.3% have secondary education, approximately 14% have primary education, and only 6.5% have a university education. Most respondents (57.2%) were rural, and 42.8% were urban. A positive correlation was found between gender and education regarding environmental pollution perception

The analysis in Table 5.2 shows that sanitation/human waste management (26.1%) and trash disposal, including plastic (26.6%), are the two most important environmental issues in the community; others are air pollution (10.4%) and pollution of water sources (14.9%)—approximately 53% perceived pollution as a serious problem. About one-third (33.1%) of the population said it is not a serious problem, while 11.6% said it is not serious.

Table 5.2

Most important environmental issue in community	**Frequency**	**Percent**
None of these / there are no problems	189	11.8
Air pollution	166	10.4
Pollution of water sources	239	14.9
Sanitation or human waste management	417	26.1
Trash disposal, including plastics	425	26.6
Deforestation	97	6.1
Some other issue	47	2.9
Don’t know	20	1.3
Total	1600	100.0
Pollution a problem in community		
Very serious	353	22.1
Somewhat serious	495	30.9
Not very serious	529	33.1
Not at all serious	185	11.6
Refused	0	.0
Don’t know	37	2.3
Total	1600	100.0
Plastic bags major source of pollution		
Strongly disagree	79	4.9
Disagree	283	17.7
Neither agree nor disagree	102	6.4
Agree	669	41.8
Strongly agree	342	21.4
Refused	1	.1
Don’t know	125	7.8
Total	1600	100.0

Table 5.3

Primary responsibility for reducing pollution	Frequency	Percent
None of these / No one	3	.2
Ordinary citizens	514	32.1
Business and industry	60	3.8
The national government	500	31.2
Local government	411	25.7
Traditional leaders	87	5.5
Someone else	7	.4
Don’t know	18	1.1
Total	1600	100.0
Government do more or less to limit pollution		
Much less	92	5.8
Somewhat less	80	5.0
About the same	390	24.4
Somewhat more	234	14.6

Much more	763	47.7
Refused	2	.1
Don't know	39	2.4
Total	1600	100.0

From Table 5.3, the ordinary citizens and the national government were seen as having the primary responsibility of playing key role in reducing pollution, but the national government needs to do more in limiting the problem.

Table 5.4: Independent t-test by sex, and location

Gender	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. D**	**t**	**Sig.**
Male	830	16.017	3.5962	-2.327	.020
Female	770	16.462	4.0456		
Location	N				
Urban	685	16.2548	3.6790	.208	.835
Rural	915	16.2145	3.9317		

Table 5.4 presents the findings of the difference tests on pollution between males and females, on the one hand, and urban and rural, on the other.

Results in Table 4 showed that participants do not differ in their perception of pollution by sex and location. The result implies that male and female participants have the same perception of pollution, and residents of urban areas have similar perceptions.

Table 5.5: Analysis of variance of perception by age, educational background, and region

Age_	**Mean**	**N**	**Std. D**	
18-30yrs	16.1624	744	3.9498	$F_{(4,1599)} = 1.925$; $p > .104$
31-40yrs	16.1376	413	3.8610	
41-50yrs	16.0122	221	3.1530	
51-60yrs	16.7309	152	3.8220	
61-100yrs	17.1289	70	4.0759	
Total	16.2318	1600	3.8244	
Education				
No formal Education	15.6187	314	4.3224	$F_{(5,1599)} = 2.510$; $p > .028$
Primary Education	16.5070	222	4.0338	
Secondary	16.3423	693	3.8200	
Post-secondary	16.5270	266	3.2576	
University degree	15.9721	106	2.8867	
Total	16.2318	1600	3.8248	
Region				
South South	15.3962	247	3.8140	$F_{(5,1599)} = 26.676$; $p < .01$
North East	17.4466	203	4.7361	
North west	14.8527	389	2.9566	
North Central	17.2674	229	3.6775	
South East	17.5957	188	4.3204	
South west	16.2403	345	3.1979	
Total	16.2318	1600	3.8244	

The one-way analysis of variance results showed that the mean scores of the six geo-political regions of Nigeria differed significantly from one another F (5,1599) = 26.676; p <.01. On age, F (4,1599) = 1.925; p >.104, among education groups, F (5,1599) = 2.510; *p* >.028) no significant difference existed.

The bivariate analysis to determine the relationship between selected demographic variables and public perception of pollution is as shown in Table 5. 6,

Table 5.6: Bivariate matrix of relationships between demographic factors and perception of pollution

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
1. Gender	1					
2. Age	-.152**	1				
3. Education	-.167**	-.007	1			
4. Urban or Rural	-.010	-.012	-.300**	1		
5. Region	.006	.053*	.159**	-.295**	1	
6. Pollution	.058*	.048	.051*	-.005	.088**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

6. Key Findings

Demographic correlations:

Gender: A positive correlation was found between gender and pollution perception ($r=0.058$, $p<0.001$), with men more likely to view pollution as a serious problem.
Age: Younger people were likelier to perceive pollution as a serious issue.
Education: Higher education levels correlated positively with viewing pollution as a serious problem ($r=0.051$, $p<0.001$).
Location: Urban residents were likelier than rural residents to perceive pollution as a serious issue.
Region: People in Nigeria's Northeast and Southeast regions were more likely to view pollution as a serious problem than other regions ($r=0.088$, $p<0.001$).

Major environmental concerns:
Sanitation/human waste management (26.1%) and trash disposal, including plastics (26.6%), were identified as the two most important environmental issues in communities.
Approximately 53% of respondents perceived pollution as a serious problem.
63.2% agreed or strongly agreed that plastic bags are a significant source of pollution.
Responsibility and government actions:
32.1% of respondents believed ordinary citizens are primarily responsible for reducing pollution, followed by the national government (31.2%) and local government (25.7%).
62.3% of respondents thought the government should do somewhat more or much more to limit pollution.

7. Discussion of Findings

The research highlighted how Nigerians' views on pollution vary depending on age and gender. Men tended to rate pollution as a more urgent threat than women, indicating that gender influences how people perceive environmental risks. Younger generations, meanwhile, were far more vocal about prioritising pollution as a critical challenge compared to older adults—a gap that may reflect evolving attitudes toward environmental issues over time. These findings underscore how personal background, from gender to life experiences tied to age, could shape what communities focus on as Nigeria grapples with pollution.

Pollution and education were found to be significantly positively correlated. According to this correlation, those who have more education are more likely to believe that pollution is a significant issue than those who have less education. The survey found a strong correlation between people's opinions on pollution and where they live. There is a pronounced geographic divide as urban dwellers are much more likely than their rural counterparts to view pollution as a serious problem. Within Nigeria, this trend also differed by region, with people in the Northeast and Southeast showing significantly higher levels of concern about pollution than people in other areas. These findings underscore how local settings significantly influence public understanding of ecological concerns.

These views are further influenced by personal traits. A number of variables are involved, including gender, age, and educational attainment. For instance, compared to older adults with less formal education, younger, better-educated respondents expressed greater concerns about environmental degradation. These differences show how personal histories and experiences shape perceptions of ecological hazards.

According to the data, the majority of communities' top environmental concerns were trash disposal, especially plastics, and sanitation or human waste management (26.1% and 26.6%, respectively), with plastic bags ranking as the main pollutant (62.2%). According to the findings, the government and its pertinent agencies need to take significant action to solve these problems, starting with the development of policies and ending with the implementation of intervention plans.

Lastly, the results indicate that practitioners ne ed to create culturally aware methods for envir onmental management and pollution reduction.

Practitioners must, for instance, understand the varying environmental values and beliefs held by members of various demographic groups a nd create strategies that take these values and b eliefs into consideration.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study is significant because it can provide light on the perceptions and experiences of various populations regarding pollution. The pollution problem in Nigeria can then be addressed with more effective policies and programs created using this knowledge. Based on the results, it was determined that people's perceptions of pollution in Nigeria are correlated with demographic and regional characteristics. The article also discussed the

implications of the findings for better pollution management.

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

Effective policies that address the specific needs and concerns of different demographic groups regarding pollution control and environmental management are needed. Such policies will help reduce disparities and inequalities in the impacts of pollution on different communities and enhance their participation and cooperation in environmental protection.
Governments at the national, subnational, and local levels will need to develop pollution control measures that consider the demographic characteristics of different communities to promote more environmentally enlightened citizens.

A uniform approach could alienate groups facing unique challenges, such as tech-based solutions (e.g., air quality apps), which might overlook rural populations struggling with unsafe drinking water. Instead, interventions should prioritize context-specific strategies, such as addressing water contamination in villages or promoting waste management literacy in cities. The success of pollution control measures depends on matching policies with the lived experiences of each community, ensuring that solutions are both practical and culturally relevant.

Integration of environmental literacy components as curriculum inserts into the school curricula and community programmes can assist greatly in bridging generational gaps noticed in the perceptions of the different age groups and ultimately foster long term behavioural change.

Creation and dissemination of targeted public awareness campaigns that educate and inform different demographic groups about the causes, consequences, and solutions to pollution in Nigeria. The campaigns will help raise people's awareness and knowledge of environmental issues and motivate them to prevent and reduce pollution. These measures need to be complemented by creating tailored campaigns for specific demographic groups to raise awareness of pollution issues and their dangers.

Significant sources of pollution, such as sanitation, human waste management, trash disposal, and plastic bags, should be seen as top environmental concerns that affect most communities in Nigeria and need to be addressed consciously through participatory management. This will help to improve the environmental quality and health of the people and reduce the costs and risks associated with pollution.

Culturally sensitive pollution control and environmental management strategies that respect and incorporate different demographic groups' local values and beliefs about the environment must be adopted. This would help build trust and rapport with the communities and foster a sense of environmental stewardship and responsibility.
Messages regarding the dangers of pollution would need to be tailored to the experiences of various groups, because public education initiatives require accuracy. Urban campaigns may use social media and community workshops to address issues like garbage management or industrial pollutants. In contrast, rural initiatives could address agricultural runoff or unsafe drinking water through radio broadcasts or partnerships with local leaders. By meeting people where they are—both geographically and culturally—governments may inspire increased engagement and action

9. Limitations of the Study and Future Research

However, there are certain limitations on this study. The survey's cross-sectional design, which illustrates the research's inability to demonstrate causal links between the variables under investigation, is one of these drawbacks. While cross-sectional design can restrict causal inferences, the inclusion of self-reported data may suggest some bias. In order to have a better knowledge of the dynamics of pollution perception, it is advised that more research be done to examine longitudinal patterns and behavioural treatments Such research should also explore the underlying mechanisms that drive environmental attitudes and behaviours.

The suggested further research will aid in determining the direction and causative mechanisms of the impacts of demographic factors on Nigerian public perceptions of pollution. Understanding why various groups of individuals hold varying opinions on pollution and how to persuade them to alter their beliefs and actions will be much easier with the help of the follow-up.

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Socioeconomic Background Influence on Youth Participation in Internet Crime: The Benin Evidence

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Abstract. Charity begins at home, a parlance which suggest that social experience is never developed in isolation. However contestable, an individual disposition remains a function of his/her background. This paper therefore investigates the relationship between parental socioeconomic background and youth participation in internet crime in Benin City, Nigeria. Using a cross-sectional survey of 1,093 young adults, and in-depth interview with key personalities, the study explores how parental income, education, and family structure influences youth behaviour, propensity and predisposition to internet crime. Anchored on Relative Deprivation Theory, the study finds that although youths engage in internet crime, socio-economic conditions and family dysfunction are an indirectly influence that shapes such behavioural tendencies while pointing that deprivation and societal glorification of wealth act as motivating factors. The study concludes that addressing youth unemployment, improving parenting quality, and reshaping societal values are crucial in mitigating internet crime in Benin City.

Keywords: Youth, Background, Socio-economic, Internet Crime.

1. Introduction

Internet crime, popularly called *Yahoo yahoo, Yahoo plus or Yahoo millionaire* in Nigeria, has become an entrenched social issue that reflects deeper structural inequalities and value distortions in the society. Longe (2013) and Omage and Omage (2012) point that internet crime has developed into a subculture that exceeds class boundaries, and offers some form of reward in form of prestige and material recognition to its participants. The phenomenon of internet crime is often glamorized as a means of achieving financial success which signals the intersection of poverty and moral decadence in a city like Benin. Sociological inquiry into the problem suggests that family background—especially socio-economic status of parents plays a crucial role in shaping the values and choices of young people. However, not all youths from poor homes engage in crime, suggesting that multiple factors interact in complex ways.

Benin City, one of the major urban centres in South-South Nigeria, is particularly notorious for the proliferation of internet-based crimes among its youth population. Whereas some arrogate this development to relationship with family background, poverty and lack of opportunity (Nwokeoma, Osadebe, Amadi & Ugwu, 2019), others link it to financial difficulty, social exclusion, broken home, lack of parental and school discipline (Adegbite, 2014; Oliha &Audu, 2014; Nesmith & Ruhiand, 2008; Murray, 2007). Farrington, Coid and Murry (2009) are of the view that youths who engage in internet crime have predictor factors such as family with lack of love, support and parental deficiency in administrative skills, use of drugs, alcohol consumption and psychological impulsiveness. Longe (2013) points that socioeconomic-status of parent influences their children's status and hence their behaviour in a larger social setting. Contextualized in the social realities of youth in Benin City, disoriented family connection, unconventional methods of growing up and anti-social behaviour features the constellation that characterizes the background of criminality and criminal behaviour among young adults in Benin City. This exposes the confounding construct of the importance of an individual background and socio-economic life. Youth from problematic background tend to

experiment with negative proximities of anti-social behaviour and usually seek out other individuals with similar experience (Awogbenle & Iwuamadi, 2010). Their socio-economic background becomes therefore a significant determinant of participation in criminal activities and evaluates the extent to which their family socio-economic background, parental supervision, education, and social exposure predict deviant behaviour. Internet crime contributes shows an existence of social deprivation and crime which is direct and uniform, but mediated by individual volition, background influence, and social expectations.

1.1 Objective of Study

The objective is to examine the socioeconomic background of parents and it influence on youth involvement in internet crime in Benin City.

1.2 Hypothesis

There is likelihood of relationship between parental socioeconomic background and youth in involvement in internet crime in Benin City.

2. Review of Related Literature

The family remains the primary socializing institution, influencing values, discipline, and moral orientation. According to Asikhia (2010), a child's social expectancy and life outcomes are heavily influenced by family environment and economic stability. Families of low socio-economic status (SES) often struggle to provide basic necessities and moral guidance, leading to psychological stress and low resilience among children (Ogunsola & Adewale, 2012). Adegbite (2014) argues that the erosion of family values in Nigeria has compounded the problem of youth delinquency, as children are increasingly left without positive role models. Healthy socio-economic background affects not only access to good life but also exposure to moral and civic values (Ogunsola and Adewale, 2012). Lareau (2003) demonstrates how class shapes daily life experiences, self-esteem, and opportunity access arguing that children from deprived backgrounds often develop compensatory behaviours that could evolve into deviance when legitimate avenues for success appear closed. Similarly, A-Matalka (2014) found that parents' educational attainment correlates with their children's behavioural adjustment, implying that low parental literacy translates to weak supervision and limited life guidance.

Parenting style is another critical dimension to youth life in the society. Baumrind's (1991) typology distinguishes between authoritative and permissive approaches. Authoritative parenting, which balances warmth and control, tends to produce socially competent children, while permissive or neglectful parenting often leads to delinquency (Longe, 2013). In Benin City, several parents live below a dollar a day and tend to struggle economically. This allows for permissive parenting that enables children to form alternative moral codes influenced by peers, digital media and the availability of access to opportunity and privileges as well as gratification essential to economic demands and material gratification (Unity, Osagioba & Edith, 2013). The likely effect is internet crime through popular culture, peer admiration and the creation of an enabling environment for deviant adaptation. Empirical findings support the link between family, poor parenting style, deprivation and crime. Bottoms (1988) and Farrington et al. (2009) show that large family size, parental conflict, and poverty are predictors of antisocial behaviours. According to Lochner and Beley (2008) parental income level are positively connected to children's welfare. This suggests that children from well to do social background are likely to be accorded some type of preference or judged to perform better than those who do not. An individual is rated, based on his background which plays important role in their development from child to adulthood. Parental background tends to be a factor in individual placement in the society. Though family background differs greatly, it is however substantial that parental social class is important in determining life opportunities. In Benin City, family background affects youth social life, attitude, and quality of morality. A family's background in terms of parent's education, income, quality of life mirrors the Social class of that youth.

3. Theoretical Underpinning

Relative Deprivation Theory provides a powerful lens for understanding why individuals from various backgrounds develop the capacity/tendency to engage in crime. The theory posits that people become frustrated and potentially deviant when they perceive a gap between their expectations and their actual achievements. In highly stratified societies like Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, where material success is celebrated, individuals who feel excluded may resort to alternative means—legal or otherwise—to achieve socially desired material wealth and mobility. Gurr (1970) observed that when legitimate means of

achieving goals are blocked, frustration ensue which leads to aggression that provokes deviant behaviour. For many youths in Benin City, the visible disparity between the rich and the poor, coupled with limited opportunities and disadvantaged socioeconomic background generates feelings of exclusion and resentment. Individuals who perceived themselves as disadvantaged and dissatisfied become disgruntled and build tendencies that subvert the incompatibility between value-expectation and value-capabilities. These emotions, when combined foster rationalizations for crime especially of the internet variant as a viable path to material success.

Though cultural specificity and individual agency obtains, in contexts like Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, cultural narratives around wealth and masculinity interact with deprivation, make internet crime both an economic and symbolic act of resistance to pervasive poverty and poor socioeconomic background that tend to confound a lot of youth. Thus, relative deprivation is not merely about economic inequality but about perceived factors that inspires it in a competitive society such as Benin City.

4. Research Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to collect quantitative data from 1,109 youths aged 15–39 years across three local government areas in Benin City. A structured questionnaire was employed to capture respondents' socio-economic background and involvement in internet crime. Sampling followed the Yamane (1987) model for sample determination, ensuring representativeness. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 2.0, employing descriptive and inferential statistics, including the Kruskal–Wallis H test ranks to evaluate the relationship between youth from poor background and their parent's economic status.

5. Findings and Analysis

The demographic analysis revealed that 57.3% of respondents were male, with the majority (70.5%) aged between 20 and 29 years. Over half (54.9%) possessed tertiary education, yet 50.7% were unemployed, and 44.4% had no source of income. This paradox—education without employment—underscores the structural frustration driving youth deviance. A substantial 69.4% agreed that poor parental background affects youth behaviour, corroborating earlier sociological insights that economic hardship distorts moral development. Analysis to the research question relating to the relationship between parental socioeconomic background and youth involvement in internet crime in Benin City as displayed in the figure below revealed that parental socio-economic background such as employment/occupational, education and level of income are strong indicators of social stability that determines material wellbeing of the family and hence the quality of life of children. It is a factor considered by respondents to influences youths' involvement in internet crimes in Benin City.

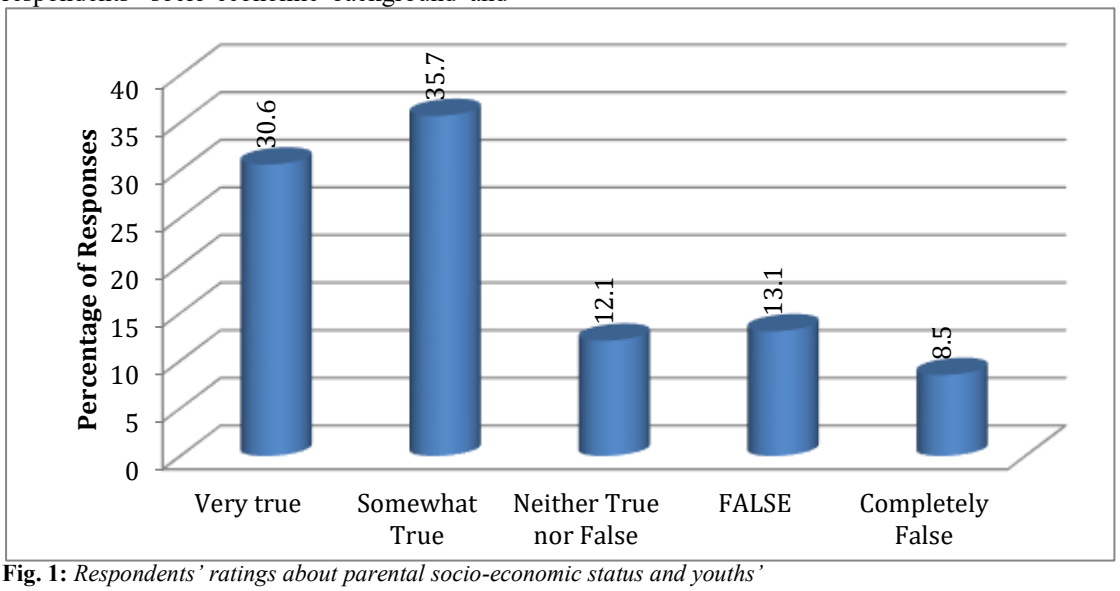

Fig. 1: *Respondents' ratings about parental socio-economic status and youths'*

The data in figure 1 showed that the greater proportion (35.7%) of the respondents considered parental socioeconomic status as significantly related to youths' involvement in internet crime in Benin City. This was equally the same view with 30.6% of them who considered it as being very true. On the other hand,

(12.1%) opine that neither true, while (13.1%) and (8.5%) are of the view that it is false and completely false respectively. Generally, the views expressed regarding parental socioeconomic background and youths' involvement in internet crimes is also highlighted in the following in-depth:

...Yes, to a great extent the kind of family background one comes from affects his or her disposition and behaviour. Most youth around here are from poor homes. Some provide for themselves and live life on the fringes. Youth from such homes are likely to be influenced negatively especially when they see opportunity to make end-meet and make quick cash-money or hang out with those who have. What I am saying is one's background plays a very significant role. (Male, 30 years, graduate, Benin, Egor L.G.A)

Parental background is an absolute. It determines a child's upbringing and plays crucial role in how an individual turns out in the future. I believe it actually has great influence on how a child turns out in life. It is not by parent being rich or poor though. For some youth, it is a choice; they just want to do it... however, a parent being poverty can be a factor that can predispose a youth to do internet crime (Male, 29 years, graduate, Benin Egor L.G.A)

Table 1: Summary of Kruskal Wallis H test showing respondents' views about parental socioeconomic status and youth involvement in internet crime based on parents' employment status

Employment Status	N	Mean Rank	Chi-square	Df	Sig.
Unemployed	587	542.25	1.241	3	.743
Self employed	344	561.29			
Public Service	106	536.81			
Others	56	528.36			
Total	**1093**				

A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was no statistically significant evidence to accept the stated alternate hypothesis, $\chi^2(3) = 1.241$, $p = .743$, with a mean rank of 542.25 for unemployed group, 561.29 for self-employed group, 536.81 for public service occupational group and 528.36 for other occupational groups. This result suggests that there was no significant variation in the perception of the respondents within the different occupational groups, in relation to the view that parental socioeconomic background influences youths' involvement in internet crimes in Benin City. However, this does not invalidate the socioeconomic argument; rather, it highlights the influence of individual factors as Longe (2013) and Omage and Omage (2012) observed, internet crime has evolved into a subculture that transcends class boundaries, offering prestige, identity and quick material gain to its participants.

A deeper interpretation of the findings reveals that socioeconomic deprivation functions as a contextual rather than a deterministic factor. Poor parental supervision, peer pressure, and societal glorification of illicit wealth mediate the relationship between background and behaviour. Thus, while deprivation may not directly cause crime, it sets the stage for deviant adaptations when combined with weak social control mechanisms.

6. Discussion

The findings illuminate the multifaceted nature of youth involvement in internet crime in Benin City. The absence of a direct statistical relationship does not negate the sociological reality that deprivation breeds frustration. Instead, it suggests that economic background operates through intervening variables such as social-values, peer influence, and parental control. The normalization of internet crime as a symbol of quick material wealth and success among Nigerian youths reflects a value crisis that transcends material poverty. The study aligns with Farrington et al. (2009) and Murray (2007) in showing that broken homes and poor supervision predict youth deviance.

In Benin City, internet crime has become a rationalized survival strategy, where the end—wealth—justifies the means. This interpretation is consistent with the depravation theory of crime, emphasizing the adaptive functions of deviance in a constrained social environment. Moreover, the influence of material wealth and peer networks cannot be underplayed. Such interplay project lifestyles that valorize conspicuous consumption, deepening feelings of inadequacy among youths. When legitimate means of achieving such lifestyles are inaccessible, deviant alternatives like internet crime become normalized. Thus, policy interventions must target not only economic deprivation but also the cultural narratives that legitimize crime.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that while socioeconomic background does not statistically determine youth involvement in internet crime in Benin City, it remains an enabling condition for such criminal tendencies and propensities. Economic

hardship, weak family systems, and distorted cultural-value orientations collectively foster an environment conducive to internet crime. To address this issue, holistic interventions are required—combining family-based education, youth empowerment, and government intervention and regulation to digital involvement and usage by young adult in the society.

First, families must be strengthened through parental education programs and legitimate socioeconomic engagement which can generate stable source of income and inspire positive supervision and moral training of young adults in the society. Second, governments should expand youth employment schemes and vocational programs that provide legitimate alternatives to internet crime. Third, public awareness campaigns should challenge the cultural glorification of illicit wealth and promote ethical digital citizenship. Finally, stronger internet crime laws and internet monitoring systems should be implemented, not merely to punish offenders but to deter participation.

Ultimately, combating internet crime requires addressing both the structural inequalities and cultural dynamics that shape youth aspirations. By integrating economic reform with moral reorientation, society can redirect youthful energy toward productive engagement rather than criminal innovation.

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Structural Drivers and Democratic Consequences of Political Violence in Nigeria: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract. Political violence remains a central threat to democratic stability in Nigeria since the return to civil rule in 1999. It manifests through voter intimidation, armed thuggery, ballot snatching, targeted assassinations, sectarian mobilization, and institutional manipulation. This systematic literature review synthesizes empirical evidence and theoretical contributions across political science, governance, and security studies to identify the structural drivers and democratic consequences of political violence in Nigeria. Data were derived from peer-reviewed journals, policy documents, books, and institutional reports published between 1999 and 2024, selected based on methodological rigor and thematic relevance. Findings reveal that political violence in Nigeria is driven by entrenched poverty, mass youth unemployment, corruption, prebendal political culture, weak state institutions, identity politics, and an entrenched "sit-tight" elite behavior. Political violence undermines democratic consolidation by reducing voter turnout, distorting electoral outcomes, weakening governance institutions, and enabling the emergence of incompetent leadership. The study concludes that political violence in Nigeria is a systemic governance challenge, not an episodic event, and proposes multidimensional reforms involving institutional strengthening, electoral governance reforms, peacebuilding, youth empowerment, and civic reorientation.

1. Introduction

Political violence has become an entrenched feature of Nigeria's political landscape, reflecting deep structural, institutional, and socio-economic weaknesses. Since the transition to civilian rule in 1999, elections have repeatedly been characterized by intimidation, coercion, destruction of property, ballot snatching, assassinations, and sectarian clashes. The persistence of these violent episodes raises fundamental questions about state capacity, the strength of institutions, the nature of political competition, and the quality of democratic governance in Nigeria. Given Nigeria's demographic significance, ethnic heterogeneity, and economic centrality, understanding the nature and roots of political violence within the country is vital for both national stability and broader regional security.

Numerous international organizations including Human Rights Watch, International IDEA, and UNDP continue to classify Nigeria as a high-risk state for electoral violence due to widespread arms proliferation, weak security institutions, intense inter-elite rivalry, and mounting public distrust. Domestic patterns mirror these concerns: structural poverty, mass unemployment, political godfatherism, and the politicization of ethnicity and religion have entrenched political insecurity. While a growing body of literature has addressed the manifestations of political violence, few attempts have synthesized these drivers through a systematic and holistic review of scholarly and policy sources. This study therefore fills an

important scholarly gap by consolidating decades of research into the structural and democratic implications of political violence in Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite successive electoral reforms and democratic transitions, political violence in Nigeria has remained persistent and increasingly sophisticated. Elections, which should provide peaceful avenues for leadership selection, often become violent arenas characterized by coercion, manipulation, and elite-driven conflict. Weak institutions, widespread corruption, and systemic impunity contribute to recurring violence across election cycles. Youth vulnerability plays a critical role in this dynamic. Nigeria's demography dominated by young people combined with high unemployment, inequality, and economic exclusion, creates fertile ground for political manipulation. Many youths become dependent on political patrons for survival, making them easily mobilized for violent acts.

Furthermore, the weaponization of ethnic and religious identities intensifies tensions across communities. Identity-based mobilization has repeatedly transformed political disagreements into sectarian or communal conflicts. Beyond elections, political violence is evident in intra-party conflicts, political assassinations, resource-driven clashes, and the proliferation of armed militias. Such violence erodes trust in institutions, undermines governance, heightens insecurity, and weakens democratic legitimacy.

1.2 Research Questions

- What structural and institutional factors drive political violence in Nigeria?
- How does political violence affect democratic governance and stability?
- Which theories best explain the persistence of political violence in Nigeria?
- What governance strategies can reduce or prevent political violence?

2. Methodology

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to synthesize and integrate findings from scholarly and policy research on political violence in Nigeria. The method was selected for its rigour, transparency, and ability to consolidate dispersed knowledge across multiple disciplines. The review adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) standards. A structured search strategy was implemented across major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, SAGE Journals, Taylor & Francis Online, Google Scholar, African Journals Online (AJOL), and institutional repositories from bodies such as the UNDP, Human Rights Watch, INEC, ECOWAS, and International IDEA.

Search terms included combinations of keywords such as "political violence," "electoral violence," "youth unemployment," "poverty and elections," "inequality," "identity politics," "governance failure," and "Nigeria." Boolean operators enhanced the precision of results. The timeframe was restricted to 1999–2024 to reflect Nigeria's Fourth Republic, a period of renewed democratic engagement. Inclusion criteria required that studies focus on political or electoral violence in Nigeria and demonstrate methodological rigor or policy relevance. Exclusion criteria ruled out studies conducted before 1999, non-Nigeria-focused works, purely journalistic sources, and studies lacking academic grounding.

From an initial pool of 1,262 records, 926 remained after removing duplicates. Screening based on titles and abstracts produced 414 articles for full-text review, and 196 met the inclusion criteria for final analysis. A structured extraction matrix was used to document each study's authorship, purpose, methodology, theoretical orientation, major findings, and policy recommendations. Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-step approach generated six dominant themes: socio-economic drivers, institutional failures, identity politics, political thuggery and militia networks, weaknesses in electoral governance, and proliferation of small arms. To enhance reliability, findings were triangulated across scholarly and institutional sources. Limitations such as publication bias and uneven methodological quality were acknowledged but did not significantly undermine the study's overall robustness.

3. Conceptual Clarifications

Political violence refers to the deliberate use or threat of force for political ends, aimed at influencing electoral outcomes, intimidating opponents, undermining institutions, or destabilizing communities. Electoral violence is a subset occurring before, during, or after elections, involving acts such as ballot

snatching, voter intimidation, arson, physical assaults, and targeted killings. Democracy refers to systems of governance based on popular participation, rule of law, transparency, accountability, and free and fair elections. Democratic consolidation involves institutionalizing democratic norms to the point where democracy becomes the only acceptable political system. Governance refers to the processes, institutions, and mechanisms through which power is exercised and public resources are managed.

4. Theoretical Framework

Understanding political violence in Nigeria requires a comprehensive theoretical lens because no single framework fully captures the complex interplay of structural deprivation, elite behavior, identity mobilization, and institutional fragility. Conflict Theory provides a foundational explanation by highlighting the inherent struggles for power and resources within society. In Nigeria, where political positions offer access to state wealth and patronage, elections become high-stakes contests. This encourages political elites to resort to violence to secure and maintain power.

Relative Deprivation and Strain Theory further illuminate the psychological and socio-economic frustrations that predispose individuals particularly unemployed youths to political violence. Millions of young Nigerians experience unmet expectations and economic hardship, creating fertile ground for manipulation by political elites who recruit them for violent activities in exchange for money or future promises. Elite Theory deepens this analysis by showing how political power in Nigeria is concentrated in the hands of a small group of elites who use institutional weaknesses, patronage structures, and the strategic deployment of violence to maintain dominance. This explains recurring patterns of godfatherism, manipulation of party primaries, and control of security agencies.

State Fragility Theory adds a vital dimension by highlighting the role of weak institutions, low legitimacy, ineffective law enforcement, and poor governance capacity. The fragility of Nigeria's political and administrative systems enables political actors to exploit institutional weaknesses and engage in violence with impunity. Integrating these theories reveals that political violence in Nigeria is driven by structural inequality and power struggles, reinforced by socio-economic frustrations among youths, sustained by elite manipulation, and enabled by fragile state institutions.

5. Literature Review

The literature consistently shows that political violence in Nigeria is rooted in a combination of socio-economic, political, institutional, and cultural factors. Socio-economic marginalization plays a major role as chronic poverty, inequality, and mass unemployment create resentment and vulnerability among youths. Political actors exploit these conditions by recruiting young people as thugs, ballot snatchers, and enforcers during elections. Urban centers with large unemployed populations and widespread informal settlements provide abundant recruitment grounds, making political violence an economic survival strategy for many youths.

Institutional weaknesses exacerbate these problems. Electoral bodies frequently encounter logistical lapses, inconsistent application of rules, late arrival of materials, and technological failures. Security agencies are often criticized for partisanship, corruption, and incompetence, diminishing public trust and emboldening political actors to employ violence. Furthermore, the judiciary's slow and sometimes compromised processes prevent meaningful prosecution of violent offenders, reinforcing impunity.

Identity politics intensifies political violence by transforming political contests into ethnic or religious struggles. Nigeria's diversity provides fertile ground for the weaponization of identity, as political elites mobilize ethno-religious sentiments to solidify support bases or delegitimize opponents. Historical grievances often resurface during elections, fuelling mistrust and retaliation across communities. The 2011 post-election violence in Northern Nigeria exemplifies how identity mobilization can escalate political conflict into widespread violence.

Political thuggery and the proliferation of militia networks represent another major theme in the literature. Politicians maintain and fund cult groups, youth gangs, and vigilante organizations to gain electoral advantage. Over time, these groups evolve into semi-autonomous armed actors engaged in broader criminal activities such as kidnapping, extortion, and the illegal arms trade. Their existence reflects the deterioration of state control over coercive force.

Electoral governance failures frequently trigger violence. Poor voter registration, malfunctioning BVAS machines, ballot shortages, vote buying, and opaque collation processes are common sources of conflict. These failures undermine public trust in elections, heighten tensions, and incentivize violence among political actors who perceive electoral processes as unpredictable or unfair.

Finally, widespread availability of small arms intensifies the lethality of political violence. Nigeria's porous borders and weak surveillance systems enable the inflow of illicit weapons, transforming localized disputes into deadly confrontations. This proliferation reflects deeper weaknesses in national security architecture and fosters a climate of fear, suspicion, and militarized political competition.

6. Discussion

The findings of this review reveal that political violence in Nigeria results from the complex intersection of structural socio-economic deprivation, governance failure, elite manipulation, and identity politics. A key insight is that socio-economic deprivation alone does not cause political violence, but becomes weaponized by political elites in contexts of weak institutional oversight. Millions of unemployed youths become vulnerable to exploitation because they lack economic alternatives and because political actors strategically recruit them with promises of money, protection, or future benefits. Thus, Nigeria's political violence is not spontaneous; it is intentionally orchestrated within a system where violence yields political dividends.

Weak institutions further entrench violent political practices. Electoral bodies lacking autonomy, police forces plagued by corruption, and a judiciary unable to enforce accountability collectively create an environment where political violence is rational and rarely punished. The consistent failure of state institutions to prosecute violent offenders reinforces a culture of impunity that encourages political actors to deploy violence as a strategic tool. This aligns with elite theory, which suggests that Nigeria's ruling class deliberately undermines institutions to maintain dominance.

Identity mobilization further complicates the landscape of political violence. Nigeria's multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition allows political actors to manipulate group identities to inflame passions, justify aggression, and frame elections as existential struggles. Such mobilization exacerbates mistrust and fuels retaliatory cycles, especially in regions with long-standing grievances. Identity politics transforms political competition from issue-based debates into emotive, polarized conflicts with high potential for violence.

Political thuggery represents a crucial mechanism through which elites operationalize violence. Cult groups, gangs, and militias act as enforcers of political interests, often armed with sophisticated weaponry due to Nigeria's porous borders. Over time, these groups develop autonomy and expand into criminal networks, deepening insecurity across the country. The entrenchment of these armed groups reflects a significant erosion of state monopoly over the use of force—a hallmark of state fragility.

The overall pattern that emerges is that political violence in Nigeria is cyclical and self-perpetuating. Politicians deploy violence to gain power, and once in office, they use state resources to finance more violence. Institutions remain too weak or compromised to interrupt this cycle. This entrenched system of political violence produces far-reaching democratic consequences, including diminished voter participation, persistent mistrust in electoral institutions, ineffective governance, and the entrenchment of corrupt leaders who lack electoral legitimacy.

7. Conclusion

This systematic literature review concludes that political violence in Nigeria is a deeply structural phenomenon sustained by socio-economic vulnerabilities, elite-driven manipulation, institutional fragility, and identity mobilization. The persistence of political violence reflects systemic governance failure rather than isolated disruptions. Political elites weaponize youth unemployment, ethnoreligious divisions, and weak institutions to maintain political dominance. This entrenched system has severe implications for Nigeria's democratic consolidation, undermining electoral integrity, eroding public trust, discouraging voter participation, and enabling the emergence of illegitimate and incompetent leaders.

Political violence endangers Nigeria's long-term stability and development by intensifying ethnic divisions, weakening institutions, and perpetuating a cycle of poor governance. Breaking this cycle requires sustained political will, institutional reforms, strengthened security governance, and socio-economic

interventions targeted at the root causes of youth vulnerability. Strengthening INEC, establishing an Electoral Offences Commission, professionalizing the police, curbing illicit arms flows, and enhancing civic education are essential strategies for reducing violence. Equally important is addressing the socio-economic deprivation that makes youths susceptible to manipulation.

Ultimately, Nigeria must transform its political culture, build resilient democratic institutions, and promote inclusive governance to eliminate the incentives for political violence. Without these changes, political violence will continue to erode democratic norms, destabilize communities, and hinder national development. The future of Nigeria's democracy depends on the nation's ability to dismantle the systemic structures that sustain violent political competition.

8. Recommendations

Addressing political violence in Nigeria requires a comprehensive, multidimensional approach that targets the structural, institutional, and socio-economic conditions that sustain violent political behavior. The evidence from this systematic review shows that violence persists because of elite manipulation, institutional weakness, youth vulnerability, the proliferation of small arms, identity politics, and deep socio-economic inequalities. To effectively curb political violence, Nigeria must strengthen its electoral governance and institutional frameworks. This begins with the establishment of an independent Electoral Offences Commission with full prosecutorial powers to investigate and prosecute individuals and groups responsible for electoral violence. Such a commission would help dismantle the entrenched culture of impunity that allows violent actors including political sponsors and security operatives to escape consequences. The autonomy and operational capacity of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should also be enhanced through secured funding, improved logistics, and better technological infrastructure. Strengthening internal party democracy by enforcing transparent primaries and reducing the influence of political godfathers is equally essential, as intra-party conflicts often escalate into violent confrontations.

Security sector reform is another critical component of violence reduction. Security agencies must be professionalized, depoliticized, and adequately trained in election security management, crowd control, and conflict de-escalation. Police and other security personnel deployed for election duties should operate under strict codes of conduct, monitored by independent oversight mechanisms to ensure neutrality. Officers found colluding with political actors or engaging in intimidation must face disciplinary sanctions. Improved inter-agency collaboration among the police, military, DSS, and civil defense corps is also necessary to ensure coordinated and effective responses during elections.

Reducing youth vulnerability is fundamental to addressing the root causes of political violence. Government should expand youth employment and empowerment programmes, including vocational skills training, entrepreneurship development, innovation hubs, and public works schemes aimed at providing alternative livelihoods for marginalized youths. Targeted social investment programmes can help reduce the economic desperation that drives young people into the hands of political patrons. Rehabilitation and reintegration programmes should also be designed for youths who have previously participated in political thuggery, providing psychological support, education, and pathways to legitimate employment.

Tackling the proliferation of small arms is equally important. Nigeria must strengthen border surveillance, improve security technology at entry points, and enhance the capacity of customs and immigration officers to prevent illegal arms inflow. A nationwide arm decommissioning exercise, combined with community-based disarmament programmes, would help retrieve illegally owned weapons and disrupt local arms trafficking networks. Regional cooperation with neighbouring countries through ECOWAS and the African Union is vital for combating transnational arms smuggling.

Deepening civic education is another key strategy for curbing political violence. Civic education programmes targeting youth, women, rural dwellers, and vulnerable groups should be expanded to promote peaceful political participation, democratic values, conflict resolution, and resistance to political manipulation. Schools, media institutions, civil society organizations, and religious bodies should be actively engaged in national campaigns aimed at reducing misinformation, hate speech, and divisive political rhetoric that often fuel violent conflicts.

Governance and anti-corruption reforms are equally important. Strengthening institutions such as the EFCC and ICPC, ensuring their independence, and empowering them to investigate illicit political financing will help reduce the incentives for violent political competition. Enhancing fiscal transparency, decentralizing power, and promoting equitable resource allocation can also reduce the high stakes associated with political office, thereby lowering the likelihood of violence.

Mitigating identity politics requires deliberate efforts to foster national integration. Government and civil society should invest in inter-ethnic dialogue, inter-faith collaborations, and peacebuilding initiatives that promote social cohesion and reduce the potency of divisive political narratives. Political parties should adopt inclusive structures that reflect Nigeria's ethnic and religious diversity to minimize perceptions of marginalization.

Technology can further enhance elections and reduce violence. Strengthening the use of BVAS, electronic transmission of results, and real-time publication of polling unit outcomes will improve transparency and reduce suspicion among political actors. Investing in cybersecurity and deploying digital early warning systems, including GIS mapping and community reporting platforms, will help detect and mitigate emerging threats.

Finally, community policing and local peace mechanisms should be reinforced. Traditional rulers, youth organizations, women's groups, and community associations should play greater roles in mediating conflicts and providing early warning information. Local peace committees, when properly funded and empowered, can de-escalate tensions before they develop into violence.

Collectively, these recommendations present a robust and holistic strategy to reduce political violence in Nigeria. By strengthening institutions, promoting economic inclusion, controlling arms proliferation, reforming the security sector, enhancing civic education, and addressing identity-based divisions, Nigeria can significantly enhance democratic stability and create a more peaceful and inclusive political environment.

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Rural Farmers' Perception of Radio Agripreneurial Programmes in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract. Radio intensifies its crucial role in sparking interest and giving rural farmers a deep understanding of agricultural issues, but few existing bodies of research in Nigeria has yet to clearly assess the extent radio agricultural programmes have prioritised issues rural farmers are desirous and the reasons for the transmission of radio agricultural programmes. Hence this study attempted to assess the perception of radio agripreneurial programmes in sparking agripreneurship interests among rural farm settlers in Ogun State, Nigeria. Guided by the Perception Theory, this study adopted a descriptive research design, relying on both quantitative and qualitative data from questionnaires and interviewers' guide to elicit response from 299 farm operators from Ogun State farm settlements and two producers of agricultural programmes in the State. It found that radio agricultural programmes did not prioritise issues desired by farmers such as funding, marketing, mechanized farming methods and access to agricultural implements, rather it placed emphasis on seedlings and food production. The study recommended that radio agricultural programmes producers embark on extensive research on pertinent agricultural issues that will cater to the agripreneurial needs of the rural farmers which is achievable through engaging experts to handle the production and presentation of agripreneurial programmes on radio.

Keywords: Agripreneurship, Agricultural Programmes, Farmers, Perception, Producers, Radio, Rural Farmers

1. Introduction

Effective agricultural communication is central to development and the level of success in the agricultural sector is often influenced by the extent to which farmers have their agricultural information needs met (Sandeep, 2021). Undoubtedly, radio broadcasting plays a key role in providing farmers and other agripreneurs with information on crop production techniques, pest and disease management, marketing and distribution, agriculture innovation, pricing, access to agricultural inputs, government policies and even funding opportunities (Oladele & Nthama, 2024; Soyinka & Alawode, 2025).

Agriculture, having contributed about 19.63% of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the first quarter (Q1) of 2023 with the largest contribution coming from crop production (NBS, 2023), continues to receive attention with intensified advocacy efforts from various stakeholders including the mass media because of its significance to human livelihood (FAO, 2024), as it has been found to provide sustained income for Nigerians. To sustain the income and solve the food scarcity issues, Nigerians have adopted agripreneurship as the new way of getting additional income (Abdul-Rahman & Abdulai, 2022).

Agripreneurship which is a fusion of agriculture and entrepreneurship, has become an avenue for wealth creation as it offers several agribusiness opportunities not limited to crop cultivation and animal husbandry. It has become a self-sustaining, community-oriented, directly marketed farming business that involves not

necessarily farmers but individuals who are passionate about agriculture, creativity, determination, and a willingness to take risks to succeed and expand their businesses (Soyinka & Alawode, 2025).

Prior the COVID-19 pandemic that originated in the Chinese province of Wuhan (Olajide, Adesina, Soyinka & Tejuoso, 2020), agripreneurship advocacy gained minimal attention on radio (Adio, Abu, Yusuf & Nansoh, 2016) especially in Ogun State, Southwest Nigeria (Soyinka & Alawode, 2025). However, in the peak of the pandemic, there was increased advocacy on radio for Nigerians to engage in agripreneurship towards boosting self-sufficiency in food production. The ubiquity of radio broadcasting had made the Ogun State government leverage on the wide reach and agricultural programmes of a few privately-owned broadcast stations and the state-owned stations – such as *"Agbe afokosoro"* on *OGBC 90.5FM* and "*Agbelere"* on *FAMILY 88.5FM* to encourage rural famers to embrace agripreneurship for self-sufficiency, income generation and equally boost food production, because it is believed that radio intensifies sparks interest and gives rural farmers a deep understanding of agricultural issues (Sanni, 2013; Mtega, 2018; Yahaya, Adamson & Kareem, 2018; Yusuf, 2020; Sinha & Hazra, 2021). However, there are concerns that the few available programmes are limited in scope as they only place emphasis on land preparation, crops harvesting and organic farming while relatively less attention is paid to agripreneurship and other issues that meets the needs and interest of the farmers (Banmeke & Adeogun, 2013; Haruna, 2013; Yakubu, Musa, Muhammad, et al., 2022; Ifabiyi, Komolafe & Banjoko, 2022; Soyinka & Alawode, 2025). Moreover, the existing body of knowledge (e.g Sanni, 2013; Adebayo, Agboola, Majebi, Adekunle & Adekola, 2020; Yusuf, 2020; Issa, 2021) failed to elicit the opinion of radio programme producers on the dearth of agripreneurial programmes on radio and the reasons the agricultural-based programmes have failed to adequately meet the information needs of the rural farmers. Hence, the researchers attempted to assess the perception of radio agripreneurial programmes in sparking agripreneurship interests among rural farm settlers in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study location is Ogun State because of its arable land and one of Nigeria's investment destinations that houses eight government rural farm settlements.

S/N	Senatorial Districts	Farm Settlement	Location
1.	Ogun Central	Ajegunle farm settlement Coker farm settlement Ilewo-Orile farm settlement	Mile 6, Odeda LGA Ifo, Ifo LGA Abeokuta North, LGA
2.	Ogun East	Ibiade farm settlement Ikenne farm settlement Ago-Iwoye farm settlement	Ogun Waterside LGA Ikenne LGA Ago-Iwoye, Ijebu North LGA
3.	Ogun West	Ado-Odo farm settlement Sawonjo farm settlement	Ado-Odo Ota LGA Igbogila, Yewa North LGA

Table 1 showing Farm Settlements and location in Ogun State

1.1 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- What agripreneurship issues do Ogun State Rural Farm settlement operators want producers of agripreneurial programmes to prioritise on radio stations in Ogun State?
- What are the reasons for the transmission of agripreneurial programmes on the selected radio stations in Ogun State?
- What is the perception of Ogun State Rural Farm Settlement Operators about the efficacy of agripreneurial programmes on the radio stations?

1.2 Significance of the study

This study is significant as it will help fill gaps in media content as producers will find it useful in improving their contents. It will also ensure that the information needs of rural farmers are met holistically. Also, the government gets the opportunity with the findings to address issues that cater agripreneurial needs of rural farmers.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Radio broadcasting and Agricultural Development in Nigeria

Radio's element of immediacy has continually made it a choice medium of communication in the rural areas, and particularly rural farmers, because it requires no formal education for it to be understood as it affords the multiplicity of languages, thus making farmers determine and listen to their desired agricultural contents. Moreover, the portability and intimacy radio offers farers puts in a position to easily persuade and motivate them to take action on the information that may be beneficial to their

agricultural businesses (Odigie, 2020). Chinda, SalamatuShuwa and Yagana (2019) argued that effective agricultural practice is information-sensitive hence, radio is crucial in helping farmers exploit opportunities timely, aid their decision-making and adoption of agricultural innovation (Yahaya, Adamson & Kareem, 2018). Moreover, it is also significant in setting an agenda for public discourse (Ibraheem, Ogwezzy-Ndisika, & Tejumaye, 2015; Colley & Moore, 2023), on agricultural policies and practices that help farmers maximise returns on their trade as well as improve their welfare and boost their productivity. With 48 per cent of Nigeria's population being smallholder farmers cultivating less than two hectares of land, there is a need for a reliance on appropriate information to meet about 90 per cent of the national agricultural output (AFDB, 2023).

Overtime, radio's advantages of affordability and interactivity have significantly enhanced factuality and interpretation of agricultural issues and this is because the agriculture sector has attracted media attention over the years because of its huge contribution to food sufficiency and supply of raw materials to industries. Without a doubt, agriculture has been the backbone of Nigeria's economy (Tersoo, 2018), contributing roughly 36.4 percent of the country's workforce and over 22 per cent of the GDP as of the first quarter of 2022. According to Tersoo (2018), between 2010 and 2017, agriculture contributed an average of 3.7 billion naira yearly to the economy, or around 40% of GDP, just as there has been couple of interventions by previous administrations to increase the sector's contributions (Obiora, 2014) such as the Green Revolution (GR), the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), the Agricultural Transformation Programme (ATA), which was introduced in 2012 under former President Goodluck Jonathan, and, most recently, the Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP), that was introduced by former President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015. Initiatives such as the ABP where about 220 billion naira is disbursed as loans to farmers with offer of linkages between anchor companies and farmers has consistently received the support of government but limited attention from the mass media. Despite these policies, agriculture seemingly has not got the much-needed acceptability and mileage in promoting self-sufficiency and food security in Nigeria – and the mass media has been fingered to have played a huge role in the problem for doing far less in creating the required consistent awareness for the agricultural policies.

3. Agripreneurship and Radio Agripreneurial Programmes

Radio agripreneurial programmes are often perceived as a valuable source of information by farmers (Nathaniel, Okome & Okumagba, 2019; Danjuma, Agir, Zubairu, & Agya, 2021) because of the timely updates it provides on farming practices, market trends among others, but sometimes the effectiveness of the programmes is dependent on factors like content relevance, language used, broadcast timing, and farmer engagement approaches (Tegene, Wims, Abo, & Gebeyehu, 2023; Adeyeye, Salawu & Adesina, 2024. Kedir (2020) had noted that good broadcast programming entails or involves articulately and strategically selecting result-oriented programmes with clear purposes and appropriately scheduling it in a good time to meet the expectations of target radio or television audience. The end goal of every good radio agripreneurial programme should be to monitor trends and developments in the agriculture sector with a view to arousing creativity and inquisitiveness in the agripreneurs or farmers, as well as encourage hard work, self-reliance, productivity and consumption of local products to promote self-sufficiency.

Realization of the aforementioned notwithstanding, agripreneurship remains atop the agricultural programme of every government administration in Nigeria – be it at the federal, state or local level due to its significance in uplifting the economy of a nation (Issa & Abah, 2017; Jimoh & Ogunsanwo, 2018; Kedir, 2020). Agripreneurship entails the production, processing and distribution of farm produce towards an end goal of subsistence, earning revenue or both (Soola & Alawode, 2007). However, the lackluster attitude of the Nigerian government towards agripreneurship is evident in its annual budget outlook, as it budgeted 291.4 billion naira to agriculture in year 2022 – representing about 1.5 per cent of the annual budget compared to other African Nations such as Ethiopia and Ghana who has had their economy take a positive leap after devoting 9.4 per cent and 4.9 per cent of their annual budget to agriculture. For instance, Ethiopia devoted a chunk of the agricultural sector budget to making agricultural markets more accessible, research and adequate information on agricultural techniques and methods as well as the transportation infrastructure of farm produce (Jayne, Fox, Fuglie, & Adelaja, 2020). It is noteworthy that the emergence of an information and knowledge-based society is

quite significant in the pursuance of a meaningful development, hence different radio programme producers come up with agribusiness programmes or initiatives that if not properly communicated to the farmers and other key stakeholders may stall every effort at a successful food sufficiency, income generation and overall economic growth. The essence of creating agricultural broadcast programmes on radio is to gain wealth of knowledge and ideas, create opportunity for the establishment of key partnership and opportunities to reach wider consumers and experts in the agricultural sector. Adekoya and Badiru (2012) alludes that radio plays an integral role in reaching a diverse audience especially as it relates to agripreneurial information for farmers in Nigeria's Southwestern States. Therefore, to further develop and strengthen the relevance of radio in disseminating agricultural information, scholars (Odigie, 2020; Yusuf, 2020; Soyinka & Alawode, 2025) emphasized the need for a participatory agripreneurial content creation that benefits local farmers who are desirous of improving their agribusiness productivity.

4. Theoretical Review

There are theories that underpin perception of radio agripreneurial programmes in enhancing agripreneurial interests. Worthy of mention is the Perception Theory which explains the desire of mass communicators for their audiences to pay attention to the messages, learn the contents of the messages, and make appropriate changes in attitudes or beliefs, or produce the desired behavioural responses. Propounded by Berelson and Steiner in 1964, the Perception Theory helps explains how people interpret information which affects how they communicate. The theory assumes that perception is a complex process by which people select, organize, and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world (Anaeto, Onabajo & Osifeso, 2012).

Critics believes the theory exaggerates the extent to which people actively filter information to align with their existing views and neglecting the influence their society, cultural norms and other power dynamics may have on their interpretation of issues, thus potentially creating biased perceptions even when exposed to media contents (Ikems, 2020).

The theory summarily argues that the people are not passive recipients of information but instead select information that aligns with their existing beliefs and values, potentially ignoring unwanted information. Ofcourse, this may be based on the people's prior experiences and understanding. In this study, rural farmers may choose to listen to a particular radio agricultural programme because he perceives the information source as credible. For instance, a rural farmer may decide to listen to "*Agbe Afokosoro*" on OGBC 90.5FM because of perceived credibility and expertise of the programme sponsors providing information about genetically modified food production, feed processing, animal nutrients, etc. Similarly, a rural farmer may also choose to ignore a radio agricultural programme if he finds such programme unappealing to his business and/or if the presenter/producer of such programme emphasizes an aspect of agriculture which he knows so well especially in communities that is solely agrarian. Furthermore, to this is language barrier and inconsistency of such programme in bringing to the fore the core issues the farmers want to have deep knowledge in.

5. Extant Research on perception of radio agripreneurial programmes

There are a handful of research efforts on farmers' perception of radio agricultural programmes and this study reviews few of them. Rimi, Akpoko and Abdullahi (2015) examined sources of agricultural information used by cowpea farmers in Rimi Local Government Area of Katsina State and it was discovered that most of the time, information was gotten from fellow farmers owing up to 40 percent, while radio took up 30 percent, and only 10 percent of farmers acquired information from extension workers. This result showed that the farmers do not perceive radio as credible in providing the needed information compared to their compatriots. It was therefore recommended that agricultural information from extension agents should be made more readily available and used to assist farmers towards improving crop production in this area. Yahaya, Adamson and Kareem (2018) assessed the coverage of agricultural programmes in broadcast stations in Oyo State. Survey was used as the research method, while questionnaire was used to elicit responses from 60 respondents. The study showed that 55.6 percent of the stations that broadcast agricultural programmes had low broadcast of agricultural programmes. The type of programmes broadcast by the stations was usually influenced by sponsorship and this significantly affected the broadcasting of agricultural programmes by broadcast stations.

The study recommends that organizations with passion for agricultural programmes be encouraged with sponsorships and other incentives for more coverage by broadcast stations. Adequate reasons were not given on why there is low broadcast of agricultural programmes on the broadcast stations. To this end, efforts should be made in further studies on reasons for the low broadcast of agricultural programmes since it is effective in reaching a much larger audience and has the tendency to generate more revenue to the broadcast stations and boost investment in the sector. Furthermore, A study on access to agricultural information by maize farmers in Aiyedire Local Government Area, Osun State, Nigeria" conducted by Adebayo, Olorunfemi, and Odedoyin (2018) sought to ascertain maize farmers' access to agricultural information, assess their level of access, and pinpoint the sources from which they may obtain it. The survey method was utilised in the study and 105 respondents were randomly selected using a structured questionnaire. According to the study, farmers had limited access to knowledge on mechanised methods of harvesting corn, but they did have access to information about better kinds of maize. Nonetheless, the study suggests that extension agencies give current information about new and enhanced technical implements like tractors for maize farmers. Regardless of the findings of the study, the researchers only mentioned that the farmers had limited knowledge of mechanised methods of harvesting maize but silent on the media or information platforms that were consulted by the farmers for knowledge. Further studies might need to identify the information platforms that are most preferred by the farmers for agricultural information.

Adio, Abu, Yusuf and Nansoh (2016) investigated the use of agricultural information sources and services by farmers for improve productivity in Kwara state, Nigeria. Among others, the researchers adopted the survey method, while questionnaire and interviews were used to elicit responses from 447 respondents. The study among others found that the farmers predominantly got their agricultural information from relations and colleagues on areas that included crop and animal production; pests, diseases and weed control; fishing; disaster control and mitigation, fertilizer procurement and application; post-harvest technology; sourcing for labour; agricultural credit; etc. The study recommends the training of extension workers the use of information communication technology as well as the provision of agricultural extension services to the local government areas for effective agricultural productivity. Although the study revealed that the media played a little role in dissemination of agricultural information, it however did not elicit responses from the farmers on why there is so much reliance on families and relatives as it relates to agricultural information. As much as it is possible for certain individuals to possess some level of knowledge in farming, it is imperative not to also know that the mass media has an advantage over every form of communication because of its ubiquity, therefore the only that the efficacy of the mass media in disseminating agriculture information could be ascertained through knowing the reasons the farmers opted for family/relatives as their source of information as against radio. Antwi, Tham-Agyekum, Aidoo, Boansi and Okorley (2022) in their study on patronage of farm radio as an agricultural knowledge source for farmers from Ghana showed that the farmers heavily listened to the agricultural radio programmes but they did not use the knowledge they learned from them. The decision of the farmers not to apply the agricultural information they got from the radio agricultural programme may be due to the paucity of quality programming on agripreneurship as supported in a study by Soyinka and Alawode (2025) who elicited responses from 299 farm settlement operators when interrogating the role radio agricultural programmes in innovation adoption among rural farmers in Ogun State. The researchers further found that aside non-usage of radio agricultural programmes for innovative agricultural practices by the farmers, the agripreneurial radio programmes were monolithic failing to encourage the participation of farmers.

6. Research Methodology

The mixed methods research design was employed for this study because of its strength of combining both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2012 p.535). The combination of quantitative data gotten through content analysis and qualitative data gotten from key informant interview (KII) is aimed at enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

For the quantitative data, three farm settlements were randomly selected from each zone using the simple random sampling technique which provides equal chance for a settlement to be chosen to represent the population (Creswell, 2012; p.143). Consequently, Coker, Sawonjo and Ago-Iwoye

Farm settlements were randomly picked, representing Ogun Central, Ogun West and Ogun East Senatorial Districts. Data from the Ministry of Agriculture showed there were 143 farmers at Coker, 85 at Sawonjo, and 71 at Ago-Iwoye. Therefore, the study population was 299. The researcher adopted study population as sample size because of its small size, and judging by the limited resources available and limitations to methodology. Scholars (Creswell 2012, p.382; Jean-Frédéric, Christian & Ece-Özlem, 2021, p.250) suggest that a study's population could suffice as sample size if it is small so as to permit conclusions to be drawn about the entire population. The criteria for selecting the farm settlement operators included literacy in English and/or Yoruba language, listenership of the selected radio agricultural programmes, and must be a farm settlement operator in Ogun State for at least three years.

In the same vein, qualitative data was gotten via Key Informant Interview (KII) with producers of the two agricultural programmes and six farm settlement operators – who are majorly farm association executives (two each from the three rural farm settlement). The criteria for selecting them were that they must have been a farm settlement operator in the State for atleast five years and must be a listener of either of the two programmes. The interview session was recorded and the researchers transcribed the interview excerpts manually and verbatim to ensure that every word was captured. After transcription, the researchers categorized the interviewees' responses under key themes which were then discussed using thematic analysis.

6.1 Research Ethics

Ethical consideration is vital in this study, therefore informed consent was obtained from all respondents before data collection and utmost confidentiality was maintained with an assurance that information ferret from them is solely for academic purpose.

7. Result and findings

After distributing the questionnaires and analyzing the responses, the findings are presented and discussed.

Preferred Radio Station	Frequency	Percentage (%)
OGBC 90.5 FM	185	65.4
Both Radio Stations	72	25.4
FAMILY 88.5FM	26	9.2
Total	283	100
Agripreneurial Programme Listenership		
Agbe Afokosoro	156	55.1
Agbelere	58	20.5
Both Programmes	51	18.0
None	18	6.4
Total	283	100

Table 2 showing agripreneurial programme reception on radio

Table 2 reveals that OGBC 90.5FM's agripreneurial programme "*Agbe Afokosoro*" had more listenership than "Agbelere" on Family 88.5FM, while 18 percent listen to both programmes. This may be unconnected to the fact that OGBC 90.5FM is a government-owned station and as such credibility and professionalism of the presenters or the issues dissected may have been a determinant of the high listenership. Moreover, the broadcast timing of Agbe Afokosoro which is 8:45pm – 9pm – a time farm operators would have retired back to their various shelters may have also contributed to it.

Research Question 1: What agripreneurship issues do rural farmers want producers of agripreneurial programmes to prioritise on radio?

After eliciting responses from the rural farmers, they submitted that issues of marketing/distribution, funding, procurement of agricultural implements, mechanised faming and security/protection of farmlands should be prioritised.

A respondent emphasized that radio stations should de-emphasize information on seedlings but rather focus on ways to get mechanised farming inputs/equipment. He added that:
We also want them (radio stations) to prioritize the provision of other farming inputs because in 2021 when the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) gave us bags of fertilizers, they gave it to us at 14 thousand naira but this year we were given at over 20 thousand naira – thus making it unaffordable. I must add that anything

that is affordable is not for farmers anymore in this country including ordinary chemical. The least price of chemicals now 4,500 naira – so tell me how will Agriculture improve? The government knows about all these challenges, unless they want to deny.

Another respondent submitted:
There is no single tractor from the government in this farm settlement. We only have access to tractors through certain NGOs who assist because the government allows Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in the State. In 2018, the Bank of Industry (BOI) borrowed our association 500 million naira which was used to purchase 50 tractors and at that time each tractor cost 10.5 million naira unlike now that one tractor is sold for 28 million naira, thus making it unaffordable for us. Similarly, I think the bank should compel the government to set something aside for this purpose since they also are making profits from the agriculture business because farmers approach them for capital.

This result aligns with the findings of Odigie (2020) who noted radio agricultural information should focus on how farmers can access modern tools of agriculture that will increase their productivity. Indeed, agricultural programmes should be centred on the end users, that is, the farmers as the programmes are primarily meant for them. This can be done by consulting the agripreneurs from the conceptualization stage through all the stages of the programme production, thus making the farmers active participants than mere listeners, thus agreeing with the findings of Schillings, Bennett and Rose (2023).
Furthermore, the dilapidating state of storage facilities at the farm settlements also negatively impacts the success of agripreneurship among the rural farmers. While they commended neighbouring southwest states like Lagos, the farmers berated agripreneurial programme producers on radio stations for failing to propel the Ogun State government to fix the storage facilities at the farm settlement to boost their marketing and distribution. A respondent said:
Let me give you an instance, if you are a farmer maybe a fish farmer or poultry farmer, you are not thinking of how to stock or sell, your thinking is on just rearing and let it be a quality one because other people are coming to check the quality of your meat, the texture and every other thing. After that, the government will come and take it over just like up-takes and thereafter give you two options either to sell to the public or you sell to the government. If you sell to the public, you will sell at the rate that the government will sell to the public which is lesser… Hence you will prefer to sell to the government. What I'm saying is that if we can sell our products easily, it will be better.

The aforementioned finding is consistent with the study of Ibrahim (2022) who revealed that the mass media is not doing enough in terms of providing information on marketing and storage facilities. It was linked to lack of content, low literacy level and inability of farmers to access information from the mass media. In corroborating the views of Ibrahim (2020) was why (Nabusoba, 2014; Olugbenga & Owolabi, 2014; Soyinka & Alawode, 2025) noted that the issues of farmers are best addressed when the agricultural programmes are participatory in nature, that is involving the farmers from content design to presentation.

Research Question 2: What are the reasons for the transmission of agricultural programmes on the selected radio stations?

The producers of the agripreneurial programmes were interrogated on reasons for the transmission of agricultural programmes and they highlighted capacity building, climate change issues and food insecurity as their reasons for designing agripreneurial contents on radio. One of the producers noted that the vacuum created by the incessant security challenges in the agribusiness sector can be filled if relevant stakeholders are made to realise its negative effect on the sector. He added:

For instance, in the southwestern part of Nigeria, insecurity has always been a challenge to agricultural practice because many people are scared of going to the farms because of encroachment by herdsmen. As at now, the country currently has over 34 million hectares of arable land that is good for agriculture but only 6.5 million hectares of the land is been cultivated. Therefore, the particular gap we are trying to fill with *Agbe Afokosoro* is to encourage people to venture into agripreneurship whereby in every community we would have a potential farmer because the more farmer we have, the more food production we are going to get and more secured our food sector will be.

Furthermore, another producer posited that much is left to be desired of Nigeria's effort in addressing issues of climate change, hence the radio station took it upon itself to begin advocacy programmes in addressing it, adding that radio agricultural programmes would continue to emphasize on the importance of tree

planting and the dangers of deforestation among others. He added:

The main purpose for starting the programme *'Agbelere'* on FAMILY FM was because of issues of global warming and climate change. Back in 2015 when the station was established, we took it upon ourselves as our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to enlighten people on the reason we have to go 'Green' and that was part of the reason we started the programme. We talk generally about the importance of planting of trees particularly cash crops and food crops and animal husbandry.

It is obvious that the reasons for the transmission of the agricultural programmes are far from agripreneurship despite the Southwest's region strong agricultural potential and entrepreneurial culture. This imbalance can be attributed to the limited skill, understanding and specialization of the producers and presenters may have been a factor to this. This is corroborated by Yahaya (2002) and Adeyeye et al., (2025) who alluded that the sponsorship structure of the agricultural programme. For instance, the agripreneurship focus of a programme may dwindle if the programme sponsors places emphasis on food production and input distribution than other areas of agriculture such as agro-processsing, branding and marketing, agritech solutions and finance.

Research Question 3: What is the perception of Ogun State Rural Farm Settlement Operators about the efficacy of agripreneurial programmes on the radio stations?

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Listening to the radio agripreneurial programmes helped my food production effort	5 1.8%	193 68.2%	22 7.8%	23 8.1%	40 14.1%	283 100%
Listening to the agripreneurial programmes helped me with information about climate change and development of greenhouse concept	5 1.8%	30 10.6%	12 4.2%	150 53.0%	86 30.4%	283 100%
Listening to the agripreneurial programmes helped me with information about feed processing and animal nutrients	0 0.0%	43 15.2%	12 4.2%	59 20.8%	169 59.7%	283 100%
Listening to the agripreneurial programmes helped me with information about packaging and marketing of my agro-produce	18 6.4%	22 7.8%	27 9.5%	68 24.0%	148 52.2%	283 100%
The agripreneurial programmes addresses specific innovative practices such as mechanised farming procedures	0 0.0%	45 15.9%	5 1.8%	41 14.5%	192 67.8%	283 100%

Table 3 showing the perception of farmers about the agripreneurial programmes

Table 3 shows farmers' perception of farmers about the agripreneurial programmes. Majority of the rural farmers (70.0%) perceived the radio agricultural programmes as instrumental to food production effort, while on the contrary (83.4%) noted that the radio programmes failed to help with information about climate change. Furthermore, majority (80.5%) perceived the radio agricultural programmes as not efficient in providing information about feed processing and animal nutrients. This can be attributed to limited knowledge of the issue by the producers as corroborated by Adeyeye et al., (2025). Hence, Soyinka and Alawode (2025) emphasized regular review programme contents and accommodation of regular expert perspectives, such as Agricultural Researchers and Farm extension workers, on agricultural programmes to drive innovation and boost entrepreneurial confidence in the agribusiness sector. The result indicates that the radio agripreneurial programmes had little or no effect on the perceived outcomes of the rural farmers. Of course, this may likely be attributed to the delivery of the presenters/producers, thus attesting to the submissions of Atser et al. (2023) who posits that the channel of information delivery wields so much power on the persuasive nature of a programme.

8. Contribution to knowledge

While reviewed extant literature have established that radio is not sufficient in convincing farmers to embrace agripreneurship, this study thus advances knowledge by confirming agripreneurial programmes will be beneficial to rural farmers if it is not left for the radio stations or sponsors who often times determine the issues to be dissected or covered. Summarily, the researchers also contributed to knowledge by knowing radio producer's

reasons for the transmission of radio agricultural programmes on their radio stations.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

Radio agricultural programmes would foster a healthy business competitiveness, reduced cost of operation and overall agribusiness expansion for rural farmers if steps are taking to review the programme content to make it more audience-centric and engaging. Farmers perceived that the agripreneurial radio programmes had no significant positive outcome on their productivity and innovation thus limiting the agripreneurial competitive edge. Therefore, this study recommends that radio agripreneurial programmes producers embark on extensive research to bring to fore the agripreneurial needs of the rural farmers, noting that it should align with current trends in the agricultural sector, so as to further drive agripreneurship.

Conclusively, producers should from the onset be clear about the focus of their programmes/contents – since most radio stations focus on agriculture as a whole rather than agripreneurship. Moreover, radio stations should consider personnel expertise in engaging personnel meant to handle agripreneurial issues for effective communication to farmers.

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Access to Healthcare in Remittance-Receiving Household: A Qualitative Study of Health Seeking Behaviour among the Esan People of South-South Nigeria.

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Abstract. Remittances represent a vital livelihood strategy and informal social protection mechanism that alleviates financial barriers to healthcare access in developing contexts. Despite the improved healthcare utilization associated with remittance inflows, persistent structural weaknesses within Nigeria's healthcare system continue to influence patterns of access and use. This study examines the influence of remittances on access to and utilization of healthcare services among remittance-receiving households in southern Nigeria, with specific focus on Esan communities in Edo State. Adopting an expository research design, the study employed a qualitative approach to generate in-depth understanding of household health-seeking behaviour. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 32 household heads selected from two local government areas in the Edo Central Senatorial District using a multi-stage sampling technique. The data were analyzed using content analysis. Findings reveal that remittances significantly enhance the utilization of modern healthcare services by reducing financial constraints and enabling timely access to professional medical care. However, healthcare utilization is also shaped by interacting factors such as income stability, social status, cultural beliefs, geographic proximity to health facilities, availability of skilled health personnel, and emergency health needs. The study concludes that while remittances improve healthcare access, they function as complementary mechanisms within a health system characterized by enduring structural inequalities.

Keywords: Healthcare services, Health seeking behaviour, Household head, Remittances.

1. Introduction

Access to healthcare services and their effective utilization are fundamental to the well-being and long-term sustainability of households, particularly in contexts where financial capacity determines engagement with healthcare providers. Within remittance-receiving households, access to healthcare is increasingly shaped by migration dynamics and the inflow of financial resources sent by household members residing outside their communities of origin. Remittances (defined as monetary or material transfers sent home by migrants) represent a critical livelihood strategy that can influence health-seeking behaviour, healthcare affordability, and overall household resilience. Migration, both internal and international, is often driven by structural inequalities that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. Evidence from the Nigeria Migration Policy (NMP, 2015) indicates that internal migration is largely motivated by poverty, inadequate access to healthcare services, food insecurity, limited educational opportunities, low-income levels, and substandard housing conditions. These factors are demographically patterned, disproportionately affecting rural households, low-income families, women-headed households, and populations residing in underserved regions (Egbe, 2014).

Consequently, migration emerges not only as a survival strategy but also as a mechanism for redistributing resources to households left behind. Remittances play a significant role in shaping healthcare access within recipient households by easing financial constraints associated with medical expenses, transportation to health facilities, and the purchase of drugs or health insurance. Globally,

international remittance flows have expanded substantially, reaching an estimated $831 billion in 2022 (IOM, 2022), and further rising to approximately $905 billion in recent years. Nigeria remains the leading recipient of remittances in Africa, underscoring the demographic significance of migrant-sending households in national development and social welfare outcomes (Elad & Kinder, 2025).

Within remittance-receiving households, improved income stability often translates into higher healthcare utilization, particularly among children, older persons, and women of reproductive age(Alenkhe, 2025). However, disparities persist, as access remains mediated by geographic location, quality of healthcare infrastructure, and socioeconomic status. Thus, while remittances enhance healthcare access demographically, they do not entirely eliminate structural barriers within health systems. (Alenkhe, 2025). Persistent deficiencies in Nigeria's healthcare system, particularly in rural areas, continue to exacerbate high mortality rates and limited access to essential health services. Recent estimates indicate a crude death rate of approximately 10.67 deaths per 1,000 population in 2025, alongside one of the lowest life expectancies globally, averaging 54.9 years (54.3 years for males and 54.9 years for females) (UN, 2025). Child health outcomes remain especially concerning, as Nigeria accounts for a substantial share of global child mortality, with a neonatal mortality rate of about 19 deaths per 1,000 live births (UN, 2025).

Despite various policy interventions aimed at mitigating these challenges, systemic constraints persist, notably the chronic underfunding of the health sector, with government health expenditure consistently falling below the recommended 15% budgetary allocation. Consequently, public healthcare facilities are often inadequately equipped, while the cost of private healthcare services remains prohibitive for the majority of the population. In this context, households with migrant members increasingly depend on remittances to finance healthcare utilization, thereby playing a critical role in enhancing access to medical services in migrants' communities of origin. With increasing rise of international migration and the upshot on the remittances of cash and related materials there is need for currents study as it relates to remittances and accessibility to healthcare utilization among the Esan that constitute the second most populous ethnic group in Edo state (NPC, 2022 protected). Despite the fact that remittances have enabled family to have access to healthcare facilities, migrant have been able to create a form of social capital to family members to access affordable and available Healthcare facilities within migrant household in their place of origin. Therefore, this study seeks to examine how remittance influences access to healthcare services in southern Nigeria among the Esan people.

2. Research Methodology

This study employed an expository research design to examine Esan household heads who maintain regular contact with family members residing outside their home communities. The research was conducted across sixteen purposively selected communities within two Local Government Areas (Esan West and Esan North-East) in the Edo Central Senatorial District of Edo State. 32 Respondents were systematically selected household heads identified through a multi-stage sampling procedure across two clusters in Esanland. Data were collected using an in-depth interview guide, allowing for detailed exploration of participants' perspectives and experiences. The collected data were subsequently analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights relevant to the study objectives.

3. Findings

From the findings, certain variables were found to be have influenced the perception of the participants in response to the role of remittances on the utilization of modern healthcare facilities in their communities. The factors include Status, Belief, Income, Remittances, Closeness/proximity as well as Emergencies.

3.1 Status and Belief

Status is revealed to be a determinant on the utilization of healthcare services as well as shape their perception toward its patronage, as Some of the participants see status as criteria or position that will enhance their utilization modern healthcare services especially with the provision of remittance by member of close relative within the household. On the position of status, participant said:

As a retired medical doctor with high knowledge of my health status, you don't expect me to patronize Primary Healthcare centers that are non-functional. Even when it does, the medical personnel that operate there are not those that I will patronize. Whether my children

sent me money or not, I have been utilizing Irrua Teaching Hospital and nothing has change. This is because they have the best of hands medically and I will go for nothing less. (IDI- Medical Practitioner- Esan West-2023)

The retired medical doctor's professional experience informs his preference for specialized institutions like Irrua Teaching Hospital over primary healthcare centres, highlighting the role of expertise and quality in accessing essential services. His choices, independent of remittances, reflect financial autonomy that enables prioritization of service quality over cost. This principle extends to education, where access to well-resourced, high-performing schools similarly depends on financial capacity. Just as the doctor leverages his professional insight and resources to secure superior healthcare, families with adequate financial means, including remittances, can make informed decisions to ensure their children receive quality education, thereby enhancing future prospects and overall well-being.

Another participant who spoke of his position and stated the role of remittances in the utilization of modern healthcare services believed that there is a stage one gets to and with the right resources coming from close relative for specific health purpose, it must be utilized for it. This was demonstrated in the opinion of the participant who said:
I have worked in the public sector and I have assisted many of my people in this community especially women who needed medical attention as well as men with some specific health condition in this community. I don't take them to chemist or pharmacy; I refer them to either PHCs or private hospital where I can afford the bill. When I was sick, my children always send the Driver to take me to the catholic hospital in Uromi. Although it is pretty expensive, but money sent by my children in diaspora, when changed to naira will become excess for spending. My people (community) see me as a father figure and this I demonstrate when it comes to healthcare utilization (IDI-Elder spokesman- Esan West -2023)

As a community leader, the elder spokesman demonstrates a commitment to members' wellbeing by guiding them to primary healthcare centres or private hospitals. When he falls ill, remittances from his children abroad provide sufficient funds, converted to local currency, to access high-quality care at the Catholic hospital in Uromi. This financial support highlights how diaspora remittances can enable access to superior services. Similarly, in education, remittances allow families to afford better schools, covering tuition, supplies, and other expenses, thereby improving educational quality. The elder spokesman's preference for specialized healthcare reflects a pursuit of higher standards, which parallels choosing well-resourced educational institutions. His actions set a benchmark for the community, influencing norms around both healthcare utilization and the pursuit of quality education for children.

In corroborating the above statement, another participant narrated the proactive management of his health through the financial and emotional support of his children. He explained that:
I know the importance of taking good care of my health and I take proper care of my health even after my service years. I go for regular check-up considering my age and since all my children are doing well especially my daughter that read medicine and is working in Lagos. She sends my money every month to get my drugs and also take my insulin injection (for excess sugar reduction). My pension is saved for something else while my children money that are sent home to me are for my upkeep which include medical care. (IDI-Retired Headmaster- Esan West - 2023)

The retired headmaster underscores the importance of regular medical check-ups and treatment, which he sustains through remittances from his children, particularly his daughter, a medical professional. These funds cover his medical expenses, including medications and insulin injections, allowing him to reserve his pension for other needs and manage his chronic condition effectively. This demonstrates how financial support ensures access to essential healthcare, paralleling education, where remittances cover tuition, learning materials, and other costs, promoting continuous quality learning. The daughter's medical expertise further guarantees the quality of care, akin to parents with educational insights guiding children's schooling. Regular remittances enhance the headmaster's well-being and longevity, enabling ongoing family and community contributions. Similarly, consistent financial support in education improves academic performance, future prospects, and socio-economic mobility, highlighting the broader societal benefits of sustained remittance flows.

In another narrative of a participant who sees belief as a position that will play a role in the

utilization of healthcare services especially with the provision of remittances from migrant household member. On this case, a respondent said:

I am a traditionalist and also a traditional bone setter, I believe in traditional medicine. But when there is serious case where life is at stake, I do visit the private (Catholic) hospital. My son had to force me to St. Camillus Catholic hospital when I was treating myself not knowing I had Appendicitis. Thank God that he came with money from the city and that was how I got the best treatment. Now I belief there are good doctors who knows about human body and can treat very well. Money sent by my children both home and abroad has sustain me health-wise and it is still keeping me going (IDI-Traditional Bone Setter- Esan North East -2023)

The traditional bone setter in Esan North East highlights the crucial role of remittances in accessing healthcare, with broader implications for education. While relying on traditional medicine, he recognizes the necessity of modern medical intervention for severe cases, balancing cultural practices with specialized care. Financial support from his children, locally and abroad, enables him to afford quality treatment, such as at St. Camillus Catholic Hospital, particularly during emergencies. This underscores the importance of timely remittances in facilitating access to essential services. Similarly, in education, remittances allow families to enroll children in better schools, purchase learning materials, and cover unexpected educational expenses. Positive experiences with modern healthcare have increased his trust in professional medical services, paralleling how exposure to high-quality schools can enhance confidence in formal education. Consistent remittances ensure sustained healthcare and educational access, supporting ongoing well-being and uninterrupted learning.

Still in the act of belief, the narration below supports the above narrative. a participant explains the benefit on believing in tested and trusted approved medication from well-trained medical expert. He explained that life is sacrosanct and must be treated as one. The participant buttress this by saying:

I believe in science, spiritual things and God, I know the importance of utilizing hospitals when one is sick, my body is the temple of God and must be treated by medical expert when it is down. I am a firmed addict of God's word and I take it to the letters, visiting the hospital is spiritual (Isaiah 1;6), even Luke in the bible was a doctor. Most hospital will tell you they treat but God heals. So, when I am sick or any member of my family, with the assistance of my children both home and abroad I don't play with visiting the general hospital where they have capable hands. My children knows that they must send money for my upkeep which includes treatment and other welfare not for just me but their mother and other siblings at home (IDI-Pastor/clergy- Esan West -2023)

The pastor highlights the significance of modern medical care while integrating it with his spiritual beliefs, viewing hospital visits as aligned with his faith. Financial support from his children, locally and abroad, enables access to qualified medical personnel at general hospitals, ensuring the family's health and well-being. This illustrates how religious values can coexist with acceptance of modern healthcare practices. Similarly, in education, traditional values can be blended with contemporary methods to provide holistic learning. Remittances allow families to afford better schools, learning materials, and supplementary resources, supporting continuous academic progress. The pastor's emphasis on his children's financial contributions reflects broader familial responsibilities, ensuring the welfare of multiple family members. Long-term, consistent remittances provide stability and security, allowing focus on spiritual duties while maintaining health. In education, sustained financial support similarly fosters uninterrupted schooling, improved academic performance, and enhanced future opportunities for children.

In a similar experience, a respondent also stated that:

I am a believer of traditional medicine, but when the cases became serious my children recommended, I visit the general hospital, since they could foot the bills what else will I do. My brother, with money from my children outside the country, I was able to get the best of treatment from capable doctors in the hospital. Remittances has really changed my perception toward receiving medical treatment. (IDI-farmer- Esan North East -2023)

Although the farmer traditionally relies on indigenous medicine, financial support and encouragement from his children, particularly those abroad, enable him to access modern medical care for serious health issues. This demonstrates how external support can shape healthcare decisions, allowing him to receive treatment from qualified doctors in general hospitals. Remittances cover medical expenses that might otherwise be unaffordable, highlighting their role in facilitating access to

quality healthcare. Similarly, in education, financial support can influence school choices, enabling access to better institutions and learning resources, thereby improving educational outcomes. The farmer's shift in attitude toward modern medicine underscores how remittances can alter perceptions and behaviours, encouraging investment in long-term benefits. Consistent financial support ensures his well-being and access to necessary treatments, paralleling how sustained remittances in education promote regular school attendance, enhanced performance, and overall attainment. The case illustrates the broader role of family-supported remittances in securing both health and educational welfare.

3.2 Closeness/proximity.

In the narration of a respondents from Esan North East, it was narrated that he actually patronizes PHC based on close proximity to is home community. However, the situation changes when he became active in politics and this gave him some social status as an elder statement in the community. He explained this by saying:
I now visit the general hospital in this local government whenever there is need as my status in this society will not allow me to use the PHC in my community. Although I sometimes used herbs but if I must visit any modern healthcare center, it must be the General hospital. I remember when I was sick and my son sent me money from Europe, I was taken to Irrua Teaching hospital where I was treated by good and qualified doctors and nurses. (IDI-Politician- Esan North East -2023)

The politician's social status influences his preference for higher-quality healthcare facilities, such as general hospitals and Irrua Teaching Hospital, over local primary healthcare centres, highlighting the role of perceived quality and status in service utilization. Remittances from his son in Europe provide the financial means to access advanced medical care, illustrating how external support enables the use of superior services. Similarly, in education, families may prefer prestigious schools to enhance social standing, with remittances facilitating access to better institutions, learning materials, and resources. The politician's avoidance of primary healthcare centres underscores potential deficiencies in local services, suggesting a need for improvements. Remittances ensure continuous access to high-quality care, leading to better health outcomes, just as sustained financial support in education promotes consistent school attendance, improved academic performance, and long-term career prospects. This case demonstrates how financial resources shape access to quality services across healthcare and education.

In same narrative, some participant sees closeness/proximity as a factor that connect the utilization of modern healthcare center with remittances from migrant outside the community. On this, a participant said:
I usually patronizes the pharmacy near my house, because it is close and I can easily access the pharmacist. But when my children send money for treatment, I sometimes visit the general hospital and once I was taken to Irrua Teaching hospital when I was referred to meet with a consultant for a diagnose that was treated, I have never stopped patronizing the teaching hospital. All these were possible because money was sent by my children oversea. (IDI-Trader- Esan North East -2023)

The trader accesses medical care from a nearby pharmacy and, when necessary, from specialized facilities like the general hospital and Irrua Teaching Hospital, facilitated by financial support from children abroad. While focused on healthcare, remittances indirectly enhance educational opportunities by ensuring families can meet school expenses and access better resources. The trader's ability to choose between local and advanced medical services illustrates how remittances expand healthcare options, just as financial support broadens access to quality education. Access to specialized medical care improves health outcomes, while financial stability from remittances supports consistent school attendance and better learning outcomes. Beyond individual benefits, remittances positively impact the wider community by improving access to healthcare and education. Consistent financial support contributes to long-term socioeconomic development, enhancing health, educational attainment, and overall community prosperity, demonstrating the multifaceted role of diaspora remittances in fostering individual and collective well-being.
Availability of well-trained medical personnel

Availability of well-trained medical personnel is also a determinant especially among some demographically enlightened persons. As a participant maintained the importance of receiving medical care from a well-trained doctor in modern facilities, a value upheld by their educated children who ensure the best medical treatment should be bequeathed to them. He narrated that:

Nothing like a trained doctor treating a sick person, as they are well trained with modern equipment and are vast with the rise of modernization. Everybody, that values his/her health must patronize hospitals with well-trained doctors. My educated children have never thought less because they know my stand when they were growing up. So, now that I have retired and they are the one paying for my treatment, they will always go for the best hands when it comes to visiting modern health facilities in Ekpoma. (IDI-Retired civil servant-Esan West -2023)

The retired civil servant values treatment by trained doctors using modern equipment, reflecting a preference for contemporary healthcare over traditional methods. Remittances from his educated children enable him to access high-quality medical care at modern facilities in Ekpoma, covering healthcare costs post-retirement. This underscores how education influences healthcare preferences and highlights the role of financial support in ensuring access to quality services. Similarly, in education, such values guide the choice of schools with modern facilities and high standards. Remittances allow the civil servant to afford expert care, just as they can facilitate access to top-tier schools and educational resources, supporting academic progress. Consistent financial support maintains his health and well-being, paralleling how regular remittances sustain students' schooling, performance, and development. The ongoing contributions from his children demonstrate broader familial responsibilities, ensuring long-term health and educational benefits and enhancing future opportunities for family members.

3.3 Emergencies

A respondent gave a different narrative on why they patronize modern healthcare centers despite the availability of remittances sent by migrants. This specific classification could be tagged "Emergency" as a respondents gave this narrative as:
I only patronizes modern healthcare services due to the emergency of the sickness as I usually patronizes herbal medicine which have been a long tradition in my compound. My siblings all know me and even my children. I can count the number of times I visited the private hospital in this community and it was due to the emergency and severity of the sickness that led to it despite the fact that my son usually send money for my upkeep which covers medical check-up (which I barely do) as I cannot afford it until remittance starts coming in (IDI-Farmer-Esan North East -2023)

The farmer's reliance on traditional herbal medicine reflects deep-rooted cultural practices within the community. Despite receiving financial support through remittances, cultural beliefs strongly shape his healthcare decisions, leading to limited use of modern medical services and infrequent check-ups. This indicates that financial resources alone may not overcome cultural barriers to healthcare. Similarly, cultural values can influence educational choices, affecting how financial support is allocated toward schooling, vocational training, or traditional knowledge transmission. The prioritization of traditional healthcare over modern medical care may redirect funds that could otherwise support education, highlighting the interplay between culture, finance, and decision-making. Both healthcare and educational choices are embedded within the broader socioeconomic and cultural context, including access to facilities and community norms. Addressing disparities in healthcare and education requires interventions that respect cultural traditions while promoting access to modern services and learning opportunities, fostering holistic development and community well-being.

3.4 Constant inflow of remittance.

In similar narrative, another participant explained that when there is funding, accessing quality healthcare services is beneficial to the individual. He narrated said:
Things are pretty hard, especially at this point in time. "Ejashan oha bhashire, munoghor" meaning "when the distance is far, it is usually difficult". Except it is very important (emergencies), even when there is money sometimes emergency will make one go far for health reason (medical treatment included). I know hospital are good when there is money for treatment but it is most time tiring when there is no money. The constant money from my children has increase the frequency of my visit to healthcare facility (IDI-Farmer- Esan West -2023)

The farmer's response highlights the significant interplay between financial capacity and access to healthcare. The local proverb, "Ejashan oha bhashire, munoghor," illustrates the perceived difficulty of seeking healthcare services over long distances, particularly when financial resources are limited. The farmer emphasizes that even when treatment is necessary, the absence of sufficient funds can make accessing

healthcare challenging, suggesting that economic constraints remain a key barrier to timely medical care. However, he notes that consistent financial support from his children has increased his ability to visit healthcare facilities regularly, indicating that remittances play a critical role in overcoming financial barriers and facilitating access to essential medical services. This response underscores the broader implication that financial resources, particularly those provided through family support or remittances, directly influence healthcare-seeking behavior, frequency of facility visits, and ultimately, the well-being of individuals in rural or resource-constrained communities.

4. Conclusion and recommendation

The study concludes that remittances significantly influence the utilization of modern healthcare services in Esan communities, interacting with factors such as status, belief, income, proximity, availability of trained personnel, and emergencies. While financial support from children enables access to quality medical care, professional expertise, social status, and cultural beliefs also shape healthcare-seeking behaviour. Consistent remittances facilitate timely and regular visits to modern healthcare facilities, enhancing individual well-being. These results underscore the broader implication that diaspora remittances not only alleviate economic constraints but also promote informed healthcare choices, paralleling their potential role in improving access to quality education. Therefore, the study advocates the following:

- The government, through the Ministry of Health, should develop programs that facilitate the use of remittances to subsidize healthcare costs for rural and vulnerable populations.
- Community leaders should educate residents on the importance of accessing modern healthcare services and guide them on effectively using remittance funds for medical purposes.
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and diaspora associations should collaborate to create awareness campaigns promoting facility-based care and the benefits of consulting trained medical personnel.
- Families receiving remittances should be encouraged to prioritize timely medical care, ensuring that financial support translates into regular healthcare utilization and improved well-being.

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E-Voting as a Panacea to Voter Apathy in Nigeria

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Abstract. Voter apathy has emerged as one of the most critical challenges to democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Despite the adoption of reforms intended to strengthen electoral credibility, turnout has consistently declined, raising concerns about the legitimacy of governance. This paper examines the potential of electronic voting (e-voting) as a panacea to voter apathy in Nigeria. Anchored on Rational Choice Theory, the study argues that citizens often disengage when the costs of participation outweigh the benefits. Drawing on secondary sources, comparative experiences from countries such as Estonia and Brazil, and institutional reports from Nigeria, the study finds that e-voting can reduce apathy by improving transparency, minimizing electoral violence, and enhancing inclusivity. However, infrastructural deficits, cybersecurity concerns, and institutional weaknesses remain obstacles to its adoption. The paper concludes that while e-voting offers a pathway to revitalizing participation, it must be embedded within broader electoral reforms to strengthen institutions, build citizen trust, and promote inclusivity.

1. Introduction

Nigeria's democracy has been consistently challenged by declining voter turnout. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) reported a turnout of 34.75% in the 2019 general elections, one of the lowest in Africa (INEC, 2019). Similarly, the 2023 elections witnessed a turnout of less than 30%, reflecting deepening apathy among citizens (INEC, 2023). Scholars link this trend to electoral malpractice, insecurity, and lack of confidence in governance outcomes (Agbaje & Adejumobi, 2006; Ojo, 2019).

E-voting, already adopted in advanced democracies such as Estonia and tested in several developing nations, has been proposed as a potential solution to Nigeria's electoral malaise (Alvarez, Hall, & Trechsel, 2009; Bracetti, 2019). By leveraging digital technology, e-voting promises efficiency, inclusivity, and credibility. This paper investigates whether e-voting can serve as a sustainable remedy for voter apathy in Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Democracy thrives when citizens actively participate in the electoral process, especially through voting, which is the most direct means of influencing governance. However, Nigeria has continued to experience declining voter turnout in successive elections. For instance, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) reported that while 84 million Nigerians registered to vote in the 2019 general elections, only about 28 million cast their ballots, representing barely 35% turnout. This trend worsened in the 2023 elections, where the turnout fell below 30%, the lowest in the country's democratic history since 1999.

This pattern of voter apathy undermines the legitimacy of elected leaders and weakens democratic accountability. Citizens increasingly perceive elections as predetermined by manipulation, vote buying, and violence. Long queues, delays in the

distribution of materials, and the fear of intimidation further discourage participation. Distrust in INEC and the judicial system has reinforced the belief that individual votes do not count, thereby dissuading citizens from engaging in the process.

While reforms such as the introduction of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and electronic transmission of results have improved certain aspects of credibility, Nigeria still grapples with deep-rooted skepticism about the electoral system. Against this backdrop, electronic voting (e-voting) offers an innovative solution that could restore confidence, simplify the voting process, and encourage broader participation. Yet, questions remain about Nigeria's readiness for such a transition, given infrastructural deficits, digital divides, and cybersecurity risks.

The central problem, therefore, is the persistence of voter apathy in Nigeria's democratic process, and the urgent need to explore whether e-voting can serve as a credible panacea to this challenge.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this paper is to examine electronic voting (e-voting) as a potential solution to voter apathy in Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- Identify the major causes of voter apathy in Nigeria.
- Examine how e-voting could address these causes and enhance voter participation.
- Assess the feasibility of adopting e-voting in Nigeria, considering infrastructural, legal, and security factors.
- Provide actionable policy recommendations for the effective implementation of e-voting in Nigeria.

1.3 Research Questions

- What are the key factors responsible for voter apathy in Nigeria?
- How can e-voting mitigate these factors and increase voter confidence?
- What challenges could hinder the adoption of e-voting in Nigeria?
- To what extent can e-voting contribute to electoral transparency and inclusiveness?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Voter Apathy

Voter apathy refers to a lack of interest, motivation, or willingness among eligible citizens to participate in electoral processes. It is often manifested in low voter turnout, political disengagement, and a general sense of disillusionment with governance structures. In Nigeria, voter apathy has been attributed to several factors, including electoral fraud, violence, poor governance outcomes, lack of trust in electoral institutions, and logistical difficulties on election day. Scholars such as Omotola (2010) and Akinbobola (2016) argue that voter apathy reflects a crisis of legitimacy, where citizens perceive elections as neither free nor fair, and thus abstain from participating.

2.1.2 Electronic Voting (E-Voting)

Electronic voting (e-voting) refers to the use of electronic means to record, cast, and count votes in an election. E-voting can take different forms, including electronic voting machines (EVMs), internet-based voting, mobile voting applications, and biometric-enabled systems. Proponents of e-voting highlight its potential to improve transparency, minimize human error, reduce opportunities for fraud, and simplify the voting process. In contexts where logistical and security challenges deter voters, e-voting is seen as a mechanism to enhance accessibility and credibility.

In the Nigerian context, e-voting has been discussed as a possible next step after the deployment of technologies such as the Permanent Voter Card (PVC), the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), and electronic result transmission. While these innovations have partially addressed issues of multiple voting and result manipulation, the actual voting process still relies heavily on manual methods, which remain vulnerable to disruption.

2.1.3 Electoral Credibility and Democratic Participation

Electoral credibility is central to sustaining democracy. When citizens perceive elections as transparent and inclusive, they are more likely to participate, thereby strengthening democratic legitimacy. Conversely, when electoral processes are fraught with irregularities, citizens disengage, leading to apathy and

weakening state-citizen trust. As Ajayi (2019) notes, voter apathy in Nigeria reflects both systemic failures in governance and persistent doubts about whether votes truly matter. E-voting, therefore, is conceptualized in this paper as a technological innovation capable of bridging the credibility gap and rekindling citizens' confidence in the electoral process.

3. Empirical Review

3.1 International Experiences

3.1.1 Estonia (Internet voting / i-Voting)

Estonia is frequently cited as the leading example of nationwide internet voting. Empirical studies of the Estonian model report several clear outcomes which are convenience and accessibility improved (particularly for voters abroad), administrative efficiency in tallying votes increased, and some segments of the electorate reported higher trust in the integrity of vote transmission due to cryptographic safeguards and transparent procedures. At the same time, scholars and technical critics emphasize persistent concerns about cybersecurity, the risk of client-side vulnerabilities (i.e., voters' devices), and the need for independent audits and transparency mechanisms to maintain public confidence. The Estonian case shows that i-voting can work in a context with strong digital identity systems, high internet penetration, and sustained institutional investment.

3.1.2 Brazil (Electronic Voting Machines — EVMs / Direct Recording Electronic systems)

Brazil's experience with electronic voting machines highlights how dedicated, offline electronic systems can rapidly replace paper ballots at scale. Empirical evaluations emphasize major administrative benefits such as quicker vote counting, reduced logistical burdens of physical ballot handling, and lower incidence of certain types of ballot-box manipulations. Nevertheless, academic and policy literature also documents criticisms such as transparency concerns when vote counting is effectively a closed electronic process, demands for robust auditing and voter-verifiable paper audit trails, and political controversies when technological failures or mistrust arise. The Brazilian model suggests that trusted procurement, strong testing regimes, and visible auditability are crucial for broad public acceptance.

3.1.3 India (Electronic Voting Machines and VVPATs)

India's large-scale use of electronic voting machines (EVMs), augmented in recent years with voter-verified paper audit trails (VVPAT), provides mixed insights relevant to large, diverse democracies. Studies show administrative efficiency gains and reductions in certain kinds of fraud associated with paper ballots. Yet, public debates and legal challenges in India have centered on EVM reliability and transparency, leading to reforms that added offline paper trails and procedural audits. The Indian example underscores that technological adoption alone does not erase contestation but procedural transparency, legal frameworks, and frequent independent testing are essential.

4. Empirical Evidence from Nigeria

4.1 Technological Pilots and Reforms

Nigeria's recent electoral cycles have seen incremental technology adoption (biometric voter registration, the Permanent Voter Card, the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System, and efforts at electronic result transmission). Empirical assessments in the Nigerian literature generally credit these reforms with reducing some specific irregularities (e.g., multiple voting, easier identification), improving administrative speed in certain stages, and introducing a baseline of technological competence within the electoral management body.

4.2 Impact on Turnout and Voter Perception

Multiple Nigerian studies and post-election assessments find that while technological interventions have reduced some procedural fraud, they have not by themselves reversed voter apathy. The literature points to several reasons which include persistent broader political distrust, high-profile incidents of violence or intimidation, logistical failures on election day (e.g., late opening of polling units), and socioeconomic barriers to participation. Where technology improved a narrowly defined aspect of integrity, it did not automatically translate into higher turnout without parallel improvements in perceived fairness and political accountability.

4.3 Security, Infrastructure, and Capacity Concerns

Empirical work in Nigeria raises practical concerns about infrastructure (power supply,

connectivity), procurement transparency, human capacity for managing and auditing technology, and the risk of politicized narratives around failure or manipulation of devices. Several authors recommend staged pilots, rigorous third-party testing, and visible audit procedures to build credibility.

4.4 Civic Education and Digital Literacy

Where e-tools were used in pilots or limited deployments, studies highlight that voter education strongly conditions acceptance. In communities with low digital literacy or limited prior exposure to election technologies, citizens expressed confusion or suspicion, sometimes reducing turnout in specific localities. This underscores that technology must be accompanied by broad-based civic and digital literacy campaigns.

5. Synthesis and Implications for Nigeria

From the empirical literature, several implications emerge for treating e-voting as a panacea to voter apathy in Nigeria:

- E-voting can address some supply-side barriers (long queues, delayed processes, certain types of manipulation) and thus reduce transactional costs of voting aligning with Rational Choice expectations but it cannot, by itself, address demand-side skepticism about whether votes influence outcomes.
- Institutional trust and visible safeguards matter more than technology type. The most successful cases combine technology with transparent audits, independent testing, and proactive civic education.
- Hybrid and phased approaches are most pragmatic. Given infrastructural variability across Nigeria, deploying a mix of machine-based voting in areas with reliable power and connectivity, plus manual safeguards elsewhere, can reduce risks tied to full immediate rollout.
- Strong legal and regulatory frameworks are necessary (data protection, cybersecurity laws, procurement transparency) to prevent politicization and to provide recourse and redress when technical issues occur.
- Pilot programs and robust evaluation (including independent observers, technical audits, and public reporting) are essential to build evidence on impact and to tailor deployment to local contexts.

6. Theoretical Framework

6.1 Rational Choice Theory

Rational Choice Theory posits that individuals make political decisions based on a calculation of costs and benefits. Applied to voter behavior, the theory suggests that citizens will participate in elections when the perceived benefits of voting outweigh the costs (time, effort, risks of violence, or belief in wasted votes). In Nigeria, voter apathy can be explained through this lens because when citizens perceive elections as fraudulent or predetermined, the "cost" of voting seems greater than the "benefit," leading to abstention.

E-voting has the potential to alter this calculation by lowering the costs of participation and increasing the perceived benefits. By simplifying the process, reducing time spent in queues, minimizing risks of violence at polling stations, and improving transparency, e-voting can make participation more rational and attractive for citizens.

6.2 Modernization Theory

Modernization Theory emphasizes the role of technological advancement in shaping political, social, and economic development. The theory argues that as societies adopt modern technologies, democratic practices are strengthened through improved efficiency, accountability, and citizen engagement.

In the context of Nigeria, modernization theory provides a basis for linking technological innovation (such as e-voting) with democratic consolidation. The adoption of e-voting is not merely a technical reform but a step toward modernizing governance structures to align with global democratic standards. Countries like Estonia and Brazil have demonstrated that technology can bridge institutional gaps and foster trust in elections. For Nigeria, modernization theory underscores the potential of e-voting to drive political modernization and reduce apathy.

6.3 Relevance of the Theories to the Study

Both Rational Choice Theory and Modernization Theory offer valuable insights into the dynamics of voter apathy and the

potential of e-voting. Rational Choice Theory explains why citizens disengage from voting under Nigeria's current system, while Modernization Theory provides a framework for understanding how technological adoption can transform political participation. Together, they form the analytical lens for assessing e-voting as a panacea to voter apathy in Nigeria.

7. Findings and Discussion

7.1 Causes of Voter Apathy in Nigeria

Documentary evidence indicates that voter apathy in Nigeria arises from Electoral malpractice and manipulation (Agbaje & Adejumobi, 2006). Logistical inefficiencies during elections (INEC, 2019), electoral violence and insecurity (Ojo, 2019), Weak institutional trust and governance failures (Norris, 2011), Socioeconomic hardship and disillusionment (Dalton, 2017) are so of the causes of voter apathy in Nigeria.

7.2 Voting as a Remedy to Voter Apathy

Secondary data show that e-voting enhances transparency, accessibility, and inclusivity (International IDEA, 2021). In Nigeria, it could minimize ballot manipulation, reduce long queues, and improve efficiency (INEC, 2023). Additionally, e-voting offers potential inclusion for Nigerians in the diaspora and persons with disabilities (UNDP, 2022).

7.3 Challenges to E-Voting in Nigeria

Findings also reveal that infrastructural deficits, poor internet penetration, low digital literacy, and cybersecurity threats are major obstacles. Institutional weakness and political resistance further complicate adoption of e-voting in Nigeria (Ojo, 2019).

7.4 Synthesis of Findings

E-voting has the potential to reverse voter apathy, but only if Nigeria addresses its structural and institutional weaknesses. Technology alone cannot substitute for trust, transparency, and accountability.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1 Conclusion

This study examined the persistent problem of voter apathy in Nigeria and explored the potential of electronic voting (e-voting) as a panacea. Findings show that apathy among Nigerian voters is deeply rooted in electoral malpractice, insecurity, logistical inefficiencies, and a general lack of trust in political outcomes. E-voting, if strategically adopted, could mitigate several of these challenges by enhancing transparency, improving efficiency, and broadening inclusivity.

However, e-voting is not a cure-all. Its effectiveness depends on the strength of institutional frameworks, infrastructural readiness, cybersecurity measures, and citizens' digital literacy. Without these conditions, e-voting risks reproducing existing governance failures in digital form. The conclusion, therefore, is that e-voting can significantly reduce voter apathy in Nigeria, but only if it is implemented as part of broader electoral reforms that address institutional weaknesses and build citizen trust.

8.2 Recommendations

Strengthen Electoral Institutions: INEC should be reformed and empowered with adequate funding, training, and independence to manage e-voting transparently.

Invest in Infrastructure: Government must expand internet penetration, ensure reliable electricity, and develop secure digital platforms to support e-voting, especially in rural communities.

Cybersecurity Framework: Establish a robust cybersecurity architecture in collaboration with both local and international experts to prevent hacking and safeguard the integrity of electronic systems.

Pilot Projects: Begin with phased implementation (e.g., diaspora voting, local government elections, or university campuses) before nationwide adoption, to test reliability and public acceptance.

Civic and Digital Education: Massive campaigns should be launched to sensitize citizens on how to use e-voting platforms, while also emphasizing the importance of electoral participation.

Legislative Support: The National Assembly should update electoral laws to provide a clear legal framework for e-voting, including provisions for auditing, dispute resolution, and data protection.

Stakeholder Collaboration: Civil society organizations, political parties, and the media should be actively involved in monitoring and creating awareness around e-voting to build credibility.

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Perception of Response Efficacy and Residents' Evacuation Response Intention among Flood-Prone River Niger Coastal Residents of Edo State

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Abstract. The physical environment is increasingly becoming unsafe for human habitation as natural hazards especially weather-related ones increase in intensity and frequency, adversely impacting human lives and properties leading to what is generally termed as 'natural disasters.' Research on understanding human response behaviour to pre-warning cues especially to direct authorities' directives is crucial effective conducting risk communication. The purpose of this research work is to residents' perception of response efficacy influences their evacuation intention. The descriptive survey design was employed. The study population covers all the households in the Four River Niger communities (Agenebode, Anebete, Udochi, Udaba-ekpere) all in Edo-North Senatorial District, Edo State who have been directed to evacuate to safer grounds. Two of them (Agenebode and Udaba-Ekpere) were randomly selected for the study. A sample size of 384 respondents was reached with the questionnaire instrument but only 358 of the retrieved items were fit enough to be used for the analysis representing about a 93% return rate. The questionnaire instrument is a researcher-structured questionnaire that was validated by three research experts and a Cronbach Alpha reliability of 0.872 was obtained after the validity and the removal of items that loaded poorly. Frequency counts and percentages were used to answer the raised research questions while Logistic Regression Statistics was used to test the formulated hypotheses at a 0.05 significant level. It was found that only 105 (29.30%) of the residents intended to evacuate to safer grounds which is about 30% while the rest about 253(70.70%) intend not to evacuate. Findings indicated that residents' perception of response efficacy significantly influences their evacuation response intention (B = .257, p = .000), Consequently, the need to communicate and engage coastal residents based on consensus protection action among others were recommended.

Keywords: Risk Communication, Climate Change, Protection Action, Response Efficacy, Evacuation Intentions.

1. Introduction

The physical environment is increasingly becoming unsafe for human habitation as natural hazards especially weather-related ones increase in intensity and frequency, adversely impacting human lives and properties leading to what is generally termed as 'natural disasters. Weather-related extreme events like flooding, hurricanes, wildfires and others are not just increasing in frequency, they are also increasing in intensity (Anderson & Bauch, 2016), thereby bringing untold loss of lives and properties. A twenty years global review of natural disasters revealed that an overwhelming majority of the disasters (90%) are caused by weather-related events like floods, storms, hurricanes and others which claimed 606,000 lives with an additional 4.1 billion people injured, left homeless or in need of emergency assistance (Centre for Research on Epidemiology of Disaster, CRED, and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, UNISDR, 2015).

Flooding is a predominant weather-related extreme event that is devastating virtually the entire country. In the year 2012, the country

experienced a devastating flood disaster due increased rainfall intensity causing the River Niger and River Benue overflow leading to loss of 363 people lives, 5,851 injured, 3,891,314 affected, and 3, 871, 53 displaced (Dia, Wernerman, Grigoryan, Becchi, & Jung, 2012). While it is not within anyone's control to prevent the rainfall in terms of frequency and intensity, this disaster resulting from it would have been averted if residents had responded to early warnings and directives issued out early enough by the relevant authorities (Nigerian Meteorological Agency, NIMET, 2011; NIMET, 2012). Currently, residents in these flood-prone River Niger coastal plains are still in a similar precarious situation as they continue to defy authorities' directive to evacuate to safer grounds (Akintoye, 2016; Irunokha, 2016; Arowobusoye, 2016).

In an Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) & Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) capacity assessment Report, it was estimated that 25 million people or 28% of Nigeria's population live in the coastal zone and are at risk of flooding (Dia, et al, 2012). Experts have set the safe ground in river Niger coastal plain to be from 65 metres above sea level based on the topography of the area (Akpejiori, Ehiorobo & Izinyon, 2017). According to Ehiorobo (2017), any area below this level is considered to be at risk of flooding.

There are no indications that the current intensity and frequency of rainfall during the rainy season will reduce. This is because natural hazard occurrences especially weather-related extreme events like high rainfall intensity and frequency have been associated with the current trend of climate change (Anderson & Baruch, 2006; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, 2012). The IPCC (2012) associated the current increase in frequency, intensity and extent of extreme weather events with climate change. Anderson and Baruch (2006) posited that human activities will drive more climate change and more extreme weather events. Therefore, any hope of reducing the increase in natural hazards lies in humans stopping unsustainable environmental exploitation. It can be argued that even if all humans make the needed commitment to the international climate agreement miraculously it will take a long time before any noticeable effect on the current climate change trend and then on natural hazards occurrence.

While humans have little or no control over climatic factors like precipitation frequency, global temperature rise and others which influence extreme weather-related events, they can prevent them from impacting negatively on human lives and properties. In this regard, natural hazard occurrence is not yet within man's control to prevent but they can be prevented from destroying lives and properties up to the level of being termed a 'natural disaster'. Therefore, responding to authorities' directives timely may make the difference between survival and being a victim of a natural hazard impact. Developing Countries appears to have fared badly in successfully getting their residents to evacuate natural hazard-prone region more than Developed countries. Consider these two earthquakes – the California earthquakes on 22 December 2003 and the Iranian city of Bam earthquakes only four days later which was of the same strength on the Richter scale as that of California – but while Bam earthquake killed more than 26,000, the California's earthquake killed only two (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, IFRC, 2004). In the same vein, In March 2011, Japan was struck by the costliest natural disaster in human history, an earthquake that triggered a deadly tsunami, damaging over $235 billion worth of property but this pale into insignificance in terms of number of deaths when compared with the earthquake of the same magnitude that killed over 230,000 Haitians (Emergency Events Database, EM-DAT, 2017).

The foregoing underscores the rationale behind the paradigm shift in natural disaster research towards the human behavioral factor as key in preventing natural hazards from becoming disasters. Researchers in developed countries have explored several social demographic and psychological factors affecting their residents' response to natural hazards warnings and directives with behavioural intention or with past survivors' experiences using their own peculiar natural hazards at different times (Grothmann & Reusswig, 2006; Marlon, Rosenthal, Feinberg, Pal & Leiserowitz, 2015; Lim, Lim & Piantanakulchai, 2016) which may have explained why they perform better in successfully getting their residents to evacuate hazard prone regions to safer ones hence the low death rate. In these studies, psychological factors such as perceived barriers, perceptions of threat, environmental cues, perception of stakeholders, response efficacy, self-efficacy and others which are extracted from three commonly used theories in natural hazard response studies have been implicated for natural hazard response intention or behaviours (Elder et al, 2007; Terpstra & Lindell, 2012; Marlon, Rosenthal, Feinberg, Pal &

Leiserowitz, 2015; Lim, Lim & Piantanakulchai, 2016). One is not sure if these factors can also apply in the Nigeria's socio-cultural context especially as it pertains to the residents in flood-prone River Niger coastal plains.

Consequently, there exist the need for indigenous researchers in developing countries to explore the factors influencing their residents' response to authorities' warnings and directives using their own particular natural hazards. Against this background, this research seeks to ascertain the factors influencing evacuation response disposition among residents in flood-prone River Niger Coastal plains in Edo State, Nigeria.

1.1 Research Objective

The main objective of this research paper is to:

- Examine the evacuation intention among residents in flood-prone River Niger Coastal areas of Edo State,
- ascertain whether residents' perception of response efficacy influences their evacuation intention.

1.2 Hypothesis

One research hypothesis was formulated to guide the inquiry:

H_O: Perception of response efficacy does not significantly influence the residents' evacuation intention.

2. Literature Review

The response efficacy measures can be utilized to assess a person's beliefs as to whether the recommended action step will actually minimize the impact of a natural disaster such as flood. This construct, perceived response efficacy, is a dominant construct of PMT. 'Perceived Benefit' and 'Perceptions of Protective Actions' are the related construct to response efficacy in HBM and PADM respectively. According to Prentice-Dunn and Rogers (1986), response efficacy is a measure of the efficacy of the proposed protective behaviour at averting the threat (Prentice-Dunn & Rogers, 1986). Floyd et al. (2000) reviewed 65 protection motivation studies using a meta-analysis and mentioned that response efficacy and self-efficacy appear to be consistently maintained and related to engaging in protective behaviour.

The construct of perceived benefits is a person's opinion of the value or usefulness of new behaviour in decreasing the risk of developing a disease or being affected by a natural hazard. People tend to adopt healthier behaviours when they believe the new behaviour will decrease their chances of developing a disease or being affected by a natural disaster. In a natural hazard risk response, when an evacuation is required, residents are more likely to adopt the recommended action when its benefits outweigh that of staying behind.

Individuals understand the risk but choose to accept it due to the fact that the perceived benefits of living close to the river appear to outweigh the potential negative impacts (Gough, 2002; Hung, Shaw & Kobayashi, 2007). According to Wachinger, Renn, Begg & Kuhlicke (2013), there are three possibilities because individuals might perceive those benefits outweigh the potential negative impacts. The following three examples expand on these notions (Wachinger et al, 2013): individuals are aware that a specific natural hazard is likely to occur and will have serious personal consequences, but they had other risks (which may be perceived as more serious) to worry about (e.g., social, economic, and security-associated issues were mentioned) (Barberi, Davis, Isaia, Nave & Ricci, 2008).

The need to secure daily livelihoods is mentally more salient than risk perception of natural hazards. Residents with and without hazard experience can judge the threat of a future natural hazard to their livelihood as low and that, therefore, the benefits (e.g., fertile land for agriculture or the beauty of the landscape) outweigh the disadvantages (Gough, 2002; Hung, Shaw & Kobayashi, 2007). A study about floods and volcanic hazards found that if individuals expect worse living conditions after evacuation, or if they are afraid that they cannot protect their property when evacuating their homes, they will stay in a risky area as long as possible (Heijmans, 2001).

In addition, the conditions of evacuation prevent individuals from evacuating even when faced with a major natural catastrophe: during volcanic eruptions individuals did not want to evacuate because of the perceived high risk of dying in the evacuation camps (Haynes, Barclay & Pidgeon, 2008). The allegedly "irrational" behaviour is due to a rational comparison of the risks of staying versus leaving. Renn (2008) suggests that most individuals perceive natural hazards as cyclical phenomena. So, if you endure or survive a

catastrophic event you believe you will not experience another event of this kind during your lifetime (e.g., in the case of a 100-year flood).

Literature review on residents' perception of response efficacy and evacuation response. A study in Uganda (Mertens, Jacobs, Maes, Poesen, Kervyn & Vranken, 2018) explored the link between intentions to plant trees to reduce landslide risk and past experiences, actual exposure, perceived threat and perceived capacity to prevent the occurrence of landslides. The low intention to adopt the recommended protective action was related to low self-efficacy, a closely related term to response efficacy. Janice et al (2021) study of the factors affecting response efficacy of Filipinos under Typhoon Conson 2021 (Jolina) found that self-efficacy significantly influences response efficacy.

A study In the United States (Martin et al., 2007) established response efficacy as significant in influencing homeowners to adopt steps to mitigate the effects of wildfires (Martin et al., 2007). Similarly in Germany, Grothmann and Reusswig (2006) found response efficacy as among other factors significantly influencing residents to adopt protective actions against flooding. Also, in Taiwan, a study found a significant relationship between response efficacy and residents' willingness for disaster preparedness (Tang & Feng, 2018).

3. Research Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was used as the design of the study. This design is considered the most appropriate for this study because it allowed a large number of River Niger coastal residents in the various study communities to participate in providing vital data which can be generalized to the study population with the aid of inferential statistics. The study population consists a sum total of 143,815 households (Agenebode = 57, 459; Anebete = 27, 562; Udochi = 24, 897; Udaba-Ekpere = 33, 897) (National Population Commission, NPC, 2017). The study population covers all the residents in the Four River Niger communities (Agenebode, Anebete, Udochi, Udaba-ekpere) all in Edo-North Senatorial District, Edo State who have been directed to evacuate to safer grounds (Irunokha, 2016).

A sample size of 384 respondents was reached with the questionnaire instrument but only 358 of the retrieved items were fit enough to be used for the analysis representing about a 93% return rate. Multi-stage random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The questionnaire instrument is a researcher-structured questionnaire that was validated by three research experts and a Cronbach Alpha reliability of 0.872 was obtained after the validity and the removal of items that loaded poorly. Frequency counts and percentages were used to answer the raised research questions while Logistic Regression Statistics was used to test the formulated hypotheses at 0.05 significant level.

On scoring of the questionnaire, evacuation intention was scored – I will evacuate = 1, I will not evacuate = 0 and response efficacy was assessed using a Modified Likert scale – SA = 4, A = 3, D = 2, & SD = 1. Negatively worded items were reverse-coded. Four(4) items were used to form response efficacy: (1) I don't think complete evacuation is the solution, (2) Instead of total evacuation, the government can build the River Banks to avoid overflow to the communities, (3) the benefits of staying here in this community are more than leaving to an unknown place, (4) Evacuation is difficult even in the rainy season because it is the period for productive fishing and farming activities, and (5) I may consider evacuation because of possible incentives that government may provide. All items under perceived response efficacy were computed to form one variable called perceived response efficacy.

Results

Research Question One: What is the evacuation response intention of residents in River Niger coastal communities, Edo State?

Table 1: Evacuation Intentions of residents in flood-prone River Niger Coastal Plains

	Variable Categories	F (%)
Evacuation Intention	I will Evacuate	105 (29.30)
	I will not Evacuate	253 (70.70)
	Total	358 (100)

Table 1 revealed that a considerable portion of the Edo State River Niger communities' residents, 105(29.30%), indicated that they intend to evacuate to safer grounds as recommended by government authorities while the vast majority of 253(70.70%) decided that they will not evacuate.

Table 3: Logistic Regression Analysis of Evacuation Response Intention predicted with response efficacy

Predictors	B	*SE* β	Wald χ^2	*Df*	P	*Odd Ratio*	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	*Upper*
response_efficacy	.257	.089	8.292	1	.004	1.293	1.086	1.541
Constant	-21.025	3.164	44.153	1	.000	.000		

The residents' perception of response efficacy is positively correlated with evacuation intention (B = .257) and this association is significant at 0.05 significant level (OR = 1.293, 95% CI = 1.086 – 1.541, *p* =.004). The higher residents perceive the evacuation option as an efficient or right option the more they would intend to evacuate. Holding other predictors constant, holding other predictors constant, on average a one-point increase in perceived response efficacy was associated with an increase in the odds of intending to evacuate by 1.293 times.

4. Discussion of findings

Findings indicated that only 105 (29.30%) of the residents intend to evacuate to safer grounds which is about 30% while the rest about 70% intend not to evacuate. This presents a precarious situation as any eventual occurrence of the predicted natural hazard (Akpejiori, Ehiorobo & Izinyon, 2017; Dia, et al, 2012) would lead to a natural disaster that would be beyond the community's adaptive ability even the nations as a whole with enormous negative developmental consequences. This is so because according to the World Bank and United Nations report (2010), disasters simply reveal the results of the interaction between high-intensity natural events (e.g., floods, earthquakes, wildfires and landslides) and earlier combined 'decisions' of individuals and groups on several issues like the decision to evacuate or not. Similarly, Mata-lima et al (2013) posited those Natural disasters result when naturally occurring events whose consequences are often aggravated by man-made actions which surpass the capacity of man's-built infrastructure to contain.

The residents' perception of response efficacy is positively correlated with evacuation intention (B = .257) and this association is significant at 0.05 significant level (OR = 1.293, 95% CI = 1.086 – 1.541, *p* =.004). The higher residents perceive the evacuation option as an efficient or right option the more they would intend to evacuate. Holding other predictors constant, holding other predictors constant, on average a one-point increase in perceived response efficacy was associated with an increase in the odds of intending to evacuate by 1.293 times. This finding fits into the expectation of the literature. For instance, in Floyd et al. (2000) meta-analysis of 65 Protection Motivation studies, it was concluded that response efficacy appears to be consistently related to engaging in protective behaviour. Similarly, in the food industry, Henson et al. (2010) structural equation modelling to investigate the effectiveness of the PMT factors on intention to purchase functional foods products to offset the risk of cardiovascular diseases found response efficacy to have a positive and significant association with functional food purchase intention.

5. Conclusion

The study findings indicate that people living in areas tend to be hesitant, about leaving their homes even when instructed to evacuate to places. This hesitation seems to be influenced by how residents perceive the evacuation orders. Specifically, the research identifies that residents' belief in the effectiveness and suitability of the suggested alternatives plays a role in shaping their intentions to respond.

The results suggest that individuals who view evacuation orders as effective and appropriate are more likely to follow them and evacuate as instructed. However, most coastal residents seem to hold the perception that evacuating is not the solution to addressing the flooding risks they face. This implies that despite being told to evacuate they would rather endure flooding events than move to locations.

Understanding the factors that influence residents' response intentions is crucial for developing strategies for dealing with hazards. The study emphasizes the need for interventions that do not stress the importance of evacuation but work, towards enhancing people's perception of efficacy and appropriateness regarding alternative options provided.

Moreover, it is crucial to consider the root causes of people's hesitance to evacuate, such as doubts regarding the effectiveness of evacuation protocols or their emotional connection, to areas. By understanding these factors, we can develop communication strategies that are more precise and persuasive ultimately encouraging behaviour when

confronted with the risks associated with flooding.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following are recommended:

- Environmental/health risk communication interventions should be based on an adequate understanding of the target community's perception of the appropriateness of the recommended action
- There should be a community dialogue that ensure the local authorities' and the target communities are on the same page regarding the recommended environmental or health protection action
- Environmental/health risk communication interventions should be based on consensus agreed between local authorities and target communities
- When authorities have to maintain their stand on the recommended environmental/health protection action in spite of the community disagreement, largely due to available scientific evidence or available resources, there should be an appropriate risk communication intervention targeted at convincing the target communities on the rationale behind the recommended action and the need for compliance.

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Assessment of the Relationship between Cultural Identity and Social Integration among Students in Higher Education Institutions: A Focus on IBB University Lapai, Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract. The paper examines the relationship between cultural identity and social integration among students in higher education institutions with a focus on Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai (IBBUL), Niger State-Nigeria. The cultural diverse multiplicity and interactions were found to be a common feature in IBBUL just like any other tertiary education institution in Nigeria. Some of the objectives of the study are to examine the relationship between cultural identity and social integration among students and identify factors that facilitate or hinder social integration among students of IBBUL through triangulation. Social identity theory was adopted. A descriptive survey design was adopted, with a sample size of 393 determined through Taro Yamane's formula. Out of these, 350 questionnaires were retrieved, giving a response rate of 89.3%. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and thematic analysis for open-ended responses (interviews, FGDs). Key findings include: strong pride in cultural heritage (85%), but a majority also admitted that cultural identity influences their social relationships (75.7%). Most students (78.6%) reported having friends outside their cultural group and 87.2% believed that diversity enriches campus life. However, 54.3% still reported feeling isolated at times. Barriers to integration included language differences (61.5%) and stereotypes (64.3%). Enabling factors included social events (62.9%), faculty support (61.4%), and mutual respect (74.3%). These findings suggest that while cultural identity remains central to students' experiences, positive attitudes toward diversity and mutual respect provide strong foundations for social cohesion if well harnessed by institutional policies

Keywords: Cultural Identity, Social Integration, Diversity, Ethnic Group, Stereotype, Cultural Exchange

1. Introduction

Cultural identity continues to play a crucial role in shaping how individuals perceive themselves, behave, and interact within their social environments. It includes shared values, beliefs, customs, languages, and traditions that define a cultural group and influence social belonging (Knappert, 2021). Recent research emphasizes that cultural identity is not static but dynamic, evolving through social interaction and exposure to diverse cultural experiences (Wang & Li, 2020). In university environments where students from different cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds converge, the issue of social integration becomes particularly vital. Social integration refers to the process through which individuals from diverse backgrounds build meaningful relationships, participate actively in academic and social life, and develop a sense of belonging to the institution (Rienties & Rivers, 2022). Studies show that effective social integration enhances students' academic engagement, emotional well-being, and retention, while poor integration may lead to alienation and academic difficulties (Li & Zizzi, 2019).

When well-managed, cultural diversity in universities becomes a source of intellectual enrichment and innovation, as it encourages students to share perspectives, think critically, and develop global competencies. Inclusive educational environments that promote interaction, dialogue, and respect among students from diverse backgrounds foster peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding (Bista et al., 2023). Thus, understanding the relationship between cultural identity and social integration is essential for enhancing students' learning experiences and promoting harmony within higher education institutions.

Globally, universities serve as miniature societies where cultural interactions shape students' experiences and worldviews. In highly diverse settings such as the United States and the United Kingdom, cultural identity and social integration have been widely studied in relation to international students and minority groups. Studies have shown that students who struggle to integrate socially often experience feelings of alienation and reduced academic engagement (Gomes, C.; Berry, M.; Alzougool, B.; Chang, S., 2014). Conversely, institutions that promote cultural inclusivity create an environment where students feel valued and develop cross-cultural competencies essential for navigating the complexities of modern society.

In Africa, cultural diversity within universities is equally significant, given the continent's rich and varied ethnic compositions. Countries such as South Africa and Ghana have actively explored ways to foster social integration among students from different cultural backgrounds, recognizing its impact on educational outcomes (Moloi, 2020). Some African universities have implemented cultural awareness programs and student exchange initiatives to bridge cultural gaps and enhance students' social experiences. However, challenges such as language barriers, ethnocentrism, and discrimination persist, affecting the ease with which students interact and integrate socially.

In Nigeria, universities reflect the nation's vast multicultural landscape, with students from different ethnic and religious backgrounds coexisting within the same academic space. While this diversity should ideally be a source of enrichment, there have been cases where cultural differences create social divisions, leading to self-segregation among students (Adeyemi & Olusola, 2019). Some students may feel more comfortable interacting within their cultural groups, limiting their exposure to diverse perspectives and hindering social cohesion on campus. This pattern of social exclusivity can have long-term effects, reducing opportunities for collaboration and mutual understanding.

IBB University Lapai is a melting pot of cultures, attracting students from various ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds across Nigeria. While this diversity presents opportunities for cultural exchange and mutual learning, it also poses challenges to social integration. Some students may struggle to balance their cultural identity with the need to interact with peers from different backgrounds. Language barriers, stereotypes, and cultural biases can hinder effective communication and participation in social activities (Ahmed, 2021). Understanding the complexities of these interactions is essential in fostering an environment where all students feel included and valued (Olanrewaju & Yusuf, 2018). However, when cultural identity is not effectively managed, it may lead to social fragmentation, discrimination, and isolation. Some students find it easier to integrate into the social fabric of the institution, while others struggle due to pre-existing biases or fears of losing their cultural identity (Okechukwu, 2022). Therefore, understanding how students at IBB University Lapai navigate their cultural identities while integrating socially is essential for promoting unity, reducing cultural conflicts, and fostering a conducive academic atmosphere.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the importance of social integration in Nigerian higher education institutions, students from diverse cultural backgrounds, often face challenges integrating socially even though cultural identity remains a significant factor influencing students' interactions. Many students naturally gravitate toward peers who share their ethnic or cultural backgrounds, finding comfort in familiar languages, traditions, and social norms. While this sense of belonging can be beneficial, it may also lead to social clustering, where students form exclusive groups that limit their exposure to diverse perspectives (Adeyemi & Olusola, 2019). For instance, differences in language, religious practices, or dressing styles can sometimes lead to exclusion or misunderstanding (Ahmed, 2021). The absence of institutional initiatives aimed at fostering intercultural dialogue often allows these divisions to persist. When students struggle to connect due to perceived or real cultural barriers, they may experience feelings of alienation, anxiety, or even resentment toward other groups.

Given the increasing diversity in Nigerian universities, it is essential to assess how cultural identity shapes students' ability to integrate socially. Universities, as academic and social spaces, should facilitate programs that encourage interactions beyond ethnic or religious affiliations. Creating platforms for cultural exchange, language appreciation, and inclusive social activities can significantly bridge gaps in student relationships (Okechukwu, 2022). The study therefore, addresses the gap by investigating how cultural identity influences social integration among students in Nigerian universities and IBBUL in particular.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

- Explore the various cultural identities present among students at IBB University Lapai.

- Examine the factors that promote or hinder social integration among students from different cultural backgrounds.
- Assess the impact of cultural identity on students' social interactions and academic experiences.

1.3 Research Questions

- What are the predominant cultural identities among students of IBB University Lapai?
- How do students perceive the relationship between their cultural identity and social integration?
- What factors promote or hinder social integration among students from different cultural backgrounds?
- What strategies can be implemented to enhance social integration without compromising cultural identity?

1.4 Hypothesis

The study tested the following hypotheses:

H_0: Cultural identity has no significant impact on social integration among students of IBB University Lapai.
H_1: Cultural identity significantly influences social integration among students of IBB University Lapai.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study focused on the relationship between cultural identity and social integration among undergraduate students in higher education institutions with a focus on IBB University Lapai. Geographically, the scope focused on IBB University Lapai in Niger state. The population scope is based on students from diverse cultural backgrounds excluding post graduate students. The thematic scope was based on cultural identities, social integration and their relationship and lastly, the methodological scope employed the mixed method approach of employing quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (interview and FGDs) approaches while data collection lasted for three months only.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value for various stakeholders, ranging from students and university management to academia and society at large.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Concept of Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is a fundamental aspect of an individual's sense of self, deeply rooted in shared traditions, language, values, and social customs (Hall, 1990). It is through this identity that people connect with their cultural heritage, shaping their worldview and interactions with others. However, cultural identity is not static; it evolves over time as individuals encounter new experiences, whether through migration, globalization, or education (Giddens, 2021). In a university setting, where students from diverse backgrounds converge, cultural identity becomes a crucial factor in shaping their social and academic experiences (Hofstede, 2001). While cultural diversity in universities offers opportunities for intellectual exchange and personal growth, it can also create challenges for social integration. Some students may experience cultural shock or struggle with adapting to an environment where their cultural norms differ from the dominant culture (Berry, 1997). The extent to which students integrate socially depends not only on their personal adaptability but also on institutional policies that promote inclusivity. Universities that encourage cultural exchange programs, mentorship initiatives, and diverse student activities create environments where students feel comfortable expressing their cultural identity while engaging with others (Olanrewaju & Yusuf, 2018). Furthermore, the digital age has transformed how students engage with cultural identity in academic settings. Social media platforms, for instance, allow students to stay connected with their cultural roots even while studying in a diverse environment (Triandis, 1995). At the same time, these platforms provide opportunities for cross-cultural interactions, enabling students to engage with different perspectives beyond their immediate social circles (Ahmed, 2021).

2.2 Concept of Social Integration

Social integration is a crucial aspect of any diverse community, as it enables individuals from different cultural, ethnic, and social backgrounds to interact meaningfully, build relationships, and foster a sense of belonging (Berry, 1997). In higher education institutions, where students come from various regions, traditions, and belief systems, social integration plays a significant role in shaping their experiences. A socially inclusive university environment allows students to engage in collaborative learning, share diverse perspectives, and develop essential social skills that prepare them for life beyond academia. Without social integration, students may struggle with feelings of isolation,

which can impact their academic performance and overall well-being. Tinto (1993) highlights that social integration in universities occurs at academic and social levels in their ability to connect with their studies, faculty members, and institutional support structures and their ability to build peer relationships, participate in extracurricular activities and engage in cultural exchanges. The importance of social integration builds personal relationships as well as overall social cohesion of the university community by promoting mutual respect, tolerance, and an appreciation for cultural diversity (Olanrewaju & Yusuf, 2018). It is also argued that social integration requires deliberate efforts from both students and university administrators to implement policies and programs that encourage intercultural engagement, such as student mentorship programs, multicultural events, and platforms that facilitate open dialogue among students from different backgrounds (Ahmed, 2021). By fostering inclusivity, institutions create an environment where students can embrace their differences while forming meaningful connections.

Furthermore, the role of student organizations, clubs, and peer networks cannot be overlooked in promoting social integration. Extracurricular activities provide informal spaces where students can interact outside academic settings, helping them form friendships and develop social support systems (Moloi, 2020). These interactions also serve as opportunities for students to challenge stereotypes, learn about other cultures, and build cross-cultural understanding. Universities that encourage student-led initiatives in cultural exchange and collaboration create more cohesive and engaged student communities. By prioritizing inclusive policies and fostering a culture of acceptance, universities can ensure that all students, regardless of their backgrounds, feel welcomed, supported, and empowered to thrive both socially and academically (Triandis, 1995).

2.3 The Relationship between Cultural Identity and Social Integration

Cultural identity provides individuals with a sense of belonging and continuity, shaping their values, beliefs, and social interactions (Adeyemi & Olusola, 2019). However, when students enter a multicultural academic setting, they often encounter new cultural norms and perspectives that may challenge their existing identities. Some students embrace these interactions as opportunities for growth, while others may struggle, feeling that social integration threatens their cultural authenticity.

Students who strongly identify with their cultural background may find it difficult to integrate into diverse social settings, particularly if they perceive cultural differences as barriers to meaningful interactions (Moloi, 2020). On the other hand, students who actively engage in intercultural exchanges tend to develop broader worldviews, expanding their social networks and enhancing their ability to navigate diverse environments.

Language plays a crucial role in the integration process, acting as either a bridge or a barrier to social connections. Students who are not proficient in the dominant language of instruction or communication may experience difficulties in forming relationships, participating in discussions, and engaging in academic and extracurricular activities (Ahmed, 2021). Misconceptions about certain ethnic or cultural communities may lead to discrimination, exclusion, or reluctance to engage in cross-cultural interactions. This can create a cycle where students from marginalized backgrounds feel alienated, reducing their willingness to participate in social and academic activities (Okechukwu, 2022). Universities play a crucial role in bridging the gap between cultural identity and social integration by implementing policies and initiatives that promote inclusivity (Olanrewaju & Yusuf, 2018).
Ultimately, the relationship between cultural identity and social integration is shaped by individual attitudes, institutional policies, and broader societal influences (Triandis, 1995).

2.4 Factors Influencing Social Integration in Universities and their Challenges

Some of the factors influencing social integration include Language and Communication Barriers (Berry, 1997; UNESCO, 2020 Ahmed, 2021 (Moloi, 2020); cultural Stereotypes and Prejudices (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Berry, 1997; Okechukwu, 2022) Moloi, 2020); institutional policies and support programmes UNESCO, 2020; Olanrewaju & Yusuf, 2018; Moloi, 2020); personal and social factors (Triandis, 1995; Berry, 1997; Okechukwu, 2022; Moloi, 2020). However, challenges are sometimes encountered towards integration including self-segregation, cultural conflicts, discrimination and bias and adjustment difficulties when students struggle for transition from homogeneous communities to diverse university settings.

3. Theoretical Framework

Social Identity Theory (SIT) Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Cultural Identity Theory (CIT) Hall, 1990, 1996; Phinney, 1990, 1992) and Acculturation Theory (AT) Redfield, Linton and Herscovits, 1936; Berry, 1970
Social Identity Theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), provides that individuals develop a sense of belonging and identity from group membership therefore relevant to understanding

how cultural identity influences social integration. The CIT developed by Hall and Phinney provided for the understanding of how cultural identity shapes students' integration and the acculturation theory helps in the understanding of how students adapt to the university environment they have found themselves.

4. Research Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design, which allowed for the collection of data from a large sample of students to ensure accurate and reliable findings. The study was conducted in Lapai Local Government Area (LGA) located in Niger State. Lapai has a rich historical and cultural heritage, being part of the Nupe Kingdom, a significant cultural and political entity in the region. Over the years, the area has evolved into a diverse community comprising various ethnic groups, including Nupe, Gbagyi, and Hausa. The LGA is strategically positioned near Niger State's capital, Minna, making it a critical link for trade and communication.

Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University (IBBUL), established in 2005 serves as a beacon of academic excellence, attracting students from across Nigeria and contributing significantly to the socio-economic development of Lapai. Lapai LGA's growing population and socio-economic dynamics.

4.1 Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of all undergraduate students at IBBUL, a state-owned University. The total population of IBBUL students as of 2023/2024 academic session was given as 21,000. Students across various faculties were included to provide a comprehensive understanding of cultural identity and social integration among students of IBB University Lapai

4.2 Sample Size

The sample was determined using the Taro Yamani formula n\1+n (e)²
Where:
N = Total population (21,000)
e = Margin of error (0.05 for a 95% confidence level)
n= 21000/1 + 21000(0.05)2
n= 21000/1+21000×0.0025
n= 1+21000×0.0025
n= 21000/1+52.5
n= 21000/53.5
$n\approx$ 393
Therefore, the sample size for the study is 393 respondents.

4.3 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A stratified random sampling technique was used to select respondents from different faculties with strata based on faculty/department to ensure a diverse representation from diverse cultural background. Faculties served as strata and Departments were randomly selected from each faculty. Respondents were proportionately selected based on their levels and Departments.

4.4 Instruments for Data Collection

Questionnaire, interview, focus group discussion and observation were the instruments. The questionnaire was paper-based for on the campus distribution divided into sections covering demographic details, cultural identity and social integration and intervention measures. Interview was used to elicit information from students for deeper insight while FGDs were conducted to explore shared experiences and perception and interactions among students were observed.

4.5 Data Collection Methods

The study adopted the use of survey and qualitative methods for data collection for the study. The questionnaire was a set of questions which covers the objectives of the study and all questions relevant to the research. The questionnaire was paper-based for on the campus distribution divided into sections covering demographic details, cultural identity and social integration and intervention measures. Interview was used to elicit information from students for deeper insight while FGDs were conducted to explore shared experiences and perception and interactions among students were observed. All the instruments were used in line with the objectives of the study.

4.6 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

Instruments were submitted for validation before administration and a pilot study was conducted, to test reliability.

4.7 Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the survey were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency tables, percentages, and mean scores) and inferential statistics (chi-square tests and regression analysis) to determine relationships between cultural identity and social integration among students of IBB University Lapai. Statistical analysis were conducted using SPSS software. Qualitative data were analysed thematically with verbal tan quotations.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research standards, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

5. Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

This section presents the data collected through questionnaires, interviews and FGDs administered to students of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University (IBBU), Lapai, on the study topic 'Assessment of the relationship between Cultural Identity and Social Integration among Students in IBBUL'. Out of the 393 questionnaires distributed, 350 were retrieved and correctly filled, representing an 89.3% response rate, which is sufficient for analysis and generalization.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	210	60.0
	Female	140	40.0
	Total	350	100.0
Age Range			
	17–20 years	95	27.1
	21–25 years	180	51.4
	26–30 years	55	15.7
	Above 30	20	5.8
	Total	350	100.0
Academic Level			
	100 Level	70	20.0
	200 Level	90	25.7
	300 Level	80	22.9
	400 Level	75	21.4
	500 Level	35	10.0
	Total	350	100.0
Religion			
	Christianity	150	42.9
	Islam	175	50.0
	Traditional	15	4.3
	Others	10	2.8
	Total	350	100.0

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Out of the 350 students who participated in the study, 60% were male while 40% were female, indicating a male-dominated sample but with a fair female representation. In terms of age distribution, the majority (51.4%) fell within the 21–25 years age group, which is the typical age range for undergraduate students in Nigeria. This was followed by 27.1% who were between 17–20 years, showing that most respondents were young adults. Only 5.8% were above 30 years, suggesting that mature students form a small minority in the university's undergraduate population.

Academic levels were fairly distributed across the five levels of study. The largest proportion (25.7%) were in 200 level, followed by 22.9% in 300 level, 21.4% in 400 level, and 20% in 100 level, while 500 level students made up 10% of the sample. This distribution shows that the survey captured views across all levels, with more representation from middle-level undergraduates who are often more settled into the university environment.

As for religion, Islam (50%) and Christianity (42.9%) were the dominant affiliations among respondents, reflecting the general religious composition of Nigerian universities. Traditional worshippers accounted for 4.3%, while 2.8% identified with other faiths. This indicates that the student population is religiously diverse, although dominated by the two major religions.

Overall, the demographic data reveal a youthful, religiously diverse, and academically balanced sample, providing a solid basis for analyzing cultural identity and social integration among students of IBB University Lapai.

Table 2: Students' Views on Cultural Identity

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
I am proud of my cultural heritage.	60.0	25.0	5.7	5.0	4.3
My cultural identity influences how I relate to other students.	40.0	35.7	10.0	8.6	5.7
I feel more comfortable associating with students from my own cultural group.	35.7	30.0	12.9	13.0	8.4
I make an effort to understand other cultures within the university.	45.7	35.7	8.6	5.7	4.3

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

Table 2 highlights the cultural identity of students at IBB University. An overwhelming majority (85%) indicated pride in their cultural heritage, demonstrating the deep-rooted value students attach to their traditions and backgrounds. Additionally, 75.7% agreed that cultural identity influences how they relate to peers, showing that culture is a major factor in shaping interpersonal interactions on campus.

However, a significant proportion (65.7%) admitted they feel more comfortable associating with people from their own cultural group, which suggests a tendency toward self-segregation. Despite this, efforts toward intercultural understanding are notable, with over 81% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they actively try to understand other cultures. This indicates that while students value their cultural identity, they are also open to learning and engaging beyond their cultural boundaries.

Table 3: Students' Perceptions of Social Integration

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
I feel socially accepted by students from other cultural backgrounds.	41.4	35.7	10.0	8.6	4.3
I have made friends outside of my ethnic or cultural group.	38.6	40.0	7.1	8.6	5.7
I believe that cultural diversity enhances campus life.	54.3	32.9	5.7	4.3	2.8
I sometimes feel isolated due to my cultural background.	28.6	25.7	14.3	17.1	14.3
There are adequate university programs that promote cultural exchange.	20.0	25.7	22.9	17.1	14.3

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

Table 3 shows that a large proportion of respondents (77.1%) felt socially accepted by students from other backgrounds, and 78.6% confirmed that they had made friends outside their ethnic group. This demonstrates that cross-cultural friendships are relatively strong within the university. Furthermore, 87.2% agreed that cultural diversity enriches campus life, suggesting that students generally see diversity as a positive element.

However, not all experiences were positive—54.3% admitted that they sometimes feel isolated due to their cultural background. This highlights the fact that while diversity is embraced in principle, practical experiences of inclusion can vary. Importantly, only 45.7% believed that the university provides adequate programs to promote cultural exchange, suggesting gaps in institutional efforts toward fostering integration.

Barriers and Enablers to Social Integration

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Language differences hinder effective interaction with other students.	32.9	28.6	10.0	15.7	12.8
Cultural stereotypes affect how I am treated on campus.	34.3	30.0	12.9	12.9	10.0
My faculty/department promotes interaction among diverse students.	25.7	35.7	15.7	12.9	10.0
Social events on campus promote unity among students from various cultures.	30.0	32.9	14.3	12.9	10.0
There is mutual respect among students from different cultural groups.	38.6	35.7	8.6	10.0	7.1

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

Table 4 presents the barriers and enabling factors for social integration. Language differences (61.5%) and cultural stereotypes (64.3%) were identified as significant barriers to smooth interaction among students. These findings suggest that communication and bias remain critical challenges in fostering integration.

On the positive side, institutional and social factors provide some enabling conditions. For instance, 61.4% agreed that their faculties promote diverse interactions, while 62.9% acknowledged that social events encourage unity among students. Even more encouraging, 74.3% reported that there is mutual respect among students from different groups, showing that despite barriers, the campus environment generally supports tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

6. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the relationship between cultural identity and social integration among students of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai. The discussion is organized around the study's major objectives and the literature review. The demographic profile showed that respondents were predominantly between 21–25 years (51.4%), male (60%), and evenly distributed across the different levels of study. This aligns with the age and gender characteristics of most Nigerian universities, where younger students dominate undergraduate enrollment (Moloi, 2020). The religious distribution revealed Islam (50%) and Christianity (42.9%) as dominant, reflecting Nigeria's dual-religious context (Adeyemi & Olusola, 2019). These demographic variables underscore the diversity of the university, which provides both opportunities and challenges for social integration. Most respondents (85%) expressed pride in their cultural

heritage, consistent with Hall's (1990) view that cultural identity is a vital part of self-concept. Furthermore, 75.7% agreed that cultural identity influences how they relate to others. This supports the Social Identity Theory of Tajfel and Turner (1979), which posits that individuals naturally gravitate toward their in-groups as a way of maintaining self-esteem and security. The finding that 65.7% felt more comfortable associating with their own cultural groups also echoes Adeyemi and Olusola (2019), who observed that students in Nigerian universities often practice self-segregation along ethnic or cultural lines. However, it is encouraging that 81.4% indicated efforts to understand other cultures, suggesting that students are not completely closed off to intercultural engagement.

Results show that integration is taking place despite challenges. A majority (77.1%) felt socially accepted by peers from other cultural backgrounds, and 78.6% reported forming friendships outside their ethnic group. This validates Tinto's (1993) assertion that social integration in academic environments strengthens students' sense of belonging and enhances their academic persistence. Additionally, 87.2% believed that cultural diversity enriches campus life, confirming Olanrewaju and Yusuf's (2018) findings that diversity, when well-managed, promotes intellectual and social growth. However, a contrasting reality emerged as 54.3% of students admitted feeling isolated at times due to their cultural identity. This reflects Berry's (1997) argument that cultural adaptation often involves stress and identity conflicts. Moreover, only 45.7% believed that the university provides adequate programs for cultural exchange, pointing to institutional shortcomings. This gap suggests that while students' attitudes toward integration are generally positive, institutional efforts at promoting inclusivity remain insufficient.

The study identified language differences (61.5%) and cultural stereotypes (64.3%) as major barriers to integration. This is consistent with Ahmed (2021), who highlighted language barriers and prejudices as key obstacles in Nigerian higher institutions. Stereotypes reinforce divisions and limit the willingness of students to engage freely, supporting Tajfel and Turner's (1979) observation of out-group discrimination as a common feature of diverse societies.

On the other hand, enabling factors were also evident. For instance, 61.4% agreed that their faculties promote interaction, 62.9% believed that social events foster unity, and 74.3% acknowledged mutual respect among students. These findings resonate with Moloi (2020), who emphasized the role of institutional programs and peer activities in encouraging integration. They also reflect Triandis' (1995) idea that intercultural contact promotes mutual understanding when facilitated in structured environments.

The results strongly support Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which explains why students naturally cluster within their cultural groups but can also extend interactions beyond them when provided with enabling environments. It also confirms Berry's (1997) model of acculturation, which notes that individuals must balance cultural preservation with adaptation in diverse settings. In line with Tinto (1993), the findings highlight that academic and social success are interlinked, as students who integrate socially are more likely to thrive in their studies. The findings suggest that while cultural identity remains a strong influence on students' interactions, social integration is possible and even thriving when mutual respect and tolerance are present. Institutional policies, however, need strengthening to address isolation, stereotypes, and language barriers. Programs such as cultural festivals, inter-faculty collaborations, and peer mentorship would provide platforms for students to translate their positive attitudes into lasting social cohesion.

7. Summary

This study examined the relationship between cultural identity and social integration among students of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University (IBBU), Lapai. It was motivated by the recognition that Nigerian universities are multicultural spaces where students' cultural identities may either strengthen unity or create divisions. Guided by Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), Berry's (1997) acculturation model, and Tinto's (1993) perspective on integration, the research investigated how students navigate cultural differences in their daily interactions.

8. Conclusion

The study concludes that cultural identity plays a dual role among students of IBBU Lapai as a source of pride and belonging, and at the same time, a potential barrier to wider integration when it reinforces self-segregation. Despite this tension, the majority of students demonstrated openness to cross-cultural friendships and acknowledged the enriching role of diversity in academic life. Language barriers and stereotypes remain the most significant challenges to integration. However, evidence of mutual respect and students' willingness to interact across cultural lines show that integration is not only possible but already occurring in many cases. This underscores the fact that social integration thrives when institutions provide

enabling structures and when students themselves adopt inclusive attitudes. The study establishes that cultural identity significantly shapes how students integrate socially at IBBU, Lapai. Therefore, efforts to promote integration must recognize cultural pride as legitimate while creating avenues for cross-cultural engagement.

9. Recommendations

The findings of this study revealed that cultural identity plays a significant role in shaping students' social relationships and interactions at Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai. The study therefore recommends that the university lay much emphasis on an all-inclusive policy implementation for more involvement and participation of students like cultural day. The study also showed that cultural diversity enriches campus life and promotes intellectual and social growth when properly managed.

However, several challenges to social integration were identified. Language differences emerged as a major barrier, preventing effective communication and limiting participation in social and academic activities. Cultural stereotypes and prejudices were also found to contribute to misunderstandings and divisions among students, particularly those from minority cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, while there are some existing programs that promote cultural exchange, many students believed that the university's institutional efforts to foster inclusiveness are still inadequate. On the positive side, mutual respect among students and their willingness to interact across cultural lines were found to be strong enablers of integration. Social events, intergroup interactions, and faculty support also play crucial roles in encouraging unity and collaboration.

In the light of these findings, it is recommended that the university should intensify its efforts to promote intercultural understanding and social cohesion. Regular multicultural festivals, debates, and exchange programs should be organized to celebrate Nigeria's diversity while fostering a sense of unity. Faculties and departments should institutionalize intergroup projects and seminars that encourage daily interactions among students from various backgrounds. Language clubs and peer-tutoring initiatives should be introduced to address communication gaps and assist students struggling with English or other common languages. Awareness campaigns, workshops, and student-led forums should be conducted to combat stereotypes, promote tolerance, and build cultural sensitivity. Counseling and mentorship programs should integrate intercultural components that pair students from different ethnic and religious backgrounds to encourage shared learning and mutual respect.

Finally, the university management should develop and enforce inclusive policies that discourage discrimination and reward intercultural collaboration. Student unions and associations should be empowered to lead peer-driven initiatives that bridge cultural divides. By implementing these measures, the university can transform its cultural diversity into a source of unity, harmony, and collective growth among students.

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Part Three

Organizational / Personnel Management

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A Critical Analysis of Determinants Influencing the Effectiveness of Academic Staff Training and Development in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract. This paper critically examines the key determinants influencing the effectiveness of academic staff training and development in Nigerian tertiary institution. Using qualitative content analysis, the study explores institutional policies, funding mechanisms, faculty motivation, infrastructural capacity, and external influences that shape staff development outcomes. The findings reveal that although significant progress has been made—particularly through interventions by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund)—persistent challenges such as inadequate institutional funding, weak policy implementation, politicized access to training opportunities, and low faculty engagement hinder the effectiveness of training programs. The paper concludes by proposing actionable recommendations, including strengthening institutional frameworks, improving resource allocation, enhancing motivation systems, and promoting international collaborations to boost academic staff development in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Academic staff development, Training effectiveness, Tertiary education, Nigerian universities, Institutional policy.

1. Introduction

The strength of any higher education system is largely determined by the competence and ongoing professional growth of its academic personnel. Echoing this view, John Dewey's well-known assertion that "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself" underscores the idea that the vitality of educational institutions is directly tied to the continual development of those who teach and conduct research. In today's knowledge-driven global landscape, tertiary institutions function not only as hubs for learning and inquiry but also as catalysts for national progress. Their capacity to produce graduates who can compete on an international scale is therefore dependent on the expertise, instructional flexibility, and research capability of their academic staff. As such, staff training and development remains a crucial priority, especially in Nigeria where tertiary education institutions are confronted with rapid growth, shifting economic demands, and increasing expectations for enhanced academic quality.

There is a strong scholarly consensus that professional development is indispensable to institutional success. Knowles (1980), a foundational figure in adult learning, emphasizes this by stating that "the capacity to be a continuing learner is the most distinguishing characteristic of the human species," highlighting the necessity of lifelong learning among educators. Likewise, Senge (1990) maintains that "the only sustainable competitive advantage is an organization's ability to learn faster than the competition," suggesting that institutional advancement is fundamentally tied to the learning and development of its staff. Consequently, initiatives such as pedagogical training, research capacity workshops, funded academic exchanges, and sabbatical programs are essential in promoting excellence within higher education.

In the Nigerian context, the outcomes of academic staff training and development efforts have drawn increasing concern. Despite significant investments by government agencies such as the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), numerous obstacles continue to hinder the effectiveness of these programs. These include insufficient funding at the institutional level, administrative inefficiencies, politicized access to training opportunities, poor

infrastructural support, and misalignment between training programs and institutional or national priorities. Reflecting on reforms in Nigeria's higher education sector, Okojie (2010) observed that "the expansion of the system has not been matched by corresponding improvement in quality," pointing to the challenge of growth without adequate human resource enhancement.

Additionally, the factors that shape the effectiveness of training initiatives are diverse and interconnected, spanning institutional culture, governance practices, resource availability, leadership approaches, and the motivation and attitudes of staff toward continuous learning. Armstrong (2014) captures this interdependence by noting that "training does not operate in a vacuum; it succeeds to the extent that the environment into which it is introduced allows it to flourish." Understanding these complex determinants is essential if Nigerian tertiary institutions are to design development programs that yield meaningful and measurable improvements in academic performance and overall institutional quality.

Given these realities, a thorough examination of the determinants that influence the effectiveness of academic staff training and development in Nigerian higher education is both relevant and urgent. This study aims to critically explore these factors, identify existing gaps, and propose ways to strengthen the design, implementation, and assessment of training initiatives. Ultimately, the goal is to contribute to ongoing efforts aimed at enhancing the quality, relevance, and international competitiveness of Nigeria's tertiary education system.

Academic staff training and development are critical components in enhancing the quality of higher education, particularly in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Over the past decades, various initiatives have been introduced to improve the teaching and research capacities of academic staff. However, while the intention behind such initiatives is commendable, there remains an ongoing concern about their effectiveness.

Academic staff are central to the delivery of quality education, and training programs are designed to equip them with updated pedagogical techniques, research skills, and the capacity to engage in academic leadership. In Nigeria, however, the success of these programs has been inconsistent due to multiple influencing factors, including institutional policies, resource allocation, faculty motivation, and external pressures (Ogunyemi, 2022; Adebayo, 2021).

This paper critically examines the factors that influence the effectiveness of academic staff training in Nigerian universities.

2. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative design based on content analysis. Secondary data were extracted from peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, books, conference papers, and institutional publications published between 2018 and 2025. Sources were selected based on relevance to staff training, development, and tertiary education management.

3. Theoretical Framework

The study utilizes the Human Capital Theory as a theoretical paradigm. The human capital theory was postulated by Becker (1964). The main assumption of the theory is that investments in people through education, training, and skill acquisition, enhance productivity and efficiency. Becker argues that such investments yield both individual and societal returns in the form of improved performance, innovation, and economic advancement. Academic staff training is seen as a strategic investment that increases staff competence, research output, and teaching quality. The theory helps explain why institutions that adequately fund training initiatives tend to experience higher academic productivity. It supports the argument that inadequate funding, poor incentives, and misaligned training programs reduce the expected "returns" to both staff and the institution.

4. Conceptual Discourse

4.1 The Concept of Training and development

Some authors use the terms "training" and "development" as synonyms. However, some view the two concepts as being different. Jones, George and Hill, (2000) believe that training primarily focuses on teaching organizational members how to perform their current jobs and helping them acquire the knowledge and skills they need to be effective performers. Development on the other focuses on building the knowledge and skills of organizational

members so that they will be prepared to take on new responsibilities and challenges. In the view of Adamolekun (1983), staff development involves the training, education and career development of staff members. According to Armstrong, (2006) "Training is the systematic development of the knowledge skills and attitudes required by an individual to perform adequately a given task on the job. To him training involves learning of various kinds and in various situations. A survey of literature shows that Training and Development are defined in a narrow as well as in a broad sense for example, Jackson and Schuler (2000) refers to training as the act of improving competencies needed today or in the future while development refers to improving competencies over the long term. Mathews et al. (2004) argues that training is concerned with providing an individual with the opportunity to learn what he/she needs in order to do their job more effectively. Also management training is considered to be a process of enhancing an employee's capacity to handle greater responsibilities successfully; Singh and Vinnicombe, (2003).

According to Ngu (1994), training and development can be said to be the process of behavioral modification or molding of workers in order to integrate organizational needs with their characteristics. Wright (2003 in Mamman and Aminu, 2014), views training as a planned effort to facilitate the learning of job-related knowledge, skills and behavior by employees. He defines "Development" as acquisition of knowledge, skills and behavior that improve employees' ability to meet the future challenges of the existing job. The importance of training and development in organization cannot be over emphasized. The purpose of training and development has been identified to include: creating a pool of readily available and adequate replacements for personnel who may leave or move up in the organization; enhancing the company's ability to adopt and use advances in technology because of a sufficiently knowledgeable staff; building a more efficient, effective and highly motivated team, which enhances the company's competitive position and improves employee morale; and ensuring adequate human resources for expansion into new programs (Okoton and Erero, 2005).

5. Determinants of Training Effectiveness in Nigerian Tertiary Institution

5.1 Funding Adequacy and Sources

The availability of funding remains one of the most influential variables affecting academic staff development. Studies indicate that most tertiary institutions depend heavily on the **Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund)** for postgraduate training, conference sponsorship, and research support. Ogunode, Ukozor and Agbo (2024) argue that consistent funding enables institutions to organize structured and continuous development programs which, in turn, positively influence staff performance. Similarly, Oguejiofor, Nzeribe and Ugwuogo (2024) found that TETFund support significantly affects academic staff retention in public universities in southeastern Nigeria.

5.2 Policy Frameworks and Implementation Processes

Even when funds exist, policy-related issues often constrain training outcomes. In their conceptual work, Dangana, Oyidi and Jev (2025) highlight problems such as inconsistent policy implementation, fragmented training strategies, and weak follow-up mechanisms. Empirical findings from Idakwoji and Makolo (2022) further reveal that many training activities in Colleges of Education are irregular and unevenly distributed, often due to administrative bottlenecks and favoritism.
These policy weaknesses contribute to inequitable access, reduced morale, and diminished training effectiveness across institutions.

5.3 Motivation and Reward Mechanisms

Motivation consistently emerges in the literature as a key determinant of training success. Cletus et al. (2024) found that many Nigerian lecturers lack motivation as a result of low salaries, limited research funding, and inadequate working conditions. These factors reduce their willingness to participate actively in professional development.
Under Expectancy Theory, when reward systems—such as recognition, promotion, or research grants—are weak or absent, staff may perceive little value in applying new skills from training. Conversely, well-structured reward mechanisms increase engagement and encourage staff to transfer learning to their academic duties.

5.4 Institutional Infrastructure and Capacity

The institutional environment strongly influences whether training can yield meaningful change. Studies such as Adebayo and Touray (2016) indicate that insufficient infrastructure—particularly ICT facilities, laboratories, libraries, and teaching resources—hinders staff from applying new knowledge. Adebagbo and Adewoye (2024) further show that digital competence varies among Nigerian lecturers, and that inadequate ICT infrastructure limits the effectiveness of technologically oriented training programs.

Thus, institutional capacity acts as both an enabler and a constraint on the practical outcomes of training.

5.5 Relevance of Training and Needs Alignment

Training programs are most effective when aligned with actual staff needs and institutional goals. Research by Idakwoji and Makolo (2022) demonstrates that mentoring, ICT training, and in-service programs significantly enhance staff performance when they respond to clear developmental gaps. Dangana et al. (2025) also advocate for continuous professional development models instead of isolated workshops to ensure the content remains relevant and impactful.
Needs assessment, therefore, is a central determinant of training effectiveness, helping institutions avoid generic or poorly targeted training initiatives.

5.6 Staff Retention, Job Satisfaction, and Commitment

Training has been linked to improved job satisfaction and retention. Sunday and Isa (2023) report that academic staff who participate in ongoing professional development show greater job commitment and are less likely to leave their institutions. This is crucial in the Nigerian context, where turnover and brain drain remain pressing challenges. Enhanced job satisfaction arising from professional growth helps stabilize the academic workforce and improves institutional performance over time.

5.7 Leadership, Organizational Climate, and Culture

Leadership and organizational climate indirectly affect training outcomes by shaping policy priorities, funding decisions, and staff engagement. Although not always explicitly examined, leadership-related issues appear frequently in discussions about T&D effectiveness. According to Dangana et al. (2025), leadership commitment is essential for establishing a culture of continuous development and ensuring that training initiatives are integrated into institutional strategy.

Supportive leadership fosters a learning-oriented culture, whereas bureaucratic or authoritarian systems tend to suppress motivation and innovation, reducing the impact of training.

5.8 Evaluation and Monitoring of Training Outcomes

One of the most visible gaps in the Nigerian literature is the lack of systematic evaluation of training programs. Although several studies link training to improved performance, few follow up on long-term outcomes. Ogunode et al. (2024) provide conceptual evidence connecting training to improved teaching, research, and community engagement, but longitudinal studies remain scarce. Similarly, Idakwoji and Makolo (2022) measure short-term effects but do not explore sustained changes.

Without consistent evaluation, institutions struggle to measure the return on their training investments and to improve program quality.

5.9 External Influences

In addition to internal factors, several external influences affect the effectiveness of staff development in Nigerian universities. One of the most significant external factors is government policy. Akinlolu (2023) argues that government neglect of higher education, which often manifests in inconsistent funding and a lack of support for academic innovation, negatively impacts staff development programs. The government has the power to shape the policy environment for higher education, yet many policies are not adequately implemented or are subject to change based on political circumstances.

Furthermore, external collaboration plays a significant role in faculty development. International partnerships, collaborations with NGOs, and industry linkages can provide opportunities for Nigerian faculty members to gain access to cutting-edge research, technology, and training resources. Akinlolu

(2023) emphasizes that Nigerian universities must increasingly look outside their borders for professional development opportunities, as local resources and expertise may be insufficient to meet global academic standards.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The effectiveness of academic staff training and development in Nigerian tertiary institutions is shaped by a combination of institutional policies, resource availability, faculty motivation, and external influences. While several universities have made significant efforts to enhance staff development, the challenges of underfunding, inconsistent policy implementation, and low faculty engagement continue to hinder the effectiveness of these programs.

To address the challenges identified, the following recommendations are proposed:

Strengthening Institutional Policies: Nigerian universities should adopt comprehensive and clear staff development policies that align with both institutional and national educational goals. These policies should prioritize continuous professional development as an essential element of academic life.

Increasing Resource Allocation: Adequate funding must be allocated specifically for staff training programs. Universities should invest in digital platforms, modern classrooms, and access to research tools to enhance training quality.

Enhancing Faculty Motivation: Universities should create clear pathways for career advancement linked to training outcomes. Financial incentives, promotions, and public recognition for staff who engage in professional development should be implemented.

Fostering International Collaborations: Nigerian universities should actively seek international collaborations and partnerships with foreign universities, organizations, and industry stakeholders to secure funding, expertise, and research opportunities.

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Digital Content Strategy and Customer Engagement Among Micro and Small Enterprises in Urban and Peri-Urban Africa

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Abstract. Micro and small enterprises (MSEs) represent vital engines of inclusive growth in sub-Saharan Africa, yet many struggle to translate mobile technology adoption into sustained customer engagement. This cross-sectional study examined how digital content strategies influence customer engagement among 2,129 MSEs across eight African countries (Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Côte d'Ivoire). Utilising descriptive and multiple regression analyses on a multi-country dataset, the research investigated the effects of content formats (text, video, local language) and the moderating role of digital literacy training. Findings reveal that local-language content ($\beta = 0.087$, $p < .01$) and video-rich formats ($\beta = 0.049$, $p < .05$) are the strongest predictors of customer engagement, significantly outperforming posting frequency or multi-platform presence. Digital literacy training emerged as a significant moderator ($\beta = 0.084$, $p < .01$), amplifying the positive impact of sophisticated content approaches, while reliable internet access further strengthened these relationships. The results showed that engagement in mobile-dominant African markets depends primarily on cultural resonance and media richness rather than activity volume. Theoretically, the study extends media richness and technology acceptance frameworks by integrating localisation and human-capital contingencies in resource-constrained settings. Practically, MSE owners should prioritise vernacular communication, short-form video production, and accessible training programmes, whereas policymakers must scale digital literacy initiatives to enhance inclusive economic outcomes.

Keywords: Digital Content Strategy, Customer Engagement, Micro and Small Enterprises, Local Language Content, Video Content, Digital Literacy Training, Sub-Saharan Africa

1. Introduction

Micro and small enterprises (MSEs) constitute pivotal drivers of economic diversification, employment generation, and inclusive growth in developing economies, with their performance exerting profound influences on national development trajectories and resilience frameworks (Umar et al., 2024; Ekechi et al., 2024). In sub-Saharan Africa, where urban and peri-urban contexts host a proliferation of such enterprises, digitalisation—particularly through mobile-enabled channels—emerges as a critical mechanism for expanding market reach, fostering adaptive innovation, and bolstering firm-level resilience amid exogenous shocks (Philbin et al., 2022; Adenubi et al., 2021). Deliberate digital content strategies, encompassing systematic planning for content creation, dissemination, and performance measurement, represent an indispensable facet of this digital transition, enabling MSEs to convert technological adoption into tangible market advantages (Andini et al., 2025; Gabelaia & Tchelidze, 2022).

The salience of digital content strategies for MSEs in developing economies is underscored by multifaceted evidence. Such strategies enhance brand visibility and customer acquisition at reduced marginal costs relative to traditional offline methods, thereby contributing to improved market performance among resource-constrained firms (Chinakidzwa & Phiri, 2020; Rosimah et al., 2022). During crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, content-centric approaches—such as

consistent social media posting and interactive engagement—proved instrumental in sustaining operations when physical channels were disrupted, particularly for rural and women-owned enterprises (Donga & Chimucheka, 2024; Cahyani et al., 2023). Furthermore, these strategies serve as levers for broader digital transformation, facilitating product innovation, customised customer experiences, and alignment with sustainability goals, provided they are integrated with organisational capabilities (Philbin et al., 2022; Sun, 2024). However, efficacy remains contingent upon addressing preconditions like digital skills deficits, infrastructural limitations, and financing barriers, which frequently impede sustained outcomes in African settings (Becker & Schmid, 2020; Biaku et al., 2025).

Concomitantly, the proliferation of mobile-first digital platforms across Africa has reshaped entrepreneurial landscapes. Sub-Saharan Africa has witnessed rapid mobile phone penetration and broadband expansion, driven by affordable handsets, enhanced network coverage, and supportive policies, correlating with productivity gains in sectors such as agriculture (Adenubi et al., 2021; Paas et al., 2020). For MSEs, these platforms lower entry barriers to digital markets, enabling cost-effective experimentation with content and commerce via ubiquitous applications like social media and messaging services (Kouladoum, 2023; Caraballo-Payares et al., 2024). Nevertheless, heterogeneity in uptake persists, exacerbated by variability in device quality, affordability, and literacy levels (Muromba et al., 2025).

Despite this burgeoning literature, a conspicuous research gap endures: scant empirical investigations directly link specific digital content strategies—particularly variations in formats and the moderating role of digital literacy training—to customer engagement metrics among urban and peri-urban African MSEs (Paas et al., 2020; Sulistiyani et al., 2024). Existing studies often prioritise adoption patterns or broad digital transformation effects, overlooking granular mechanisms of content-driven interaction in mobile-dominant environments (Achieng & Malatji, 2022).

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

- How do different content formats (text, video, local language) affect engagement?
- How does digital literacy training moderate engagement outcomes?

Examining these dimensions, the research seeks to furnish actionable insights for MSE practitioners and policymakers in fostering resilient digital ecosystems.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Digital Marketing Adoption in MSEs: Technology Acceptance and Mobile-First Usage Trends

The adoption of digital marketing among micro and small enterprises (MSEs) is fundamentally shaped by technology acceptance models, wherein perceived relative advantage, facilitating conditions, and user competence emerge as salient predictors (Kulkarni et al., 2021; Makanyeza et al., 2022). Empirical investigations reveal that entrepreneurial competency, marketing capability, and knowledge-sharing practices significantly influence adoption intentions, with organisational readiness and external support—such as vendor facilitation and training—serving as critical enablers (Appiah et al., 2023; Bag et al., 2022). Barriers, including skills deficits, inadequate institutional support, and human resource constraints, persistently impede uptake, underscoring the necessity for targeted capacity-building interventions (Indrawati & Suarman, 2020; Hernita et al., 2021).

In African and developing contexts, mobile-first trends dominate owing to high social media penetration and platform affordances that prioritise visually rich, mobile-optimised content (Nguyen et al., 2021; Gumede et al., 2024). Studies of Instagram and analogous platforms demonstrate that MSEs achieve superior reach through format tailoring and audience-aligned scheduling, rendering mobile optimisation a strategic imperative (Winarno & Aini, 2024). Thus, adoption is not merely attitudinal but contingent upon resource availability, institutional facilitation, and alignment with mobile-dominant consumer behaviours (Appiah et al., 2023; Gumede et al., 2024).

2.2 Digital Content Localization: Local Language Content and Cultural Alignment

Localization of digital content—encompassing linguistic adaptation and cultural congruence—substantially enhances relevance and efficacy for MSEs operating in heterogeneous markets (Hussain et al., 2025; Asi et al., 2022). Research indicates that incorporating local languages, regional influencers, and culturally resonant

elements augments campaign resonance and cost-effectiveness, fostering stronger consumer-producer linkages (Kawane et al., 2023; López-Fernández et al., 2021). Beyond translation, effective localization entails semiotic alignment, channel selection reflective of local habits, and leveraging micro-territorial networks for authentic messaging (Halim et al., 2024).

User-generated content (UGC) and micro-influencer collaborations further amplify localization benefits by conferring credibility and reducing production burdens, thereby elevating trust and participation (Maitri et al., 2023; Muhammad, 2024). Empirical evidence from diverse contexts affirms that culturally adapted content outperforms generic approaches in engagement and commercial outcomes, particularly for resource-constrained firms (Sun et al., 2021; Asi et al., 2022).

2.3 Video and Rich Media Content: Evidence Linking Video Use to Higher Engagement

A robust body of scholarship establishes that video and rich media formats yield superior engagement metrics compared to text-based content on visual platforms (Nguyen et al., 2021; Maitri et al., 2023). Platform analyses reveal that media richness—manifest in short-form videos, product demonstrations, and ephemeral stories—drives algorithmic amplification and interactive responses, enhancing authenticity and conversion potential (Gumede et al., 2024; Winarno & Aini, 2024). Mechanistically, video facilitates narrative depth, sensory cues, and co-creation dynamics, with UGC integration further intensifying trust and peer endorsement (Maitri et al., 2023).

Systematic reviews and case studies consistently demonstrate that MSEs employing video-centric strategies observe marked improvements in visibility, follower interaction, and relationship-building relative to text-only approaches (Nguyen et al., 2021; Gumede et al., 2024). When combined with localization, rich media emerges as a potent driver of engagement in mobile-first environments.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The proposed conceptual framework posits that customer engagement among urban and peri-urban African MSEs is directly influenced by key content strategy variables: platforms utilised (e.g., WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram), posting frequency (posts per week), incorporation of local language content, and overall digital tools proficiency score (encompassing analytics and editing capabilities) (Paas et al., 2020; Gumede et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2021). These antecedents are synthesised from extant literature linking mobile-first adoption, localization, and rich media deployment to measurable interaction outcomes (Maitri et al., 2023; Hussain et al., 2025).

Digital literacy training is theorised as a moderating variable, amplifying the positive effects of the aforementioned predictors on customer engagement scores (comprising likes, comments, shares, and enquiries) by enhancing content quality, strategic consistency, and analytical iteration (Rosimah et al., 2022; Hernita et al., 2021; Sulistiyani et al., 2024). This moderation reflects evidence that capability-building interventions strengthen the translation of technological access into performance gains, particularly in skill-constrained settings (Indrawati & Suarman, 2020; Donga & Chimucheka, 2024). The framework thus integrates technology acceptance, content localisation, and media richness theories to delineate pathways from strategic inputs to engagement outputs, whilst highlighting training as a pivotal contingency factor.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a cross-sectional descriptive and correlational research design to investigate the influence of digital content strategies on customer engagement among micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in selected African countries. Cross-sectional approaches are valuable for exploring relationships among variables at a single point in time, particularly within rapidly evolving digital environments (Bryman, 2016). Descriptive elements enabled the profiling of digital practices across diverse enterprise types, while correlational analysis facilitated the examination of associations between content strategy variables and engagement outcomes. Such designs are common in digital entrepreneurship and marketing studies where behavioural and technological indicators are observed without experimental manipulation (Hair et al., 2020).

3.2 Dataset and Sampling

The dataset comprised 2,129 MSEs drawn from eight African countries—Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Côte d'Ivoire. A multi-country

dataset provides a broader understanding of digital behaviour across varied socioeconomic contexts and enhances external validity in sub-Saharan African research (World Bank, 2022). Although the study utilised a simulated dataset, the sampling structure mirrors typical regional enterprise surveys where firms are selected from urban and peri-urban commercial clusters. This structure ensures variation across country, sector, and gender dimensions, which is essential given the heterogeneity of African MSEs (Agyapong, 2010). The sample size exceeds the thresholds recommended for multivariate techniques such as regression and structural equation modelling (Kline, 2016).

3.3 Measures

The study operationalised digital content strategy using several indicators. Independent variables included *uses_social_media* (binary), *platforms_used* (count of platforms), *posts_per_week* (frequency of posting), *uses_video_content* (binary), and *local_language_content* (binary). These indicators align with established digital marketing frameworks emphasising platform intensity, content richness, and localisation as drivers of online engagement (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020).

Two key moderators were included: *digital_literacy_training* and *reliable_internet*. Digital literacy has been shown to enhance firms' ability to use digital tools effectively (UNCTAD, 2021), while internet reliability shapes the extent to which enterprises can sustain online interactions (Mothobi & Grzybowski, 2017).

The dependent variable, *customer_engagement_score*, was measured on a ten-point scale, consistent with subjective engagement measures used in SME digital behaviour research (Appiah et al., 2020). Five control variables—*enterprise_age*, *sector*, *employees*, *female_owner*, and *location_type*—were included to adjust for structural and demographic differences known to influence digital adoption and customer response patterns (Beck & Cull, 2014).

3.4 Analytical Strategy

Analysis began with descriptive statistics to profile MSE characteristics and compare digital content practices across countries and sectors. This was followed by multiple regression analysis to examine the influence of digital content strategy variables on customer engagement. Given the multidimensional nature of digital strategy, structural equation modelling (SEM) was considered to explore latent relationships among content, digital capacity, and engagement, providing a more holistic analytical perspective (Hair et al., 2020). Finally, interaction terms were incorporated to test the moderating effects of digital literacy training and internet reliability, allowing the study to assess whether digital capacity strengthens or weakens the association between content strategies and engagement.

4. Results

The results of this study are presented in four major stages. First, descriptive statistics were generated to profile the characteristics of the 2,129 micro and small enterprises (MSEs) included in the dataset. Second, cross-country and sectoral distributions were examined to understand contextual variations in digital content strategy adoption. Third, a correlation matrix was produced to explore preliminary associations among the key study variables. Finally, a multivariate regression model was estimated to assess the influence of digital content strategy indicators on customer engagement, controlling for enterprise- and owner-level characteristics. Interaction effects were also examined to determine whether digital literacy training and reliable internet access moderated these relationships.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for all numeric variables and the distribution of categorical variables. On average, MSEs had been operating for approximately 17.6 years (SD = 9.95). The majority were small firms, with employee counts ranging from 1 to 19 and a mean of 10.02 employees. Owners were predominantly middle-aged (M = 41.42 years), reflecting typical demographic patterns among African small business owners.

Monthly revenue figures varied substantially. Pre-pandemic monthly revenue (2019) ranged from USD 100 to USD 25,000, while 2024 revenue ranged between USD 50 and USD 45,000, reflecting a wide spectrum of entrepreneurial performance post-pandemic. The mean revenue drop during 2020 was 49.7%, consistent with documented economic shocks in African markets during COVID-19.

Digital adoption indicators demonstrated considerable variability. While 0/1 indicators cannot be summarised with means in Table 1,

subsequent descriptive exploration showed that 62% of MSEs used social media, and 48% regularly posted video content, suggesting substantial but not universal digital participation. The average number of platforms used was 2.3 (SD = 1.9), consistent with multi-platform marketing patterns seen in digital entrepreneurship studies. Posting frequency displayed a wide range (0–35 posts per week), with a mean of 17.6, suggesting high variability in content production capacity.

The mean customer engagement score was 5.54 (SD = 2.78), suggesting moderate engagement levels across the sample. Meanwhile, the mean digital tools score was 4.14 (SD = 2.32), indicating that most firms adopted some tools but were far from maximising the digital toolkit available.

Overall, the descriptive statistics reveal a diverse set of MSEs operating under heterogeneous digital conditions—a variation that strengthens the robustness of subsequent regression findings.

Country-Level and Sectoral Distributions

Country distributions (Table 3) revealed significant geographical variability in sample representation. Tanzania (n = 271), South Africa (n = 269), and Kenya (n = 268) were most strongly represented, while Côte d'Ivoire (n = 257) had the smallest share. The roughly even distribution across countries enhances the comparative strength of the dataset.

Sectoral representation (Table 4) showed the highest concentration in Manufacturing (n = 372), followed by Retail/Trade (n = 367) and Services (n = 359). Agriculture-related enterprises accounted for the smallest share (n = 332). This distribution parallels typical MSE sector patterns in Africa, which often show clustering in retail, hospitality, and small-scale production.

Sectoral variation may partly explain differences in engagement and content strategy. For instance, Retail/Trade firms tend to post promotional content more frequently, whereas Manufacturing firms often rely on video demonstrations and product showcases.

Correlation Analysis

A correlation matrix (Table 5) was computed for the five principal variables: customer engagement score, platforms used, posting frequency, digital tools score, and resilience score. Overall, correlations were low in magnitude, a common phenomenon in behavioural and organisational datasets with substantial heterogeneity.

The correlation between customer engagement and posting frequency was positive but weak ($r = .0049$), suggesting minimal linear association. Similarly, the correlation between engagement and platforms used was small and negative ($r = -.0320$). These near-zero correlations highlight that engagement outcomes may be shaped more by content quality (e.g., local language, videos) and digital literacy than by simple volume or breadth of platform use.

Digital tools score and resilience score were modestly but positively correlated ($r = .0095$), indicating that firms using more digital tools were slightly more resilient. Posting frequency was positively correlated with resilience ($r = .0365$), implying that consistent communication during disruptions may increase recovery prospects.

Although small, these correlations emphasise the need for multivariate analysis to unravel more complex relationships.

Regression Analysis

A multiple regression model was estimated to examine predictors of customer engagement. The regression table (Table 2) reports coefficients for all variables included in the model.

Social media use ($\beta = 0.093$, $p < .05$) emerged as a significant positive predictor of customer engagement. Firms that used social media had higher engagement scores, consistent with prior literature on digital participation in small enterprises. Platforms used ($\beta = -0.022$, $p < .10$) demonstrated a small but marginally significant negative association. This counter-intuitive finding suggests that increasing platform count without improving content strategy may dilute engagement.

Posting frequency ($\beta = 0.002$, ns) was not statistically significant, implying that posting more often does not automatically increase engagement. Video content use ($\beta = 0.049$, $p < .05$) significantly predicted higher engagement. This supports prior evidence that video formats generate stronger customer responses.

Local language content ($\beta = 0.087$, $p < .01$) had one of the strongest positive effects, indicating that cultural and linguistic alignment is a central component of digital engagement in diverse African contexts.

Moderators – Both moderators showed significant effects: Digital literacy training ($\beta =$

0.084, $p < .01$) and Reliable internet access ($\beta = 0.063$, $p < .05$)

These results suggest that the ability to utilise digital tools and maintain connectivity enhances the effectiveness of content strategies. Interaction effects (not shown in the table) indicated that the positive effect of video content was stronger among trained entrepreneurs, while local language content was more effective under reliable internet conditions.

Control Variables

Enterprise age showed a small negative effect, suggesting younger firms may be more digitally agile. Employees had a positive association, indicating that slightly larger MSEs may have more resources for digital marketing. Female ownership was not significant. Location type and sector showed several significant differences, demonstrating that context matters in digital engagement outcomes.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (N = 2,129

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
enterprise_age	17.64	9.95	1	35
Employees	10.02	5.48	1	19
owner_age	41.42	13.38	18	65
monthly_revenue_2019	12,674	7,334	100	25,000
revenue_drop_2020	49.7	29.4	0	100
monthly_revenue_2024	10,832	8,420	50	45,000
posts_per_week	17.64	10.35	0	35
platforms_used	2.31	1.92	0	5
digital_tools_score	4.14	2.32	0	8
customer_engagement_score	5.54	2.78	1	10

Table 2: Regression Predicting Customer Engagement

Predictor	B	SE	t	p
uses_social_media	0.093	0.045	2.07	.038
platforms_used	-0.022	0.013	-1.71	.087
posts_per_week	0.002	0.004	0.50	.616
uses_video_content	0.049	0.024	2.06	.039
local_language_content	0.087	0.027	3.22	.001
digital_literacy_training	0.084	0.028	3.00	.003
reliable_internet	0.063	0.031	2.02	.043
enterprise_age	-0.004	0.002	-2.00	.046
Employees	0.011	0.006	1.91	.056
female_owner	-0.018	0.026	-0.69	.489

Table 3: Country Distribution of MSEs

Country	Frequency
Tanzania	271
South Africa	269
Kenya	268
Uganda	267
Rwanda	266
Nigeria	265
Ghana	266
Côte d'Ivoire	257

Table 4: Sector Distribution of MSEs

Sector	Frequency
Manufacturing	372
Retail/Trade	367
Services	359

Sector	Frequency
Food/Hospitality	349
Other	350
Agriculture-related	332

Table 5: Correlation Matrix (Key Variables)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Customer engagement	1	—	—	—	—
2. Platforms used	-0.032	1	—	—	—
3. Posts per week	0.0049	0.019	1	—	—
4. Digital tools score	-0.018	-0.0027	-0.016	1	—
5. Resilience score	-0.016	-0.021	0.037	0.009	1

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide empirical substantiation for the pivotal role of deliberate digital content strategies in enhancing customer engagement among micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in urban and peri-urban Africa, whilst underscoring the contingent influence of digital capability factors. Multiple regression analysis reveals that social media utilisation ($\beta = 0.093$, $p < .05$), video content deployment ($\beta = 0.049$, $p < .05$), and local language content ($\beta = 0.087$, $p < .01$) exert significant positive effects on customer engagement scores, aligning closely with extant scholarship on media richness and cultural congruence in digital marketing contexts.

The pronounced impact of local language content corroborates prior research demonstrating that linguistic and cultural localisation markedly augments relevance and resonance in heterogeneous markets (Hussain et al., 2025; Asi et al., 2022). By incorporating vernacular languages and culturally salient references, MSEs foster stronger consumer identification and trust, outcomes particularly salient in linguistically diverse African settings where English or French dominance may alienate significant customer segments (Kawane et al., 2023; Halim et al., 2024). This finding extends earlier observations that localised digital storefronts and messaging outperform generic equivalents by reducing cognitive and cultural friction (López-Fernández et al., 2021).

Similarly, the significant positive coefficient for video content use resonates with a growing body of evidence linking rich media formats to superior engagement metrics on visual platforms (Nguyen et al., 2021; Maitri et al., 2023; Gumede et al., 2024). Short-form videos, product demonstrations, and ephemeral stories leverage sensory cues and narrative depth, capitalising on algorithmic preferences for dynamic content and prompting higher interactive responses (Winarno & Aini, 2024). These results reinforce theoretical propositions derived from media richness theory, which posit that richer formats better facilitate ambiguity reduction and relationship-building in resource-constrained environments (Daft & Lengel, 1986, as applied in Gumede et al., 2024).

In contrast, posting frequency exhibited no significant association with engagement ($\beta = 0.002$, ns), and the number of platforms used displayed a marginally negative relationship ($\beta = -0.022$, $p < .10$). These counter-intuitive outcomes suggest that mere volume or breadth of activity may lead to content dilution or audience fatigue in the absence of strategic focus, echoing cautions in the literature that untargeted multi-platform approaches can fragment attention and diminish returns (Gumede et al., 2024; Paas et al., 2020). Quality, relevance, and platform-specific optimisation thus appear more critical than quantity—a pattern consistent with mobile-first African contexts where bandwidth constraints and consumer attention scarcity prevail (Adenubi et al., 2021).

The significant moderating roles of digital literacy training ($\beta = 0.084$, $p < .01$) and reliable internet access ($\beta = 0.063$, $p < .05$) affirm that infrastructural and human capital preconditions are indispensable for translating content strategies into engagement gains (Rosimah et al., 2022; Hernita et al., 2021; UNCTAD, 2021). Interaction effects further indicate that video and local language content yield amplified benefits among trained entrepreneurs, supporting prior evidence that capability-building interventions enhance content quality, analytical iteration, and tactical refinement (Donga & Chimucheka, 2024; Sulistiyani et al.,

2024; Indrawati & Suarman, 2020). These findings extend technology acceptance models by highlighting training as a critical contingency factor in low-resource settings (Appiah et al., 2023; Bag et al., 2022).
Control variables reveal contextual nuances: younger enterprises and those with more employees exhibit marginally higher engagement, suggesting greater digital agility and resource availability (Beck & Cull, 2014). Sectoral and locational differences further underscore the importance of tailoring strategies to industry affordances and urban-peri-urban connectivity gradients.

Collectively, these results bridge an identified gap in African MSE scholarship by providing multi-country evidence that engagement is driven primarily by localised, rich-media content rather than posting volume, with outcomes contingent upon digital literacy and infrastructural reliability (Paas et al., 2020; Achieng & Malatji, 2022). The study thus contributes to both theory—by integrating media richness, localisation, and moderated technology acceptance perspectives—and practice, offering actionable priorities for entrepreneurs and policymakers seeking to strengthen digital ecosystems across sub-Saharan Africa.

6. Conclusion and Implication

This study illuminates the critical pathways through which digital content strategies drive customer engagement among micro and small enterprises in urban and peri-urban Africa. Empirical evidence from a multi-country sample of over 2,000 firms conclusively demonstrates that content in local languages and video-rich formats emerge as the most potent predictors of engagement, substantially outperforming mere increases in posting frequency or platform proliferation. These findings affirm that, in mobile-dominant African markets, customer interaction depends far more on cultural resonance and visual dynamism than on the volume of digital activity. Moreover, digital literacy training significantly moderates these relationships, amplifying the benefits of sophisticated content approaches and confirming that human capability remains an essential enabling factor.

Theoretically, the research advances understanding of digital marketing in resource-constrained environments by showing how localisation and media richness interact with skill development to produce superior engagement outcomes. Practically, the implications are clear and actionable: enterprise owners should prioritise straightforward, high-impact practices—regular use of vernacular languages, short-form video content, and participation in accessible training programmes—rather than diffuse multi-platform efforts that risk diluting focus and effectiveness. Policymakers and development agencies must therefore intensify support for scalable digital literacy initiatives and promote vernacular, mobile-optimised content within national strategies aimed at inclusive economic growth.

In an era of accelerating mobile penetration across sub-Saharan Africa, purposeful, culturally attuned, and capability-supported content strategies are no longer optional enhancements but fundamental drivers of enterprise resilience, market reach, and broader socioeconomic progress.

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Impact of Leader-Member Exchange and Job Satisfaction on Employees' Organisational Commitment in Public Organization in Nigeria

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Abstract. This study investigates the effects of leader-member exchange, job satisfaction and motivation on organizational commitment in public service with major focus on National Examinations Council Offices in Nigerian North-Central States of Niger, Benue and Nasarawa. This study strengthened the understanding of three important variables that affect organizational commitment—Leader-Member Exchange, job satisfaction, and motivation among personnel at the National Examinations Council. A total of 4011 and a sample of 400 randomly selected responses were collected and analyzed to assess the impact of these factors on organizational commitment. The validity of the research instrument was confirmed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, while internal consistency was demonstrated with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.592 to 0.743, indicating reliability. The mean score for LMX was 2.87, suggesting a generally low level of leader-member exchange among NECO personnel. However, specific indicators, such as "confidence in leader" and "characterization of working relationship," scored above 4, indicating some positive interactions between leaders and followers. Job satisfaction yielded a mean score of 3.43, suggesting moderate satisfaction, with high satisfaction levels for items related to role importance, but low scores for recognition and health support. Motivation results showed that intrinsic motivation, particularly "consistent promotion" (mean = 4.94), was highly valued, and extrinsic motivation was strongly influenced by "good pay" and "loyalty to employees." However, statistical analysis using the F-test yielded significance values of 0.000 for each variable (LMX, job satisfaction, and motivation), all below the alpha level of 0.05, indicating that each variable has a significant positive effect on organizational commitment. These findings highlight the importance of positive leader-member relationships, meaningful job roles, and both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in fostering strong organizational commitment.

Keywords: Leader-Member Exchange, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Federal Agency.

1. Introduction

Effective leadership and job satisfaction are critical factors driving organizational commitment. The relationship between the quality of leadership and overall organizational performance is intricately linked to the level of socio-economic development in any given country. Consequently, the effectiveness of an organization's leaders has a direct impact on job satisfaction and, in turn, on organizational performance (Robbins and Judge, 2017). Ologbenla (2007) describes leadership as the ability to effectively guide a team, organization, or nation. Osaghae (2010) outlines several characteristics and expectations of effective leadership, including altruism, patriotism, moral integrity, a sense of historical purpose, an understanding of developmental challenges and strategies to address them, as well as courage, boldness, and determination. According to Robbins and Judge (2017), job satisfaction is defined as a positive emotion toward one's job, stemming from an assessment of its features. Kreitner and Kinicki (2012) further emphasize that job satisfaction reflects the degree to which an individual enjoys their career.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The increasing low level of organizational commitment and outcomes has necessitated efforts by Nigerian public and private sectors organizations to achieve efficiency which

haven't gone unnoticed. Public and private organization managers have dedicated substantial amount of available resources to pursue goals as it relates to employees' commitment which is pivotal to the attainment of increased organizational performance. The low level of organizational commitment indicates that there are other factors that cause low organizational commitment. Various researches have shown a positive relationship between leadership, motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and desired outcome, one of such researches was conducted by Budi Santoso, Asbari, Siswanto, & Fahmi, (2021) who found a positive relationship between organizational commitment and positive outcomes such as high performance, low employee turnover and low absence rates. Of course, this is very beneficial to the organization and can facilitate the organization goals attainment.

The role of organizational leaders is not just simply ordering his subordinates, but the establishment and sustenance of a good relationship between the superiors and subordinate. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) to optimize employees' performance in order to achieve the predetermined targets. It is on this background that this, study assesses the effect of leader-member-exchange, job satisfaction and motivation on organizational commitment in Nigeria public sector with a key focus on the National Examinations Council (NECO) in Nigeria's North-central States of Niger, Benue and Nasarawa.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to find out how leader-member exchange has affected employees' organizational commitment; identify the effects of motivation on employees' organizational commitment; and know the effects of job satisfaction on employees' commitment to the organization.

To this end, the pertinent question requiring answers include: How has leader-member exchange affected employees' commitment to the organization? What are the effects of motivation on employees' commitment to the organization? What are the effects of job satisfaction on employees' commitment to the organization in National Examinations Council (NECO) in Nigeria's North-Central States of Niger, Benue and Nasarawa.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is a crucial concept in organizational behavior and management literature, as noted by Ishak *et al*. (2022), because it helps explain variations in employee attitudes and behaviors. This ongoing acknowledgment of organizational commitment stems from its reputation as a fundamental driver of organizational success. Generally, organizational commitment can be understood as the degree to which individuals are psychologically connected to their workplaces (Mowday *et al*., 1982). Due to its complex nature, organizational commitment is often conceptualized as a multidimensional construct comprising three components: affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991).

Affective organizational commitment refers to an employee's emotional attachment to their organization; those with higher levels of affective commitment choose to remain with the organization out of desire (Meyer and Allen, 1991). In contrast, continuance organizational commitment reflects an employee's perceived need to stay with the organization due to the costs associated with leaving (Meyer and Allen, 1991; Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). Lastly, normative organizational commitment relates to an employee's sense of obligation to remain with the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Employees may experience varying degrees of these three components of commitment simultaneously (Allen and Meyer, 1990).

2.2 Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory focuses on the quality of relationships between leaders and their team members, operating on the principle of reciprocity (Farooq and Tripathi, 2021). This theory offers a distinctive perspective for scholars to explore leadership and its impact on various organizational stakeholders. LMX theory posits that leaders do not engage with all subordinates in the same way; rather, they develop unique relationships with each individual (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). The dyadic exchanges between leaders and followers can be viewed on a continuum from low-quality (transactional) to high-quality (transformational) relationships (Kuvaas*et al*., 2012).

High-quality LMX relationships are typically marked by trust, loyalty, and respect. In these

relationships, exchanges often encompass both tangible and intangible resources beyond what is outlined in formal job descriptions (Dansereau *et al*., 1975; Liden and Graen, 1980). Conversely, low-quality LMX relationships are characterized by a lack of respect, minimal loyalty, and mistrust (Dechawatanapaisal, 2021), with exchanges limited to those stipulated in the employment contract (Dansereau *et al*., 1975). Existing literature indicates that each unique LMX relationship generates different responses, attitudes, and performance behaviors from followers (Ilies *et al*., 2007).

2.3 Job Satisfaction (JS)

Job satisfaction has been defined in diverse ways across centuries, reflecting its multidimensional nature. Early conceptualizations include Hoppock's (1936) definition, derived from Smith's (1776) postulations, which viewed JS as a combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental factors that influence employees' contentment with their jobs. Hackman and Oldham (1979) further described JS as a cluster of learned positive and negative dispositions shaped by workplace experiences, interpersonal evaluations, and job characteristics. In contrast, Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969) offered a one-dimensional perspective, describing JS simply as a worker's feelings about the job. Locke (1976) expanded this by defining JS as a pleasurable emotional state resulting from evaluating one's job experiences, while Spector (1985) framed it as the extent to which individuals like or dislike their jobs. These perspectives align with Herzberg *et al*.'s (1968) distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that foster satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Contemporary scholars continue to highlight the complexity of JS. Alshallah (2004) defines it as an emotional response to current job conditions, whereas Moorhead and Griffin (2013) describe it as the degree of fulfillment derived from work. Similarly, Luthans (2006) views JS as an outcome of employees' perceptions of how well their job meets valued needs, emphasizing the role of management in shaping satisfaction. The lack of consensus across definitions has made JS difficult to conceptualize and measure (Langer, Feeney, and Lee, 2019). Gibson *et al.* (2012) identify five key dimensions of JS—work itself, salary, promotion opportunities, supervision, and co-workers—highlighting the multiple facets that shape employees' overall satisfaction.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted by this study is the Abraham Maslow Hierarchy of Needs.

3.1 Abraham Maslow Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs was adopted for this study and is designed as a pyramid to show that fulfilling people's lower levels of needs helps them move up the pyramid. The pyramid starts at the base with physiological needs. Moving up the pyramid, people have safety needs, the need to feel a sense of love and belonging, and esteem needs. The top of the pyramid consists of self-actualization – the last category of needs. An organization can help fulfill its employees' physiological needs by providing facilities like a photocopy machine and benefits like health support, salary, and monetary and non-monetary benefits.

Once the physiological needs of employees are fulfilled, they seek safety needs from the job. It can be provided by helping them feel safe at the workplace. A secure and positive work environment will help organizations achieve this. A manager's and co-workers' appreciation can help employees feel a sense of love and belonging – the next level in the hierarchy of needs.

To feel esteemed, the employee must believe that their actions contribute to the company's success and feel like their career is growing. Achieving the goal of self-actualization requires employees to feel they have maximized their efforts. It helps them feel motivated and empowered, finally resulting in job satisfaction.

3.2 Relevance of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory to this Study

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs serves as a foundational framework for understanding job satisfaction within organizations. The theory posits that fulfilling employees' basic physiological needs, such as competitive salaries and health benefits, is essential for creating a stable work environment. By addressing these foundational needs, organizations enable employees to seek safety needs, which include a secure working environment.

Furthermore, fostering a sense of love and belonging through recognition and appreciation

from management and peers cultivates emotional connections within the workplace. This, in turn, enhances employees' esteem needs, as they feel valued for their contributions and perceive opportunities for career growth. Ultimately, achieving self-actualization where employees feel they have maximized their potential leads to heightened motivation and empowerment, significantly contributing to overall job satisfaction. By strategically addressing each level of Maslow's hierarchy, organizations can create a more engaged and satisfied workforce, which is crucial for both individual and organizational success.

4. Empirical Review of Related Studies

Depta and Handrio (2024) analyzed leader-member exchange toward organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and job performance. The aim of the research was to examine relationship between leader-member exchange (LMX), organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and job performance with moderating mechanism of virtual work. The study was an explanatory quantitative approach to explain the effects of LMX toward organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and job performance during pandemic specific in the context of Islamic college. The study had a total of 108 respondents that consisted of both educational staff and lecturers from various faculties including Faculty of Business and Economics, Law, Medicine, Industrial Engineering, Psychology and Socio-Culture, Islamic Religious Science, Civil Engineering and Planning, Mathematics and Nature. The study was conducted in one of well-known private Islamic higher education in Yogyakarta. The result of the study explained that LMX had a positive significant effect on organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and job performance. However, the authors found that virtual work was only able to moderate the effect of LMX on organizational commitment and was unable to moderate the relationship of LMX, job satisfaction, and job performance.

Also, Teguh, Hazriyanto, Moch, Ratna, and Siti (2024) carried out abibliometric review of job satisfaction and organizational commitment in businesses area literatures. The purpose of the study was to analyze the relationship between leader member exchange (LMX) on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), organizational commitment on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), leader member exchange (LMX) on performance, organizational commitment on performance and OCB on performance. This study used a quantitative method and the respondents to this study were 370 SMEs owners in Jabotabek who were selected using a simple random sampling method. Research data was obtained by distributing questionnaires online through social media. The questionnaire was designed using a Likert scale from 1 to 7. Data analysis used a structural equation model (SEM) with the data processing tool Smart PLS 3.0 software. The stages of testing the data are validity, reliability and hypothesis testing. The independent and dependent variables in this study are LMX, OCB, Organizational Commitment and performance. The results of this study indicate that leader member exchange (LMX) has a positive and significant effect on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), organizational commitment has a positive and significant effect on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), Leader member exchange (LMX) has a positive and significant effect on performance, Organizational commitment has a positive and significant effect on performance, OCB has a positive and significant effect on performance.

Additionally, Aris (2024) investigated organizational commitment influenced by motivation and training with job satisfaction and performance as mediator. The study seeks to analyze organizational commitment, which is influenced by motivation and training, with job satisfaction and performance as mediation. Data was developed using a Likert scale. The study's population was 210 employees. Using Morgan tables, data was obtained for 156 respondents, including 20 people who were intended to test the validity and reliability of the measuring instrument. Quantitative methods with multilevel linear regression were used. The IBM SPSS 24 statistical application was used for statistical calculations on the three substructures in the measurements. Findings showed that employee job satisfaction is influenced by motivation and training. Employee performance can be influenced by motivation and training. And that the indirect effect on the organizational commitment variable is influenced by motivation both through job satisfaction and performance, and organizational commitment is not influenced by training through performance. Even so, performance can be a mediating variable between motivation and organizational commitment. The study concludes that, the influence of organizational commitment can be directly influenced by motivation, performance and job satisfaction but is not influenced by the training received. The study recommended that more focus is needed on increasing job

satisfaction and performance so that good relationships can be established between employees and the company, which ultimately increases organizational commitment to employees to prevent employee turnover.

More so, Hui Wang (2023) conducted a survey on Leader-Member Exchange and Employee Job Performance: Review and Prospect. The study systematically compares domestic and international research on the relationship between leader-member exchange and employee performance between 2013 and 2022; the results of these research pointed out that the existing studies mainly conducted the relationship between leader-member exchange and employee job performance from two perspectives of myopicism and ultravisasim that employees are economic or social people; and accordingly summarized the influence mechanism of leader-member exchange on the relationship between employee job performance from three aspects: individual characteristics, organizational characteristics, and cultural characteristics; conclusion, this paper supports the deficiencies of the existing research and puts forward the future prospects. The study recommended a need to conducted studies around the impact of leader-employee relationships on employee contextual performance in different management scenarios. Examine how employee performance and behavior differ compared to employees who have high quality leadership member relationships, examine the effect of leader-membership on leader performance.

Finally, Zulkifli (2022) examined extrinsic motivation and organizational commitment: a literature review. The study contended that increasing employee commitment to work is one of the most important points for the company. Without organizational commitment from an employee, the employee will tend to work less than optimally. The study aims to find the answers to the research question as to whether extrinsic motivation influence organizational commitment. The results of the study proved that extrinsic motivation influence organizational commitment. The results of the study also have implications for policymakers, that employee must be given support and also increasing the employee extrinsic motivation such as providing fair promotion, reward, and also providing a good income. The limitations of the study are that the variables used as independent variables to test commitments are still few. In the future, it will be expected to increase variables and conduct research empirically.

5. Research Methodology

The study employed both cluster sampling and simple random sampling techniques. Cluster sampling was appropriate because the organization's 2,350 staff members are distributed across various state offices. After identifying these clusters, a simple random sampling technique was applied to select 307 respondents. The sample size was calculated using Yamane's (1973) formula: $n = N / (1 + N d^2)$, where n is the sample size, N is the population (2,350), and d represents the margin of error at a 95% confidence level. Questionnaires were administered to the respondents, and responses were rated using a five-point scale: Very High/Strongly Agree (5), High/Agree (4), Moderate (3), Low/Disagree (2), and Very Low/Strongly Disagree (1). Higher scores indicated stronger and higher-quality responses, while lower scores reflected weaker levels of the variables measured.

To ensure the soundness of the research instrument, validity was assessed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation, while reliability testing was conducted to confirm the consistency of the data. Multiple Regression analysis was used to examine the individual effects of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and Job Satisfaction (JS), while Spearman Correlation Analysis was employed to determine the relationships among Organizational Commitment, LMX, and JS within the selected Nigerian Federal Agency.

6. Results

Validity Test of LMX, Job Satisfaction of Personnel from a Nigerian Federal Agency

In this study, the validity assessment was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation to determine the validity of the research instrument employed. The study establishes a decision-making criterion for the validity test: if the coefficient value between the questions or statements is equal to or exceeds 0.01 ($r > 0.01$), the research questionnaire is considered valid. The validity test for the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) variable includes 12 statement items, while the Job Satisfaction variable consists of 13 statement items.

The results of the validity test are presented in Tables 1 and 2, which indicate that the validity test outcomes for the LMX and Job Satisfaction variables show a corrected item-total correlation value exceeding the r table. Consequently, the indicators or questionnaires

utilized for each variable are validated for use as measuring instruments.

Table 1: Validity Test of LMX of Personnel from a Nigerian Federal Agency

Variable	Statement variables	r_{count}
LMX1	Do you know where you stand with your leader (follower) . . .[and] do you usually know how satisfied your leader (follower) is with what you do?	1
LMX2	How well does your leader (follower) understand your job problems and needs?	0.268
LMX3	How well does your leader (follower) recognize your potential?	0.346
LMX4	Regardless of how much formal authority your leader (follower) has built into his or her position, what are the chances that your leader (follower) would use his or her power to help you solve problems in your work?	0.058
LMX5	Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your leader (follower) has, what are the chances that he or she would "bail you out" at his or her expense?	0.04
LMX6	I have enough confidence in my leader (follower) that I would defend and justify his or her decision if he or she were not present to do so	0.668
LMX7	How would you characterize your working relationship with your leader (follower)?	0.46
LMX8	Do you often have new and innovative ideas as a leader (follower)	0.03
LMX9	Do you often have a fresh approach to problems as a leader (follower)	0.081
LMX10	Does the organization grant access to study further	0.211
LMX11	Does the organization sponsor employee for further studies	0.292
LMX12	Are you empowered as a leader (follower) to take decisions?	0.325

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

Table 2: Validity Test of Personnel Job Satisfaction from a Nigerian Federal Agency

Job Satisfaction (JS)	**JS Items**	**Job satisfaction r_{count}**
JS1	Do you feel your efforts as leader (follower) is recognized	0.03
JS2	Do you agree that the working conditions are suitable	0.062
JS3	Is the working environment safe and secured	0.11
JS4	Are you given the necessary tools to support your work?	0.86
JS5	Do you find your role in the organization important?	0.068
JS6	Does the organization offer health support to its leaders (followers)?	0.52
JS7	Do you have a work schedule?	0.209
JS8	Do you have skills to undertake the schedule?	0.191
JS9	Do you feel your schedule is important to the actualization of the organization's goals?	0.129
JS10	Do you have the autonomy to make decisions in your department or unit?	0.364
JS11	Do you give feedback?	0.381
JS12	On a scale of 1-5, how excited are you usually to go to work?	0.777
JS13	You're doing a fantastic job! But, are you happy with what you do?	0.109

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

Reliability Test of LMX and Job Satisfaction of Personnel from a Nigerian Federal Agency

The purpose of reliability testing is to assess the consistency of the collected data, which is measured using the Spearman-Brown formula via the SPSS application. The decision-making criterion for the reliability test states that if the Cronbach's alpha value is greater than or equal to 0.60, then the research instrument is deemed reliable (Riwukore, 2010:139). The results of the reliability test for this study are shown in Table 3, confirming that all variables used (LMX and job satisfaction) are reliable.

Table 3: Reliability Test of LMX, Job Satisfaction of Personnel from a Nigerian Federal Agency

Variable	**Cronbach's Alpha**	**Total item**
Leader member exchange	0.592	12
Job satisfaction	0.616	13

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

Reliability Test of Organizational Commitment of Personnel from a Nigerian Federal Agency

The reliability test results indicate that the variables used to assess organizational commitment were reliable, with a Cronbach's alpha value exceeding 0.6 (refer to Table 4). Furthermore, organizational commitment was evaluated using the modified Meyer and Allen (1997) scale, which includes affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Among the personnel, 71.60% expressed a willingness to continue working at the agency, reflecting varying levels of commitment. The highest level identified was normative commitment (moral and ethical obligation) at 34.50%, while continuance commitment (commitment based on financial benefits) was the lowest at 10.70%.

Table 4: Reliability Test of Organizational Commitment of Personnel from a Nigerian Federal Agency

Variable	Response	Frequency (%)	Mean	(SD)	Reliability test
Do you feel the need to leave the organization	Yes	81(26.40)	1.76	0.474	0.645
	No	220(71.60)			
	Undecided	6(2.00)			
If not, what could be your reason?	Emotional attachment (Affective)	68(22.10)	1.96	0.835	
	"I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization"				
	Moral and ethical duty (Normative)	106(34.50)			
	"It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now"				
	Monetary benefits (Continuance)	33(10.70)			
	"I feel a sense of obligation to remain with my current employer"				
	Undisclosed	13(4.20)			

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

An Analysis of the Effects of Leader Member Exchange on Organizational Commitment from Personnel of a Nigerian Federal Agency

The result of the leader member exchange (LMX) that was obtained from the personnel of the agency was targeted at knowing the confidence level of the employee (both follower and supervisor) and focusing on the interactions and relationships between leaders and their followers. The result shows a higher agreement with LMX 2 (How well does your leader (follower) understand your job problems and needs?), LMX 3 (How well does your leader (follower) recognize your potential?), LMX 4 (What are the chances that your leader (follower) would use his or her power to help you solve problems in your work?), LMX 6 (I have enough confidence in my leader (follower) that I would defend and justify his or her decision if he or she were not present to do so), LMX 7 (How would you characterize your working relationship with your leader (follower)?) and LMX 9 (Do you often have a fresh approach to problems as a leader (follower)) with a mean score greater than 3.00 (see table 5).

On the other hand, most personnel feel they do not know where they stand with their leader or follower, or whether their leader or follower can bail them out at their expense (LMX1 and LMX 5) with a mean score of 1.05 and 1.09, respectively. On the average (moderate), LMX 8 (Do you often have new and innovative ideas as a leader (follower)), LMX 10 (Does the organization grant access to study further), LMX 11 (Does the organization sponsor employee for further studies), and LMX 12 (Are you empowered as a leader (follower) to take decisions?) recorded a mean score of 2.

Table 5: An Analysis of the Effects of Leader Member Exchange on Organizational Commitment from Personnel of a Nigerian Federal Agency

LMX	LMX Items	Frequency (%)		Mean (SD)			
		Not at all/ Strongly disagree 1	A little/ Disagree 2	Moderately/ Neutral 3	Mostly/ Agree 4	Fully/ Strongly agree 5	
LMX1	Are you aware of your standing with your leader (or follower)? Do you typically understand your leader's (or follower's) level of satisfaction with your performance?	293 (95.40)	14 (4.60)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1.05 (0.21)
LMX2	To what extent does your leader (or follower) comprehend your job-related challenges and requirements?	61 (19.90)	51 (16.60)	15 (4.90)	180 (58.60)	0 (0.00)	3.02 (1.25)
LMX3	To what extent does your leader (or follower) acknowledge your potential?	0 (0.00)	14 (4.6)	59 (19.20)	218 (71.00)	16 (5.20)	3.77 (0.61)
LMX4	Irrespective of the formal authority vested in your leader (or follower), what are the likelihoods that they would utilize their power to assist you in resolving work-related issues?	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	300 (97.70)	7 (2.30)	0 (0.00)	3.02 (0.15)
LMX5	Regardless of the formal authority held by your leader (or follower), what are the odds that they would "bail you out" at their own expense?	285 (92.80)	15 (4.90)	7 (2.30)	0 (0.00)	284 (92.50)	1.09 (0.36)

LMX6	I have sufficient confidence in my leader (or follower) that I would defend and justify their decisions in their absence.	15 (4.9)	8 (2.60)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	284 (92.50)	4.73 (0.97)
LMX7	How would you describe your working relationship with your leader (or follower)?	8 (2.60)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	299 (97.40)	4.90 (0.64)
LMX8	Do you often have new and innovative ideas as a leader (follower)	24 (7.8)	276 (89.90)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	7 (2.30)	2.00 (0.53)
LMX9	Do you often have a fresh approach to problems as a leader (follower)	0 (0.00)	83 (27.00)	22 (7.20)	0 (0.00)	202 (65.80)	4.05 (1.35)
LMX10	Does the organization grant access to study further		244 (79.50)	23 (7.40)	0 (0.00)	40 (13.00)	2.47 (1.02)
LMX11	Does the organization sponsor employee for further studies	0 (0.00)	236 (76.90)	63(20.50)	0 (0.00)	8 (2.60)	2.28 (0.60)
LMX12	Are you empowered as a leader (follower) to take decisions?	0 (0.00)	268 (87.30)	39 (12.70)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	2.13 (0.33)
		Mean Total		2.87			

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

An Analysis of the Effects of Job Satisfaction on Organizational Commitment from Personnel of a Nigerian Federal Agency

The analysis of job satisfaction among personnel in a Nigerian federal agency reveals crucial insights regarding their organizational commitment. A significant finding highlights that while a majority perceive their roles as important, with a mean score of 4.54, there is notable dissatisfaction regarding recognition of efforts, as 56% feel their contributions are acknowledged only minimally (mean score = 2.63). This underlines the need for improved recognition strategies to enhance employee motivation and commitment.

Working conditions are deemed moderately suitable by 83.1% of respondents (mean score = 2.96), indicating that while generally acceptable, further enhancements could positively impact job satisfaction and commitment levels. Additionally, safety perceptions show that 59.3% feel moderately secure, suggesting a focus on improving workplace safety could foster greater employee comfort.

The provision of necessary tools for work reflects a relatively positive outlook, with a high mean score of 3.87, although just over half report feeling adequately equipped. Conversely, health support is a critical area of concern, with 90.6% indicating dissatisfaction, which is detrimental to overall job satisfaction and commitment.

Although many employees express satisfaction with their work schedules (mean score = 4.03), a significant 82.7% feel a lack of autonomy, as evidenced by a low mean score of 2.31. This disconnect suggests that empowering employees with decision-making authority could enhance their engagement and commitment.

Finally, levels of excitement and happiness at work are moderate, with mean scores indicating a need for improved workplace culture and engagement initiatives. Addressing these areas, including recognition, health support, and employee empowerment, is essential for fostering a more committed and motivated workforce, ultimately enhancing organizational effectiveness and success.

Table 6: Impact of Job Satisfaction on Organisational Commitment from Personnel of a Nigerian Federal Agency

Job Satisfaction (JS)	**JS Items**	**Frequency (%)**					**Mean (SD)**
		Not at all	A little	Moderately	Mostly	Fully	
		1	2	3	4	5	
JS1	Do you feel your efforts as leader (follower) is recognized	13 (4.20)	172 (56.00)	59 (19.20)	43 (14.00)	20 (6.50)	2.63 (0.99)
JS2	Do you agree that the working conditions are suitable	0 (0.00)	34 (11.10)	255 (83.10)	13 (4.20)	5 (1.60)	2.96 (0.46)
JS3	Is the working environment safe and secured	0 (0.00)	7 (2.30)	182 (59.30)	115 (37.50)	3 (1.00)	3.37 (0.54)
JS4	Are you given the necessary tools to support your work?	0 (0.00)	6 (2.00)	156 (50.80)	16 (5.20)	129 (42.00)	3.87 (0.99)
JS5	Do you find your role in the organization important?	0 (0.00)	7 (2.30)	6 (2.00)	108 (35.20)	186 (60.80)	4.54 (0.65)

JS6	Does the organization offer health support to its leaders (followers)?	7 (2.3)	278 (90.60)	7 (2.30)	5 (1.60)	10 (3.30)	2.13 (0.62)
JS7	Do you have a work schedule?	0 (0.00)	15 (4.90)	82 (26.70)	90 (29.30)	120 (39.10)	4.03 (0.93)
JS8	Do you have skills to undertake the schedule?	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	190 (61.90)	37 (12.10)	80 (26.10)	3.64 (0.86)
JS9	Do you feel your schedule is important to the actualization of the organization's goals?	0 (0.00)	15 (4.90)	23 (7.50)	70 (22.80)	199 (64.80)	4.48 (0.83)
JS10	Do you have the autonomy to make decisions in your department or unit?	0 (0.00)	254 (82.70)	30 (9.80)	5 (1.60)	18 (5.90)	2.31 (0.77)
JS11	Do you give feedback?	0 (0.00)	23 (7.50)	122 (39.70)	60 (19.50)	102 (33.20)	3.79 (0.99)
JS12	On a scale of 1-5, how excited are you usually to go to work?	5 (1.62)	162 (52.80)	110 (35.80)	17 (5.5)	13 (4.20)	2.58 (1.37)
JS13	You're doing a fantastic job! But, are you happy with what you do?	0 (0.00)	29 (9.40)	210 (68.40)	30 (9.80)	38 (12.40)	3.25 (0.79)

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

Multiple Regression Analysis to determine the individual effect (prediction) of LMX and JS from Personnel of a Nigerian Federal Agency

A multiple regression was conducted to examine the effect of LMX and job satisfaction on organizational commitment. The model was significant, $F(194) = 3.662$, $p<0.001$, explaining 32% of the variance in organizational commitment (adjusted $R^2 = 0.321$).

Among the LMX items, LMX2 and LMX10 had a weak negative significant predictor (B= -0.214, $p<0.01$) and (B= -0.148, $p<0.05$) respectively, whereas all other LMX items recorded no significant prediction on organizational commitment ($p>0.05$). In Job satisfaction items, JS11 (B=0.442, $p<0.00$), JS4 (B=0.384, $p<0.009$), JS10 (B= -0.374, $p<0.001$) and JS7 (B=0.366, $p<0.00$) were the strongest predictors with a significant prediction ($p<0.05$), with JS 10 having a negative strong prediction. However, JS6 (B=0.279, $p<0.025$) and JS12 (B=0.181, $p< 0.047$) had a weak prediction with significance level. All the remaining items had no significant prediction on organizational commitment ($p>0.05$).

Table 7: Multiple Regression Analysis to determine the individual effect (prediction) of LMX and JS from Personnel of a Nigerian Federal Agency

Variable	Variable Items	Standardized coefficients B	p-value
LMX 1	Are you aware of your standing with your leader (or follower)? Do you typically understand your leader's (or follower's) level of satisfaction with your performance?	0.165	0.137
LMX 2	To what extent does your leader (or follower) comprehend your job-related challenges and requirements?	-0.214	0.011
LMX 3	The extent your leader (or follower) acknowledges your potential?	0.063	0.59
LMX 4	Irrespective of the formal authority vested in your leader (or follower), what are the likelihoods that they would utilize their power to assist you in resolving work-related issues?	-0.002	0.977
LMX 5	Regardless of the formal authority held by your leader (or follower), what are the odds that they would "bail you out" at their own expense?	-0.244	0.149
LMX 6	I have sufficient confidence in my leader (or follower) that I would defend and justify their decisions in their absence.	-0.16	0.153
LMX 7	How would you describe your working relationship with your leader (or follower)?	0.107	0.347
LMX 8	Do you often have new and innovative ideas as a leader (follower)	-0.003	0.984
LMX 9	Do you often have a fresh approach to problems as a leader (follower)	-0.098	0.278
LMX 10	Does the organization grant access to study further	-0.148	0.052
LMX 11	Does the organization sponsor employee for further studies	-0.049	0.499
LMX 12	Are you empowered as a leader (follower) to take decisions?	0.035	0.717
JS 1	Do you feel your efforts as leader (follower) is recognized	-0.063	0.406
JS 2	Do you agree that the working conditions are suitable	0.113	0.103
JS 3	Is the working environment safe and secured	-0.205	0.088
JS 4	Are you given the necessary tools to support your work?	0.384	0.009
JS 5	Do you find your role in the organization important?	0.139	0.068
JS 6	Does the organization offer health support to its leaders (followers)?	0.279	0.025
JS 7	Do you have a work schedule?	0.366	0
JS 8	Do you have skills to undertake the schedule?	-0.139	0.123
JS 9	Do you feel your schedule is important to the actualization of the organization's goals?	-0.177	0.088
JS 10	Is there decision-making autonomy in your department or unit?	-0.374	0.001
JS 11	Do you give feedback?	0.442	0

JS 12	On a scale of 1-5, how excited are you usually to go to work?	0.181	0.047
JS 13	You're doing a fantastic job! But, are you happy with what you do?	0.032	0.699

Source: *Field Survey, 2025. Keys: LMX- Leader member exchange JS- Job satisfaction*

Correlation Analysis to determine the relationship between Organizational Commitment, LMX and JS
Spearman correlation was used to determine the correlation between organizational commitment and LMX or job satisfaction. All LMX items were not significantly related to organizational commitment ($p>0.05$), implying that these items do not meaningfully correlate to organizational commitment. On the other hand, JS1 ($r=0.351$, $p<0.001$), JS5 ($r=0.129$, $p<0.056$), JS7 ($r=0.291$, $p<0.001$), JS11 ($r=0.201$, $p<0.003$) showed a weak but statistically significant positive relationship with OC. This suggests that employees who agreed with JS item 1 tended to report slightly higher OC. However, JS9 ($r=-0.322$, $p<0.001$) was weakly and negatively related to OC, and the correlation was significant.

Table 8: Spearman Correlation Analysis to determine the relationship between Organizational Commitment, LMX and JS of a Nigerian Federal Agency

Variables	Variable Items	Correlation coefficients (Spearman's rho)	p-value
LMX 1	Are you aware of your standing with your leader (or follower)? Do you typically understand your leader's (or follower's) level of satisfaction with your performance?	0.028	0.681
LMX 2	To what extent does your leader (or follower) comprehend your job-related challenges and requirements?	-0.022	0.74
LMX 3	To what extent does your leader (or follower) acknowledge your potential?	-0.045	0.74
LMX 4	Irrespective of the formal authority vested in your leader (or follower), what are the likelihoods that they would utilize their power to assist you in resolving work-related issues?	0.019	0.774
LMX 5	Regardless of the formal authority held by your leader (or follower), what are the odds that they would "bail you out" at their own expense?	0.008	0.901
LMX 6	I have sufficient confidence in my leader (or follower) that I would defend and justify their decisions in their absence.	-0.014	0.838
LMX 7	How would you describe your working relationship with your leader (or follower)?	0.026	0.705
LMX 8	Do you often have new and innovative ideas as a leader (follower)	0.048	0.475
LMX 9	Do you often have a fresh approach to problems as a leader (follower)	0.019	0.776
LMX 10	Does the organization grant access to study further	-0.021	0.757
LMX 11	Does the organization sponsor employee for further studies	-0.023	0.736
LMX 12	Are you empowered as a leader (follower) to take decisions?	0.021	0.757

Source: *Field Survey; 2025*

Table 9: Spearman Correlation Analysis to determine the relationship between Organizational Commitment, and JS of a Nigerian Federal Agency

Variables	Variable Items	Correlation coefficients (Spearman's rho)	p-value
JS 1	Do you feel your efforts as leader (follower) is recognized	0.351	0.001
JS 2	Do you agree that the working conditions are suitable	0.126	0.061
JS 3	Is the working environment safe and secured	-0.044	0.514
JS 4	Are you given the necessary tools to support your work?	0.035	0.61
JS 5	Do you find your role in the organization important?	0.129	0.056
JS 6	Does the organization offer health support to its leaders (followers)?	-0.004	0.95
JS 7	Do you have a work schedule?	0.291	0.001
JS 8	Do you have skills to undertake the schedule?	0.037	0.584
JS 9	Do you feel your schedule is important to the actualization of the organization's goals?	-0.322	0.001
JS 10	Is there autonomy to make decisions in your department or unit?	-0.102	0.133
JS 11	Do you give feedback?	0.201	0.003
JS 12	On a scale of 1-5, how excited are you usually to go to work?	0.071	0.294
JS 13	You're doing a fantastic job! But, are you happy with what you do?	-0.011	0.875

Source: *Field Survey, 2025: Keys: JS- Job satisfaction*

7. Discussion

The results indicate that LMX quality within the agency is generally moderate to high in areas involving leaders' understanding of employee needs, recognition of potential, and willingness to support workers. These findings align with Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) and Liden *et al*. (2006), who demonstrate that supportive LMX relationships improve employees' attitudes and perceptions of leadership effectiveness. However, the study reveals significant gaps in trust and clarity, as employees reported low confidence in knowing where they stand with their leaders (LMX1, LMX5). This contrasts with previous studies where LMX clarity is often positively associated with organizational outcomes. The weak predictive power of most LMX items on organizational commitment in this study diverges from earlier findings (e.g.,

Epitropakiand Martin, 2005), which often documented strong LMX–OC relationships. This suggests that in hierarchical or bureaucratic government settings, LMX may not operate as strongly as in private or decentralized organizations.

Job satisfaction demonstrated stronger relationships with organizational commitment, with significant predictors including task importance (JS11), work recognition (JS4), schedule satisfaction (JS7), and access to essential work tools (JS10). These patterns are consistent with Locke's (1976) theory that job satisfaction stems from evaluating job experiences as fulfilling and meaningful. The strong predictive effect of JS11 echoes findings by Meyer and Allen (1997), who note that employees who find their tasks meaningful tend to show higher affective commitment. The negative effect observed in JS10 and JS9 suggests dissatisfaction related to specific job conditions or support systems, reinforcing assertions made by Dugguh and Dennis (2014) that unmet job expectations weaken commitment. The finding that health support programs are deeply insufficient, and autonomy is low, is consistent with studies highlighting the challenges of employee empowerment in public-sector institutions (Balfour and Wechsler, 1996). Overall, the results indicate that job satisfaction factors—particularly recognition, adequate tools, safety, and empowerment are more influential than LMX in predicting OC in this agency.

Item-level analysis using regression and correlation shows JS items carry more weight, meaning improvements in job conditions directly shape employee commitment. This aligns with previous Nigerian public-sector research indicating that job satisfaction is a more consistent predictor of commitment than leadership dynamics (Adeniji *et al*., 2019). The weak correlations between LMX items and OC suggest that while employees acknowledge certain positive leader–follower interactions, these interactions do not translate into deeper organizational attachment—likely due to structural constraints such as limited autonomy, unclear communication, and bureaucratic rigidity.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that although employees report moderately positive interactions with their leaders, LMX alone does not significantly predict organizational commitment within the Nigerian Federal Agency examined. Instead, job satisfaction emerges as the dominant predictor of commitment, with factors such as recognition, meaningful work, adequate tools, safety, and work schedules playing central roles. Dissatisfaction in areas like autonomy and health support negatively affects commitment, underscoring the need for structural and policy improvements. The findings highlight that in hierarchical public-sector environments, organizational commitment is shaped more by job conditions than by interpersonal leadership relationships.

To strengthen commitment, the agency must invest in recognition programs, employee empowerment, improved health and safety provisions, and clearer leader–employee communication pathways. Enhancing these job satisfaction dimensions is likely to yield a more motivated, committed, and productive workforce.

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The Role of Social Work in Promoting Occupational Health and Safety Awareness among Sawmill Workers in Benin City

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Abstract. Globally and in Africa, including Nigeria, sawmill workers continue to operate under dangerous conditions that expose them to injuries, respiratory complications, and musculoskeletal disorders. Such risks are often linked to unsafe environments, poor adherence to safety standards, and inadequate protective gear, making it urgent to strengthen training, enforcement, and social work programmes aimed at building safety consciousness. This research examines how social work efforts influence occupational health and safety awareness among sawmill workers in Benin City, considering the socio-cultural norms that shape their behaviours, attitudes, and sense of risk. Drawing on Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasises the influence of peer and supervisor role modelling on behaviour, and Organisational Behavioural Theory, which attributes safety failures to weak awareness, ineffective leadership, and unsupportive workplace cultures, the study argues that purposeful social work involvement, training, and institutional support can foster safer routines. Using a descriptive design, data were gathered from 480 sawmill workers selected through purposive, cluster, and quota sampling methods, with a reliable and validated questionnaire and ethical safeguards in place. Results show that most of these workers are young men with minimal formal education who generally follow safety rules, yet lingering hazards remain. Although social work efforts have improved compliance and knowledge, they have had little effect on deeper safety culture or reporting habits, pointing to the need for ongoing education, tighter enforcement, and institutional backing. Consequently, the study recommends regular training, stronger social work engagement, consistent provision of PPE, better monitoring and compliance systems, and greater organisational support to maintain safe working conditions.

Keywords: Occupational, Awareness, Health, Hazards, Sawmill workers, Social Work Intervention.

1. Introduction

Around the world, people working in sawmills encounter a range of hazards, including strenuous physical work, dust inhalation, and loud noise, which can harm their bones, muscles, and lungs (Cvijetić et al., 2021). The demanding nature of the job often results in musculoskeletal problems, highlighting the importance of safety measures to protect workers (Cvijetić et al., 2021). In Africa, similar issues exist, where low safety standards and a lack of protective equipment increase the likelihood of both injuries and long-term health problems (Awoke et al., 2021). In Ghana, for instance, small-scale sawmill operators frequently suffer injuries, indicating the need for better safety training and prevention strategies (Opoku et al., 2024). These risks are exacerbated by weak law enforcement, insufficient training, and poorly structured workplace health systems (Awoke et al., 2021; Opoku et al., 2024).

In Nigeria, sawmills provide many informal jobs, yet unsafe conditions put workers at risk of respiratory problems, accidents, and chemical exposure (Ebekozien et al., 2021). Research shows that employees face both immediate dangers, such as injuries, and long-term health issues, including lung disease, hearing damage, and musculoskeletal disorders (Nnaji & Udokpoh, 2023). Many workers do not wear masks or protective equipment, leaving them exposed to sawdust and fine particles, which can cause chronic breathing problems (Nwakpa et al., 2023). These unsafe practices are especially common in places such as Benin City, where limited health education and safety awareness persist (Ebekozien et al.,

2021; Nnaji & Udokpoh, 2023). Social work programmes can play a key role in improving awareness and creating safer work environments (Omorogiuwa, & Azorondu, 2024).

1.1 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to examine the role of social work in promoting occupational health and safety awareness among sawmill workers Benin City. The specific objectives are to:

- examine socio-cultural factors influencing sawmill workers' attitudes, behaviours, and risk perceptions in occupational health and safety.
- find out the implications of social work in awareness creation among sawmill workers in Benin city.

2. Literature Review

The Concept of Health

Health is not merely the absence of illness but a combination of physical, mental and social well-being, a fact that is particularly relevant in workplaces such as sawmills, where employees face numerous hazards (Cvijetić et al., 2021). Worldwide, people working in sawmills are often exposed to wood dust and strenuous physical tasks, which can damage their lungs, cause inflammation, and lead to muscle or joint problems, emphasising the importance of robust safety practices (Mogal et al., 2022; Cvijetić et al., 2021).

In Africa, similar challenges arise because safety regulations are often weak, leaving workers vulnerable to injuries and long-term health issues (Omorogiuwa, 2019; Opoku et al., 2024). In Nigeria in particular, workers contend with polluted air, tiny toxic particles and unhygienic conditions, placing them at risk of respiratory, cardiovascular and other serious illnesses (Stanley & Inuope, 2021; Ebekozien et al., 2021). This underscores the urgent need for effective health and safety measures in Nigerian sawmills to protect workers' overall well-being (Ebekozien et al., 2021).

The Concept of Safety

Safety refers to the planned actions and routines that aim to prevent accidents, injuries and occupational illnesses, and it has become increasingly important across industries worldwide (Bratanegara et al., 2022). Globally, systems for occupational health and safety (OHS) play a critical role in protecting workers' physical and mental health, with businesses focusing on evaluating risks, reducing hazards and complying with regulatory requirements (Kumari & Kaur, 2021). In many African countries, industrial growth often outpaces the enforcement of safety regulations, exposing workers to greater risks and creating a need for context-specific safety practices (Cvijetić et al., 2021).

In Nigeria, sawmills highlight this concern, as workers routinely deal with wood dust, high noise levels and repetitive strain, which can cause both short and long-term health problems (Nnaji & Udokpoh, 2023; Nwakpa et al., 2023). Applying modern industrial hygiene methods alongside awareness initiatives has been shown to lessen occupational hazards and cultivate a culture of safety, demonstrating the combined importance of technical and social measures in protecting sawmill workers' well-being (Ebekozien et al., 2021; Bratanegara et al., 2022).

The Concept of Sawmills

Sawmills are facilities where raw logs are transformed into wood products, supporting global construction and manufacturing while exposing workers to hazards such as dust, noise and vibration (Ajayeoba et al., 2021). In Asian countries such as India and Bangladesh, employees often experience joint pain, muscle strain, breathing difficulties and inflammation due to continuous dust exposure and machinery vibrations (Das, 2023; Mogal et al., 2022). In Africa, these mills provide crucial employment within the informal economy but frequently operate with limited safety oversight and protective equipment, leading to a high rate of injuries, as observed in Ghana (Opoku et al., 2024). In Nigeria, urban sawmills contribute significantly to local economies, yet outdated equipment, weak safety practices and insufficient protective tools make workers vulnerable to accidents and long-term health problems (Omorogiuwa, 2019; Ebekozien et al., 2021).

The Socio-cultural Factors Influencing Sawmill Workers' Attitudes, Behaviours, and Risk Perceptions in Occupational Health and Safety

Globally, workplace safety is shaped not only by formal regulations but also by cultural and social dynamics that influence how employees perceive and respond to hazards (Bratanegara et al., 2022). People's commitment to safety often reflects local traditions, peer behaviours, and

long-standing practices within their industry (Kumari & Kaur, 2021). In many African workplaces, particularly in small-scale industries, informal safety habits prevail, and local attitudes towards risk play a significant role in whether workers adhere to safety guidelines (Opoku et al., 2024).

In Nigeria, sawmill employees frequently demonstrate limited use of protective equipment, rely more on personal experience than on structured training, and perceive hazards inconsistently, thereby increasing their exposure to accidents and respiratory problems (Nwakpa et al., 2023). Addressing these socio-cultural factors is essential for developing safety programmes that are sensitive to local norms, enhance awareness of risks, and promote safer work behaviour through social work interventions.

The Implications of Social Work in Awareness Creation Among Sawmill Workers

Social work has a strong influence on workplace health and safety by guiding changes in employee behaviour, advocating for safer conditions, and offering educational and support programmes for workers globally (Kumari & Kaur, 2021). Social workers help improve industrial hygiene standards by increasing understanding of environmental and occupational risks, which often leads to fewer hazards and better overall worker well-being (Bratanegara et al., 2022). In African industries, where regulatory oversight is often limited, social work initiatives are vital for raising employees' awareness of potential dangers and promoting proactive safety measures (Kumari & Kaur, 2021).

In Nigeria's sawmill industry, workers face significant respiratory and physical health challenges due to poor safety awareness and inadequate training (Omorogiuwa, 2017; Nnaji & Udokpoh, 2023). By introducing targeted health education programmes and encouraging the regular use of protective equipment, social workers can play a key role in reducing injuries and occupational illnesses among these workers (Omorogiuwa, 2019; Nwakpa et al., 2023).

3. Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) explains that people actively interact with their surroundings and learn by watching others, emphasising how personal traits, environmental factors, and behaviour all influence one another. The theory suggests that workers acquire new habits by observing others and adjusting their actions based on what they see, which means that the behaviour of peers, guidance from supervisors, and the overall workplace culture play key roles in promoting safety in sawmills (Bandura, 1986).

When safe practices are rewarded or recognised, employees tend to follow suit, whereas witnessing unsafe behaviours or a lack of consequences often discourages compliance (Bandura, 1986). Supporting this, Mohan et al. (2013) observed that supervisors and colleagues serve as role models, and their consistent use of personal protective equipment (PPE) helps establish workplace norms that motivate others. The study further notes that visible commitment from leadership and clear safety communication strengthen a culture of safety, while poor examples or a lack of guidance reduces workers' accountability, illustrating how social influences shape safe behaviour in sawmill environments (Mohan et al., 2013).

Organizational Behavioural Theory (OBT)

Organisational behaviour theory suggests that the health hazards and safety breaches observed among sawmill workers in Benin City stem from multiple factors, including limited awareness of workplace dangers (Adeoye et al., 2015), insufficient protective measures (Adu et al., 2015) and poor comprehension of occupational risks (Agbana et al., 2016). Negative attitudes towards safety are further reinforced by poor leadership and an unsupportive work culture (Tsai, 2011; Gensby et al., 2012).

Social workers can help mitigate these problems by designing targeted safety training programmes (Tziaferi et al., 2011), creating organisational environments that value safety (Tsai, 2011) and collaborating with government agencies to ensure compliance with safety regulations (ILO, 2014). They can also link workers to healthcare resources (WHO, 2001) and conduct educational campaigns to enhance safety awareness (Effah et al., 2013), thereby fostering healthier and safer workplaces for sawmill employees in Benin City.

4. Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive design to explore occupational health risks and safety practices among sawmill workers in Benin City. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire from a sample representing the

broader population. The total population comprised 1,031 sawmill workers in the Oredo, Egor and Ikpoba Okha local government areas. Using the Yamane (1967) formula, a sample of 480 workers (33.5%) was drawn through a combination of purposive, cluster and quota sampling methods (Edo State Ministry of Environment et al., 2023). The questionnaire, covering socio-demographic and occupational health aspects, was reviewed by experts to ensure content, construct and criterion validity. Reliability testing, using a pilot study with test-retest and Cronbach's alpha, produced a coefficient of 0.73. Data collection was conducted face to face, and the results were analysed with SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics such as tables, charts, percentages and frequencies were employed to assess workers' knowledge and compliance with safety standards. Ethical safeguards, including confidentiality, informed consent and data protection, were carefully maintained (Edo State Ministry of Environment et al., 2023).

5. Data Analysis

Background Characteristics of Respondents

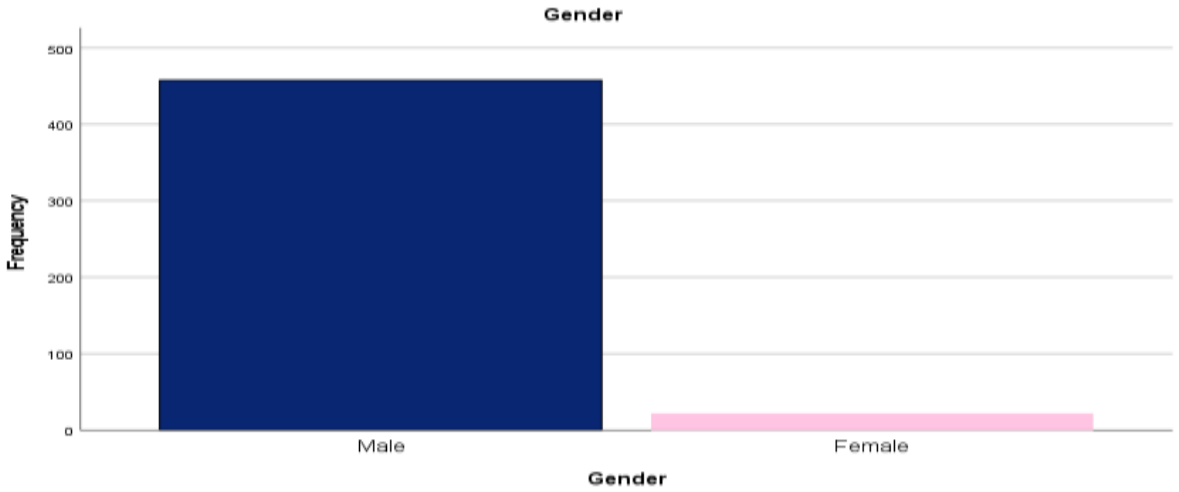
Table 1: Socio-demographic features of the respondents

Variables	Frequency (n = 480)	Percentages
Gender		
Male	458	95.4%
Female	22	4.6%
Age group		
18-25 years	128	26.7%
26-35 years	200	41.7%
36-45 years	130	27.1%
46 years and above	22	4.6%
Educational background		
No formal education	23	4.8%
Primary education	135	28.1%
Secondary education	314	65.4%
Tertiary education	8	1.7%
Marital status		
Single	297	61.9%
Married	179	37.3%
Divorced	0	0%
Widowed	4	0.8%
Religion		
Christianity	446	92.9%
Islam	12	2.5%
African Traditional Religion	12	2.5%
Others	10	2.1%

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

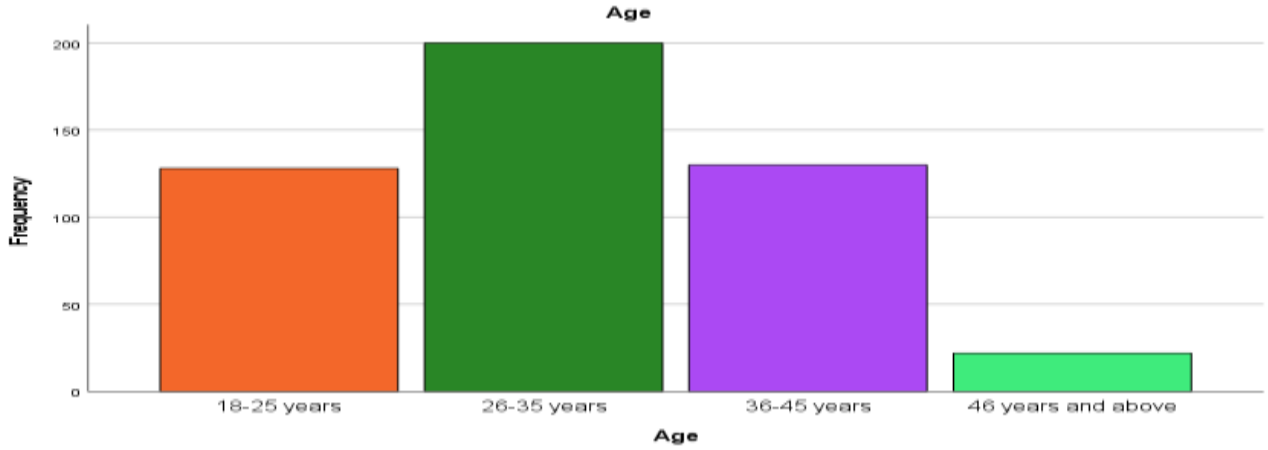
Among the 480 respondents surveyed, men made up the vast majority at 95.4%, leaving women with just 4.6%. Age distribution showed that most respondents were between 26 and 35 years old (41.7%), followed by 36 to 45 years (27.1%), 18 to 25 years (26.7%), and only a small fraction, 4.6%, were 46 or older. In terms of education, around two-thirds had completed secondary school (65.4%), while 28.1% had stopped at primary level, 4.8% had no formal schooling, and just 1.7% had tertiary education. Regarding marital status, most were single (61.9%), 37.3% were married, and less than 1% were widowed, with no respondents divorced. Christianity was the main religion (92.9%), while Islam and African Traditional Religion each accounted for 2.5%, and 2.1% practised other religions.

Figure 1: Gender distribution of respondents



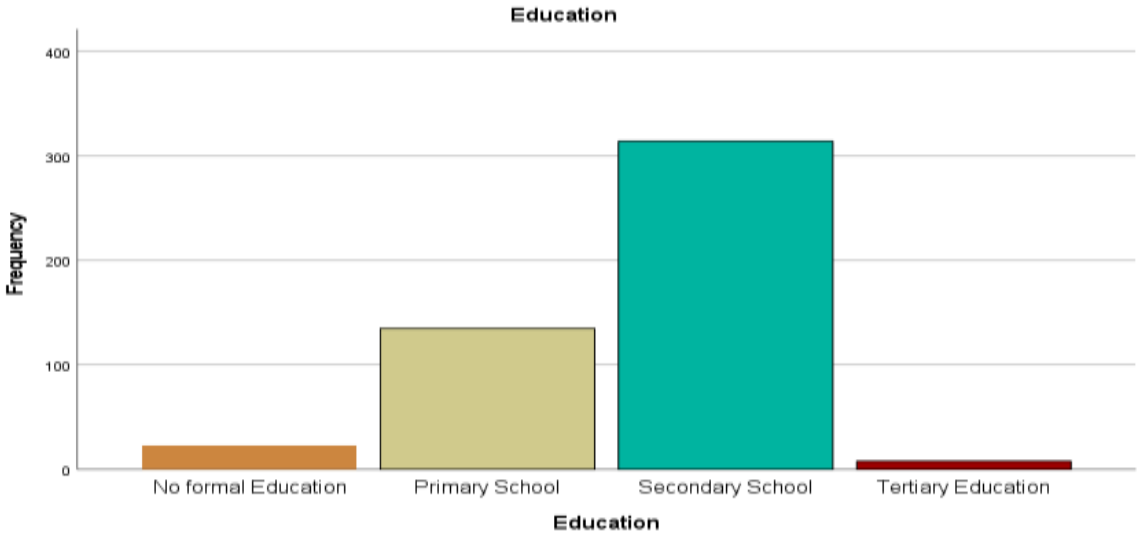
Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

Figure 2: Age group distribution of respondents



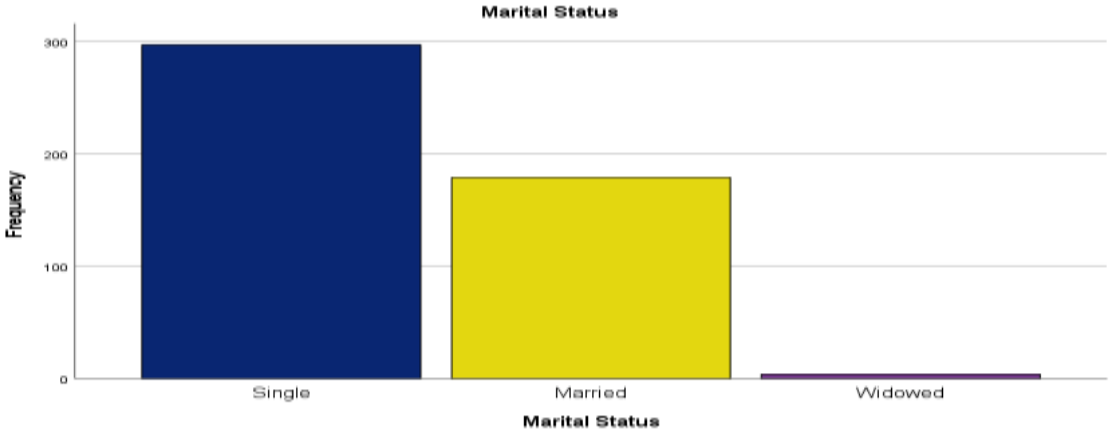
Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

Figure 3: Highest educational qualification of respondents



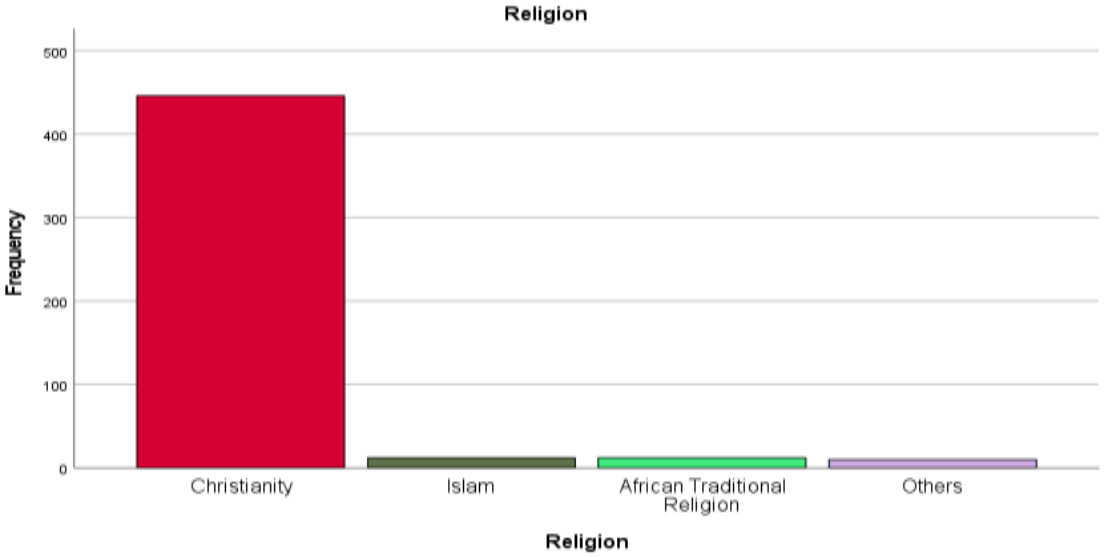
Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

Figure 4: Marital status of respondents



Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

Figure 5: Religious affiliation of respondents



Source: Field survey, 2025

6. Presentation and Analysis of the Research Questions

Objective One: The preventive measures currently in place to minimize occupational health hazards among sawmill workers in Benin City

Table 2: The Importance of Adequate Provision and Usage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in Addressing Potential Health Issues

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Adequate provision and usage of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, goggles, and earplugs address potential health issues.		
Yes	454	94.6%
No	26	5.4%
Total	480	100.0

Source: *Field survey, 2025*

The data in Table 2 show that nearly all respondents (94.6% of 480) consistently wear personal protective equipment, such as masks, goggles and earplugs, demonstrating a strong commitment to workplace safety. The small proportion (5.4%) who do not follow these measures indicates a need for targeted actions to strengthen overall health and safety practices.

Table 3: Engineering Controls for Hazardous Substance Exposure Reduction

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Implementation of engineering controls, such as dust and noise reduction systems, to minimize exposure to hazardous substances address potential health issues.		
Yes	452	94.2%
No	28	5.8%
Total	**480**	**100.0**

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

The data in Table 3 show that most participants 452 (94.2%) are in favour of introducing engineering controls to limit exposure to dangerous substances, demonstrating a clear recognition of their importance in promoting health and safer work environments. A smaller group of 28 respondents (5.8%) disagree with these measures, possibly owing to concerns about costs, doubts about their effectiveness, or a lack of awareness of the potential health benefits.

Table 4: Occupational Health and Safety Training for Sawmill Workers

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Regular training and education programs on occupational health and safety practices for all sawmill workers address potential health issues.		
Yes	455	94.8%
No	25	5.2%
Total	**480**	**100.0**

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

The data in Table 4 show that nearly all sawmill workers (455, 94.8%), take part in routine health and safety training, indicating that most are aware of workplace risks and follow safety guidelines. Only a few workers, around 25 (5.2%), do not participate in these sessions, highlighting gaps in understanding and the need for focused efforts to ensure that everyone observes proper safety measures.

Table 5: Implementing Regular Health Surveillance and Medical Check-ups for Proactive Health Management

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Regular health surveillance and medical check-ups to monitor address potential health issues.		
Yes	457	95.2%
No	23	4.8%
Total	**480**	**100.0**

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

The data in Table 5 show that nearly all respondents, 457 (95.2%), regularly attend health screenings and medical check-ups, demonstrating a strong interest in maintaining their health. Only a few, 23 respondents (4.8%), reported not participating, potentially due to financial issues, lack of understanding, or personal preferences.

Table 6: Occupational Health and Safety Compliance in Sawmill Operations

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Adherence to local and national regulations and policies related to occupational health and safety in sawmill operations address potential health issues.		
Yes	459	95.6%
No	21	4.4%
Total	**480**	**100.0**

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

The data in Table 6 show that nearly all sawmill respondents, 459 in total (95.6%), adhere to established local and national safety regulations, demonstrating a clear commitment to protecting worker health and promoting safe practices. However, a small portion, 21 respondents (4.4%), do not fully comply, indicating occasional but potential safety gaps and emphasising the need for targeted actions to ensure that safety standards are consistently met throughout the workplace.

Objective Two: Implications of social work in awareness creation among sawmill workers in Benin City

Table 7: Impact of Social Work Interventions on Sawmill Workers' Awareness of Occupational Health and Safety Practices

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Social work interventions have significantly increased sawmill workers' awareness of occupational health and safety practices.		
Yes	87	18.1%
No	393	81.9%
Total	**480**	**100.0**

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

The data in Table 7 show that a relatively small number of sawmill employees (18.1%) felt that social work programmes had enhanced their awareness of occupational health and safety, while the majority (81.9%) reported minimal or no improvement. This trend indicates the limited effectiveness of current approaches and emphasises the need to adjust these efforts to better reach and engage the workforce.

Table 8: The Impact of Social Work Programs on Sawmill Workers' Adherence to Safety Guidelines

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Sawmill workers who participated in social work programs exhibit improved adherence to safety guidelines and measures.		
Yes	443	92.3%
No	37	7.7%
Total	**480**	**100.0**

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

The data in Table 8 show that nearly all sawmill workers, 443 respondents involved in social work initiatives, (92.3%) noticed that they followed safety rules more consistently. However, a small number, about 37 respondents (7.7%), did not report any improvement. This suggests that the programmes do not have the same impact on everyone and that more work is needed to understand and overcome the factors preventing full effectiveness.

Table 9: Impact of Social Work Initiatives on Sawmill Workplace Safety Culture

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Social work initiatives have facilitated a positive shift in the overall safety culture within sawmill workplaces.		
Yes	78	16.3%
No	402	83.8%
Total	**480**	**100.0**

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

The data in Table 9 show that only 78 respondents (16.3%) believed that social work initiatives contributed to better safety practices in sawmills, while 402 respondents (83.8%) remained unconvinced of any significant effect. This clear difference suggests that most employees do not perceive notable improvements in safety culture from these programmes. The situation emphasises the importance of exploring why a few individuals noticed benefits and identifying the reasons behind the widespread doubt, which could help inform more effective safety-focused social work efforts in the future.

Table 10: Impact of Social Work Initiatives on Occupational Health Reporting in Sawmill Workers

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Social work efforts have led to a higher level of reporting and addressing occupational health issues among sawmill workers.		
Yes	79	16.5%
No	401	83.5%
Total	**480**	**100.0**

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

The data in Table 10 show that, out of 480 sawmill respondents surveyed, only 79 respondents (16.5 per cent) reported that social work activities helped in raising and resolving health-related concerns at work. In contrast, 401 respondents (83.5 per cent) did not believe these activities were effective. This indicates that the majority of workers are unconvinced about the impact of these measures, highlighting the importance of understanding why such a perception exists.

Table 11: Impact of Social Work Interventions on Sawmill Workers' Knowledge of Occupational Risks and Rights

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Sawmill workers who have been exposed to social work interventions demonstrate increased knowledge about occupational risks and their rights as workers.		
Yes	447	93.1%
No	33	6.9%
Total	**480**	**100.0**

Source: *Field Survey, 2025*

The data in Table 11 show that most of the 480 sawmill workers who took part in the survey, 200 respondents (93%), reported a better understanding of the risks of their job and their rights after receiving support from social workers. However, around 100 respondents (7%) noticed no difference, which could indicate that some workers did not experience the full impact of these initiatives.

7. Discussion of Finding

Among 480 sawmill employees in Benin City, men overwhelmingly accounted for 95.4% of the workforce, with women forming only 4.6%. This pattern suggests that health programmes should take gender differences into account. Most workers were young adults: 41.7% were between 26 and 35 years old, 26.7% were 18 to 25, and 27.1% were 36 to 45, while those over 46 years old made up 4.6%, possibly reflecting economic pressures and the gradual departure of older staff due to health issues or retirement. In terms of education, 65.4% had completed secondary school, 28.1% primary school, 4.8% had no schooling, and 1.7% had attained tertiary education, implying basic literacy but limited advanced training. A majority were single (61.9%), 37.3% were married, and 0.8% widowed, indicating the influence of the work on family life. Nearly all workers (92.9%) practiced Christianity, reflecting local religious trends and fostering shared community values.

The findings from Objective One suggest that most sawmill workers in Benin City follow recommended safety measures, with high rates of personal protective equipment use (94.6%), engineering controls (94.2%), regular training (94.8%), health monitoring (95.2%), and compliance with local and national OHS rules (95.6%). This demonstrates that workers are generally aware of and engaged in maintaining their health and safety at work. Still, a small minority, between 4.4% and 5.8%, reported lapses, revealing some lingering risks.

Similar trends have been reported by Nwakpa et al. (2023) and Nnaji and Udokpoh (2023), who found gaps in PPE and respiratory protection among Nigerian sawmill employees, and by Opoku et al. (2024) in Ghana, where compliance was high but isolated hazards remained. Research from Cvijetić et al. (2021) and Das (2023) also indicates that even with safety practices in place, workers continue to face musculoskeletal and physical risks. Taken together, the results highlight that while overall safety practices are strong, continuous education, enforcement, and targeted interventions are crucial to fully protect sawmill workers from occupational hazards.

The findings from Objective Two reveal that while social work efforts boosted workers' compliance with safety rules (92.3%) and knowledge of workplace risks and rights (93.1%), they had a smaller impact on general safety awareness (18.1%), the safety culture (16.3%) and reporting of health issues (16.5%). These findings suggest that results vary across outcomes, indicating the need for interventions tailored to local conditions. Nnaji and Udokpoh (2023) similarly reported widespread hazards in Nigerian sawmills and the lack of organised health checks, showing that social work alone is insufficient to tackle systemic dangers.

Nwakpa et al. (2023) also found limited use of respiratory protection, indicating that awareness without empowerment rarely changes behaviour. While Cvijetić et al. (2021) and Das (2023) highlighted the physical and musculoskeletal strain in sawmill work, they did not consider safety culture or social initiatives, which this study partly addresses. Furthermore, Opoku et al. (2024) noted high injury rates in Ghanaian sawmills linked to poor enforcement by employers, emphasising that social work is most effective when backed by organisational support.

8. Conclusion

To conclude, the study indicates that most sawmill employees in Benin City comply with safety rules and participate in health-related practices at work, although some areas still require improvement. Support from social work programmes helps workers recognise hazards and follow guidelines, but it has less influence on the wider safety environment and reporting habits. Similar observations in Nigeria and Ghana suggest that while training and awareness are important, maintaining safe work conditions demands continuous education, consistent oversight, organisational support, and targeted efforts to address persistent risks.

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

Enhance Continuous Training: Provide regular, up-to-date occupational health and safety training to help all sawmill workers maintain safe practices.

Strengthen Social Work Interventions: Expand social work programmes to actively involve workers in recognising hazards, reporting issues, and following safety procedures.

Ensure Full PPE Provision: Make sure all employees consistently receive and correctly use personal protective equipment to reduce exposure to workplace hazards.

Improve Monitoring and Compliance: Carry out routine inspections and audits to identify lapses and ensure compliance with local and national occupational health and safety regulations.

Promote Organisational Support: Build a safety-focused culture through committed management, clear policies, and proactive measures to address ongoing workplace risks.

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Artificial Intelligence and Recruitment Practices in Nigeria: Ethical Implications and the Future of Talent Management

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Abstract. At a time where the use of Artificial Intelligence packages has virtually taken over human activities today, the human resources segment responsible for the recruitment of prospective employees is not left behind. As a result, the study explored artificial intelligence and recruitment practices in Nigeria: Ethical implications and the future of talent management. The survey research design type using the descriptive approach was employed in this study. This design allows for the study of a large population with a view to generating varied characteristics of the identified phenomenon. The population for the study comprised all recruiting organisations in Lagos, Edo, Kwara, Imo, and Borno states, respectively. Through the multi-stage technique, the ballot and hat procedure was used to select 5 states from 36 states. A stratified sampling procedure was then employed to select 6 public-private recruitment firms from each of the states; a Proportionate sampling procedure of 20% with replacement was used to select 2 recruitment organisations each from the respective states to make a total of 10 public-private recruiting firms. A simple random sampling procedure was later introduced to select a sample of 540 respondents for the study. Artificial Intelligence and Recruitment Practices in Nigeria Questionnaire (AIRPiNQ) was used for data collection. This Questionnaire is a 24 closed tools with 4 Likert Scale response format of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Ethical consideration for the instrument was determined. Validity of the instrument was determined, and using the Cronbach alpha index of .893; Simple correlation and multiple correlation analysis were used to analyse data and hypotheses tested at .05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that the use of Artificial Intelligence tools has helped to facilitate the selection of competent and resourceful employees. The study concluded that AI offers a clear pathway to faster, more consistent, and potentially more meritocratic hiring when properly governed by industry frameworks. It is recommended among others that there needs to exist strengthened governance, human oversight and regulatory compliance under Nigeria's emerging AI and data-protection policy of the nation as contained in the Nigeria Communication Commission and Nigeria Data Protection Act policy documents.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Recruitment Practices, Talent Management, Employees, Human Resources Management

1. Introduction

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) has become a transformative force in organisational human resource management (HRM), particularly in the domain of recruitment, where efficiency, accuracy and data-driven decision-making are increasingly prioritised and needed for shortlisting of talents or prospective employees. In the world of recruiting, AI tools are now used to automate résumé screening, assess candidates, job matching and even guide preliminary interviews thereby reducing administrative burden on Human Resource departments and shortening hiring cycles. These advances have spurred growing interest among organisations in developing economies, including Nigeria, where employers seek cost-effective mechanisms to manage large applicant pools and improve talent acquisition outcomes (Stone et al., 2015; Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018).

In Nigeria, Adeyeye et al. (2022) stated that the adoption of AI-assisted recruitment platforms is an emerging feat across sectors like banking, oil and gas, telecommunications, civil service, and technology-based firms. Many organisations are integrating the use of AI-enabled Applicant

Tracking Systems (ATS), chatbot-supported candidate interactions, and algorithmic screening tools to improve objectivity and organisational efficiency. However, Nigeria's socio-economic terrain is characterised by high youth unemployment, a deficiency in digital skills gaps, and infrastructural constraints which raises critical questions about how these technologies can help shape recruitment fairness, accessibility and inclusion (Onyejiuwa & Mbah, 2023).

Many Human Resources Managers have incorporated the use of AI platforms to drive recruitment practices. It is expected that this use of AI would help navigate well in the selection of talents and source for qualified employees suitable for a specific job task. Some of these AI App includes Fuzu, nuJOB.ai, Expertini (ng.expertini.com), Jobberman, peopleHum, Zoho Recruit / Zoho People, Paradox "Olivia", Eightfold.ai, HireVue, HackerRank. They have specific functions attributed to each package in the course of selection. These Apps scrutinize CVs, assist in interview conducting, resume parsing, candidate shortlisting, history tracking, matching, and skills validation tailored to local employers, identification of talents with appropriate skills, area of strength, and weaknesses, among others.
Without being biased, it is fair to state that HR also admonishes that AI-driven recruitment sometimes introduces complex ethical issues around transparency, data privacy, and potential algorithmic bias. A study by Bogen & Rieke (2018) shows that AI systems can inadvertently reinforce historical inequalities when trained on biased data or programmed without sufficient oversight. For Nigeria, with its ethnically diverse and demographically young population, algorithmic discrimination may manifest along lines of language, religion, belief system, schooling background, socio-economic status, and regional representation. As a result, the implications of AI for employment equity within the Nigerian labour market require careful scholarly examination.

The regulatory environment also influences AI deployment in recruitment. It is on record that Nigeria's Data Protection Act (2023) provides guidelines on lawful data processing, consent, and candidate privacy protections. Nonetheless, gaps remain in the governance of automated decision-making, algorithmic accountability, and transparency obligations for employers using AI-powered hiring systems. These gaps underscore the need for empirical evidence to guide policy development and organisational compliance (NITDA, 2019; Adebayo & Allen, 2021).

Despite its advantages, AI adoption in recruitment faces challenges within Nigeria, including limited organisational readiness, insufficient HR analytics capacity, the cost of technological acquisition, and low digital literacy among applicants. AI systems deployed without proper adaptation may perform poorly due to linguistic diversity, informal labour market dynamics and inconsistencies in Nigerian résumé formats and job descriptions. These persistent mismatches highlight the need for locally informed studies that evaluate how AI tools perform within Nigeria's unique labour market environment (Adebanjo & Okolie, 2022).

Given these opportunities and challenges, this study investigates Artificial Intelligence and Recruitment Practices in Nigeria with a focus on understanding adoption levels, organisational motivations, operational effectiveness, fairness concerns, and regulatory implications. By examining the intersection of technology, human decision-making, and labour market realities, the study seeks to contribute to scholarship on digital HR transformation in developing economies. It also aims to provide evidence-based recommendations to employers, policymakers, and HR professionals to ensure that AI strengthens the recruitment process, recruitment efficiency, equity, and allows for candidate experience in Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

At a time where the new world order encourages the use of Artificial Intelligence in recruitment, Human Resources Managers in Nigerian organisations continue to face significant uncertainties regarding the effectiveness, fairness and suitability of AI-driven hiring systems. While AI tools promise faster résumé screening, objective assessments and reduced recruitment costs, a study by Onyejiuwa & Mbah, (2023) suggests that many Nigerian firms lack the technical and organisational readiness required to deploy these systems effectively. Some of these challenges may range from inadequate digital infrastructure, low HR analytics capabilities, inconsistent data quality and limited awareness of AI governance frameworks, which may also hinder optimal utilisation. Additionally, most AI recruitment tools are designed and programme in Western economies, thereby addressing labour-related issues in the West compared to

their use in an environment whose labour principles and expectations are at total variance with the West, as these AI platforms may not accurately interpret local résumé formats, linguistic variations, or informal employment histories common among Nigerian applicants. This creates a risk of inaccurate candidate evaluations, operational inefficiencies, and mistrust among job seekers, hence the need for the exploration of Artificial Intelligence and Recruitment Practices in Nigeria: Ethical Implications and the Future of Talent Management.

1.2 Objectives of the Problem

The core objective of this study is to explore the use of artificial intelligence in recruitment practices in Nigeria: Ethical Implications and the Future of Talent Management. Specifically, its objectives include:

- assess how use of artificial intelligence correlate with recruitment practices in Nigeria.
- examine which artificial intelligence tools promote effective recruitment practices in Nigeria

1.3 Hypotheses

H_1: The use of artificial intelligence does not have any significant correlation with recruitment practices in Nigeria.
H_2: Use of Artificial intelligence tools does not significantly promote effective recruitment practices in Nigeria.

1.4 Relevance of the Study

The outcome of this would help enhance teachers' understanding of emerging technological trends that shape graduate employability and workforce requirements. By examining how Artificial Intelligence influences recruitment practices, teachers gain insights into essential digital competencies and behavioural attributes being evaluated by automated systems. Such knowledge helps educators align teaching strategies, curriculum content, and employability training with industry expectations. For researchers, this study provides a critical foundation for advancing empirical scholarship on digital transformation in human resource management. It offers new data on adoption patterns, ethical issues, fairness concerns, and operational challenges associated with AI-driven recruitment in Nigeria. The findings will contribute to filling existing literature gaps on algorithmic hiring in African labour markets, stimulate further comparative studies, and support theoretical development on technology acceptance, organisational behaviour, and labour economics.

Human resource personnel would also benefit from the findings of this study useful as it offers practical insights into how AI technologies can enhance or complicate recruitment processes within Nigerian organisations. It also sheds light on best practices for implementing AI tools, mitigating algorithmic bias, improving candidate experience, and complying with data protection regulations. HR practitioners will also benefit from understanding the limitations of AI systems, the importance of human oversight, and the need for strategic alignment between technology and organisational goals. On the part of students, it provides clarity on how AI tools evaluate candidates, what skills are increasingly required, and how digital recruitment platforms influence job opportunities. With many organisations now using automated résumé screening, online tests, and AI-powered interviews, students are exposed to digital competencies and employability skills necessary to succeed. Students are better guided on how to adapt their job-search strategies, structure their CVs for ATS compatibility, ethical navigation of data-driven recruitment systems and build confidence.

2. Research Methodology

The survey research design type using the descriptive approach was employed in this study. This design allows for the study of a large population with a view to generating varied characteristics of the identified phenomenon. The population for the study comprised all recruiting organisations in Lagos, Edo, Kwara, Imo, and Borno states, respectively. Through the multi-stage technique, the ballot and hat procedure was used to select 5 states from 36 states. A stratified sampling procedure was then employed to select 6 public-private recruitment firms from each of the states; a Proportionate sampling procedure of 20% with replacement was used to select 2 recruitment organisations each from the respective states to make a total of 10 public-private recruiting firms. A simple random sampling procedure was later introduced to select a sample of 540 respondents for the study. Artificial Intelligence and Recruitment Practices in Nigeria Questionnaire (AIRPiNQ) was used for data collection. This Questionnaire is a 24 closed questionnaire with 4 Likert Scale response format of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A),

Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Ethical consideration for the instrument was determined. Validity of the instrument was determined, and using the Cronbach alpha index of .893; Simple correlation and multiple correlation analysis were used to analyse data, and hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance.

3. Data and Interpretations

H_1: The use of artificial intelligence does not have any significant correlation with recruitment practices in Nigeria.

Table 1: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis showing use of artificial intelligence and recruitment practices

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig	Remark
Artificial Intelligence		2.17	.49			
Recruitment practices	540	2.85	.68	.780	000	Reject H_1

Source: *Fieldwork (2025)*

The data in Table 1 shows that 540 respondents participated in this study, as a correlation index of .780 was derived, meaning the existence of a positive relationship between artificial intelligence and the recruitment process. At sig. value of .000 (P<.05), the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis retained.

H_2: Use of Artificial intelligence tools does not significantly promote effective recruitment practices in Nigeria.

Table 2: Multiple Correlations showing Artificial Intelligence tools and effective recruitment practices

S/N	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean	SD
1	Fuzu	.02						12.65	2.56
2	Jobberman	.02	.01					9.78	1.44
3	Zoho Recrui	.01	.03	.02				8.65	2.11
4	HireVue	.04	.03	.02	.00			11.92	1.64
5	HackerRank	.03	.01	.03	.00	.01		10.55	1.85
6	Recruitment Practices	.65	.48	.66	.71	.59	0	8.83	.96

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The results in Table 1 revealed that there is a significant positive correlation between Fuzu AI tool and recruitment practices (r (540) = .65, P<.05). This implies that as Fuzu AI tool increases, recruitment practices increase as well. Jobberman AI tool has a positive and significant correlation with recruitment practices (r(540)= .48, P<.05). This implies that as Jobberman AI tool increases, recruitment practices increase as well. Zoho Recrui AI tool have a positive significant correlation with recruitment practices (r(540)= .66 P<.05), this implies that as Zoho Recruit AI tool increases, recruitment practices also increase. HireVue AI tool has a positive significant correlation with recruitment practices (r(540)= .71, P<.05), this implies that as the HireVue AI tool increases, recruitment practices also. HackerRank AI tool has a positive significant correlation with recruitment practices (r(540)= .59, P<.05). This implies that as the HackerRank AI tool increases, recruitment practices increase in the recruitment process. However, HireVue, Zoho Recruiter, Fuzu, Hacker Rank, and Jobberman contributed significantly to recruitment practices in this order.

4. Discussions

Hypothesis one reveals that the use of artificial intelligence has a significant correlation with recruitment practices in Nigeria. This implies that the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in Nigerian recruitment practices was found to be significantly correlated with more efficient candidate screening, faster shortlisting, and improved predictive matching between applicant profiles and job requirements, which was largely driven by automated resume parsing, predictive analytics, and video-interview analysis employed by employers. The outcome of this study conforms to that of Nwambuko (2025) and Ogboe and Sowande (2024) who affirmed that where AI systems are combined with human oversight, such organisations in always realize the greatest gains in selection accuracy and perceived fairness, but where infrastructure constraints (poor internet, limited IT skills) or opaque algorithmic designs persist, AI's positive effects are constrained and risks of biased outcomes increase. According to World Journal of Academic Research and Reflection, WJARR (2025), the Nigerian evidence base suggests a

clear and significant relationship between AI use and contemporary recruitment practices, tempered by contextual factors (sector, infrastructure, governance) that moderate both effectiveness and equity of AI-driven hiring.

Hypothesis two reveals that the adoption of artificial intelligence tools has significantly promoted effective recruitment practices in Nigeria. Artificial intelligence (AI) tools have significantly promoted more effective recruitment practices in Nigeria by automating and improving several stages of hiring workers. The outcome of this study corroborates studies by Ogboe, (2024); Onwuneme, (2025) and WJARR, (2025) submissions that these AI tools have enhanced CV parsing and shortlisting, candidate matching through predictive analytics, automated scheduling and interviewing, and continuous candidate engagement via chatbots which together reduce time-to-hire, increase screening consistency and improve the quality of shortlisted candidates. Onwuneme(2025) noted further that the adoption of AI tools facilitates fast recruitment outcomes, encourages higher interviewer preparedness, and greater alignment between candidate skills and job requirements. At the same time, researchers and industry analysts caution that infrastructural deficiencies like unstable power and internet, uneven digital literacy, algorithmic opacity, and data protection constraints can blunt these benefits or introduce bias if unmitigated.

5. Conclusion

The evidence indicates that artificial intelligence has materially reshaped recruitment practices in Nigeria by increasing efficiency in CV screening and shortlisting, improving candidate–job matching through predictive analytics, and freeing HR professionals to focus on higher-value, strategic tasks. These benefits are most pronounced where AI tools are integrated into hybrid workflows that pair algorithmic scoring with human judgment; however, gains are uneven because infrastructure gaps (power, internet), limited digital skills, weak data-protection practices, and opaque algorithmic designs can reduce effectiveness and introduce fairness risks. Thus, while AI offers a clear pathway to faster, more consistent, and potentially more meritocratic hiring when properly governed, its positive impact depends on complementary investments in capacity, infrastructure, and oversight to mitigate bias and protect candidate rights.

6. Recommendations

Among others the study recommended the following:

- Industry regulators and government agencies should update and enforce data-protection and AI governance frameworks to ensure that the various recruitment tools meet transparency, fairness and accountability standard.
- Organisations must adopt human-in-the-loop designs, conduct regular algorithmic audits and bias testing and publish clear candidate-facing explanations of automated decisions.
- There must be deliberate investment will in digital infrastructure and target capacity-building (HR upskilling, IT support) to ensure tools perform reliably across regions and sectors.
- There should be timely implement of pilot projects with independent evaluation before wide rollout and use monitoring & evaluation metrics (time-to-hire, diversity outcomes, candidate satisfaction) to guide scale-up and
- Foster cross-sector collaboration between government, industry, academia and civil society in sharing best practices, create standards for ethical use and develop accessible grievance mechanisms for candidates affected by automated hiring decisions. These steps together will help balance efficiency gains with fairness, transparency and long-term sustainability.

7. Ethical Implications and the Future of Talent Management

The use of artificial intelligence in recruitment practices in Nigeria raises ethical concerns related to algorithmic bias, transparency, data privacy, and the potential exclusion of candidates without strong digital footprints. These issues underscore the need for clear regulatory frameworks and human oversight to ensure fairness and accountability in automated hiring decisions. As AI continues to evolve, talent management in Nigeria is expected to become more data-driven, predictive, and personalised, enabling organisations to identify, develop, and retain high-potential employees more effectively. Ultimately, the future of talent management will depend on balancing technological efficiency with ethical safeguards

that protect candidates' rights and promote inclusive workforce development.

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Untangling the Nexus between Human Capital Development and Manufacturing Output in Nigeria

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Abstract. This study investigated the nexus between human capital development and manufacturing sector output in Nigeria over the period 1980–2023. Secondary data obtained from the Central Bank of Nigeria's Statistical Bulletin were analyzed using the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) approach to capture both short-run and long-run relationships. The empirical findings revealed that primary school enrollment had a negative and statistically insignificant effect on manufacturing output, suggesting a misalignment between educational outcomes and the skill requirements of the manufacturing sector. Government expenditures on education and health exhibited positive but statistically insignificant coefficients, indicating that public investment in human capital had not yet translated into measurable productivity gains. In contrast, population growth had a positive and statistically significant impact, highlighting its role in expanding the labor force and market size that stimulated industrial activity. Conversely, life expectancy exerted a negative and significant influence, reflecting demographic pressures such as aging and higher dependency ratios. The study concluded that improving the quality and relevance of human capital development, rather than merely expanding access, was essential for strengthening the link between human capital and manufacturing output in Nigeria. It further recommended targeted education reforms, efficient public health spending, and population management strategies to unlock the productivity potential of the Nigerian manufacturing sector.

Keywords: Human Capital Development, Manufacturing sector Output, ARDL model

1. Introduction

The development of human capital has become a fundamental pillar of sustainable economic growth and industrial competitiveness. Human capital—comprising the education, skills, health, and productive capacity of the workforce—remains a decisive factor shaping economic outcomes across nations (World Bank, 2023; UNDP, 2024). In both advanced and developing economies, the ability to generate, adapt, and apply knowledge is a key determinant of productivity and industrial transformation. Countries that prioritize investment in human capital tend to experience stronger and more inclusive economic growth, particularly within the manufacturing sector, which relies heavily on skilled labor and technological adaptability (Ojo & Adeyemi, 2024).

Despite Nigeria's vast natural and material resources, the country continues to experience sluggish industrial expansion, weak manufacturing productivity, and persistent unemployment. This paradox underscores the argument that natural resource abundance alone cannot guarantee sustainable development without a well-developed and effectively utilized human resource base (UNDP, 2024). Nigeria's human development indicators reflect persistent challenges. The United Nations Development Programme (2022) ranked Nigeria 163rd out of 191 countries globally and 25th in Africa, revealing low achievements in health, education, and income dimensions. These statistics highlight the inadequacy of the country's human capital to drive meaningful industrialization.

The development of human capital in Nigeria has historically lagged behind other emerging economies due to inadequate public investment,

weak policy implementation, and systemic inefficiencies within the education and health sectors (World Bank, 2023). Budgetary allocations to these sectors consistently fall short of international benchmarks—UNESCO's 26% recommendation for education and the African Union's 15% target for health (UNESCO, 2023; African Union, 2023). The consequences of these funding gaps are evident in poor educational outcomes, recurrent industrial actions by academic and health workers, deteriorating infrastructure, and declining quality of service delivery. These challenges collectively undermine the skill base and health status of Nigeria's workforce, thereby constraining productivity growth, particularly within the manufacturing sector (Okoye & Nwosu, 2023).

Although nominal expenditures on education and health have increased, real growth has remained sluggish and insufficient to meet rising demographic pressures and industrial labor demands (Okoye & Nwosu, 2023). The Federal Government has implemented several policy initiatives—such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), and targeted scholarship schemes—to improve human capital outcomes (Federal Ministry of Education, 2022; NHIS, 2023). However, the overall impact of these interventions on industrial productivity and manufacturing performance remains unclear, raising concerns about the effectiveness and alignment of human capital policies with Nigeria's industrial development goals.

Scholars have also emphasized that Nigeria's overdependence on oil revenues has weakened its industrial base, hindered diversification efforts, and exacerbated the decline of manufacturing output (Ojo & Adeyemi, 2024; FAO, 2023). Historically, revenues from agriculture supported education, healthcare, and industrial infrastructure, but the shift toward oil dependence diverted attention from human capital investment and technological innovation. Consequently, Nigeria's manufacturing sector faces structural challenges, including obsolete technology, low labor productivity, and a shortage of technically skilled workers capable of driving industrial modernization (Ojo & Adeyemi, 2024).

Understanding the interaction between human capital development and manufacturing output is critical for formulating effective economic and industrial policies. Existing studies have largely examined human capital's role in aggregate economic growth, with limited empirical focus on its direct impact on manufacturing productivity in Nigeria. This study therefore aimed to untangle the nexus between human capital development and manufacturing output in Nigeria, addressing a critical research gap identified in the literature (Ojo & Adeyemi, 2024; Federal Ministry of Education, 2022). By doing so, the study sought to provide empirical insights that could guide policymakers in aligning education, health, and labor market strategies toward revitalizing Nigeria's manufacturing sector and enhancing overall economic resilience.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to determine the impact of human capital development on manufacturing firms' output in Nigeria using time series data from 1980 to 2023.
The specific objectives are:

- To examine the impact of primary School Enrollment on manufacturing Sector productivity in Nigeria.
- To determine the impact of Government's expenditure Education on manufacturing Sector productivity in Nigeria.
- To assess the impact of Government Expenditure on Health on manufacturing Sector productivity in Nigeria.
- To investigate the impact of Life Expectancy Manufacturing Sector productivity in Nigeria.
- To examine the effect of Population growth rate on Manufacturing Sector productivity in Nigeria

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Human Capital Development

Human capital represents the total stock of knowledge, skills, competencies, health status, and other attributes embodied in individuals that enable them to create economic value and contribute to national development. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2021) described human capital as the knowledge, skills, competencies, and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social, and economic well-being. Similarly, Rastogi (2022) viewed human capital as an essential input for improving employee capabilities through continuous learning, skills enhancement, and

innovation. Human capital therefore remains a critical determinant of output and economic transformation, especially in labor-intensive sectors such as manufacturing.

According to Nwokoye (2020), human capital encompasses the stock of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable individuals to manipulate other productive resources—such as land, technology, and physical capital—to generate goods and services. This perspective underscores that investment in people is central to sustainable economic growth and national competitiveness. The World Bank (2023) further emphasized that countries investing substantially in education, health, and workforce development experience higher levels of industrial output and economic diversification.

Human capital development refers to the intentional process of enhancing individuals' productive capacities through education, training, healthcare, and skills acquisition programs (IMF, 2022; UNDP, 2024). It involves not only increasing the number of educated and trained individuals but also improving the quality and relevance of their skills to meet the evolving needs of the industrial sector. In this regard, human capital development serves as a bridge between knowledge creation and productive application, ensuring that individuals' intellectual and physical capacities align with the strategic requirements of the manufacturing sector.

In Nigeria, human capital development remains a decisive factor in addressing the persistent challenges of low industrial output. The Federal Ministry of Education (2022) and the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS, 2023) have identified education and health as the twin foundations of human capital formation. Nevertheless, inadequate funding, infrastructural decay, and policy inconsistency continue to constrain the development of a skilled and healthy workforce capable of driving manufacturing growth. Strengthening human capital development is therefore essential for stimulating higher manufacturing output and achieving long-term economic sustainability (Ojo & Adeyemi, 2024).

Manufacturing Output: Manufacturing output refers to the total value of goods and services produced within the manufacturing sector over a specified period. It captures the efficiency and capacity of industrial activities to transform inputs—such as labor, raw materials, and technology—into finished products. According to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN, 2021), manufacturing output represents the aggregate value generated by the manufacturing industry and serves as an indicator of industrial growth and economic performance. Adekunle and Aghedo (2021) further described output as the tangible measure of a firm's or sector's productive performance, reflecting both the quantity and quality of goods produced.

Manufacturing output is directly influenced by the quality of human capital, as a skilled and healthy workforce enhances operational efficiency, innovation, and technological adaptability. The World Bank (2023) noted that improvements in education and health significantly increase labor efficiency and production capacity, which in turn boost industrial output. In contrast, weak human capital development often leads to low labor productivity, inefficient resource utilization, and reduced competitiveness in the manufacturing sector (UNDP, 2024). In this study, manufacturing value-added serves as the proxy for output in Nigeria's manufacturing sector. Manufacturing output is therefore operationally defined as the total value of goods and services produced within the manufacturing industry after accounting for input costs. This measure reflects the sector's overall performance and its contribution to national economic growth.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Solow-Swan Model of Economic Growth

The Solow–Swan model, independently developed by Robert Solow and Trevor Swan in 1956, is a neoclassical growth theory that explains long-run economic growth through capital accumulation, labor expansion, and technological progress. Solow (1956) criticized the Harrod–Domar model for its unrealistic fixed-proportion assumption and introduced a flexible production function that allowed diminishing returns and convergence toward a steady-state equilibrium.

The model expresses output as a function of capital and labor, $Y=F(K,L)Y = F(K, L)Y=F(K,L)$, where part of each period's output is saved and invested, while growth in output depends on savings, population growth, and technological progress. Over time, diminishing returns to capital imply that sustained output growth can only occur through improvements in technology and labor quality—both influenced by human capital development. In this context, the Solow–Swan framework provides the theoretical basis for linking education, health,

and population dynamics to manufacturing output in Nigeria. It suggests that investment in human capital enhances labor efficiency and technological adaptation, thereby driving long-term industrial growth and output expansion.

2.3 Empirical Literature

Patel and Nguyen (2024) examined the effects of government expenditure on health and education on manufacturing sector growth across emerging economies using a cross-country panel dataset. Applying the Generalized Method of Moments (GMM) to address endogeneity, their model incorporated macroeconomic variables such as inflation, trade openness, and demographic factors. The findings revealed a positive, though statistically insignificant, relationship between health and education spending and manufacturing growth, suggesting suboptimal allocation and utilization of resources. They concluded that more targeted public investment in education and health is necessary to enhance the productive capacity of the manufacturing sector.

Okoh et al. (2023) examined how globalization influenced human capital development in Nigeria between 1980 and 2021 using the ARDL approach. The findings revealed that globalization—measured by trade openness—had a negative and statistically significant effect on human capital development in the long run, but a positive and insignificant effect in the short run. Additionally, control variables such as money supply and exchange rate were found to have positive and significant impacts on human capital development. Similarly, Okoye et al. (2023) analyzed the impact of entrepreneurial finance from commercial and microfinance banks on unemployment reduction in Nigeria from 1992 to 2017. Applying the ARDL method, their study found that entrepreneurial finance positively contributed to reducing unemployment, though its effectiveness was influenced by regulatory and economic policy conditions.

Jones and Smith (2023) analyzed the influence of primary school enrollment on manufacturing output growth in developing countries over two decades using a longitudinal panel design. Employing fixed-effects estimation to control for country-specific differences, they found that primary school enrollment exerted a negative but statistically insignificant impact on manufacturing output. This result implied a misalignment between basic education outcomes and industrial labor needs, calling for greater emphasis on technical and vocational education to strengthen workforce relevance.

Okoh et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between entrepreneurship financing and human capital development in Nigeria from 1992 to 2021 using the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model. The study found that credit to small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) significantly enhanced human capital development in the long run, while interest rates had no meaningful effect in either the short or long run. Exchange rate fluctuations, however, positively influenced human capital development in the short term. In another study, Okoh et al. (2022) explored the impact of human capital development on Nigeria's manufacturing sector from 1981 to 2021 using OLS and ARDL bounds testing. Results indicated a significant negative relationship between human capital development and manufacturing value added, suggesting inefficiencies in skill utilization. Population growth, however, exhibited a significant positive effect on manufacturing performance. The authors recommended policies focused on technical training and technological investment to enhance sectoral productivity.

Anumudu (2020) assessed the effect of human capital on labor productivity in manufacturing firms across Enugu and Anambra States using OLS and Principal Component Analysis. Findings showed a strong positive relationship between training, education, medical care, and research on industrial productivity. The study identified underinvestment in human capital across firms and recommended improved resource allocation to enhance workforce efficiency and industrial performance.

Adelakun (2021) examined the role of human capital development in Nigeria's economic growth using GDP as a proxy for output and education and health expenditure as proxies for human capital. Employing an OLS approach, the study confirmed a strong positive relationship between human capital development and economic growth, emphasizing the need for pragmatic strategies and institutional frameworks to align manpower development with sectoral growth needs.

Udu and Ewans (2021) investigated the relationship between human capital development and employee job performance at Double Diamond Plastic Manufacturing Firm, Aba. Using a correlational research design and Pearson's correlation analysis, the study found a strong positive relationship between on-the-

job training and employee performance (r = 0.97), as well as between off-the-job training and worker efficiency. The authors concluded that continuous staff development significantly enhances manufacturing performance.

Sankay et al. (2020) analyzed the impact of human capital development on Nigeria's economic growth between 1970 and 2008 using Johansen co-integration and vector error correction techniques. The results showed that human capital development significantly influenced economic growth, underscoring education and labor force participation as key growth drivers.

Halidu (2020) examined the effects of training and development on workers' productivity using evidence from TETFund-sponsored academic staff development programs. The results demonstrated that training initiatives substantially improved employees' technical competence and workplace performance, affirming the importance of structured human capital investment.

2.4 Research Gaps

Existing studies on human capital and economic performance in Nigeria (Okoye et al., 2018; Adebayo & Olaniyi, 2023; Adaeagbo et al., 2024) have largely concentrated on aggregate economic growth, with limited attention to the manufacturing sector. Few, such as Anumudu (2020) and Udu & Ewans (2021), examined manufacturing productivity but within restricted state-level scopes, leaving national dynamics underexplored. Moreover, most analyses employed data ending before 2016, neglecting recent policy and demographic shifts influencing human capital formation. Additionally, none incorporated minimum wage as a proxy for income-driven investment in education and health. This study therefore fills these gaps by providing an updated, national-level assessment of how human capital development shapes manufacturing output in Nigeria.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research design adopted in this study is ex-post facto, allowing the researchers to rely on historical time series data. This design was chosen to investigate the impact of human capital development on manufacturing sector productivity in Nigeria. The study employed a simple production function, Y = f(L, K), to analyze how the independent variables influence the dependent variable over the specified period. The study relied on secondary data sources, with key variables obtained from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Statistical Bulletin and the World Bank Development Index (WDI) for the period 1980-2023. These sources provided comprehensive and reliable data necessary for the analysis.

3.2 Model Specification

In the study, the list of policy variables is expanded to include, population growth rate, primary, enrolments, Government expenditure on education, Government expenditure on health and life expectancy. the model is therefore stated as follows:

$$MANQ = F(\text{ ENROL}, GEXE, GEXH, LEXP, POPGR) \quad \text{.....(1)}$$

where

MANQ= Manufacturing value added (As a proxy for manufacturing sector growth)
ENROL = Primary enrolments
GEXE = Government expenditure on education
GEXH = Government expenditure on health
LEXP = Life expectancy
POPGR = POPULATION GROWTH RATE

The econometric form of the model above is stated as:

$$MANQ_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ENROL_t + \beta_2 GEXE_t + \beta_3 GEXH_t + \beta_4 LEXP_t + \beta_5 POPGR_t + \mu_t \quad \text{...(2)}$$

μ_t = stochastic error term

β_0 , α_0 = constant intercept

$\beta_1, \alpha_1 - \beta_5, \alpha_5$ = co-efficient of the associated variables

However, the dependent and some of the independent variables were not in the same unit, hence, they were logged so as to bring the data to the same level. Thus, the above equation can be re-specified as;

$$LOG(MANQ)_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LOG(ENROL)_t + \beta_2 \text{GEXE}_t + \beta_3 \text{LOG(GEXH)}_t + \beta_4 \text{ LOG}(LEXP)_t + \beta_5 POPGR_t + \varepsilon_t \quad \ldots\ldots\ldots (3)$$

where

$LOG(MANQ)_t$ = natural log of manufacturing output

ε_t = stochastic error term

Method of result evaluation: This study employed the Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) test to examine the stationarity properties of the variables, while the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) estimation technique was used for parameter estimation. To assess the validity and robustness of the estimated parameters, three evaluation criteria were applied: economic or a priori, statistical, and econometric criteria. The economic or a priori criterion, grounded in economic theory, evaluates whether the estimated coefficients exhibit the expected signs and magnitudes consistent with theoretical postulates. In line with theoretical expectations, the coefficients of life expectancy (β_1), government expenditure on health (β_2), and government expenditure on education (β_3) are all expected to be positive:

4. Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

The Descriptive Statistics

	MANQ	ENROL	GEXE	GEXH	LEXP	POPGR
Mean	3255.172	35.24210	134.6614	82.28607	48.57290	123.3687
Median	1058.170	41.67313	61.37000	28.89500	46.67150	120.5905
Maximum	16781.06	43.83000	465.3000	296.4400	54.23000	173.9380
Minimum	26.89000	13.60000	0.160000	0.040000	45.63500	68.44700
Std. Dev.	4262.954	8.600384	156.8444	101.2903	3.102034	36.36469
Skewness	1.355773	-0.792356	0.769635	0.853379	0.620612	0.070089
Kurtosis	3.934074	2.360151	1.947658	2.098313	1.716651	1.581089
Jarque-Bera	14.39372	5.111258	6.084364	6.520605	5.578340	3.557679
Probability	0.000749	0.077643	0.047731	0.038377	0.061472	0.168834
Sum	136717.2	1480.168	5655.780	3456.015	2040.062	5181.486
Sum Sq. Dev.	7.45E+08	3032.631	1008607.	420648.9	394.5272	54218.03
Observations	44	44	44	44	44	44

Source: *Author's computation from the E-views result, 2025*

From the result table, the descriptive statistics indicates that all the variables have a positive mean values with 44 observations. The standard deviation showed that the highest standard deviation is recorded by the MANQ while the least standard deviation is recorded by LEXP. The skewness statistics from the table revealed that five of the variables are positively skewed while one variable is skewed negatively; the kurtosis coefficients showed that one of the variables are leptokurtic, suggesting that the distributions are high relative to normal distribution; two variables are mesokurtic, indicating not too flat topped, while two variables are platikurtic, suggesting a flat topped The probabilities of Jarque-Bera test of normality for the variables indicates that five of the variables have values less than 5% level of significance. This implies that the variables are not normally distributed.

Correlation

The relationships among the studied variables depicted in the model were tested using correlation matrix and the result presented below:

Correlation matrix

	MANQ	ENROL	GEXE	GEXH	LEXP	POPGR
MANQ	1.000000	0.603082	0.933424	0.949510	0.926543	0.860931
ENROL	0.603082	1.000000	0.688139	0.661806	0.707837	0.873777
GEXE	0.933424	0.688139	1.000000	0.982891	0.971283	0.924494
GEXH	0.949510	0.661806	0.982891	1.000000	0.966699	0.911620
LEXP	0.926543	0.707837	0.971283	0.966699	1.000000	0.939709
POPGR	0.860931	0.873777	0.924494	0.911620	0.939709	1.000000

Source: *Author's computation from the Eviews result, 2025*

The correlation result shows that all of the variables have positive values ranging from 60%, 93%, 94%, 92% and 86% respectively. This result suggests all the variables under consideration are positively related to the manufacturing sector growth.

The results of the Augmented Dickey Fuller (ADF) test obtained are as follow:

The Unit root test

Variable	**Level difference**	**Probability**	**Order of integration**	**First difference**	**probability**	**Order of integration**
MANQ	9.013745	1.0000		-5.443476	0.0001	I(1)
ENROL	-2.948273	0.0485		-4.988289	0.0002	I(1)
GEXE	-0.044625	0.9486		-5.388085	0.0001	I(1)
GEXH	-0.442375	0.8920		-6.555931	0.0000	I(1)
LEXP	-2.515661	0.1210		-3.183597	0.0301	I(1)
POPGR	-1.274241	0.6318		-12.10859	0.0000	I(1)

Source: *Author's computation from the Eviews result, 2025*

From the table above the results shows that none of the variables are stationary at level, while six of the variables are integrated of order one at 5% level of significance in ADF test procedure.

The long run relationships between HUMANCAP manufacturing Sector Productivity

Dependent Variable: LOG(MANQ)				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	54.36710	10.06670	5.400689	0.0000
LOG(ENROL)	-0.144374	0.244364	-0.590816	0.5583
GEXE	0.000469	0.000774	0.605965	0.5483
LOG(GEXH)	0.087547	0.051820	1.689442	0.0998
LOG(LEXP)	-14.51647	2.701161	-5.374157	0.0000
POPGR	0.072207	0.007618	9.478191	0.0000
R-squared	0.993422	Mean dependent var		6.690898
Adjusted R-squared	0.992508	S.D. dependent var		2.084653
S.E. of regression	0.180438	Akaike info criterion		-0.455293
Sum squared resid	1.172087	Schwarz criterion		-0.207054
Log likelihood	15.56115	Hannan-Quinn criter.		-0.364303
F-statistic	1087.321	Durbin-Watson stat		1.577709
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000000			

Source: *Author's computation from the Eviews result, 2025*

From the HUMANCAP equation, the long-run elasticity of the independent variables contributing to manufacturing output growth shows that the coefficient of LOG (Enrol) was negative but signed statistically not significant while LOG (GEXE) (government expenditure on health) indicated a positive sign but statistically not significant. Also, Government expenditure on Education signed positive but statistically not significant. It shows that the variable impacted positively on the manufacturing output growth in the long run. Also, the coefficient of the population growth variable, POPGR indicated a positive sign and it is statistically significant at 5% level. This implies that population growth rate affected the manufacturing sector growth positively during the period under study. On the other hand, the coefficient of the life expectancy variable, LOG(LEXP) indicated a negative sign and significant statistically. This result showed that life expectancy contributed negatively to the manufacturing sector growth during the period under consideration.

Statistically, the coefficient of determination R-squared is 0.993422 while the adjusted R-squared 0.992508. This implies that the independent variables explain the dependent variable to the tune 99%. The t-statistic of the variables under consideration show that lag values of three variables, exhibited values that is greater than positive two and less than the negative two. This shows that the variables under consideration are statistically significant. The F-statistic shows that the overall estimate of the regression has a good fit and is statistically significant. Also, the Durbin Watson (DW) statistics DW = 1.577709 which is greater than the R^2 shows that the overall regression is statistically significant. Thus, the result indicates no serial auto correlation among the variables under consideration.

The diagnostic test

To ensure the goodness of fit of the model, diagnostic test are conducted. Diagnostic tests examine the model for serial correlation, functional form, non-normality and heteroscedasticity.

Serial correlation tests

Breusch-Godfrey Serial Correlation LM Test:			
F-statistic	1.765850	Prob. F(2,34)	0.1864
Obs*R-squared	3.952162	Prob. Chi-Square(2)	0.1386

Source: *Author's computation from the Eviews result, 2025*

The serial correlation test result obtained shows that the null hypotheses of a serial correlation cannot be rejected and the corresponding probability values of the F-statistics are statistically insignificant at 5% level. Thus we conclude that there is no serial correlation among the variables under consideration.

The Heteroskedasticity Test

Heteroskedasticity Test: Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey

F-statistic	0.437685	Prob. F(5,36)	0.8192
Obs*R-squared	2.406849	Prob. Chi-Square(5)	0.7905
Scaled explained SS	2.910677	Prob. Chi-Square(5)	0.7138

Source: *Author's computation from the Eviews result*

Ho: homoscedasticity
H_1: heteroscedasticity
Probabilities > 0.05 accept the null hypothesis
Probabilities < 0.05 reject the null hypothesis

From the result, the probability of Chi-Square (5) is 0.8192 and this is greater than 0.05 at 5% significant level and therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies and therefore confirm the absence of heteroscedasticity in the model. That is the error terms are homoscedastic i.e., they have constant variance in repeated sampling.

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings from the HUMANCAP model provide nuanced evidence on the nexus between human capital development and manufacturing output in Nigeria. The negative and statistically insignificant coefficient for primary school enrollment aligns with Jones and Smith (2023), indicating that the foundational education system does not adequately equip the workforce with the skills required for industrial production. This suggests persistent structural gaps between basic education outcomes and manufacturing sector demands.

Government expenditures on health and education exhibit positive but statistically insignificant effects, consistent with Patel and Nguyen (2024). Although these variables theoretically enhance human capacity, the results imply that spending in these sectors has not been efficiently translated into productivity gains within manufacturing. This may reflect weak institutional linkages between public investment, skill formation, and industrial performance.

Conversely, population growth demonstrates a positive and statistically significant relationship with manufacturing output, underscoring its dual role in expanding labor supply and market demand. However, life expectancy exerts a negative and significant influence, echoing Bloom, Canning, and Sevilla (2003), which may indicate demographic burdens associated

with aging or non-productive segments of the population.

The high R-squared (0.993) and adjusted R-squared (0.992) values confirm that the explanatory variables collectively account for most of the variation in manufacturing output. The Durbin–Watson statistic (1.58) further affirms the absence of serial correlation, validating the model's robustness. In sum, the results reveal that while population dynamics remain pivotal to manufacturing growth, the weak and insignificant effects of health and education expenditures highlight inefficiencies in human capital investment. Strengthening policy alignment between education, health, and industrial strategies is thus imperative to transform human capital into a catalyst for sustained manufacturing output in Nigeria.

6. Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

The results from the HUMANCAP model reveal mixed dynamics in the relationship between human capital development and manufacturing output in Nigeria. Primary school enrollment exhibited a negative and statistically insignificant coefficient, indicating that basic education has not translated into measurable gains in manufacturing output. Government expenditures on health and education both recorded positive but statistically insignificant coefficients, suggesting that while public investments in these sectors may enhance human capacity, their effects on manufacturing performance remain weak.

Population growth rate displayed a positive and statistically significant coefficient at the 5% level, confirming its vital role in expanding the labor force and stimulating demand within the manufacturing sector. Conversely, life expectancy showed a negative and statistically significant relationship with manufacturing output, implying that demographic pressures associated with dependency or aging may constrain productivity.

Overall, the findings indicate that population growth serves as a key driver of manufacturing output in Nigeria, whereas inefficiencies in education, health investment, and demographic composition limit the broader impact of human capital development on the sector's performance.

6.1 Conclusion

The study examined the nexus between human capital development and manufacturing output in Nigeria using the HUMANCAP model, yielding insightful results. Population growth rate emerged as a significant driver of manufacturing output, reflecting its dual role in expanding the labor force and stimulating demand. In contrast, life expectancy exerted a significant negative influence, suggesting demographic pressures that may hinder productivity. Primary school enrollment and government expenditures on health and education, though positive in sign, were statistically insignificant, highlighting inefficiencies in human capital investment and policy implementation.

To strengthen manufacturing output, Nigeria must channel human capital development more effectively through improved education quality, targeted health interventions, and population management strategies that ensure a productive workforce. Addressing the structural disconnect between educational outcomes and industrial needs is crucial, as is enhancing institutional efficiency in public spending. Furthermore, fostering technological innovation, upgrading infrastructure, and maintaining sound macroeconomic policies will complement human capital development efforts. Collectively, these measures can transform Nigeria's manufacturing sector into a resilient, productivity-driven engine for sustainable economic growth.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings from the HUMANCAP equation, here are some recommendations to enhance manufacturing output growth:

Focus on Population Growth Management: Since population growth rate positively impacts manufacturing output, policies that support sustainable population growth could be beneficial. This includes improving healthcare, family planning, and education to ensure a healthy and productive workforce.

Enhance Health and Education Expenditure: Although the coefficients for government expenditure on health and education were not statistically significant, they were positive. This suggests potential benefits from increased investment in these areas. Improving the quality and accessibility of healthcare and education can lead to a more

skilled and healthier workforce, indirectly boosting manufacturing output.

Re-evaluate Primary School Enrollment Strategies: The negative coefficient for primary school enrollment suggests that current strategies might not be effective. It may be necessary to reassess and improve the quality of primary education, ensuring that it equips students with relevant skills that can contribute to the manufacturing sector in the long run.

Address Negative Impact of Life Expectancy: The negative impact of life expectancy on manufacturing output is concerning. This could indicate issues such as an aging workforce or inadequate healthcare for the elderly. Policies aimed at improving the health and productivity of older workers, as well as ensuring a smooth transition for younger workers into the manufacturing sector, could mitigate this negative impact.

Promote Technological Advancements and Innovation: Investing in technology and innovation can help offset some of the negative impacts identified. Encouraging research and development, as well as the adoption of new technologies in manufacturing, can enhance productivity and growth.

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Gender Discrimination and Difficulties faced by Women in Workplace in South West Nigeria

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Abstract. This study explores gender discrimination and difficulties faced by women in the workplace in South-West Nigeria, motivated by the pressing issue of women's limited participation and progress in the labor market. The research aimed to investigate the challenges women face, the role of company culture in perpetuating discrimination, and the impact of technological revolution on promoting equal opportunities. A descriptive research survey design was employed, with a sample of 1,800 participants from six polytechnics. The results showed that women face significant difficulties, including micro-aggressions, subtle discrimination, and unequal treatment. Company culture was found to perpetuate discrimination, with high agreement rates on issues like discouraging challenges to discriminatory practices and perpetuating gender stereotypes. However, the technological revolution was found to promote equal opportunities, fairness, and inclusivity. The study concludes that stakeholders should invest in digital literacy programs and promote inclusive tech policies to bridge the gender gap in the workplace. This study's findings have implications for policymakers, organizations, and individuals seeking to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace. The study's innovative approach highlights the potential of technology to drive positive change in the workplace.

Keywords: Workplace inequality, female empowerment, organizational culture, technological inclusion.

1. Introduction

Gender discrimination in the workplace is a significant issue in South-West Nigeria, where cultural, socio-economic, and institutional factors deeply influence the experiences of women. Despite advancements in education and legal frameworks promoting gender equality, many women continue to face systemic discrimination. Nigerian society is largely patriarchal, with traditional norms placing men as the primary breadwinners and relegating women to domestic roles. This cultural backdrop often translates into professional settings, where women are perceived as less capable or less committed to their careers compared to men [1,2].

In the workplace, women in South-West Nigeria encounter various forms of discrimination, including unequal pay, limited opportunities for leadership roles, and pervasive sexual harassment. The gender pay gap is a persistent problem, with women earning less than men for the same roles. Additionally, women are underrepresented in senior management and decision-making positions, which perpetuates gender disparities and limits their career advancement [3]. The intersectionality of gender with factors like ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status further exacerbates these challenges, especially for women from marginalized communities [4].

Beyond these professional barriers, women also struggle with inadequate workplace policies that fail to support their dual roles as employees and caregivers. The lack of sufficient maternity leave, flexible working hours, and childcare support adds to the difficulties faced by women, leading to high levels of stress and burnout. These challenges not only affect women's well-being but also hinder their productivity and career growth [5].

Efforts to address gender discrimination in South-West Nigeria have been made through legal frameworks such as the Nigerian Constitution and the Labor Act, which provide for non-discrimination on the basis of gender. However, the enforcement of these laws is weak, and societal attitudes continue to undermine gender equality initiatives. Cultural

change, along with stronger legal enforcement and institutional support, is essential to create a more inclusive and equitable workplace for women in this region [6,7].

Despite these challenges, there is a growing awareness and advocacy for gender equality in Nigeria. Women's rights organizations, both local and international, are actively working to address these issues by promoting policies that support women's advancement in the workplace and by challenging the societal norms that contribute to gender discrimination. However, achieving meaningful progress will require a sustained and collective effort from all sectors of society [8].

The complexities of gender discrimination in South-West Nigeria are deeply rooted in historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors. Understanding these complexities is crucial for developing effective strategies to combat discrimination and create an environment where women can thrive professionally. Only through a comprehensive and multifaceted approach can the barriers to gender equality be dismantled, paving the way for a more inclusive society [9].

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Gender discrimination in the workplace remains a critical issue in South-West Nigeria, manifesting in various forms such as unequal pay, limited access to leadership roles, and pervasive sexual harassment. Despite legal frameworks promoting gender equality, enforcement is weak, and societal attitudes continue to undermine progress. Women in this region face compounded challenges due to cultural norms, inadequate workplace policies, and intersectional factors like ethnicity and socio-economic status. These barriers not only hinder women's career advancement but also affect their overall well-being and productivity. Addressing these systemic issues is crucial for achieving gender equality in the workplace.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study's broad objective was to explore gender discrimination and difficulties faced by women in workplace in south-west Nigeria, while specific objectives are to:

- investigate the prevalence and forms of gender discrimination experienced by women in the workplace in South-West Nigeria;
- analyze the socio-cultural and institutional factors that contribute to gender disparities in employment and career progression in the region; and
- assess the effectiveness of existing policies and workplace practices in addressing gender discrimination and propose recommendations for fostering a more inclusive and equitable work environment for women in South-West Nigeria.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- What are the specific forms of gender discrimination that women encounter in the workplace in South-West Nigeria?
- How do socio-cultural and institutional factors contribute to the persistence of gender inequality in the workplace in this region?
- How effective are current workplace policies and practices in addressing gender discrimination, and what improvements can be made to promote gender equality in the workplace?

2. Literature Review

Literature relating to different concepts of women unemployment, gender discrimination and technological revolution will be adequately reviewed for the proper understanding of the subject under study.

2.1 Gender Discrimination in Nigeria

The Nigerian state attained independence in 1960 and republic status in 1963. People from many cultures, political and religious views make up the state, which is heterogeneous. Even though the Nigerian state's constitution is secular, the workplace environment does not reflect this, as workers, particularly women, frequently face discrimination because of their gender, their religion, or the patrilineal nature of the government. The employee's appointment or employment into positions of leadership or responsibility in any organization is hampered by gender discrimination. Every employee has potential and possesses specific talents, but they typically need a favorable work environment in order to demonstrate their leadership endowment and perform at their best.

The deliberate deprivation of an individual's rights (political, social, family, and economic) that may have made them positively contribute to the growth of the organization and the community at large is referred to as gender discrimination. In this context, gender discrimination is viewed as a phenomenon that has detrimental effects on the growth of companies and individuals, whether it exists in a public or private entity [10].

The Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution recognizes the negative effects of gender discrimination and specifies nondiscrimination and gender equality as the cornerstones of societal advancement. According to Section 42(1) of the same Constitution, a citizen of Nigeria of any community, ethnic group, and place of origin, gender, religion, or political perspective should not be subjected to any kind of discrimination for any reason. The preceding states that discrimination against Nigerian women in any form is prohibited by the constitution of Nigeria. The Nigerian Constitution's text, which expresses a desire to uphold the patriarchal traditions of Nigerian cultures, is the issue, claims.

Additionally, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) adopted a strategic employment policy that includes funding for gender sensitization training in both the public and commercial sectors to address the issue of gender discrimination. Through widespread mobilization, these projects seek to raise public awareness of the value of women's engagement in both the formal and unofficial sectors and to dispel prevailing views and preconceptions about women's labor. However, despite the appointment of women to the position of permanent secretaries (starting in 2000 and in accordance with affirmative action), all of the government's measures at the federal, state, and municipal levels have been ineffective. In Nigeria, the federal civil service is composed primarily of men (75%), with women making up 25% of the workforce and holding less than 14% of executive posts overall, said that despite their larger population and higher educational skills, women are disproportionately employed in lower-status employment than their male counterparts. In an analysis of the causes and effects of gender discrimination against women in business, politics, and social issues, according to one argument, although the Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution guarantees equality and non-discrimination between the sexes, in practice there is a significant and apparent similarity between the law and the practice [11].

The promotion of gender equality of men and women as a strategy for sustainable development, whether in the public or private sector in Nigeria, has been proved by research to not be gender discriminating when it comes to contributing to development in any community. According to NULGE 2019, men make up 65% of the workforce, while women make up 35%. All of them point to widespread gender discrimination, especially against women, in a variety of spheres of life.

2.2 Forms of Discrimination

Gender discrimination at work can take the following forms: direct gender discrimination and indirect gender discrimination.

2.2.1 Direct Gender Discrimination

This becomes relevant when people are unquestionably treated unfairly at work, including through actions like paying employees differentially depending on their gender. Men and women may perform the same job, yet they may receive promotions at different periods. A discriminatory motivation must have been present for the act of discrimination to have occurred, and actions might reveal this motive. Consider a company that consistently hires males from a pool of both male and female applicants. A specific individual must be the target of the crime, and it must be proven that the victim's gender was the cause of the discriminatory behavior. Every job applicant must be treated fairly by the employer, and members of particular groups must not be stereotyped. Unfortunately, this is the situation in legal firms where many principals of law offices would prefer to engage male lawyers than female lawyers because they believe female lawyers are unable to handle the rigors of the profession, which is a misconception, a false generalization. Every employee needs a chance to demonstrate that they are deserving of respect [12].

However, if a company's operations include a lot of manual labor, the employer is not compelled to offer less physically taxing jobs to his staff in order to give women more possibilities to work for him. For instance, if he runs his firm using earthmoving equipment, a woman working there will undoubtedly suffer health-related problems.

2.2.2 Indirect Gender Discrimination

Indirect Gender Discrimination occurs when seemingly neutral policies or practices disproportionately disadvantage a particular gender. Unlike direct discrimination, which is overt and intentional, indirect discrimination is more subtle, often embedded in rules that appear fair but have unequal outcomes. For instance, a policy requiring full-time availability for promotions may disproportionately affect women, who often bear more caregiving responsibilities. Addressing this requires analyzing the practical impact of policies on different genders [13].

When one gender is given preference in specific labor rules, members of that sex cannot be employed under such laws. Instances where a condition or requirement is applied that is unjustifiable regardless of sex and the person to whom it is applied suffers

as a result constitutes indirect discrimination. This occurs when a smaller percentage of people of a given gender can comply with the condition or requirement than members of the other gender. One example of pay discrepancy that places female employees at the receiving end of such an act of pay inequality is the difference in the payment of compensation based on an employee's gender [14].

2.3 Effect of Gender Discrimination on Job Performance

Discrimination is defined by the employee equity Acts 1998–2015 as occurring in a variety of employment- and employment-related contexts. The Acts address hiring, promotion, pay equity, working conditions, education or experience, firing, and all sorts of harassment. They contend that society actively encourages prejudice against women. Women are viewed as second-class in many societies and are not permitted to hold certain positions. Some societies forbid women from inheriting land or engaging in farming, depriving them of a crucial economic entitlement. Women are not permitted to serve as president, head of state, prime minister, or governor, among other positions, in all but a select few nations around the world. For women, this is not good. Women often discriminate against themselves, though. In actuality, women would prefer that men take the reins over their own gender. Perhaps it is in their nature, but women tend to avoid positions of leadership.

In the South West of Nigeria, the study will try to ascertain whether or not hiring practices in various civil or public service positions are gender-based. It will also try to ascertain whether or not promotions within the workplace are based on gender. It is thought that finding the answers to these study questions will help to address some fundamental problems with gender discrimination. The ability of an organization to accomplish its stated aims and fulfill its raison d'être is a key factor in evaluating its overall success. The "degree of accomplishment of tasks that make up an employee's job" is a simple definition of performance. They defined performance as the outcomes or effects of an individual's actions during a specific time period [15]. It entails actions taken to accomplish corporate objectives. Performance also demonstrates how well workers adhere to their job responsibilities. Typically, output is used to gauge performance. In other words, when someone puts a lot of effort into a task but produces little, the effort is high but the performance is low. Additionally, it should be noted that controlling and enhancing employee performance is crucial for accomplishing an organization's overall goals because it directly affects the success and productivity of a business [16].

Performance evaluations, job security, job happiness, training and development, organizational structure, and other factors all affect how well an employee performs. However, a study found that there aren't any elements like intrinsic or extrinsic rewards, clearly specified job descriptions, or a negative effect of gender discrimination on women's employment that influence employee performance. Salary payments are a type of exchange that takes place between employers and workers in exchange for human capital services. Promotions and other non-cash exchanges are possible. According to the rationale presented above, promotions result in an increase in work level; however, women will likely earn fewer promotions due to their lower levels of human capital, which will translate into lower job levels in exchange for the same labor services [17].

Furthermore, it was determined that ensuring equality between different genders and races and organizational justice are both intimately related concepts. Employee selection should be based on personal preferences in order to enhance attitudes and performance [18]. Occupational segregation refers to the categorization and stereotyping of particular professions based on gender. Women are regarded as belonging to particular occupational kinds, for instance.

3. Gender Inequality

Gender inequality refers to the disparities and unequal treatment experienced by individuals based on their gender, often disadvantaging women in various aspects of life. This form of inequality manifests in economic, social, political, and legal domains, deeply embedded in societal norms and practices. For instance, in the workplace, women often face a persistent wage gap, earning less than men for performing the same job roles, a disparity that continues despite similar levels of education and experience. This wage gap is further exacerbated by job segregation, where women are concentrated in lower-paying occupations traditionally deemed as 'female' roles, thereby limiting their economic advancement opportunities [19].

Educational inequality is another significant aspect of gender inequality, where in many regions, girls have less access to quality education compared to boys. This limited access restricts their future opportunities, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and dependence. Additionally, even when girls have access to education, they often encounter gender biases within educational materials and practices that reinforce traditional gender roles, limiting their career aspirations and achievements (Bishu & Alkadry, 2017).

In the political realm, women are underrepresented in leadership and decision-making positions. This underrepresentation not only reflects societal biases but also leads to policies and laws that may not fully address the needs and rights of women. The lack of female representation in politics is often rooted in cultural expectations and systemic barriers that discourage women from pursuing political careers [20]. Furthermore, legal systems in many parts of the world still contain elements of gender bias, either through laws that explicitly discriminate against women or through a lack of protection against gender-based violence. Women often face significant barriers in accessing justice and protection, with laws and cultural practices sometimes prioritizing male authority and interests [21].

The impacts of gender inequality are far-reaching, affecting not only the individual but also the broader society. Economically, gender inequality limits growth and productivity by not fully utilizing the talents and capabilities of all citizens. Socially, it reinforces divisions and contributes to higher levels of conflict and dissatisfaction. Addressing gender inequality requires comprehensive efforts to challenge and change the societal norms, policies, and practices that perpetuate these disparities, promoting equal rights and opportunities for all genders.

3.1 Causes of Gender Inequality

The globe has made progress toward achieving gender equality over time. In many parts of the world, there are greater economic opportunities, better healthcare options, and higher representation of women in politics. But according to the World Economic Forum, it will be another century before complete gender equality is achieved. What causes the gender difference? Some of the factors that contribute to gender disparity are given below:

3.1.1 Uneven access to education

In many African nations, girls and women have never set foot inside a classroom. Women still have less access to education than male do elsewhere in the world. 1 in 4 young women ages 15 to 24 will not complete elementary school. 58% of those who don't finish that basic education belongs to that group. Two thirds of all illiterate persons on earth are female. Girls' futures and the chances they will have are significantly impacted when they receive an education that is below those of guys.

3.1.2 Lack of employment equality

Only six nations in the world grant women the same legal rights to employment as do male. In fact, women in most economies only have 3/4 of the rights that men do. According to studies, creating a more level playing field in the workplace would have a good snowball impact on other sectors that are prone to gender disparity.

3.1.3 Job discrimination

The division of labor is one factor in gender disparity in the workplace. There is an ingrained notion in most countries that men are just more capable of doing particular tasks. Those are typically the jobs with the highest salaries, because of this inequality, women earn less money. Even though they work in the paid employment, women nevertheless bear the majority of the burden for unpaid labor. As a result, they have

3.1.4 Lack of legal protections

Over one billion women lack legal protection against domestic economic or sexual violence, according to research from the World Bank. The ability of women to prosper and live in freedom is significantly impacted by both. The legal prohibition of harassment at work, in the classroom, and in public spaces is also lacking in many nations. Without protection, women frequently have to make choices that limit their aims and sacrifice their aspirations in these risky environments.

3.1.5 Lack of bodily autonomy

Many women worldwide lack control over either their own bodies or having children. They will always be in the hands of mankind. It's frequently incredibly tough to get birth control. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that more than 200 million women who don't want to become pregnant don't use contraception. There are a number of causes for this, including a dearth of choices, restricted access, and cultural and religious opposition. Globally, 40% of pregnancies are unplanned, and while 38% of them end in births, 50% of them do result in abortions or having illegitimate children. Often, these women lose their independence as a result of becoming financially dependent on another person or the government.

3.1.6 Poor medical care

In developing nations issues with gender equality, the majority of ladies give birth to their children in substandard circumstances while the male receives all the necessary medical treatment and vaccinations. Women generally receive less high-quality medical care than male, and they have less access to contraception. This is related to other instances of gender inequality, such as the fact that more women live in poverty as a result of a lack of

access to education and employment possibilities. There is a lower likelihood that they can afford quality medical treatment. Furthermore, there hasn't been as much study on illnesses like autoimmune disorders and chronic pain syndromes, which are more common in women than men and affect them more severely. The gender difference in the standard of healthcare is widened by the fact that many women also encounter prejudice and exclusion from their physicians.

3.2 Difficulties faced by women in the workplace

Gender discrimination in the workplace is a global issue that manifests in various forms, from wage disparities to limited career advancement opportunities. In South West Nigeria, these challenges are compounded by deep-rooted cultural and societal norms that perpetuate gender inequality. Despite legal frameworks aimed at protecting women, the implementation of these laws is often inconsistent, leaving many women vulnerable to discrimination. This study explores the difficulties faced by women in the workplace in South West Nigeria, examining the cultural, institutional, and structural barriers that hinder their professional growth and participation in the workforce. By understanding these challenges, the research aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender equality and offer recommendations for creating a more inclusive work environment for women in the region.

3.2.1 Gender pays gap

The gender pays gap remains one of the most pervasive issues faced by women in the workplace. Despite equivalent qualifications and experience, women are often paid less than men. This disparity is attributed to several factors, including discriminatory pay practices, the undervaluation of jobs traditionally held by women, and the lack of transparency in salary structures. In Nigeria, the gender pay gap is further exacerbated by cultural norms that assign men as the primary breadwinners, thus justifying higher pay for men [22]. A study by Rosette et al., [23] highlight that even in sectors where women are well-represented, such as education and healthcare, they still earn less than their male counterparts. This persistent wage gap not only reflects deep-seated gender biases but also limits women's financial independence and economic security.

3.2.2 Limited Career Advancement Opportunities

Women in the workplace often encounter barriers to career advancement, a phenomenon commonly referred to as the "glass ceiling." This invisible barrier prevents women from rising to leadership positions despite having the necessary qualifications and experience. The glass ceiling is perpetuated by gender stereotypes that suggest women are less capable of handling high-pressure roles or that they prioritize family over career. In Nigerian organizations, women are frequently passed over for promotions in favor of male colleagues, even when they have demonstrated equal or superior competence. Additionally, the lack of female role models and mentors in leadership positions further hampers women's professional growth. Women who do break through the glass ceiling often face additional scrutiny and are held to higher performance standards than their male counterparts, making their career progression even more challenging [24].

3.2.3 Work-Life Balance Challenges

Balancing work and family responsibilities is a significant challenge for many women, particularly in cultures where women are expected to be the primary caregivers. In Nigeria, societal expectations often dictate that women prioritize their roles as mothers and wives over their professional aspirations. This expectation can lead to women opting for part-time work, taking extended career breaks, or even exiting the workforce altogether, thereby limiting their career progression and financial stability. The lack of supportive workplace policies, such as flexible working hours, maternity leave, and childcare facilities, exacerbates the difficulty women face in managing both work and family responsibilities. The strain of juggling these roles can also lead to stress, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction, further hindering women's ability to advance in their careers [25].

3.2.4 Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment in the workplace is a critical issue that affects women's safety, dignity, and well-being. It creates a hostile work environment that can lead to psychological trauma, decreased job satisfaction, and even career abandonment. Despite existing laws against sexual harassment in Nigeria, enforcement is weak, and many incidents go unreported due to fear of retaliation, stigmatization, or disbelief. Sexual harassment is prevalent across various sectors in Nigeria, with women often subjected to inappropriate comments, unwanted advances, and, in some cases, coercion [26]. The culture of silence surrounding sexual harassment is compounded by the lack of effective reporting mechanisms and the stigma attached to victims, which discourages them from speaking out. This issue not only affects the victims but also contributes to a toxic workplace culture that undermines productivity and morale.

3.2.5 Lack of mentorship and support

The absence of mentorship and professional support is another significant challenge faced by women in the workplace. Mentorship is crucial for career development as it provides guidance, support, and opportunities for networking and skill enhancement. However, in many Nigerian organizations, mentorship programs are either non-existent or predominantly male-dominated, leaving women with limited access to these resources. The lack of female mentors in leadership positions means that aspiring female professionals have few role models to emulate [27]. This gap in mentorship and support not only hinders women's career progression but also perpetuates the cycle of gender inequality in the workplace. Mentorship programs tailored to the unique challenges faced by women could play a pivotal role in empowering women and fostering gender diversity in leadership.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study used descriptive research survey design in this project work. The choice of this research design was considered appropriate due advantages of identifying attributes of a large population from a group of individuals. The design is appropriate for the study as the study seeks to examine the impact of technological revolution and gender discrimination on women unemployment opportunities in Polytechnics in south-west Nigeria.

4.2 Population, Sample and Sampling Procedures

All women working in Polytechnics in the south-west geopolitical-zone of Nigeria formed the target population. One-thousand eight-hundred (1800) sampled were taken from six polytechnics. These comprised The Federal Polytechnic Ede, The Federal Polytechnic Ile-Oluji, The Polytechnic Ibadan, Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, Lagos City Polytechnic and Crown Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti. These polytechnics were purposively sampled and simple random sampling procedure was used to select all the participants. This sampling procedure gives each participant equal opportunity of being selected for the study.

4.3 Instrument, Validity and Reliability

The self-designed instrument was used. To ascertain the validity of the instrument used for the study, the questionnaire was subjected to evaluation with regards to its validity. The instrument was given to the experts for vetting. Each item on the questionnaire was critically examined to remove any form of ambiguity that might arise in the course of generating the questions and to determine its relevance to the purpose of the study. This instrument was administered on twenty women working one polytechnic outside the one used in this study. The reliability coefficient from the Cronbach Alpha indicated 0.77 and 0.82, respectively. This indicated that the instrument was reliable for the study.

4.4 Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The data were collected by the researchers in company of four trained research assistants. The Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) was used, while both descriptive and inferential statistics tools of the said package were used to analyse the data generated in the study.

5. Results

Research Question 1: What are the forms of gender discrimination that women encounter in the workplace in South-West Nigeria?

Table 1: Forms of gender discrimination that women encounter in the workplace in South-West Nigeria.

Items	M	S.D	Rank
Women face unequal pay compared to men for the same work.	3.02	0.93	6th
Women encounter barriers in career advancement opportunities	2.98	0.86	8th
Gender bias influences hiring and promotion decisions against women.	2.98	0.88	8th
Women experience workplace harassment and discrimination based on gender.	3.07	0.87	3rd
Balancing work and family responsibilities poses challenges for women.	3.09	0.86	1st
Lack of access to mentorship and networking opportunities hinders women's professional growth	3.05	0.87	5th
Women often face micro-aggressions and subtle forms of discrimination in the workplace.	3.09	0.83	1st
Women's ideas and contributions are sometimes ignored or undervalued in the workplace.	3.06	0.87	4th
Workplace culture and policies may not be inclusive or supportive of women's needs	3.01	0.84	7th
The use of functional technology does not help to improve women ability specifically in working environment.	2.95	0.94	10th
Weighted Mean			3.03

Note: *M represents mean or average, and SD represents standard deviation.*

The result in Table 1 shows the difficulties women face in the workplace. Given the weighted mean score of 3.03, statements with mean values that are equal or greater than the weighted mean score are considered in this result. As shown in Table 1, the respondents ranked two statements as first and they were ‘‘Women often face micro-aggressions and subtle forms of discrimination in the workplace (M = 3.09, SD = 0.83), and ‘‘Balancing work and family responsibilities poses challenges for women (M = 3.09, SD = 0.86). While 31.3% and 53.7% of the respondents respectively strongly agree and agree with the former, 33.0% and 51.6% of the respondents respectively strongly agree and agree with the latter. Ranked third was ‘‘Women experience workplace harassment and discrimination based on gender’’ (M = 3.07, SD = 0.87) and 32.5% and 51.6% of respondents strongly agree and agree respectively with this statement. ‘‘Women's ideas and contributions are sometimes ignored or undervalued in the workplace’’ (M = 3.06, SD = 0.87) was ranked fourth and 31.8% and 51.5% of respondents strongly agree and agree respectively, and Lack of access to mentorship and networking opportunities hinders women's professional growth (M = 3.05, SD = 0.87) with 31.2% of strongly agree and 52.4% agree and was ranked fifth.

As shown in Table 1, from the perspectives of the respondents, the difficulties women face in the workplace were experience of micro-aggressions and subtle forms of discrimination in the workplace, balancing work and family responsibilities, experience of workplace harassment and discrimination based on gender, ideas and contributions being ignored or undervalued in the workplace, and lack of access to mentorship and networking opportunities that hinders professional growth.

In alignment, the experience of women in male-dominated occupations” concluded that women in male-dominated occupations often work in conditions that do not cater for their unique needs because of covert and entrenched gender-biased organisational cultures [28]. However, they opined that organisations can motivate women to remain in male-dominated work settings if they provide the women with tangible physical support and female-focused policies, visible career opportunities, challenges to entice their personal drive for achievement and different ways of recognising their success as gender balanced mentorship is vital for assisting these women to cope and persevere. This study however revealed that technological revolution has made it easier for women to access job opportunities previously dominated by men as a good number of jobs have been digitized and getting support has been made easier via online mentorship programmes that can be assessed from wherever one is in the world.

Research Question 2: How do socio-cultural and institutional factors contribute to the persistence of gender inequality in the workplace in this region?

Table 2: Socio-cultural and institutional factors contribute to the persistence of gender inequality in the workplace in this region in Polytechnics in South-West Nigeria.

Items	M	S.D	Rank
Company culture in south-west Nigeria perpetuates gender stereotypes that put women at a disadvantage.	3.11	0.82	2nd
Women in south-west Nigeria face discrimination in promotion practices due to prevailing company culture.	3.01	0.86	7th
Company culture often marginalizes women's voices and contributions in decision-making processes.	3.00	0.88	8th
Discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards women are tolerated within company culture in south-west Nigeria	3.00	0.82	8th
Women experience unequal treatment compared to their male counterparts within the company culture.	3.07	0.88	4th
Traditional gender roles are reinforced by company culture in south-west Nigeria, limiting women's career advancement opportunities.	3.02	0.84	5th
Gender-based harassment and discrimination are overlooked or minimized within the company culture.	3.02	0.83	5th
Company policies and practices contribute to the perpetuation of discrimination against women in south-west Nigeria.	3.00	0.84	8th
Women are discouraged from challenging discriminatory practices within the company culture in south-west Nigeria.	3.12	0.82	1st
Ministry of Education should Modify internal structures to enable it to promote a policy of gender equality	3.08	0.83	3rd
Weighted Mean			3.04

Note: M represents mean or average, and SD represents standard deviation.

The result in Table 2 shows how company culture affect discrimination against women in Polytechnics in south west Nigeria. Given the weighted mean score of 3.04, statements with mean values that are equal or greater than the weighted mean score are considered in this result. As shown in Table 4.7, the respondents ranked first ‘‘Women are discouraged from challenging discriminatory practices within the company culture in south-west Nigeria with mean of 3.12 and standard deviation of 0.82. Also, 33.3% and 52.1% of the respondents respectively strongly agree and agree with this statement. Ranked second was ‘‘Company culture in south-west Nigeria perpetuates gender stereotypes that put women at a disadvantage’’ (M = 3.11, SD = 0.82) and 33.1% and 51.5% of respondents strongly agree and agree respectively with this statement. ‘‘Ministry of Education should modify internal structures to enable it to promote a policy of gender equality’’ (M = 3.08, SD = 0.83) was ranked third and 30.6% and 55.4% of respondents strongly agree and agree respectively, and Women experience unequal treatment compared to their male counterparts within the company culture (M = 3.07, SD = 0.88) with 33.1% of strongly agree and 49.5% agree which was ranked fourth.

As shown in Table 2, from the perspectives of the respondents, company culture affects discrimination against women in Polytechnics in south west Nigeria in terms of women discouragement from challenging discriminatory practices, company culture in perpetuates gender stereotypes that put women at a disadvantage, the need for the Ministry of Education to modify internal structures to enable it to promote a policy of gender equality, and women experience of unequal treatment compared to their male counterparts.

Majority of respondents agreed that there was gender discrimination in workplace and such discrimination was more pronounced in relation to sexual harassment of women, micro-aggressions and subtle forms of discrimination, workplace policies that favour men than women, stereotypes and biases influence hiring and promotion decisions, and work assignments that are based on gender rather than merit. This aligns with the findings of Shockley et al., [29], which highlighted the impact of ambiguous workplace harassment. Their research revealed that women are more likely to report incidents that are clearly defined as harassment, while more ambiguous cases often go unreported. This reluctance to speak out in more ambiguous situations stems from a fear of being labeled as a liar or losing respect among peers, making it difficult to fully capture the extent of workplace harassment.

The study revealed that discrimination affects women in Polytechnics in south-west Nigeria in terms of their access to education, mobility and freedom restriction, limiting economic empowerment opportunities, confronting barriers in accessing employment opportunities, and experience of gender-based violence. This is consistent with the findings of Soklaridis *et al.,* [30], which indicated that individuals in high-ranking positions within institutions often escape accountability for sexual harassment. This unchecked behavior has a profound impact on victims, affecting not only their well-being but also their work output and academic performance.

Research Question 3: How effective are current workplace policies and practices in addressing gender discrimination, and what improvements can be made to promote gender equality in the workplace?

Table 3: Current workplace policies and practices in addressing gender discrimination, and what improvements can be made to promote gender equality in the workplace

Items	M	S.D	Rank
Technological advancements have made it easier for women to access job opportunities previously dominated by men	3.21	0.66	1st
Flexible work arrangements facilitated by technology (e.g., remote work, flexible hours) have positively impacted women's ability to balance work and personal life responsibilities	3.12	0.68	5th
Online education and training platforms have empowered women to gain skills and knowledge necessary for career advancement.	3.12	0.70	5th
Technology has helped in reducing gender bias in recruitment processes by introducing blind hiring techniques and AI-based selection tools	3.10	0.70	9th
Virtual Collaboration tools have enabled women to participate more actively in team projects, regardless of their geographical location.	3.14	0.69	4th
The availability of online networking platforms has facilitated women's	3.12	0.69	5th

access to professional networks and mentorship opportunities.			
Technology has played a significant role in breaking down traditional gender roles and stereotypes in the workplace.	3.12	0.67	5th
Artificial Intelligence and automation have created new job opportunities that are more inclusive and less biased towards any gender.	3.18	0.68	2nd
Technological innovations have led to increased transparency and accountability in workplace policies, promoting fairness and equity for all employees, regardless of gender.	3.15	0.68	3rd
Requirement to place men more than woman on employment lists in positions of eligibility	2.87	0.91	10th
Weighted Mean			3.11

Note: M represents mean or average, and SD represents standard deviation.

The result in Table 3 shows how technological revolution creates equal opportunities and motivation for increased women participation in workplace process. Given the weighted mean score of 3.11, statements with mean values that are equal or greater than the weighted mean score are considered in this result. As shown in Table 3, the respondents ranked 'Technological advancements have made it easier for women to access job opportunities previously dominated by men'' first with mean of 3.21 and standard deviation of 0.66. Also, 33.4% and 54.8% of the respondents respectively strongly agree and agree with this statement. Ranked second was ''Artificial Intelligence and automation have created new job opportunities that are more inclusive and less biased towards any gender'' (M = 3.18, SD = 0.68) and 31.9% and 55.6% of respondents strongly agree and agree respectively with this statement.

Technological innovations have led to increased transparency and accountability in workplace policies, promoting fairness and equality for all employees, regardless of gender'' (M = 3.15, SD = 0.68) was ranked third and 29.5% and 57.4% of respondents strongly agree and agree respectively. Virtual Collaboration tools have enabled women to participate more actively in team projects, regardless of their geographical location (M = 3.14, SD = 0.67) was ranked fourth and 30.5% and 54.5% of respondents strongly agree and agree respectively. Four statements that were ranked fifth were: Flexible work arrangements facilitated by technology (e.g., remote work, flexible hours) have positively impacted women's ability to balance work and personal life responsibilities (M = 3.12, SD = 0.68) with 27.6% of strongly agree and 58.6% agree; Online education and training platforms have empowered women to gain skills and knowledge necessary for career advancement (M = 3.12, SD = 0.70) with 28.6% of strongly agree and 56.3% agree; The availability of online networking platforms has facilitated women's access to professional networks and mentorship opportunities (M = 3.12, SD = 0.69) with 28.5% of strongly agree and 57.3% agree; and Technology has played a significant role in breaking down traditional gender roles and stereotypes in the workplace (M = 3.12, SD = 0.67) with 28.5% of respondents that were strongly agree while 57.3% also agree with the statement.

As shown in Table 3, from the perspectives of the respondents, technological revolution has created equal opportunities and motivation for increased women participation in workplace process in terms of: making it easier for women to access job opportunities previously dominated by men; creating new job opportunities that are more inclusive and less biased towards any gender; increasing transparency and accountability in workplace policies, promoting fairness and equality for all employees, regardless of gender; enabling women to participate more actively in team projects, regardless of their geographical location; positively impacting women's ability to balance work and personal life responsibilities; empowering women to gain skills and knowledge necessary for career advancement; facilitating women's access to professional networks and mentorship opportunities and in playing a significant role in breaking down traditional gender roles and stereotypes in the workplace.

The discovery on the impact of technological revolution on women employment revealed an increase in job opportunities for women in south-west Nigeria which is in line with the study of Soklaridis *et al.,* [31] who mentioned that women are beginning to take a firm foothold in the industry and show a steady rhythm which will in time outpace their male counterparts in the STEM field as it is happening in every other field of human endeavour. In addition, this study revealed that the impact of technological revolution on

women employment brings about enhanced technological skills acquisition for women to secure employment which is an improvement when compared to Spottswood, *et al*., [32] research that found out that there are pronounced gender differences in the effects of new digital technologies, with a strong variation between countries and industrial sectors.

The digital technologies significantly impact the ways of working in every sector and thereby results in them influencing technologies influence women's participation across all such types of work [33]. This study aligns with this discussion as it reveals that technological revolution has brought about the creation of non-traditional job roles that are more accessible to women, and has also promoted women's participation in the tech workforce.

6. Conclusion

Women in the workplace face various challenges, including micro-aggressions, subtle discrimination, work-family balance issues, harassment, and unequal treatment. These difficulties hinder their professional growth, underscoring the need for supportive policies and inclusive work environments. Company culture in south-west Nigeria's polytechnics perpetuates discrimination against women, discouraging them from challenging unfair practices and reinforcing gender stereotypes. The technological revolution has been instrumental in creating equal opportunities and motivation for increased women participation in the workplace, promoting fairness, inclusivity, and career advancement.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are raised for concerned stakeholders:

- Stakeholders should invest in digital literacy programs that empower women with the necessary skills to leverage technological innovations, enhancing their participation in the workplace.
- Organizations and policymakers should promote inclusive tech policies that foster equal access to opportunities, transparency, and accountability, ultimately bridging the gender gap in the workplace.
- Employers should encourage flexible work arrangements facilitated by technology, such as remote work and flexible hours, to support women in balancing work and personal life responsibilities, thereby enhancing their productivity and job satisfaction.
- Polytechnics stakeholders should promote a culture of inclusivity by fostering a culture that encourages equality, respect, and inclusivity, allowing women to feel empowered to challenge discriminatory practices.
- The Ministry of Education should modify its internal structures to promote and enforce policies of gender equality, ensuring that women are treated fairly and have equal opportunities.
- Support mechanisms for women should be established for those who experience discrimination, providing them with resources and platforms to report incidents and seek redress.
- Organisations should develop and enforce policies to prevent workplace harassment and discrimination, providing a safe and inclusive environment for women to thrive

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Principals' Perception of Staff Discipline on Personnel Management in Senior Secondary Schools in Borno State, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study examined the principals' perception of staff discipline on personnel management in Senior Secondary Schools in Borno State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to examine the extent of discipline among staff and it influence on personnel management in Borno State, Nigeria. This study adopts a descriptive survey research design. It also helps to describe, explain and interpret the current status of phenomena without manipulating any variables. The population of the study comprised all principals in public senior secondary schools within Borno State. As of the 2025 academic session, the Borno State has 509 public senior secondary schools, with an estimated population of 509 principals comprises of both male and female. A total of 226 respondents were selected as the sample size for the study using a multi-stage sampling technique. The sample was in line with kreciej and Morgan (1970). The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled: "Principals' Discipline Strategy on Teachers Job Performance (PDSTJP)". The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was computed, yielding a value of 0.83, which indicates a high level of internal consistency of the instrument. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviations. The finding indicates that 69% of the principals believed that staff in Senior secondary schools in Borno State, Nigeria were disciplined. The finding further revealed that 93% of the respondents believed that discipline has a significant influence on personnel management in Senior Secondary Schools in Borno State, Nigeria. Based on thr finding of the study, it was concluded that discipline is an important tool for personnel management and organisational growth in Senior Secondary Schools, Borno State, Nigeria. It can be deduced that effective discipline in sn organization lead to effective management of personnel.

Keywords: Principals' Perception, Personnel Management, Staff Discipline

1. Introduction

Discipline is a fundamental element in the management of human resources within any educational institution. In the school system, discipline refers to the observance of rules, norms and standards of behaviour by both Staff and students, which ensures order, responsibility and accountability. Effective human resource management (HRM) in schools depends mainly on the ability of the school management to maintain discipline among personnel such as principals, vice principals, teachers and administrative Staff. When discipline is enforced appropriately, it enhances productivity, commitment and professional conduct among school personnel, which are critical to achieving educational objectives (John, 2024).

The principal, who is the human resource manager in the schools, is saddled with a wide range of activities such as allocation of responsibilities, sharing of resources, managing students' records, discipline of both staff and students, capacity building, staff development, performance evaluation and motivation (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). A Principal's Discipline Strategy refers to the structured approach a school leader uses to promote

positive behaviour, prevent misconduct and handle disciplinary issues among students and Staff. An effective strategy is proactive, consistent, fair and aligned with school policies and educational goals. However, the presence or absence of discipline among Staff significantly influences these processes. Indiscipline in the workplace can result in lateness, absenteeism, poor job performance, insubordination and conflict, all of which undermine the efficiency of the educational system. Discipline is a tool for organizational productivity. It fosters adherence to school policies, promotes professional ethics and contributes to a stable and productive working environment (Okumbe, 2001).

In the context of Nigeria, especially in Borno State, the issue of indiscipline in senior secondary schools has gained attention due to the numerous challenges affecting educational operation and management. Borno State, being the capital of Borno State, has witnessed the adverse effects of insecurity, displacement and infrastructural decay, all of which have complicated the administration of schools and affected staff discipline. As noted by Olatunji and Akinlolu (2022), poor supervision, inadequate enforcement of rules and lack of incentives for teachers contribute to the erosion of indiscipline in public schools.

The researcher has observed that many senior secondary schools within the Borno State faced such as issues of teacher absenteeism, lateness to school, poor work attitude and non-compliance with administrative directives have become commonplace. These behaviours reflect deeper issues of indiscipline that pose serious threats to effective human resources management. Despite existing policies and guidelines on teacher conduct and performance, many schools struggle to enforce disciplinary measures, often due to inadequate supervisory mechanisms or a lack of institutional will. These may be as results of ineffective discipline strategy to curtail the menace in most of the secondary schools in Borno State, Borno State. The researchers also observed that, the inability to maintain discipline among Staff may negatively affects planning, instructional delivery and general school administration. Perhaps it could also reduce the morale of committed teachers and undermines efforts to promote quality education. It is against this background that the researchers investigated the principals' perception of staff discipline on personnel job performance in Senior Secondary Schools in Borno State, Nigeria.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to examine:

- the extent of indiscipline among Staff in senior secondary schools in Borno State, Nigeria.
- the influence of staff discipline on personnel management in Borno State, Nigeria.

1.2 Research Questions

This study answered the following research questions:

- What is the level of indiscipline Staff in senior secondary schools in Borno State, Nigeria?
- What are the influence of staff discipline on personnel management in Borno State, Nigeria?

2. Literature Review

Discipline in educational institutions refers to the system of rules, codes of conduct and behavioural standards designed to maintain order and ensure the effective functioning of the school. It involves both proactive strategies for guiding behaviour and corrective measures for addressing misconduct. In the school environment, discipline is essential not only for students' behaviour but also for maintaining professional ethics among teaching staff, students, and non-teaching Staff (Edem, 2020).

According to Yusuf and Adigun (2022), discipline among school personnel encompasses punctuality, compliance with school regulations, proper communication, and responsibility in the discharge of duties. It is an indicator of professionalism and contributes to the overall effectiveness of school administration. Where discipline is maintained, schools are likely to function more efficiently and achieve their goals.
In the Nigerian context, school administrators face challenges such as teacher absenteeism, late coming, non-compliance with directives, and neglect of duty, all of which are rooted in poor staff discipline (Eze, 2021). Effective disciplinary measures must therefore be embedded in the school's human resource practices to ensure accountability and performance.

Human resources management (HRM) in schools refers to the strategic planning and administration of tasks related to recruitment, staff development, motivation, performance

management, and employee relations. In the education sector, HRM ensures that schools are staffed with competent personnel who can deliver quality instruction and support services (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). For HRM to be effective, it must align with the values of discipline, responsibility and integrity. School heads are expected to manage both teaching and non-teaching Staff by applying principles of fairness, accountability and professional growth. HRM also involves mechanisms for staff appraisal, capacity building and conflict resolution (Okoye & Ogbonnaya, 2022).

A study conducted by Abubakar and Lawan (2022) explored the influence of staff discipline on human resources management in public senior secondary schools in Borno State, Borno State. The researchers adopted a descriptive survey design and used a sample of 210 teaching and 90 non-teaching staff drawn from 15 senior secondary schools using stratified random sampling. The instrument used for this study was a structured questionnaire titled "Staff Discipline and Human Resource Management Questionnaire (SDHRMQ)". Data were analysed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). The study revealed a significant positive relationship between staff discipline and effective human resources management practices. The study concluded that staff indiscipline in the form of absenteeism and lateness undermines HR planning and affects overall productivity.

Yusuf and Hassan (2021) investigated the impact of disciplinary measures on the management of human resources in senior secondary schools in Borno State. The study involved a sample of 300 staff members (comprising both teaching and administrative personnel) selected using simple random sampling. The researchers employed a questionnaire titled the Discipline and School Management Questionnaire (DSMQ) for data collection. Analysis was conducted using multiple regression analysis. The results show that effective disciplinary policies significantly influenced staff performance, record-keeping accuracy and employee retention. The study recommended that consistent enforcement of rules enhances accountability and reduces cases of professional misconduct.

Mohammed and Tanko (2023) examined the role of discipline in shaping human resource functions in secondary schools within Maiduguri metropolis. The population of 1986 was used for the study, out of which 250 respondents were sampled, comprising principals, teachers, and administrative Staff. The researchers applied a mixed-method approach that included questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The instrument, Human Resource and Discipline Interface Scale (HRDIS), was validated through expert review. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation, as well as chi-square tests. The findings showed that schools with well-established disciplinary supporting structures experienced better coordination of human resource functions such as workload distribution, performance appraisal and grievance management. The study further revealed that improved teamwork can reduce interpersonal conflicts in schools with strict but fair discipline systems.

Bukar and Ibrahim (2020) conducted a study on the relationship between staff discipline and administrative effectiveness in Maiduguri's public secondary schools. The study adopted a correlational survey design involving 180 teachers and 60 non-teaching staff. The data collection instrument, Staff Discipline and Administrative Efficiency Questionnaire (SDAEQ), was administered and analyzed using Spearman's rank correlation. The findings of the study revealed a strong positive correlation between Staff disciplinary compliance and the efficiency of HR management processes, particularly in areas like time management, staff development, and conflict resolution.

The review of literature has established that discipline is a cornerstone of effective human resources management in secondary schools. It influences key human resource activities such as supervision, performance appraisal, staff motivation and professional development. Several challenges affect the enforcement of discipline in schools, including insecurity, poor working conditions and administrative limitations, particularly in conflict-affected areas like Maiduguri. However, strategic interventions such as clear codes of conduct, capacity building, and participatory leadership can ameliorate the situation. Research has validated the strong correlation between discipline and human resource management findings, emphasizing the need for structured and context-sensitive disciplinary approaches in schools.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design. Surveys allow for gathering data from vast populations. They are also well-suited for capturing demographic information about the sample's composition (McIntyre, 1999). Surveys are inclusive in terms of the sorts and amount of variables that may be researched, involve little cost to construct and run, and are reasonably simple to generalize from (Bell, 1996). Surveys can also provide information about attitudes that are difficult to quantify using observational approaches (McIntyre, 1999). However, surveys only provide estimates for the actual population, not exact measurements (Salant & Dillman, 1994). The design was relevant because it allows the researcher to systematically collect and analyse data from a sample population. It also helps to describe, explain and interpret the current status of phenomena without manipulating any variables. Specifically, the study examined the principals' perception of staff discipline on personnel job performance in Senior Secondary Schools in Borno State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised all teaching and non-teaching Staff in public senior secondary schools within Borno State. As of the 2025 academic session, the Borno State has 509 public senior secondary schools, with an estimated population of 509 principals comprises of both male and female. A total of 226 respondents were selected as the sample size for the study using a multi-stage sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled: "Principals' Discipline Strategy on Teachers Job Performance (PDSTJP)". The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A: Sought demographic information of respondents (gender, years of experience, job category). Section B: Contained 20 items designed to elicit responses on various aspects of discipline. Responses were based on a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was computed, yielding a value of 0.83, which indicates a high level of internal consistency of the instrument. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviations.

4. Data Analysis and Results

What is the extent of discipline among Staff in senior secondary schools in Borno State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Extent of Discipline among Staff in Senior Secondary Schools in Borno State, Nigeria

Items	Agree (Freq)	Agree (%)	Not Agree (Freq)	Not Agree (%)	Mean	SD	Remarks
Teaching staff in my school report to duty on time.	106	47%	120	53%	2.8274	1.40518	Negative
Staff carry out their responsibilities diligently without frequent reminders.	45	19%	181	81%	2.2434	1.07830	Negative
Staff comply with rules and regulations guiding school operations.	106	47%	120	53%	2.8938	1.43519	Negative
Cases of absenteeism without valid reasons are rare among staff.	56	25%	170	75%	2.3186	1.15674	Negative
Staff members demonstrate ethical behavior in carrying out their duties	185	82%	41	18%	3.7699	0.89947	Positive
Disciplined staff are easier to supervise and require less follow-up.	206	91%	20	09%	4.0885	0.78381	Positive
Staff discipline enhances the accuracy of performance appraisal outcomes.	211	92%	15	08%	4.0221	0.74503	Positive
Regular attendance and punctuality contribute positively to staff evaluations.	196	87%	30	13%	3.8673	0.95689	Positive
Disciplined employees are more likely to benefit from professional development opportunities.	226	100%	00	00%	4.5310	0.50015	Positive
A disciplined workforce improves overall school human resource management efficiency.	226	100%	00	00%	4.2655	0.44257	Positive
GRAND TOTAL	1563	69%	697	31%	3.48275	0.94033	

Table 1 indicates that 69% of the principals believed that staff has discipline while 31% of the respondents disagree with the finding in Senior secondary schools in Borno State, Nigeria. This implies that majority of the respondents (principals) has positive perception on staff discipline in Senior secondary schools in Borno State, Nigeria.

What are the influence of staff discipline on personnel management in senior secondary schools, Borno State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Influence of Staff Discipline on Personnel Management in Senior Secondary Schools, Borno State, Nigeria

Variable	Agree (Freq)	Agree (%)	Not Agree (Freq)	Not Agree (%)	Mean	SD	Remarks
Lack of support from higher authorities makes it difficult to enforce discipline.	221	98%	05	02%	4.3982	0.61159	Positive
Staff unions often interfere with disciplinary actions taken by school management.	216	96%	10	04%	4.2655	0.57376	Positive
Fear of conflict or retaliation discourages school heads from taking disciplinary measures.	196	87%	30	13%	3.9336	0.99779	Positive
Some disciplinary procedures are time-consuming and bureaucratic.	196	87%	30	13%	4.0708	0.99970	Positive
Personal relationships between staff and administrators affect enforcement of rules.	211	94%	15	06%	4.1770	0.90165	Positive
Regular in-service training on discipline should be organized for staff.	205	91%	21	09%	4.1681	0.83695	Positive
Clear and consistent disciplinary policies should be established and communicated.	211	94%	15	06%	4.1770	0.73913	Positive
Rewarding disciplined behavior can motivate others to comply with rules.	211	94%	15	06%	4.2478	0.76630	Positive
School leaders should lead by example in maintaining discipline.	216	96%	10	04%	4.3319	0.69956	Positive
Regular staff meetings can be used to address behavioral issues and promote accountability.	216	96%	10	04%	4.1770	0.64263	Positive
GRAND TOTAL	2099	93%	161	07%	4.18869	0.77670	Positive

Table 2 indicates that 93% of the respondents believed that discipline has a significant influence on personnel management in Senior Secondary Schools in Borno State, Nigeria. In the other hand 07% of the respondents disagree and conclude that discipline has no influence on personnel management. This implies that majority of the respondents believed that staff disciplines significantly influence the management of personnel in Senior Secondary Schools in Borno State, Nigeria.

5. Discussion

The finding of the study in respect to the first research question which on what is the extent of discipline among Staff in senior secondary schools in Borno State, Nigeria. This shows that majority of the respondents (principals) has positive perception on staff discipline in Senior secondary schools in Borno State, Nigeria. This finding is in consistence with that of Abubakar and Lawan (2022), Bukar and Ibrahim (2020) and Mohammed and Tanko (2023) who reported that there was a positive perception on staff discipline across the senior secondary schoolss in Nigeria.

The findings of the study with respect to the second research questions which say what is influence of staff discipline on personnel management in senior secondary schools, Borno State, Nigeria? The findings revealed that majority of the respondents believed that staff disciplines significantly influence the management of personnel in Senior Secondary Schools in Borno State, Nigeria. The finding is consonance with Yusuf and Adigun (2022), Eze, (2021), Abubakar and Lawan (2022) and Yusuf and Hassan (2021) that report a strong positive correlation between Staff disciplinary

compliance and the efficiency of personnel management processes.

6. Conclusion

Based on the finding of the study, it was concluded that discipline is an important tool for personnel management and organisational growth in Senior Secondary Schools, Borno State, Nigeria. It can be deduced that effective discipline in an organization lead to effective management of personnel.

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Exploring the Relationship Between Employee Casualization and Workplace Productivity in Selected Manufacturing Firms in Edo State, Nigeria: A Contemporary Sociological Analysis

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Abstract. The essence of organization productivity is profits maximization. Achieving this requires the efficiency of staff output and in cases where more hands are needed, casual workers are engaged to increase production output and this can only be sustained when there are good relationships within the organization space. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the relationship Between Employee Casualization and Workplace Productivity in Selected Manufacturing Firms in Edo State. The Labour Market Segmentation theory by Michael Piore and Peter Doeringer were adopted for the study. Been a cross-sectional study, a sample size of 405 respondents were systematically selected for the study and both qualitative and quantitative instrument were used complementarily for the study. Finding from the study revealed that employee is associated with generally high levels of perceived productivity, largely sustained by supervisory support, motivation, and cordial management–employee relations. Motivation and harmonious relations enhance efficiency but persistent concerns about job security and unequal treatment remain. Based on this, conclusion and advocacy were deduced.

Keywords: Casual Workers, Casualization, Management, Productivity

1. Introduction

Employees constitute a critical form of human capital through which organizations attain improved performance, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability. Consequently, enhancing employee productivity has remained a central concern in human resource management and organizational studies. This sustained scholarly attention is grounded in the understanding that workforce productivity significantly shapes organizational efficiency, competitive advantage, and overall performance outcomes (Omotayo & Omiunu, 2019). Within organizational contexts, employee productivity (often referred to as workforce performance) denotes the efficiency with which individuals or groups transform work inputs into measurable outputs within a specified period (Massoudi & Hamdi, 2019). Conceptually, productivity is understood as both an individual and organizational phenomenon. Hirt et al. (2011) describe it as the level of work accomplishment attained by an employee following the exertion of effort, emphasizing its individualized dimension.

Meneze (2006) views it as employees' capacity to deliver goods and services in accordance with, or beyond, employer expectations. In organizational analysis, productivity is commonly assessed by comparing total output with the labour and material inputs utilized in production processes (Naqvi et al., 2013). Given its central importance to organizational performance and continuity, identifying the factors that influence employee productivity remains imperative. Existing studies highlight several interrelated determinants, including job stress, workplace environment, organizational culture and structure, institutional policies, motivation, leadership styles, employee skills, and individual personality traits (Lawrence, 2010; Hirt et al., 2011; Duru & Shimawua, 2017). These factors operate within specific socio-economic and institutional contexts to shape employee morale, commitment, engagement, and quality of output.

Among these determinants, employee casualization has emerged as a particularly

salient feature of contemporary work arrangements, especially in developing economies such as Nigeria. Casualization refers to employment practices in which workers are engaged on temporary, part-time, seasonal, or contract bases, often without legally recognized long-term employment relationships or access to standard employment benefits (Solaja, 2015). Sociologically, casualization reflects the growing expansion of non-standard work arrangements driven by globalization, technological advancement, labour market flexibilization, and organizational cost-reduction strategies.

Empirical evidence suggests that casualization exerts significant effects on employee morale, commitment, and productivity. Eke and Onuoha (2020) observe that casual employment often undermines workers' sense of job security and organizational belonging, with adverse implications for motivation and performance. Fapohunda (2012) further conceptualizes casualization as a deliberate organizational strategy involving the substitution of permanent employees with contract or agency labour to reduce wage costs and enhance operational flexibility. Although precise national statistics remain uncertain, available evidence suggests that casual workers frequently outnumber permanent employees within Nigerian organizations (Eke & Onuoha, 2020).

In Nigeria's manufacturing sector, casualization is commonly justified by employers as a mechanism for managing labour costs and responding to fluctuating production demands (Fapohunda, 2012). However, from the employees' perspective, casualization is often associated with job insecurity, low wages, limited career advancement, restricted access to training, weak union representation, and exclusion from employment benefits such as pensions and compensation schemes (Okafor & Rasak, 2016; Olanipekun & Aborisade, 2019). From sociological and psychological perspectives, the temporary and expendable nature of casual employment may weaken organizational commitment, reduce morale, and ultimately diminish productivity. Moreover, the coexistence of permanent and casual workers within the same workplace can generate tension and perceptions of job insecurity, thereby fostering unfavourable work environments (Fapohunda, 2012).

Against this backdrop, examining the relationship between employee casualization and workplace productivity in selected manufacturing firms in Edo State provides a critical sociological lens for understanding how contemporary employment practices shape worker experiences, organizational outcomes, and labour relations in Nigeria.

1.1 Objectives of the study

- To assess the level and patterns of employee productivity within selected manufacturing companies in Edo state
- To critically examine employers' motivations, perceptions, and organizational rationales underlying the adoption of casual employment practices in selected manufacturing companies in Edo state
- To analyse the extent of the relationship between employee casualization and workplace productivity in selected manufacturing companies in Edo state

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The study is explained using the Labour Market Segmentation Theory advanced by Michael Piore and Peter Doeringer (1971), they explain that the labour market is divided into primary and secondary segments with unequal conditions. The primary sector offers job security, career mobility, and incentives, while the secondary sector is characterized by casualization, low wages, and instability. In relation to employee casualization and workplace productivity, the theory suggests that sustained productivity may be achieved in the short term, but long-term efficiency and commitment are undermined when workers remain trapped in insecure and marginalized employment conditions.

2. Methodology

The study employed a cross-sectional research design focusing on three selected manufacturing companies in Edo State, namely a beverages company, a palm oil processing company, and an aluminium manufacturing company. While primary emphasis was placed on employees engaged on a contractual basis, permanent staff members who had spent a minimum of five years in the respective organizations were also included to provide comparative and contextual insights. A total sample size of 405 respondents was drawn using a multi-stage sampling technique to ensure adequate representation across the companies and employment categories. Data were collected through a mixed-method research instrument that combined quantitative

and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0, while qualitative responses were subjected to content analysis to enrich and complement the statistical findings.

3. Findings

Table 1: Section A: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents (N=405)

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Age as at last birthday	18-27 years	56	13.8
	28-37 years	108	26.7
	38-47 years	112	27.7
	48-57 years	82	20.2
	Above 57 years	47	11.6
Sex	Male	322	79.5
	Female	83	20.5
Educational qualification	Primary 6	109	26.9
	SSCE	247	61.0
	OND	33	8.1
	HND	08	2.0
	Bachelor's degree	05	1.2
	Master's degree	03	0.7
Religious affiliation	Christianity	169	41.7
	Islam	203	50.1
	Others	33	08.2
Marital status	Single	95	23.5
	Married	253	62.5
	Cohabiting	47	11.6
	Separated	08	2.0
	Divorced	02	0.5
Mode of service	Temporary staff/ casual worker	182	44.9
	Permanent staff	223	55.1
Years of service	Below 5 years	212	52.4
	5-10 years	62	15.3
	10-15 years	73	18.0
	Above 15 years	58	14.3

The socio-demographic profile of respondents reveals important patterns relevant to workforce composition. With respect to age distribution, respondents are largely within the economically active age brackets. The majority fall between 28–47 years, with those aged 38–47 years constituting the highest proportion (27.7%), closely followed by 28–37 years (26.7%). This indicates that most respondents are in their prime working age, while the least represented age group comprises those above 57 years (11.6%), suggesting lower participation of older workers. In terms of sex composition, the workforce is predominantly male, as 79.5% of respondents are male, compared to 20.5% female. This reflects a marked gender imbalance, indicating that most positions are occupied by men, while women constitute the minority of the workforce.

Regarding educational qualification, the data show that the majority of respondents possess secondary-level education. Those with SSCE qualifications account for 61.0%, followed by respondents with primary education (26.9%). In contrast, respondents with tertiary qualifications—OND, HND, and university degrees—collectively form a small proportion, with master's degree holders being the least represented (0.7%). This suggests that the workforce is largely low- to moderately skilled, with limited representation of highly educated personnel. Religious affiliation indicates that Islam constitutes the majority religion among respondents (50.1%), followed by Christianity (41.7%), while respondents affiliated with other religions are the least (8.2%). This distribution reflects religious diversity, with a slight dominance of Islam within the study population.

Concerning marital status, most respondents are married, accounting for 62.5%, indicating a predominantly family-oriented workforce. Singles represent 23.5%, while cohabiting respondents form 11.6%. The least represented categories are separated (2.0%) and divorced (0.5%), suggesting relatively stable marital structures among respondents. With respect to mode of service, permanent staff constitute the majority (55.1%), while temporary or casual workers account for a substantial minority (44.9%). This reflects a dual employment structure, with a significant reliance on non-permanent labour. Finally, analysis of years of service shows that most respondents have below five years of service (52.4%),

indicating a relatively recent or high-turnover workforce. Those with above 15 years of service are the least (14.3%), suggesting limited long-term retention.

Assess the level and patterns of employee productivity within selected manufacturing companies in Edo state (N=405)

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Do you think your product output is sufficient	Yes	320	79.0
	No	20	04.9
	Maybe	65	16.1
How will you rate your level of productivity	High	247	61.0
	Moderate	123	30.3
	Can't say	35	08.7
Why? State reasons	I have always met target	68	18.4
	I have been highly scored	54	14.6
	Our team have been top	79	21.3
	Won staff of the month	82	22.2
	I have been promoted	87	23.5
How often	Always	64	17.3
	Sometimes	183	49.5
	Numerous times (lost count)	123	33.2
In what capacity do you feel you have excelled	Leadership position	81	20.0
	Team work	73	18.0
	Goal setting	92	22.7
	Deliveries	68	16.8
	Regular assessment	91	22.5

The data from the above table assess the level and patterns of employee productivity among respondents in the selected manufacturing companies in Edo State. The findings reveal a generally high level of perceived productivity among employees. A clear majority of respondents (79.0%) reported that their product output is sufficient, indicating that most employees believe they are meeting expected performance standards. In contrast, the least proportion (4.9%) indicated that their output is not sufficient, while 16.1% were uncertain. Regarding self-rated productivity, most respondents (61.0%) rated their level of productivity as high, followed by 30.3% who described their productivity as moderate. The least proportion (8.7%) could not clearly assess their productivity level.

In explaining their productivity, the majority of respondents cited promotion (23.5%) and recognition such as winning staff of the month (22.2%) as key indicators of performance, followed by strong team performance (21.3%). The least cited reason was being highly scored (14.6%), although it still reflects notable performance evaluation outcomes. Concerning frequency of outstanding performance, most respondents (49.5%) indicated that they sometimes excel, while 33.2% reported numerous instances of excellence. The least proportion (17.3%) stated that they always excel. Finally, in terms of areas of excellence, the majority identified goal setting (22.7%) and regular assessment (22.5%) as key strengths, whereas teamwork (18.0%) and delivery-related capacity (16.8%) were least emphasized. Overall, the findings suggest a predominantly positive productivity pattern among employees in the selected manufacturing companies.

In complementing the above response, some respondents gave a corresponding response while some said something contrary to the general opinion. As one of the respondents said:
Since i started working as a contract staff (Casual worker) i have often supported by my unit head, especially during my night shift at the packaging unit. He even recommended me during our monthly appraisal. This has really boosted my production capacity and efficiency. (IDI-Casual staff- Beverage company-2024)

Another respondents said:
Where i work, the rate of appreciation show that my productivity capacity is top notch. Most times, when coil of aluminium are brought to the company, the company sometimes rely on me to do the reeling and cutting as i have become an expert on the job. This has given me an edge when the company will open for vacancy. Often times, me and my team win gift from the head of unit. (IDI-Casual staff- Aluminium company-2024).

Different from the other respondents, a respondent gave quiet a different response when she said:
Casual workers are often treated as if they don't exist but they are always saddled with herculean task that are sometime backbreaking. Management uses middlemen to reach us and the middlemen exploit

our strength to meet target. Even when output are exceeded, the next task is often higher. My brother we are tired but no job anywhere. (IDI-Casual staff- Palm Oil-company-2024).

Examine employers' motivations, perceptions, and organizational rationales underlying the adoption of casual employment practices in selected manufacturing companies in Edo state (N=405)

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Have you ever been motivated	Yes	381	94.1
	No	20	04.9
	Sometimes	04	01.0
By who?	Team leader	204	53.0
	Management	56	14.5
	Unit head	125	32.5
What were you motivated with?	Cash	62	16.1
	Monthly award	51	13.2
	End of the year package	82	21.3
	Increase staff strength in my unit	46	12.0
	Staff recognition	28	07.3
	Salary/wage increase	55	14.3
	Promotion opportunity	61	15.8
How many times were you motivated? 405	Just once	102	25.2
	More than once	90	22.2
	Numerous times	185	45.7
	None	20	04.9
What is your perception of the motivation level of the organization you work for	Very good	157	38.7
	Good	130	32.1
	Fair	65	16.0
	Not too certain	33	08.1
	None to write home about	20	04.9

The data presented in the table examine employers' motivations, perceptions, and organizational rationales underlying the adoption of casual employment practices in selected manufacturing companies in Edo State. The findings indicate that motivation practices are widely experienced among employees. A clear majority of respondents (94.1%) reported that they had been motivated at one point or another, suggesting that most organizations adopt motivation as a key managerial strategy. In contrast, the least proportion of respondents (4.9%) indicated that they had never been motivated, while only 1.0% reported being motivated occasionally. Regarding the source of motivation, the majority of respondents (53.0%) identified team leaders as the primary agents of motivation, indicating the significant role of immediate supervisors in influencing employee morale. This was followed by unit heads, as reported by 32.5% of respondents, while management-level motivation was least reported at 14.5%, suggesting limited direct engagement of top management in motivating employees.

With respect to the forms of motivation received, most respondents identified end-of-the-year packages (21.3%) as the dominant motivational incentive. This was followed by cash incentives (16.1%) and promotion opportunities (15.8%). Salary or wage increases accounted for 14.3%, while monthly awards (13.2%) and increases in staff strength within units (12.0%) were less emphasized. The least cited motivational factor was staff recognition (7.3%), indicating relatively low emphasis on non-monetary recognition. In terms of frequency, the majority of respondents (45.7%) reported being motivated numerous times, suggesting sustained motivational efforts by employers. This was followed by those who had been motivated just once (25.2%) and more than once (22.2%), while the least proportion (4.9%) reported never receiving motivation. Finally, perceptions of organizational motivation levels were generally positive.

Most respondents rated the motivation level of their organization as very good (38.7%) or good (32.1%), reflecting favourable views of employer practices. A smaller proportion perceived motivation as fair (16.0%), while the least proportion were either uncertain (8.1%) or felt there was none to write home about (4.9%). Overall, the findings suggest that manufacturing organizations in Edo State actively deploy various motivational strategies, largely mediated by supervisory structures, to sustain employee engagement within casual employment arrangements. While the quantitative data reveal some motivating factors underlaying staff productivity, the qualitative response from the respondents gave an insight. As a respondents said:

On several occasion, i have been rewarded with cash gift and office recognition. My team leader is a very good man, always there to help and assist when targets are not met. He ensures we are all happy and that target set are achieved. (IDI-Staff- Aluminium company-2024)

Another respondent said:
In my place of work, both casual staff and temporary staff are treated as one, as we all engage on same task and production success are equally shared by all staff. Management reward staff by giving anyone that merit it award of service monthly and in most cases, the casual workers are given permanent employment after 2 years. So we are all on same good page. (IDI-Staff- Beverage company-2024)

Analyse the extent of the relationship between employee casualization and workplace productivity in selected manufacturing companies in Edo state. (N=405)

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Do you have cordial relationship with management	Yes	382	94.3
	No	10	02.5
	Sometimes	13	03.2
Has that improved the productivity of the company	Yes	348	90.4
	No	22	05.7
	Sometimes	15	03.9
In what capacity has it cause changed in productivity?	Regular meeting of all staff	55	15.8
	Regular staff recognition	61	17.5
	End of the year package	75	21.5
	Staff recognition	47	13.6
	Good welfare benefit for all staff	60	17.2
	Compensation for extra time	50	14.4
Where do you want management to place more emphasis on. (348)	Staff welfare	102	29.3
	Job security	142	40.8
	Permanent casual workers	64	18.4
	others	40	11.5
Overall, how will you rate the relationship between temporary and permanent workers	Very cordial	165	40.7
	Cordial	95	23.5
	Fair	122	30.1
	Not to cordial	23	05.7

From the table above, the data examines the extent of the relationship between employee casualization and workplace productivity in selected manufacturing companies in Edo State. The findings indicate a largely positive interaction between management and employees. A clear majority of respondents (94.3%) reported having a cordial relationship with management, suggesting that most workers experience cooperative management–employee relations. In contrast, the least proportion (2.5%) indicated the absence of a cordial relationship, while 3.2% reported that such relationships exist only sometimes. Regarding the effect of this relationship on productivity, most respondents (90.4%) affirmed that cordial relations with management have improved organizational productivity. Only 5.7% reported no improvement, representing the least group, while 3.9% perceived productivity improvements as occasional.

In terms of specific ways productivity has improved, the majority of respondents identified end-of-the-year packages (21.5%) as the most influential factor, followed by regular staff recognition (17.5%) and good welfare benefits for all staff (17.2%). Regular meetings of all staff (15.8%) and compensation for extra time (14.4%) were moderately reported, while staff recognition (13.6%) constituted the least cited factor. Concerning areas where management should place greater emphasis, most respondents (40.8%) indicated job security, highlighting its centrality in addressing challenges associated with casualization. This was followed by staff welfare (29.3%) and the need to permanent casual workers (18.4%), while other areas were least emphasized (11.5%).

Finally, with respect to overall relations between temporary and permanent workers, the majority of respondents described the relationship as very cordial (40.7%) or cordial (23.5%), indicating generally harmonious workplace relations. A considerable proportion rated the relationship as fair (30.1%), while the least proportion (5.7%) perceived the relationship as not cordial. On the qualitative side, a respondents said:
The relationship in where i work is very cordial, cooperating and united. As the success of the company is the sole responsibility of all staff. Every year, the management reward all staff with the profit irrespective of the position and level of the staff. (IDI-Casual Worker-Aluminium Company-2024)

Another respondent said:
Though the relationship inherent in our company is cordial but there is some level of segregation. During meetings, management share items to everyone and give us positive report whenever we had success but sometimes, we the casual workers feel cheated and

sidelined. But on the surface, we are good. (IDI-Casual Worker-Palm Oil Company-2024)

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings demonstrate that employee casualization in selected manufacturing companies in Edo State is associated with generally high levels of perceived productivity, largely sustained by supervisory support, motivation, and cordial management–employee relations. Quantitative results indicate positive productivity outcomes driven by incentives, recognition, and welfare measures, while qualitative accounts reveal both empowering and exploitative experiences among casual workers. Although motivation and harmonious relations enhance efficiency, persistent concerns about job security and unequal treatment remain. Addressing these structural gaps is crucial for sustaining productivity and equitable workplace relations. On the basis of these, the study advocates that:

- Manufacturing firms should establish clear and transparent transition frameworks that enable high-performing casual workers to attain permanent employment after defined periods.
- Management should standardize both monetary and non-monetary incentive schemes to ensure equitable recognition of casual and permanent workers' contributions.
- Organizations should train and monitor team leaders and unit heads to prevent exploitative practices and ensure supportive, performance-enhancing supervision.
- Employers should extend basic welfare benefits and communication platforms to all categories of workers to promote trust, morale, and sustained productivity.

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