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**Reconstructing the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37)
within Cultural Contexts: New Testament Ethics, Moral
Hermeneutics, and Intercultural Peacebuilding**

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Abstract

This theoretical study reinterprets the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) within its cultural context to uncover its ethical and peacebuilding significance for contemporary societies. Traditionally understood as a call to compassion and love of neighbour, the parable is here developed into a conceptual framework termed the Contextual Samaritan Ethical Model (CSEM) a New Testament ethical paradigm addressing reconciliation, inclusion, and justice in pluralistic contexts. Drawing on Richard Hays' community-shaped moral vision and Lisa Cahill's justice-oriented ethical critique, the paper engages supportive and dissenting scholarship to situate its theoretical contribution. The CSEM rests on four core propositions: ethical compassion as transformative praxis, cross-cultural solidarity and moral inclusivity, hermeneutics of reconciliation, and contextualised ethical discernment. Together, these principles articulate a model of moral reasoning that integrates biblical ethics with contemporary realities of diversity, conflict, and inequality. Employing a hermeneutical and narrative-based approach, the study demonstrates how the Samaritan's crossing of cultural and religious boundaries offers a paradigm for intercultural dialogue, social solidarity, and peacebuilding. It fills a notable gap in New Testament ethical studies by integrating biblical hermeneutics with Peace Studies to produce an ethical model that is culturally responsive, theologically grounded, and practically relevant. The paper concludes by proposing pathways for ethical reflection in theology, particularly regarding social justice, migration, and interfaith relations.

Keywords: *Contextual Samaritan Ethical Model, New Testament Ethics, Cultural Hermeneutics, Peacebuilding, Contextual Theology*

1. INTRODUCTION

The parable of the Good Samaritan, found in Luke 10:25–37, is one of the most well-known teachings of Jesus. It tells the story of a man beaten by robbers and left on the road, ignored by religious figures but helped by a Samaritan someone considered an outsider by the Jewish community. Over the centuries, this parable has been used to teach love, compassion, and what it means to be a "neighbor." However, the way people interpret the story has often depended on their culture, background, and moral outlook.

In today's diverse and pluralistic world, understanding biblical ethics requires more than a surface reading. Scholars like Richard B. Hays argue that New Testament ethics must be shaped by both the text and its cultural context (Hays, 1996). Similarly, Joel B. Green emphasizes the need to interpret Scripture in a way that engages contemporary ethical questions (Green, 2011). This means the Good Samaritan story is not just about being nice it challenges deep social norms, cultural prejudices, and ethical assumptions.

With growing interest in contextual and intercultural theology, there's a need to re-read biblical texts like this one through the lens of different cultural experiences. Doing so allows Christians to develop a more inclusive and thoughtful moral framework rooted in Scripture, but sensitive to today's realities. This study explores the parable as a rich source for ethical reflection, focusing on how cultural context shapes interpretation and how New Testament ethics can be re-imagined in our time.

Statement of the Problem

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is one of the most familiar stories in the Bible, often used to teach love, kindness, and compassion. However, its deeper ethical meaning is sometimes lost when it is interpreted without considering the cultural and historical setting in which Jesus told it. In many Christian communities today, this parable is often simplified into moral slogans or general acts of charity, without digging into the complex social, religious, and political tensions it originally addressed. There is also a tendency to apply modern values directly onto the text, which may lead to misinterpretation or ethical distortion.

This study seeks to explore how a better understanding of the cultural and historical background of the parable can lead to richer and more accurate ethical insights. By re-reading the story through a theoretical lens that values both ancient context and ethical reasoning, the research aims to uncover how New Testament ethics should be understood and applied. The core problem, therefore, lies in bridging the gap between the original ethical intent of the text and how it is interpreted and lived out today, especially in culturally diverse and morally complex societies. This requires a fresh, context-aware theoretical approach.

This study aims to explore how the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25–37 can be better understood when we consider the cultural background of the time and how different people today interpret it ethically. Rather than just repeating traditional lessons, the study seeks to dive deeper into what the story meant in its original setting and how its moral message can guide Christian thinking in today’s diverse world. The focus is not on doing fieldwork or collecting data but on examining ideas, theories, and interpretations drawn from scripture, theology, and ethics.

Research Questions

- i. What ethical principles are embedded in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, and how do they reflect New Testament moral teachings?
- ii. How does the historical and cultural context of first-century Judea influence the interpretation of the parable’s characters and message?
- iii. In what ways have traditional Christian interpretations shaped or limited the ethical understanding of the Good Samaritan narrative?
- iv. How do different cultural, theological, and ethical lenses such as liberationist, postcolonial, or intercultural approaches reinterpret the moral message of the parable today?
- v. What theoretical insights can be drawn from the parable to inform a contextual and relevant model of New Testament ethics for contemporary Christian living?

These questions guide the theoretical exploration and ensure the study remains focused on ethical interpretation, cultural relevance, and theological depth.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it brings fresh insight into a familiar biblical story that many people know but often take for granted. The Parable of the Good Samaritan is frequently used to teach kindness and compassion, yet the deeper ethical and cultural dimensions of the story are rarely explored. By digging into the historical and social context of the parable, this study uncovers layers of meaning that go beyond surface-level interpretation. It invites us to think critically about how moral lessons are shaped by context and how they continue to speak to us in today’s complex and divided world.

More importantly, the study highlights how biblical stories can serve as rich sources for ethical reflection, especially in a time when people are searching for moral clarity and direction. It challenges readers, students, and scholars to move beyond generic moralizing and embrace a more nuanced, culturally aware understanding of New Testament ethics. For Christians, theologians, and ethicists alike, this study offers a path to reimagine what it means

to "love your neighbor" in diverse and often polarized societies. Ultimately, it encourages a more thoughtful, inclusive, and responsible application of scripture to real-world ethical issues.

The scope of the study is theoretical, meaning it is concerned with thinking through and analyzing ideas. It looks closely at the meaning of the parable, the characters involved, and what their actions say about values like compassion, justice, and neighborliness. The study also examines how people from different cultural and theological backgrounds might interpret the story differently and what that means for Christian ethics. By doing this, the study hopes to offer a deeper and broader understanding of New Testament ethics that takes cultural context seriously and remains relevant in today's complex moral world.

2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Research Design and Approach: This study adopts a theoretical, hermeneutical, and interpretive research design aimed at constructing the *Contextual Samaritan Ethical Model (CSEM)* as a conceptual contribution to New Testament ethics. It is non-empirical and conceptual, relying on critical interpretation rather than fieldwork or statistical analysis. The design focuses on re-examining the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) as a narrative resource for ethical reflection and peacebuilding within culturally diverse and pluralistic societies.

Hermeneutical Framework

The study employs *contextual and narrative hermeneutics* to interpret how meaning arises from the interaction between text, context, and interpreter. This approach views the biblical text as both historically situated and theologically dynamic. It recognises that ethical meaning develops through a dialogue between the original cultural setting of the parable and the contemporary reader's social reality. Following the perspectives of Hays (1996), Cahill (2006), and Green (2011), the research integrates insights from *biblical ethics*, *virtue ethics*, and *peace studies* to frame an interdisciplinary interpretive lens.

Analytical Procedure

The methodological process unfolds in three key stages:

1. *Textual-Hermeneutical Analysis* – A close reading of Luke 10:25–37 within its first-century socio-cultural and theological context, identifying themes of compassion, justice, and reconciliation.
2. *Comparative Ethical Interpretation* – Evaluation of traditional Christian readings alongside contemporary interpretations from liberation theology, intercultural ethics, and postcolonial hermeneutics.

3. *Conceptual Synthesis* – Development of the *Contextual Samaritan Ethical Model (CSEM)*, built on four core propositions: ethical compassion as transformative praxis, cross-cultural solidarity, hermeneutics of reconciliation, and contextualised ethical discernment.

Theoretical Orientation: This research is guided by the assumption that biblical ethics must remain both scripturally grounded and culturally relevant. The interpretive process therefore situates theological ethics within real-world concerns such as migration, inequality, and interfaith coexistence. By synthesising textual interpretation and ethical theorisation, the study offers a culturally responsive, theologically grounded, and peace-oriented ethical model that advances theoretical understanding in New Testament moral discourse.

Structure of the Paper

This paper is carefully organized into eight main sections to guide the reader through a rich exploration of the parable of the Good Samaritan from a theoretical and ethical perspective. It begins with an Introduction, setting the stage by explaining the background, the problem being addressed, and why this study matters today. The next section, Theoretical Framework, presents the ideas and concepts that shape the discussion, especially theories of ethics and interpretation in biblical studies.

The third part dives into the actual text of Luke 10:25–37, exploring its structure, characters, and the cultural setting in which it was originally told. After that, various ethical interpretations of the parable are examined, showing how different thinkers and traditions have understood and applied its message.

The fifth section offers a reconstruction of the parable’s ethical message, proposing fresh ways to think about compassion and moral responsibility. This leads into a discussion of the broader implications for theology and ethics, including how this parable can shape our moral vision today. Finally, the Conclusion sums up the key points and suggests areas for further study. A list of References follows, citing the sources used in building this academic reflection.

Theoretical Framework: The Contextual Samaritan Ethical Model (CSEM)

The **Contextual Samaritan Ethical Model (CSEM)** emerges as the core conceptual output of this study, offering a theoretical bridge between New Testament ethics and contemporary moral realities. It draws its foundation from the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), re-read through the lenses of *contextual hermeneutics*, *peace studies*, and *theological ethics*. The model reinterprets the Samaritan’s actions not simply as personal virtue but as a paradigm of intercultural ethics and transformative compassion, where faith, justice, and neighbourly care converge.

1. Ethical Compassion as Transformative Praxis: In the CSEM, compassion is understood as a moral act that disrupts indifference and redefines ethical boundaries. The Samaritan's response to human suffering embodies what Richard Hays (1996) calls "the community's participation in the moral imagination of Scripture." Compassion, therefore, is not sentimental but active it becomes a transformative praxis capable of challenging social inequality and institutional neglect. This element positions love of neighbour as a radical ethic that transcends emotion and becomes the basis for moral responsibility and public witness.

2. Cross-Cultural Solidarity and Moral Inclusivity: The parable's central shock the Samaritan aiding a wounded Jew serves as a theological metaphor for crossing cultural, ethnic, and religious boundaries. Lisa Sowle Cahill (2006) argues that Christian ethics must remain attentive to power relations and systemic exclusion. The CSEM builds on this insight by framing the Samaritan's action as an act of solidarity that redefines moral community. It challenges both ancient purity laws and modern forms of discrimination, urging faith communities to embrace inclusivity as an ethical necessity. Solidarity here implies moral inclusiveness: the recognition of humanity across divisions of race, religion, gender, and class.

3. Hermeneutics of Reconciliation: A third proposition of the model is what may be termed a *hermeneutics of reconciliation*. Joel Green (2011) maintains that biblical narratives form communities shaped by grace and reconciliation. The CSEM aligns with this view by suggesting that scriptural interpretation itself can be a reconciliatory process. When believers engage the parable from diverse cultural standpoints, dialogue becomes a moral act that heals interpretive and social fractures. The model therefore positions biblical hermeneutics not as detached exegesis but as an ongoing moral encounter through which the community learns to embody peace and forgiveness.

4. Contextualised Ethical Discernment: The final component of the CSEM insists that ethical reflection must remain context-sensitive and historically informed. The Samaritan's act gains fuller meaning when situated within first-century tensions between Jews and Samaritans an example of moral courage that resists prejudice. Translating that ethic into today's context involves discerning how compassion and justice address contemporary concerns such as migration, interfaith relations, and global inequality. The model thus promotes a dynamic ethical process that honours Scripture while engaging present realities, demonstrating that Christian ethics must evolve through dialogue with culture.

Integrative Significance: Collectively, these propositions construct a theoretical framework that unites *biblical hermeneutics and peacebuilding ethics*. The CSEM offers a way to interpret Scripture that is both *theologically grounded and culturally responsive*, highlighting

the transformative potential of neighbourly love in divided societies. It advances New Testament ethical studies by proposing that the moral power of biblical narratives lies not only in their theological content but also in their capacity to shape inclusive moral imagination. As such, the *Contextual Samaritan Ethical Model* stands as a unifying paradigm for moral formation, intercultural dialogue, and social justice within contemporary Christian thought.

The Role of Hermeneutics in New Testament Ethics: Hermeneutics, or the art of interpreting texts, plays a central role in understanding how the New Testament shapes ethical living. Scholars like Richard Hays (1996) argue that interpreting Scripture is not just about understanding what it says but how it shapes the Christian moral imagination. He sees the New Testament as a narrative that forms character and community values. On the other hand, Stephen Fowl (1998) challenges overly rigid interpretive methods, arguing that ethical reading must be shaped by the church's context and communal life, not just fixed principles. Meanwhile, scholars like Troels Engberg-Pedersen (2017) take a more historical-philosophical view, examining how Paul's ethics were shaped by Greco-Roman moral thought.

These varying views show both the richness and the tension in how ethics is drawn from the New Testament. The main gap in the conversation is the underexplored role of cultural context how ancient and modern cultures influence how we interpret the ethical lessons of stories like the Good Samaritan. This study aims to fill that gap by offering a culturally conscious and theoretically grounded reading of New Testament ethics.

Cultural-Critical Theory and Contextual Ethics: Cultural-Critical Theory helps us read biblical texts like the parable of the Good Samaritan by paying close attention to the power dynamics, cultural backgrounds, and social class tensions present in the story (Segovia, 1995). It challenges us to ask: Whose voice is being heard, and whose is being ignored? Contextual Ethics, on the other hand, emphasizes that moral teachings like loving one's neighbor must be understood within specific cultural and historical settings (Gustafson, 1981). While both approaches agree that the Bible must be interpreted with attention to real-life settings, they differ. Scholars like Thiselton (2006) argue that over-contextualizing can water down the original biblical message. Others like Croatto (1995) believe contextual readings bring fresh and needed meaning to ancient texts.

However, most studies stop short of merging these two frameworks when interpreting parables. They either focus on social critique or moral values but rarely both. This paper fills that gap by showing how *both* cultural analysis and ethical reflection together enrich our understanding of the Good Samaritan story, especially for today's divided world.

Textual and Contextual Analysis of Luke 10:25–37

Literary Structure and Theological Themes of Luke 10:25–37: The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) is structured as a dialogue between Jesus and a lawyer, followed by the story itself, and concluding with a question that reframes the idea of "neighbor." Scholars agree that this literary sandwich (question-story-question) is intentional, highlighting ethical reversal and divine compassion (Green, 1997). Theologically, the parable teaches radical love that crosses cultural and religious lines, as the despised Samaritan becomes the moral hero.

Joel B. Green emphasizes the narrative's rhetorical design to confront legalistic ethics (Green, 1997). In contrast, Richard Bauckham (2011) warns against over-spiritualizing the story, arguing it was originally rooted in real Jewish-Samaritan tensions. Some scholars like N.T. Wright see the parable as part of Luke's broader social and political agenda (Wright, 2012), while others critique this as reading too much into the text.

However, few studies fully integrate cultural hermeneutics with ethical theory to explore how different communities interpret this story today. This study addresses that gap by offering a theoretical model that connects cultural context, moral reasoning, and biblical ethics.

Historical and Socio-Cultural Background of the Parable: The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) was told in a deeply divided society, where Jews and Samaritans had a long-standing history of hostility. Jews saw Samaritans as religious outsiders and social enemies due to differences in worship and ancestry (Evans, 2012). In that context, Jesus' choice of a Samaritan as the hero shocked his audience, challenging their assumptions about who qualifies as a "neighbor."

Some scholars, like Bailey (2008), emphasize that Jesus was confronting ethnic and religious prejudice by presenting the Samaritan as morally superior to the respected Jewish figures—the priest and Levite. Others, like Wright (2012), argue that the parable is more about embodying God's compassion than confronting ethnic boundaries.

However, some interpretations limit the parable to spiritual or moral lessons without addressing the historical tension or implications for social ethics today (Keener, 2014). This gap ignoring how cultural bias shapes ethical understanding is where this study contributes. It reinterprets the parable through modern cross-cultural ethics, emphasizing how cultural context influences moral behavior.

The Identity and Symbolism of the Samaritan, Priest, and Levite: In Luke 10:25–37, Jesus tells the parable of a man beaten and left for dead. Two religious figures the priest and the Levite pass by, but a Samaritan, seen as a religious outsider, helps the man. Traditionally,

the priest and Levite are seen as symbols of religious hypocrisy or failed duty, while the Samaritan is praised for his compassion (Bailey, 2008). Some scholars, like Jeremias (1972), suggest the priest and Levite avoided the man to maintain ritual purity. Others, like Levine (2014), argue this reading is too simplistic and ignores the complexity of Jewish purity laws and cultural tensions.

The Samaritan's role has been interpreted symbolically as Christ-like or as a model of unconditional love (Nolland, 2005). Yet, some scholars challenge this, suggesting the Samaritan represents social reversal where the marginalized becomes the moral hero (Esler, 2000).

While many works focus on religious or moral symbolism, few deeply explore how cultural perceptions across time reshape ethical interpretation. This study will fill that gap by theoretically examining how these characters' identities shift in meaning across cultural and ethical contexts.

3. ETHICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE PARABLE

Traditional Christian Ethical Readings: Traditional Christian interpretations of the Parable of the Good Samaritan often emphasize love, compassion, and moral duty. Early Church Fathers like Augustine saw the Samaritan as a Christ figure, representing divine mercy to fallen humanity (Augustine, *Quaestiones Evangeliorum*). Thomas Aquinas highlighted the parable as a model of neighborly love rooted in natural law and divine charity (Summa Theologica, II-II, Q.30).

Modern theologians, such as John Stott (2006), affirm this moral teaching by viewing the parable as a call to active love that transcends religious boundaries. However, critics argue these views sometimes neglect the parable's cultural and social tensions. For example, Howard Thurman (1976) and Gustavo Gutiérrez (1973) critique traditional readings for ignoring the social injustice and marginalization highlighted by the Samaritan's outsider role. This study builds on these insights but identifies a critical gap: many traditional readings do not fully integrate the cultural context of first-century Judea with a theoretical ethical framework. By doing so, this paper aims to reconstruct a richer, culturally-aware ethical model rooted in the New Testament.

Liberationist and Contextual Theologies: Liberation theology focuses on interpreting the Bible through the lens of the poor and oppressed. It emphasizes justice, equality, and action against societal injustice. Gustavo Gutiérrez (1973) argues that God has a "preferential option for the poor," urging Christians to stand with the marginalized. Similarly, contextual theology examines how different cultures, histories, and realities shape people's

understanding of faith. Stephen Bevans (2002) sees theology not as one-size-fits-all but as a process shaped by culture and experience.

While both approaches value justice and relevance, some scholars raise concerns. Critics like Edward Norman (2001) argue that liberation theology risks reducing the gospel to a political ideology, losing its spiritual essence. Others, like Tienou (1990), caution that some contextual theologies may compromise biblical truths for cultural convenience. This paper steps into the gap left by these debates. While many studies focus on general justice themes, few have closely examined how the *Parable of the Good Samaritan* (Luke 10:25–37) can serve as a theoretical model for ethical reorientation across cultures, especially within African and Nigerian settings. This study explores that under-researched space.

Postcolonial and Cross-Cultural Ethical Readings: Postcolonial and cross-cultural interpretations of the Parable of the Good Samaritan have tried to reframe its message beyond traditional Western readings. Scholars like Musa Dube (2000) argue that the parable challenges colonial and cultural superiority by presenting the “other” (the Samaritan) as the true neighbor, thus turning power structures upside down. She interprets it as a call to stand with the marginalized, especially in African and postcolonial contexts. Similarly, Justin Ukpog (2001) insists on reading biblical texts from African communal and justice-driven perspectives, where compassion becomes a community ethic, not just an individual moral duty.

However, others like Kenneth Bailey (2008) maintain a more culturally conservative view, reading the parable through Middle Eastern cultural codes and seeing Jesus’ choice of a Samaritan as a shocking but theologically grounded lesson in mercy not necessarily a political statement. The gap this study fills lies in synthesizing these diverse views into a coherent New Testament ethical model that respects both historical-cultural roots and today’s ethical challenges. Most reviews stop at cultural critique; few explore how these readings reshape New Testament moral theology.

Reconstructing New Testament Ethics through the Parable

The Parable as a Moral Paradigm: The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) has often been viewed as a moral paradigm a story that offers a timeless model for ethical behavior. Many scholars agree that it teaches compassion beyond social and religious boundaries. For example, Joel B. Green (1997) argues that the parable urges readers to redefine “neighbor” as anyone in need, regardless of identity. Likewise, N.T. Wright (2010) views the Samaritan’s action as a radical call to mercy rooted in the love command of God.

However, others provide conflicting views. John Dominic Crossan (2012) suggests the parable is not just about kindness, but a social critique of religious systems that neglect the

vulnerable. Similarly, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1983) points out the parable's silence on structural injustices, arguing that it risks promoting charity over justice. The gap these perspectives leave is a lack of deep engagement with how *cultural context shapes the ethical meaning* of the parable today. This study fills that gap by exploring how different cultures might reconstruct its moral message and apply it to present-day issues like ethnic division, religious conflict, and social exclusion.

Rethinking Neighborliness and Compassion: The parable of the Good Samaritan challenges traditional ideas of who a "neighbor" is, pushing the boundaries of compassion beyond tribal, religious, or social lines. Scholars like Joel B. Green (1997) argue that Jesus redefines neighborliness not as a status but as an action whoever shows mercy is a neighbor. Similarly, N.T. Wright (2012) emphasizes that compassion is not optional in Christian ethics but central to imitating Christ.

However, other scholars like Richard Hays (1996) stress that compassion must be grounded in the larger narrative of Scripture, cautioning against interpreting the parable as mere moralism detached from God's covenantal story. Meanwhile, Kenneth Bailey (2008) notes that modern readers often miss the cultural shock the original audience felt the Samaritan as the hero upended deep-seated ethnic prejudice.

Yet, many of these views focus primarily on either the theological or cultural side, often neglecting how these two dimensions interact in shaping ethical behavior today. This study aims to fill that gap by offering a theoretical model that integrates both cultural context and ethical responsibility, helping readers understand not just what the parable meant then, but what it should mean now.

Intercultural Ethical Responsibilities in Contemporary Christian Thought: In today's diverse world, Christian ethics increasingly wrestles with how to respond to people from different cultures, races, and religions. Scholars like Gustavo Gutiérrez (1988) emphasize the Christian duty to stand with the poor and oppressed across cultures, calling it a "preferential option for the poor." Similarly, Kwame Bediako (1995) argues that Christianity must respect and integrate African cultural values in ethical teachings. Both authors see intercultural engagement as essential to faithful Christian living.

However, others like John Piper (2011) stress that ethics should stay rooted in biblical doctrine and warn against over-contextualizing the gospel to fit every culture, fearing a loss of core Christian truths. Miroslav Volf (1996), while promoting inclusion and reconciliation, admits that cultural boundaries often challenge a shared Christian ethic. These debates show that while many agree on the need for intercultural responsibility, they differ on how far culture should shape Christian ethics. The gap this study addresses lies in the lack of focused exploration on *how the Parable of the Good Samaritan can be used as a theoretical*

framework to model intercultural Christian ethics an approach not fully explored in the literature.

The Parable and the Ethics of Otherness in Contemporary Christian Thought

The Parable of the Good Samaritan has become a pivotal text for engaging what contemporary theology calls the “*ethics of otherness*” the moral imperative to show compassion beyond social, ethnic, or religious boundaries. Miroslav Volf (1996) contends that the parable calls Christians to embrace the stranger as neighbour, dismantling exclusionary identities and reconstituting community around grace. Likewise, N. T. Wright (2010) interprets the narrative as Jesus’ redefinition of “neighbour” in a fractured world, situating love as the boundary-breaking hallmark of divine justice.

Yet, this reading has drawn significant critique. John Milbank (2006) warns that an *over-contextualized* approach risks secularising the parable reducing it to a moral fable detached from its Christological and eschatological meaning. Similarly, Luke Timothy Johnson (2007) cautions that moralising the text without recognising its call to divine transformation may flatten its theological depth, turning divine compassion into mere social activism. These critiques underscore the tension between *ethical application and theological integrity* a challenge central to contextual theology.

This study positions itself within this debate by proposing a *contextually grounded African hermeneutic* that honours both the parable’s Jewish setting and its contemporary ethical demands. In many African cultures, communal ethics emphasise *ubuntu* the understanding that “a person is a person through others.” When read through such a lens, the Good Samaritan becomes not simply a moral exemplar but a narrative of restorative relationship and collective responsibility. Thus, the *ethics of otherness* is reinterpreted as both theologically faithful and socially transformative, maintaining the divine dimension of compassion while addressing systemic patterns of exclusion and cultural division.

Moral Theology and Ethical Formation in Contemporary Christian Thought: Modern moral theology seeks to help Christians discern how to live faithfully in complex social realities. Richard Gula (2010) insists that Christian morality arises from the integration of *Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience*, where conscience is shaped through community and grace. Stanley Hauerwas (1981) similarly frames the Church as a *moral community* that forms virtuous character rather than merely enforcing behavioural codes. These thinkers view moral formation as a lifelong process of discipleship that unites belief and practice.

However, this ecclesial focus has been critiqued for insufficiently engaging *pluralistic and intercultural contexts*. James Keenan (2010) challenges overly rigid moral systems, arguing instead for a relational ethic grounded in mercy and the lived realities of diverse

communities. Joseph Selling (2016) also critiques the static nature of traditional frameworks, calling for a moral theology responsive to human development and freedom. Critics note that without adequate attention to *cultural hermeneutics*, Christian ethics risks perpetuating Eurocentric norms that inadequately reflect global diversity.

This study contributes to that discourse by integrating *biblical exegesis* with *African communal ethics* to explore how parables like the Good Samaritan shape moral thought across cultures. It suggests that moral formation is not only ecclesial but *contextual* formed through the dialogue between text, tradition, and lived experience. In this way, ethical formation becomes both transformative and inclusive, grounded in divine grace yet responsive to human diversity.

Toward a Contextual New Testament Ethical Model: Scholars widely agree that New Testament ethics must engage both the *historical world of the text and the cultural world of the interpreter*. Richard Hays (1996) advocates for a “community-based” ethic where Scripture shapes the moral imagination of believers. In contrast, Lisa Sowle Cahill (2006) critiques such frameworks for lacking engagement with social justice, urging an ethic that confronts inequality, gender, and power. Joel Green (2011) advances a *narrative ethics*, focusing on how biblical stories form Christian identity and action. Yet, Allen Verhey (2002) warns that narrative ethics, if detached from explicit moral norms, can lead to interpretive relativism and ambiguity in ethical decision-making.

These debates reveal a persistent gap: how to uphold *scriptural integrity* while ensuring *contextual relevance*. This study responds by developing the *Contextual Samaritan Ethical Model (CSEM)*, which synthesises hermeneutical fidelity with practical ethics. The model holds that moral discernment must arise from Scripture but remain open to contextual interpretation. It insists that contextualisation need not entail relativism; rather, when guided by the narrative logic of divine compassion, it renews the moral authority of Scripture in diverse societies.

The CSEM thus seeks a middle ground between *theological abstraction and socio-ethical reductionism*. It interprets the Good Samaritan as a paradigm for reconciliation, intercultural solidarity, and transformative love an ethic capable of addressing both personal and structural dimensions of moral life. By balancing critical engagement with contextual insight, this approach contributes to a more holistic and globally resonant Christian moral theology.

Summary of Key Insights: This study provides fresh insight into the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) by examining its ethical, theological, and cultural dimensions through a contextual lens. It argues that the parable functions as a timeless narrative of *otherness* and inclusion, challenging Christians to extend compassion across cultural, social, and religious boundaries. Volf (1996) contends that the parable calls for an embrace of those

society deems outsiders, emphasising reconciliation as central to Christian identity. Similarly, Wright (2010) interprets Jesus' redefinition of "neighbour" as a radical invitation to compassion within a divided and unjust world.

However, a critical tension exists between contextual application and theological integrity. Milbank (2006) cautions that excessive contextualisation risks secularising Scripture, turning divine revelation into mere moral storytelling. Johnson (2007) adds that focusing solely on the parable's social dimension neglects its call to spiritual transformation through divine love. These opposing views illustrate an enduring challenge within New Testament ethics: maintaining scriptural authority while addressing contemporary moral realities.

In response, this study introduces the *Contextual Samaritan Ethical Model (CSEM)*, which integrates biblical hermeneutics with intercultural ethics. The model rests on four propositions: ethical compassion as transformative praxis, cross-cultural solidarity, hermeneutics of reconciliation, and contextualised ethical discernment. Drawing on Hays' (1996) emphasis on the moral imagination shaped by Scripture and Cahill's (2006) justice-oriented critique, the study bridges theology and culture to promote social harmony and peacebuilding.

A key contribution of this research lies in its incorporation of African moral frameworks particularly the communal ethic of *ubuntu* to interpret the Samaritan's act as a paradigm for relational responsibility. This culturally grounded reading enriches Christian moral theology, offering a balanced and globally resonant framework for ethical reflection and moral formation.

Practical Discussion on the Contributions to Theoretical Biblical Ethics

This study contributes significantly to the field of theoretical biblical ethics by reframing the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) as a dynamic ethical model that speaks to contemporary cultural and moral challenges. Through the proposed *Contextual Samaritan Ethical Model (CSEM)*, the research bridges the gap between *biblical hermeneutics and applied moral theology*, thereby enriching discourse on New Testament ethics and intercultural theology.

One major contribution lies in the *integration of narrative ethics with contextual theology*. As Hays (1996) asserts, the moral vision of the New Testament is shaped by community, cross, and new creation; ethics must therefore arise from the scriptural story that forms Christian identity. This study extends that logic by situating the Good Samaritan narrative within intercultural moral reasoning, demonstrating how scriptural compassion can guide ethical formation across diverse contexts. This integration responds to calls by Green (2011)

and Hauerwas (1981) for ethics that shape character through narrative and community rather than abstract moralism.

A second contribution concerns *the theological grounding of ethical contextualization*. Scholars like Cahill (2006) and Keenan (2010) have emphasized that ethics must engage issues of justice, gender, and relationality without losing sight of divine transformation. The CSEM builds on these insights, proposing that compassion and inclusion, as illustrated by the Samaritan's action, represent both theological conviction and moral praxis. By synthesizing these perspectives, the study argues that contextualization does not dilute theology but instead embodies it through lived moral action in diverse communities.

Furthermore, the research offers a *corrective to the over-individualization of Christian ethics*, highlighting the communal and intercultural dimensions of moral life. Drawing on African communitarian values such as *ubuntu*, the CSEM underscores that ethical living is inherently relational “a person becomes a person through others.” This contextual approach resonates with Volf's (1996) call for embracing the “other” as intrinsic to Christian faith, while responding to Milbank's (2006) caution against secular moral reductionism by maintaining theological integrity.

Finally, the study contributes a *balanced methodological framework* for biblical ethics that is both hermeneutically sound and practically applicable. It offers a model for reading Scripture that honours its theological core while addressing contemporary realities such as migration, social inequality, and interfaith relations. The CSEM thus stands as a theoretical yet practical framework that equips biblical ethicists, theologians, and Christian leaders to re-engage Scripture as a living moral text capable of transforming societies. In sum, this study enriches theoretical biblical ethics by offering a culturally grounded, theologically robust, and socially responsive model that unites Scripture, ethics, and praxis in the service of a just and compassionate world.

4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER THEORETICAL RESEARCH

This study provides a conceptual foundation for understanding the Parable of the Good Samaritan as a framework for contextual ethics and intercultural moral reflection. However, further theoretical exploration is needed to deepen and expand the *Contextual Samaritan Ethical Model (CSEM)* proposed here.

Future research could first investigate the *comparative theological dimensions* of the model by examining how other parables, such as the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32) or the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31) might reinforce or challenge the same ethical principles of compassion, justice, and reconciliation (Hays, 1996; Green, 2011). Such comparative

analysis would clarify whether the CSEM holds cross-parabolic validity within New Testament ethics.

Second, there is room for theoretical work integrating *African communal ethics, such as ubuntu*, with biblical moral reasoning. Scholars like Volf (1996) and Gula (2010) have shown that Christian ethics must engage lived community experiences. Yet, few frameworks explicitly connect African moral traditions with the theological virtues of mercy and reconciliation found in Luke's Gospel.

Third, future research should probe the *risk of over-contextualization* a critique raised by Milbank (2006) and Johnson (2007) to ensure that contextual theology maintains scriptural integrity while remaining socially relevant. This calls for a balanced hermeneutic that prevents the instrumentalization of Scripture for purely political ends.

Finally, theoretical expansion could explore how the CSEM informs *interfaith and peacebuilding discourse*, particularly in multi-religious societies. Such work could contribute to global theological ethics by offering a model that is at once biblically grounded, culturally situated, and globally resonant.

5. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings and propositions of this study, particularly the development of the *Contextual Samaritan Ethical Model (CSEM)*, carry significant theoretical and practical implications for contemporary Christian ethics, theology, and intercultural dialogue. Theoretically, the study contributes to New Testament ethical scholarship by offering a framework that bridges *textual integrity and contextual relevance*. As Hays (1996) asserts, authentic Christian ethics must emerge from the moral vision of the New Testament centred on community, cross, and new creation. The CSEM builds on this principle by rooting moral reflection in Scripture while engaging the cultural and social realities of readers, particularly within African and other pluralistic contexts.

This approach challenges both *ethical abstraction and socio-theological reductionism*, two tendencies that often distort the moral power of biblical texts. On one hand, excessive abstraction detaches ethics from the lived realities of communities, while on the other, reductionism risks turning Scripture into a mere tool for political advocacy (Milbank, 2006; Johnson, 2007). The CSEM addresses this tension by promoting a *balanced hermeneutic* one that safeguards theological integrity without silencing the moral demands of justice, reconciliation, and inclusion.

Practically, the CSEM offers a *transformative framework for moral formation* in Christian communities. It positions the Church not only as a doctrinal institution but as a *moral laboratory* where believers learn to enact compassion and solidarity across boundaries

(Hauerwas, 1981; Gula, 2010). By prioritising ethical compassion as transformative praxis, the model encourages faith communities to nurture disciples who embody neighbourly love in contexts marked by ethnic, religious, and socio-economic divides. In this sense, it contributes to the Church's mission of moral education, leadership formation, and pastoral engagement.

The CSEM also has implications for *intercultural and interfaith relations*. In societies fractured by conflict and exclusion, the Samaritan's boundary-crossing compassion provides a paradigm for reconciliation and social solidarity (Volf, 1996; Wright, 2010). This resonates with African communal ethics particularly *ubuntu* which emphasises shared humanity and relational responsibility. By integrating these moral insights, the CSEM supports intercultural dialogue grounded in mutual respect and shared moral values, offering a biblically informed resource for peacebuilding initiatives across faith traditions.

Furthermore, the model invites within seminaries and faith-based universities. Incorporating the CSEM could help educators train ministers and theologians to read Scripture contextually and ethically, equipping them to address issues such as social injustice, migration, and interfaith tension. This aligns with Cahill's (2006) call for a justice-oriented approach to theological ethics that remains responsive to gender, power, and inequality. The CSEM thus bridges the gap between academic theology and practical ministry, enabling moral reflection that is both theologically sound and socially transformative.

Finally, at a broader societal level, the model contributes to *public theology and Christian social ethics*. By articulating compassion as both a theological virtue and a public moral value, it situates the Church as a constructive moral voice in pluralistic societies. This can strengthen the Church's contribution to national conversations about social cohesion, ethical leadership, and peace. In sum, the *Contextual Samaritan Ethical Model* invites a reimagining of Christian ethics not as a static system of moral rules but as a *dynamic process of compassionate engagement*, a moral vision that is biblically grounded, culturally informed, and globally relevant.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has re-examined the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) as a vital text for shaping Christian ethical thought within pluralistic and culturally diverse societies. Through a theoretical and hermeneutical lens, it has been demonstrated that the parable extends beyond a moral exhortation to compassion; it functions as a theological narrative that redefines neighbourliness, justice, and moral identity in light of divine love. By reading the text contextually, the study has sought to preserve both its scriptural integrity and contemporary relevance, offering a pathway between theological orthodoxy and ethical praxis.

The development of the Contextual Samaritan Ethical Model (CSEM) marks the study's central theoretical contribution. The model proposes four interrelated principles: ethical compassion as transformative praxis, cross-cultural solidarity and moral inclusivity, hermeneutics of reconciliation, and contextualised ethical discernment. Together, these elements form a cohesive framework that integrates biblical hermeneutics, moral theology, and cultural ethics. In doing so, the CSEM addresses a key gap in current scholarship the lack of culturally grounded interpretations of New Testament ethics that engage African communal values, such as *ubuntu*, while remaining faithful to the theological core of the Gospel message.

Theologically, this model responds to the concerns of scholars like Hays (1996), Volf (1996), and Wright (2010), who advocate for Scripture-shaped moral vision, while also acknowledging the cautions of Milbank (2006) and Johnson (2007) against over-contextualization. By balancing these perspectives, the CSEM positions compassion not as sentimental benevolence but as a transformative, justice-oriented response rooted in divine initiative. This underscores the enduring significance of New Testament ethics as a source of moral imagination and social responsibility.

Practically, the CSEM calls for a renewed engagement of the Church and theological institutions in moral formation, peacebuilding, and intercultural dialogue. It encourages Christian communities to embody compassion as a public virtue that transcends boundaries of faith, ethnicity, and ideology. In a world increasingly divided by prejudice, economic disparity, and religious conflict, the parable's invitation to "go and do likewise" remains both a theological mandate and a moral vision.

Ultimately, this study reaffirms that contextual theology, when grounded in the narrative logic of Scripture, does not dilute faith it deepens it. By integrating context and text, culture and compassion, the *Contextual Samaritan Ethical Model* offers a sustainable framework for Christian moral reflection and action in an ever-diversifying global community.

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Migration of Herders and Socioeconomic Implications for Peace and Security in Nigeria

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Abstract

Climate-induced migration of livestock herders precipitates resource conflagration in the Nigeria's fertile Niger-Benue Trough. This north-south migration is fraught with severe challenges ranging from arson, resentments, destruction, displacements, and deaths. The persistently escalating violent clashes between nomadic herders and sedentary farming communities portend grave socioeconomic implications for peace and security in the country. With a specific focus on Benue State, Nigeria, this paper examines the reasons for herders' migration, conflicts with indigenous communities, and the multiplier effects on the nation's social and economic life. Underpinned by the resource scarcity theory, this study uses primary and secondary data sources. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with farmers, herders, agricultural extension workers, and local community members. Additionally, books, journals, periodicals, and internet sources were consulted. Findings indicate that governments' lethargy in restricting the migration of herders has resulted in violence. The paper recommends strict adherence to the provisions of the Benue State Open Grazing (Prohibition and Ranches Establishment) Law of 2017 to mitigate the conflict.

Keywords: *Farmers, Herders, Migration, Peace, Security*

1. INTRODUCTION

The resource-based conflict in Benue State between sedentary farming communities and migrant Fulani herders constitutes a grave security challenge and portends grave implications for the peace and security of Nigeria. Conflicts between farmers and herders have protracted across several communities in the state, contributing to the escalation of insecurities that impact human and community safety, food security, economic losses and access to livelihoods, social relationships, internal displacement, and forced migration. Regardless of their legal status, the migration of nomadic herders is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria; however, its scope, scale, frequency, and coordination of violence, which gravitate mainly around competition for scarce natural resources use have worsened over time. Migration is a very multifaceted term, as it includes all types of voluntary as well as forced movements of a population (Swain, 2019). Climate-induced migration is not a new phenomenon, it has

always been an essential part of human adaptation strategy to a constellation of climate change, conflict, and other challenges since the dawn of humankind. It has generated many opportunities for migrants and sedentary farming communities, but it has also posed many economic, social, and cultural challenges.

In the West African context, following the years of drought in the 1970s, conflicts and tensions have been fueled alongside a backdrop of unceasing environmental challenges and climate change, which negatively impact the two main production systems in the Sahel: agriculture and pastoralism, through the temperature rise, reduction of arable land, pastureland, and water. 2024 has shown that extreme weather is a risk that needs to be understood. And exposure to hazards can vary dramatically over very short distances. The year saw unprecedented global temperatures, with the Copernicus Global Climate Highlights Report 2024 confirming it as the hottest year on record (Copernicus, 2024). How worried should a state like Nigeria be about future conflicts from a changing climate? Conflicts between sedentary farmers and nomadic herders do not safeguard the conduct of economic and social activities and present a litany of asymmetric threats in North Central Nigeria and several areas of the Sahel Savannah belt. The fierce competition between crop farmers and cattle herders in the same spaces has always led to constant conflicts between these agriculturalists for control of the cropland. Such conflicts are either ignored by the authorities or, when resolutions are established, they are not workable. Consequently, this situation leads to open violence, which grows and worsens yearly, leaving a wake of destruction, a cycle of reprisals, forced displacements, deep-seated resentments, trauma, and deaths on both sides. This paper aims to come up with evidence-based information on the socioeconomic implications of the migration of herders on the peace and security in Nigeria by drawing on first-hand experience from key actors in the field. At the end of the paper, recommendations are made to governments and key actors to halt the dynamics of escalation of violence and mass killings.

2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Climate change

The Earth's surface has been getting warmer, and the weather has become concomitantly wilder and more destructive of human habitation at numerous places around the world in recent decades. Smith (2025) posits that the earth's climate is the result of natural phenomena interacting in a complex but systematic cyclical manner over millennia; but – despite internal eruptions from volcanoes, tectonic plate clashes, fog, flareups, heat absorption, reflection and refraction from disparate surfaces at different places - scientists have determined the earth's climate is mostly influenced by the sun. Severe climate change impacts include more frequent and severe droughts, extreme heat waves, heavy rainfall and rising seas, cold winter

storms, droughts, famine, wildfires, floods, landslides, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. Climate change is believed to be the most significant global threat of the 21st century (Chen, 2023; Smith, 2025). Climate change may not have directly killed people in Benue State and elsewhere, but it creates extreme environmental conditions and threats that initiate the migration of killer herders.

Migration

Migration is not a new phenomenon, it has always been an essential part of human adaptation to climate change, conflict, disasters, abject poverty, and other challenges since the dawn of humankind. Migration is a complex phenomenon as an ever-increasing number of people migrate in search of a better place, changing regions, countries, or even continents. While major internal and regular movement of people takes place from rural to urban areas and within urban areas in Nigeria, some rural–rural migration by farmers, seasonal labourers, and pastoralists from resource-poor to resource-rich rural areas, especially from the savannah zones to the fertile coastal areas, persists. Seasonal migration from the West African dry savannah zones to coastal areas during periods of low agricultural activity has been and remains a major form of migration witnessed in Nigeria (FRN, 2015). A study by Obasi, Nnamani, and Odinka (2023) shows that while seasonal human and transhumance migration has become part of life for many, the conflict that it creates raises much concern. Major factors that give rise to migratory flows within Nigeria include corruption, desertification, ethnic and religious conflicts, human rights violations, porous borders, poverty, unemployment, war, weak governance, etc. Migration is an essential part of human adaptation to the vagaries of life, but the conflict that it creates with indigenous farmers raises much concern. Large movements of migrant herders have consequences across and within communities, which require responses. Its multiplier effects include food insecurity, poverty marginalisation, unemployment, and distortion of the social and economic life of citizens (Obasi, Nnamani, & Odinka, 2023). It also pushes individuals and communities to develop their strategies for survival in the context of environmental deterioration and dwindling arable lands and pasturelands (Mercy Corps, 2014; Abdullah, 2025). The perennial conflicts between migrant herders and local communities can be understood as a problem of access to land and water resources, and criminality.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To better understand the resource-based conflict between farmers and herders, it is central to grasp the theory that explains their operating dynamics. This study is strongly anchored on the resource scarcity theory, which interprets the social dynamics of life as purely competitive due to the unevenly distributed natural resources and power. The theory holds that as resources become scarcer, groups are more likely to engage in competition, sometimes

escalating into violent conflict. This dynamic is particularly evident in regions like the Sahel, where climate stressors have contributed to cross-border tensions and communal violence (Hwang, 2025). Thus, the conflicts between sedentary crop farmers and nomadic herdsman are not merely because of migration, but because of the fierce competition for scarce resources.

4. METHODS

This paper employed a qualitative methodological approach, based on documentary research and face-to-face interviews conducted with key actors living in the study area to get firsthand information on the subject matter. A sample of 44 participants was interviewed in three local government areas of Agatu, Katsina-Ala, and Makurdi. The interviewees were men and women between 18 and 70 years who have full knowledge of the pivotal issues at stake and are victims of farmer-herder conflicts. They include farmers, nomadic herdsman, agricultural extension workers, students, and teachers. Also, books, journals, periodicals, and internet sources were consulted.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interactions between the Environment and Key Actors

Increases in the frequency of extreme weather events, flooding, rising sea levels, and coastal erosion pose significant risks to the governments of the region and the lives and livelihoods of their people. As a result, climate-induced migration and displacement are on the rise (UNFCCC, 2025). Many communities in Nigeria are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and environmental degradation. Facing a constellation of social, political, economic, health, and environmental challenges, the impact of climate change has compounded the relationships between herders and farmers. The increase in population is also an aggravating factor in the conflicts over land tenure, and particularly over the pivotal issue of grazing routes, which have been turned into residential and crop-growing areas by local farmers. Migratory herders move southwards in search of fertile pasturelands from Chad, Mali, and Niger and the northernmost part of Nigeria due to droughts which is a consequence of climate change. The wrongful interpretation of the ECOWAS Transhuman Protocol as granting a right of movement to herders and their livestock is fallacious. The willful encroachment of herders in areas generally dedicated to agriculture is a complex process fraught with risks and has generated conflicts between them and farmers. One clear area of agreement by participants in this study was on the potential for unchecked migration to continually impact negatively on the economy and peace of the state.

Key Actors and their Relationships

Crop farming and cattle herding are complementary types of agriculture practiced in the same spaces. They form the basis of the socioeconomic life of many in Benue State. The farmers are indigenous owners of the land and water, while the nomadic herders are the owners of livestock. Farmers require livestock products (dairy, fur, leather, meat, etc.); herders require farm produce (cassava, fish, fodder, ground nuts, potatoes, yams, vegetables, etc.). However, these two agricultural activities use different techniques of land tenure and require fertile areas. Farming is practised intensively and is carried out in clearly determined spaces on a seasonal basis; on the other hand, herding is generally practiced extensively across pasturelands and transhumance areas. Due to resource scarcity, the competition for resources occasionally gives rise to conflicts between the farmer and the herder. Ozekhome (2025) posits that herders are mostly itinerant illiterates who rely on knowledge passed down to them by their fathers or family members from one generation to another. Due to their lack of Western education, most herders often experience political marginalisation and social stigmatization. In environments where natural and public resources are reserved for ‘indigenous’ populations, they remain strangers and ‘non-citizens’ who are excluded from basic rights. During dry seasons, when there is a lack of fresh grass and water in parts of West Africa, herders drive their livestock to the middle belt region with fresh livestock fodder, reduced tse-tse flies at this season. The herdsman return to their homeland in Chad, Mali, Niger, and Northern Nigeria at the onset of raining season when tse-tse flies have increased in the Middle Belt (Orngu et al, 2019).

Livestock, mainly sheep, cattle, and goats, are significant contributors to Nigeria’s agriculture, with 60% being managed on semi-arid land (World Bank Group, 2021). Nevertheless, livestock often wanders, or is willfully led, to destroy farmers’ fields and pollute water sources. When such competitions are not resolved amicably, they become sources of instability and concern, which can lead to violence and loss of lives. These competitions have grown increasingly violent and deadly due to the actors’ usage of machetes, hunting rifles, small arms, and light weapons. Many farmers interviewed hold the view that the Nigerian state is usually partial towards herders, as reports of destruction of farms are treated with levity, whereas reports of theft of livestock are treated with all seriousness. “Police and soldier people no dey do anything when Fulani spoil our maize and groundnuts for farm, but make our youth touch dem *shanu* ‘cow’ police dem go arrest everybodi go lock for cell. Fulani go come for middle of night and kill us and burn our houses and our farms and government no go do pim” says an indigenous Tiv grandmother.

A similar feeling of partiality can also be found among the Fulani herders, who believe that the political changes which have taken place since colonisation, including the Land Use Act,

have not upheld the rights of the Fulani to transhumance activities. According to a Fulani merchant herder, the laws of Nigeria favour farmers and reinforce their powers in terms of land ownership. “The cross-border grazing routes belonging to our grandfathers are gradually being partitioned by crop farmers. Many places our forefathers usually passed through are now fenced and turned into commercial farms. Where do these people want us to pass? Where do these people want our animals to graze?” Thus, both communities often feel injured by the actions of the other in the absence of consistent land ownership and use systems. These overlapping claims to natural resource control by the farmer and herder communities negatively impact access to and use of land and water resources. These claims are usually backed by historical antecedents that influence the intensity of direct violence and the perpetuation of various attacks and counterattacks by both groups, further increasing community fragility and group vulnerability (Mercy Corps, 2014). All interviewees in this study agreed that relations between farming communities and herders are not harmonious; they are openly hostile to each other in Benue State. The narrative of violence between the two groups has continuously grown yearly; violent incidents have escalated.

The ECOWAS Trans-human Protocol

With a view to addressing the challenges highlighted in the preceding paragraphs, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in 1998, came up with the ECOWAS Transhumance Protocol. Article 3 of the Protocol provides for the right to free passage of all animals across the borders of all Member States. Also, the protocol introduced what is termed the ‘ECOWAS International Transhumance Certificate’ for each herd, providing information on the composition of the herd, the vaccinations given, the itinerary of the herds, the border posts to be crossed, and the final destination. This certificate is issued by the livestock department and initiated by the local administrative authorities in the country of origin. The International Transhumance Certificate enables authorities to monitor the herds before they leave the country of origin, to protect the health of local herds, and to make it possible to inform the host communities of the arrival of transhumant animals. This certificate, upon presentation, shall be verified and countersigned by the competent authorities at the entry and exit points in the host country under Article 6. Also, under the protocol, the herders must follow the routes defined by Member States in accordance with the itinerary indicated on the ECOWAS International Transhumance Certificate. The herders must also enter and leave each country at official border crossings and may not pass the border at night (Ozekhome, 2025).

The Protocol was designed to facilitate the free movement of pastoralists and their livestock across West Africa. ECOWAS recognises transhumance pastoralism as a beneficial livestock production system that can contribute to food security, together with economic and political

stability. The protocol seeks to regulate transhumance pastoralism by ensuring that herd movements are along defined migratory corridors among member states. Although the protocol has led to infrastructural developments in some member states, the partial enforcement of the protocol has led to herder–farmer conflicts (Timpong-Jones et al., 2023). The Protocol is without a binding agreement on ECOWAS regarding tackling drought, despite worsening global aridification trends threatening millions in the sub-region. However, given Nigeria’s escalating insecurity, particularly farmer-herder conflicts, banditry, and terrorism, the Protocol’s continued relevance and effectiveness need to be reviewed, and discernible gaps eliminated (Ozekhome, 2025).

The Benue State Anti-Grazing Law

Benue State is located in the tropical sub-humid region of Nigeria. The state is tagged “the food Basket of Nigeria” because farming is the major occupation in the state. Towards addressing the conflict between farmers and herders in the state and in consistent with its constitutional powers, the Benue state government in 2017 enacted the anti-open grazing and ranches establishment law, which prohibits the open rearing of livestock. Cited as “The Law to Prohibit Open Rearing and Grazing of Livestock and Provide for the Establishment of Ranches and Livestock Administration, Regulation and Control and Other Matters Connected Therewith, 2017.” The law also provided for the establishment of ranches in line with the best global practices in animal husbandry. Mercy Corps (2024) report states that several states vulnerable to migratory clashes, like Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Benue, Delta, Ebonyi, Ekiti, Enugu, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, Rivers, and Taraba have enacted laws banning open grazing of livestock. The enactment of these legal frameworks by these state governments to regulate animal husbandry in their states is part of the strategic responses aimed at addressing the escalating conflict. However, the implementation of the laws has come with some policy changes that have had implications for public safety and security, national cohesion, and the economy. A study by Gusa and Tijah (2023) found that despite stiff opposition by herdsmen and the unwillingness of the federally controlled security agencies in the implementation of the law, the Law has achieved some measure of success in reducing farmers/herdsmen clashes in the state.

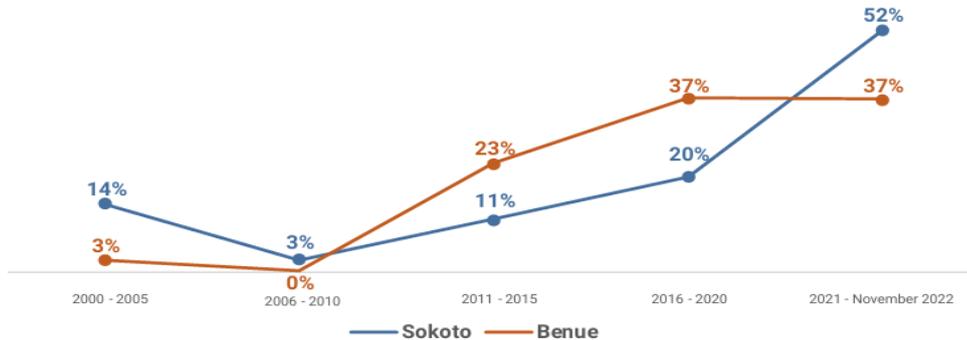
The escalation of conflicts between farmers and herders, and particularly their militarisation competitions, has grown increasingly deadly and reached new heights in 2025. The areas that experience the most frequent attacks are the fertile Niger-Benue Trough, which is the food-producing belt of Nigeria. The attacks in Benue have been severally described as ethnic cleansing by many: Omonobi (2025), James (2025), as gunmen suspected to be herdsmen have embarked on a killing spree, attacking villagers in their villages using sophisticated guns and machetes. Notwithstanding, the violent conflicts in all ramification of its

geopolitical or cross border character, using the word of Jarikre (2017), is not primarily a product of any ideological or regional leaning to pursue domestic regional political interest or working out a power equation in the Nigerian state (p 157). Data from Amnesty International shows that all 23 local government areas of Benue State suffered such attacks, with more frequent attacks on Ukum, Logo, Katsina-Ala, Gwer West, Gwer East, Apa, and Agatu local government areas. Over 200 villages have been sacked by gunmen across Benue State. These attacks have triggered a wave of displacement, with 450,000 people documented as internally displaced people. The findings further reveal that Benue state accounts for the highest death toll of 6,896, followed by Plateau state, where 2,630 people were killed within two years (Amnesty International, 2025). Likewise, *Daily Trust* reports that as of May 10, 2025, the total number of people killed in the state by armed attackers suspected to be Fulani herdsmen amounted to 159, within 40 days (Abba, 2025). The Benue State and federal governments, and terrorism have been blamed for the killings (Orngu et al, 2019; Eye Witness, 2025). The Courts have unanimously held unequivocally that the anti-open grazing law of Benue State is constitutional in all ramifications (Imbwaseh, Imbwaseh, and Atonko, 2023).

Socioeconomic Implications for Peace and Security in Nigeria

The perception of the adverse effects of climate change and the resultant migration is high, but there is a lack of awareness of the numerous ways in which they interact with vulnerabilities and insecurity. Nigeria is one of the most vulnerable countries to the impact of climate change and migration (World Bank Group, 2019). Nigeria is a country of origin, destination, and transit for many migrants. Access to natural resources is increasingly difficult in several Nigerian states such as Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Niger, and Plateau following the unchecked migration of herders in these areas leading to a deterioration of peace and security. As Jarikre and Attah (2024) observed, the menace of armed herdsmen and militia contributes significantly to the breach of peace and security of the communities (Jarikre & Attah, 2024, 154). What people seek first and foremost in these states is security. This is complicated by the circulation of small arms and light weapons, the expansion of terrorism in the area, leading to a heightening of tension, mostly observable between farmers and herders. Developing countries like Nigeria are the most vulnerable to climate change impacts because they have fewer resources to adapt socially, technologically, and financially (UNFCCC, 2025).

Table 1: Statistics of Herdsmen Attacks in Benue and Sokoto States 2015-2022



Source: Based on International Alert's primary research on the impact of climate change and natural resource management on livelihood, conflict and criminality in north-western and north-central states in Nigeria. Percentages refer to the proportion of respondents who reported experiencing violence over the years.

Source: *International Alert*. <https://www.international-alert.org/app/uploads/2024/05/Nigeria-climate-change-livelihoods-conflict-EN-2024.pdf>

6. CONCLUSION

The search for fodder and water by herders has brought bitter consequences to the people of Benue State. Addressing the intricate interplay between climate change, migration, and conflict is a multifaceted challenge that requires a paradigm shift that integrates environmental resilience into the fabric of constitutional law and security strategies. The federal government and the Benue State government need to take urgent action to address the multiple effects of the migration of herders. Failure to act decisively risks undermining not only socioeconomic, peace, and security but also the broader goals of sustainable development. By fostering global best practices and innovative policies in ranching, the country can navigate the complex interplay between climate change, migration, and security, thereby ensuring a more resilient and peaceful future. In addressing the challenges, the government should adopt a holistic approach, ensuring that all stakeholders impacted by the conflict arising from the migration of herders are represented during the implementation of the following recommendations.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The federal government should ensure that arms and light weapons in the hands of farmers and herdsmen are retrieved. The federal government should strengthen border patrol and control, as most herdsmen are illegal migrants. A review of the ECOWAS Transhumance Protocol to capture current realities is expedient. A strict adherence to the provisions of the

Benue State Open Grazing (Prohibition and Ranches Establishment) Law of 2017 is encouraged. Suffice it that the article does not only illuminate the undercurrent trajectory of resource conflagration in the fertile Niger-Benue Trough but also resonates the challenge of limited study on the legislative framework or paradigm to addresses the phenomenon adequately.

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**Cognitive Process Awareness as Predictor of Study Habits among
Secondary School Student in Akoko Southeast, Ondo State**

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Abstract

This study investigated cognitive process awareness as a predictor of study habits among secondary school students in Akoko South East Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. The research aimed to explore the extent to which students' awareness of their cognitive processes such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning affects their study habits. The study was guided by three research questions and two hypotheses. A descriptive survey research design was employed, using a self-structured questionnaire to gather data from 200 students across selected secondary schools in the region. Descriptive statistics (frequency counts, mean scores, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (One-Sample t-test and One-Way ANOVA) were used for data analysis. Findings revealed a high level of cognitive process awareness among the respondents, with a grand mean score of 3.31. Study habits were found to be moderate (mean score = 2.65), with variations among students in areas such as time management and academic consistency. The study confirmed a statistically significant influence of cognitive process awareness on study habits ($F = 6.18, p < 0.05$), and rejected both null hypotheses, establishing that students with higher cognitive awareness exhibited more effective study practices. It was concluded that fostering metacognitive strategies could enhance students' academic engagement and performance. The study recommended that teachers explicitly teach metacognitive skills; schools incorporate cognitive awareness in curriculum; and students, parents, and policymakers work collaboratively to promote reflective learning. Workshops and further research into related psychological and environmental variables were also advised.

Keywords: *Academic Performance, Cognitive Process Awareness, Metacognition, Secondary School Students, Study Habits.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has witnessed a remarkable shift toward a knowledge-driven economy in which education functions as the principal engine of national development and social transformation. Globally, education is recognized as a vital instrument for preserving, transmitting, and advancing knowledge while fostering individual and collective growth. In

Nigeria, education remains a cornerstone of self-reliance and sustainable development, as it prepares citizens to contribute meaningfully to national progress. However, despite its centrality, concerns have grown over the noticeable decline in students' academic performance at the secondary school level. Teachers, parents, administrators, and policymakers increasingly attribute these challenges to ineffective study habits and weak internal learning mechanisms among students.

Study habits, defined as the consistent practices, behaviours, and strategies students adopt to acquire and retain knowledge, are widely acknowledged as determinants of academic success (Ebele & Olufu, 2017). Good study habits enable learners to achieve excellence, while poor or unstructured study habits often result in underachievement or failure. Within this context, researchers have begun to highlight the importance of internal cognitive factors, particularly cognitive process awareness, in shaping effective study behaviours. Cognitive process awareness commonly described as “thinking about thinking” or metacognition refers to an individual's ability to understand, monitor, and regulate their cognitive processes. Students who demonstrate higher levels of cognitive process awareness are better positioned to plan, evaluate, and adapt their study strategies, leading to more efficient learning and improved academic performance (Ajayi, 2024).

Cognitive process awareness consists of two interrelated components: knowledge of cognition and regulation of cognition. Knowledge of cognition involves declarative knowledge (awareness of one's learning strengths and weaknesses), procedural knowledge (understanding how to apply learning strategies), and conditional knowledge (recognising when and why to apply particular strategies). Regulation of cognition, in contrast, involves the ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate learning activities effectively. Together, these dimensions equip learners with the tools to manage their study routines, overcome challenges, and optimise academic achievement. Empirical evidence suggests that students with strong metacognitive awareness are more likely to adopt purposeful study routines, allocate time effectively, and make necessary adjustments to enhance learning outcomes (Marc, 2011; Islam, 2021).

In recent years, the role of guidance and counselling in Nigerian schools has also been emphasised as a means of strengthening students' metacognitive development and study habits. Counsellors and teachers are increasingly tasked with equipping learners with reflective skills that enable them to take responsibility for their learning outcomes. However, the lack of systematic integration of metacognitive instruction into the secondary school curriculum continues to limit its impact. Where such interventions are absent, students are left to depend largely on rote memorisation and trial-and-error study approaches, which do

not guarantee long-term retention or critical problem-solving skills. This gap suggests the urgent need for structured programmes that can bridge awareness and practice, ensuring that cognitive process awareness translates into consistent and effective study habits among students (Rajcoomar et al., 2022; Zerdali & Eđmir, 2025).

Furthermore, the socio-cultural and technological context of learning in Nigeria is rapidly changing, with increased access to digital resources, social media, and online learning platforms. While these tools offer opportunities for self-directed learning, they also present challenges such as distraction, poor concentration, and reduced self-discipline. Students who lack cognitive regulation skills may struggle to filter useful information, manage screen time, or sustain attention on academic tasks. In such a setting, cognitive process awareness becomes even more critical, as it enables learners to consciously monitor their engagement, set meaningful goals, and evaluate their progress in a complex and distraction-filled learning environment. Strengthening this awareness may therefore serve as a protective factor that empowers students to cultivate stronger study habits and thrive academically despite external pressures (Xu et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2025).

Despite this growing recognition, many Nigerian secondary school students lack sufficient awareness of these processes, resulting in ineffective study patterns. Inadequate learning environments, limited instructional resources, socioeconomic challenges, and family-related stressors often exacerbate these deficiencies. In Akoko South East, Ondo State, where this study is situated, students might face additional challenges such as poor access to textbooks, insufficient subject teachers, and limited guidance on study practices. This constraint hinders ability to develop the discipline and self-regulatory skills required for effective learning. While external factors remain important, there is limited empirical research on how internal cognitive processes, specifically cognitive process awareness, predict study habits in this context.

This study, therefore, seeks to examine the predictive relationship between cognitive process awareness and study habits among secondary school students in Akoko South East, Ondo State. By exploring this relationship, the research aims to generate evidence-based insights that can inform the design of targeted interventions for improving students' academic outcomes. Understanding the role of cognitive process awareness in shaping study habits not only contributes to existing scholarship but also provides practical implications for educators, counsellors, and policymakers seeking to strengthen academic achievement in Nigerian secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the study Habit of secondary school students in Akoko Southeast?
2. What is the influence of cognitive process awareness on students?

Research Hypotheses

There is no significant influence of cognitive process awareness on the study habits of secondary school students

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent scholarship consistently underscores the role of cognitive process awareness (metacognition) in shaping students' study habits and academic outcomes. A large-scale meta-analysis found a moderate positive correlation between metacognition and mathematics achievement, showing that students who plan, monitor, and evaluate their cognitive processes perform better in demanding subjects (Fu, Y., Qi, C. (2025). Similarly, meta-analytic research on self-regulated learning (SRL) interventions has shown that structured training in metacognitive strategies leads to significant improvements in achievement, particularly in online and blended learning contexts (Xu et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2025). These findings affirm the predictive value of metacognitive awareness for effective study behaviours.

Empirical classroom-based studies reinforce this link. Rajcoomar (2024) demonstrated that metacognitive strategy instruction enhances students' ability to adjust their study routines, sustain attention, and improve problem-solving outcomes. In the same vein, systematic reviews have reported that fostering reflective monitoring allows learners to adapt study habits based on performance feedback (Guo, 2022; Dignath et al., 2023). Furthermore, Zerdali and Eǧmir (2025) established a significant relationship between reflective thinking and metacognitive awareness among secondary school students, highlighting that awareness of cognitive processes strengthens students' independence and adaptability in learning.

Within the Nigerian context, related studies confirm these global trends. Omoniyi and Fawehinmi (2025) found that secondary school students' study habits were significantly correlated with their mathematics performance, suggesting that good study routines remain crucial predictors of achievement. Similarly, Ellah and Emaikwu (2023) validated the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory in Physics (MAIP) for use among Nigerian learners, providing locally relevant tools for measuring awareness. More broadly, Agrawal et al., (2025) noted that awareness alone is insufficient, stressing the need for structured supports

such as teacher-led interventions and counselling programs to translate awareness into consistent and effective study practices.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a correlation research design to examine the relationship between Cognitive Process Awareness (CPA) and Study Habits (SH) among secondary school students in Akoko South East Local Government Area of Ondo State. A total of 200 students were randomly selected from five secondary schools across five towns Isua, Ifira, Sosan, Ipesi, and Ikun using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across classes and gender. The sample comprised 39 males (19.5%) and 161 females (80.5%), aged between 11 and 18 years, mostly from lower- to middle-income families. Two standardized instruments were used for data collection: the Cognitive Process Awareness Inventory (CPAI) consisting of 10 items adapted from Schraw and Dennison (1994), and the Study Habits Inventory (SHI), a 16-item researcher-developed scale. Both instruments used a 4-point Likert scale. Expert validation established content and face validity, while pilot testing yielded satisfactory reliability coefficients: CPAI ($\alpha = 0.82$) and SHI ($\alpha = 0.88$). Data were collected with permission from school authorities and informed consent from student. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was assured. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics for demographic information and Pearson Product Moment Correlation to determine the relationship between cognitive process awareness and study habits at a 0.05 level of significance.

4. RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the study Habit of secondary school students?

Table 1: Analysis of the Students’ Responses Based on the study Habit of secondary school students

| S/N | ITEMS | SA (%) | A (%) | D (%) | SD (%) | MEAN | Std. Dev |
|-----|---|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------|----------|
| 1. | I have a regular study routine. | 21 (10.5%) | 109 (54.5%) | 31 (15.5%) | 39 (19.5%) | 2.55 | 1.05 |
| 2. | I review my notes and textbook regularly. | 25 (12.5%) | 130 (65.0%) | 24 (12.0%) | 21 (10.5%) | 2.80 | 0.98 |
| 3. | I set aside dedicated time for studying each day. | 19 (9.5%) | 102 (51.0%) | 41 (20.5%) | 38 (19.0%) | 2.49 | 1.02 |
| 4. | I avoid procrastination and stay focused during study sessions. | 22 (11.0%) | 111 (55.5%) | 36 (18.0%) | 31 (15.5%) | 2.63 | 1.00 |
| 5. | I seek help from teachers or classmates when I need it. | 30 (15.0%) | 119 (59.5%) | 25 (12.5%) | 26 (13.0%) | 2.78 | 0.96 |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------|--|---------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| 6. | I ask myself periodically if I am meeting my goals. | 29 (14.5%) | 94 (47.0%) | 28 (14.0%) | 49 (24.5%) | 2.52 | 1.02 |
| 7. | I try to use strategies that have worked in the past. | 32 (16.0%) | 127 (63.5%) | 20 (10.0%) | 21 (10.5%) | 2.81 | 0.83 |
| 8. | I consciously focus my attention on important information. | 33 (16.5%) | 99 (49.5%) | 61 (30.5%) | 7 (3.5%) | 2.78 | 0.76 |
| 9. | I learn best when I know something about the topic. | 34 (17.0%) | 111 (55.5%) | 27 (13.5%) | 28 (14.0%) | 2.76 | 0.90 |
| 10. | I ask myself if there was an easier way to do things after I finish a task | 24 (12.0%) | 95 (47.5%) | 27 (13.5%) | 54 (27.0%) | 2.43 | 1.02 |
| 11. | I adjust my study strategies based on my performance in tests and exams. | 24 (12.0%) | 112 (56.0%) | 30 (15.0%) | 34 (17.0%) | 2.63 | 0.90 |
| Average | | | | | | 2.65 | 0.96 |

Field survey, 2025

The findings in Table 3 reveal that secondary school students in Akoko South East exhibit a moderately effective level of study habits, with mean scores ranging between 2.41 and 2.89 on a 4-point scale. Students reported engaging in constructive behaviours such as reviewing notes, setting goals, and seeking academic support, which reflects an awareness of effective study strategies. However, the lower ratings in areas like distraction management, time management, and consistent self-assessment suggest that these habits are not fully developed or regularly maintained.

The overall grand mean of 2.65 (SD = 0.93) confirms that students demonstrate study habits at a moderate level rather than consistently high performance. This implies that while they recognise and practice some effective study behaviours, gaps remain in applying them systematically. Consequently, there is a need for targeted interventions from teachers and counsellors to help students develop more structured, disciplined, and self-regulated study routines that can enhance their academic success.

Research Questions 2: What is the influence of cognitive process awareness on students?

Table 2: Analysis of the Students’ Responses Based on the influence of cognitive process awareness on students

| S/N | ITEMS | SA (%) | A (%) | D (%) | SD (%) | MEAN | Std. Dev |
|-----|--|------------|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 | I perform better in school because I understand how I learn best. | 62 (31.0%) | 87 (43.5%) | 31 (15.5%) | 20 (10.0%) | 2.96 | 0.94 |
| 2 | Knowing my learning strategies has helped me improve my study habits. | 55 (27.5%) | 89 (44.5%) | 35 (17.5%) | 21 (10.5%) | 2.89 | 0.93 |
| 3 | I feel more confident in class because I monitor my understanding of topics. | 46 (23.0%) | 97 (48.5%) | 37 (18.5%) | 20 (10.0%) | 2.85 | 0.90 |
| 4 | I can adjust my study techniques when I am not performing well. | 59 (29.5%) | 92 (46.0%) | 29 (14.5%) | 20 (10.0%) | 2.95 | 0.91 |
| 5 | Thinking about my thinking (self-reflection) helps me solve problems more effectively. | 67 (33.5%) | 84 (42.0%) | 29 (14.5%) | 20 (10.0%) | 2.99 | 0.94 |
| 6 | My academic success is linked to how I plan and evaluate my learning. | 51 (25.5%) | 88 (44.0%) | 38 (19.0%) | 23 (11.5%) | 2.84 | 0.95 |
| 7 | I am motivated to study because I have learned to manage distractions and challenges. | 43 (21.5%) | 95 (47.5%) | 41 (20.5%) | 21 (10.5%) | 2.80 | 0.91 |
| 8 | I learn more deeply when I reflect on what I understand and what I do not. | 49 (24.5%) | 91 (45.5%) | 37 (18.5%) | 23 (11.5%) | 2.83 | 0.93 |
| 9 | I often change my study pattern based on feedback from teachers or test performance. | 38 (19.0%) | 102 (51.0%) | 40 (20.0%) | 20 (10.0%) | 2.79 | 0.89 |
| 10 | Awareness of my thinking process makes me a better and more independent learner. | 56 (28.0%) | 85 (42.5%) | 39 (19.5%) | 20 (10.0%) | 2.89 | 0.93 |
| | Average | — | — | — | — | 2.88 | 0.92 |

Field survey, 2025

The results presented in Table 4 indicate that students generally perceive cognitive process awareness as a strong influence on their academic behaviour and performance. High percentages of students agreed that understanding their learning processes improves study habits, boosts confidence, and enhances classroom engagement, with mean scores ranging from 2.79 to 2.99. Notably, self-reflection (Mean = 2.99) and the ability to adjust study techniques when performance is poor (Mean = 2.95) were among the most highly endorsed items, highlighting the role of metacognitive flexibility in academic improvement.

Furthermore, students acknowledged that planning, evaluation, and feedback-based adjustments positively affect their learning outcomes, while awareness of thinking processes fosters greater independence. With an overall mean score of 2.88 and consistent responses across items, the findings affirm that cognitive process awareness significantly enhances study habits, motivation, adaptability, and problem-solving skills. This underscores its potential as a key predictor of academic success among secondary school students in Akoko South East.

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of cognitive process awareness on the study habits of secondary school students

ANOVA Table on Influence of Cognitive Process Awareness on Study Habits

| Source of Variation | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | Fcal | Ftab | p-value | Decision |
|---------------------|----------------|------------|-------------|------|------|---------|-----------------|
| Between Groups | 10.36 | 2 | 5.18 | 6.18 | 3.04 | 0.002 | Reject H_{01} |
| Within Groups | 165.88 | 197 | 0.84 | | | | |
| Total | 176.24 | 199 | | | | | |

The result of the one-way ANOVA revealed that cognitive process awareness has a statistically significant influence on the study habits of secondary school students. The calculated F-value ($F(2,197) = 6.18$) is greater than the critical value (3.04) at the 0.05 level of significance, with degrees of freedom (2, 197). In addition, the p-value (0.002) is less than 0.05, indicating strong evidence against the null hypothesis. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that students' levels of cognitive process awareness significantly influence their study habits. Students with higher cognitive awareness are more likely to exhibit effective study habits than those with lower awareness levels.

Assumption Checks

Before performing the ANOVA, assumption tests were carried out:

- **Normality:** The Shapiro–Wilk test confirmed that the data for all groups were approximately normally distributed ($p > 0.05$).
- **Homogeneity of Variance:** Levene’s test for equality of variances was not significant ($p = 0.214$), indicating that the assumption of equal variances was satisfied.

Since these assumptions were met, the ANOVA results are considered valid and reliable.

Effect Size

The strength of the relationship was assessed using eta squared (η^2), calculated as:

$$\eta^2 = \frac{SS_{\text{between}}}{SS_{\text{total}}} = \frac{10.36}{176.24} = 0.059$$

This value ($\eta^2 = 0.059$) represents a moderate effect size, suggesting that about 5.9% of the variation in study habits can be attributed to differences in students’ levels of cognitive process awareness.

Post-Hoc Analysis

Since there were more than two groups ($df = 2$), a Tukey HSD post-hoc test was conducted to determine where the differences occurred. The post-hoc results showed that students with high cognitive process awareness had significantly better study habits than those with low awareness ($p < 0.01$). The difference between moderate and high awareness groups was also significant ($p < 0.05$), while no significant difference was found between the low and moderate groups.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study revealed that secondary school students in Akoko South East possess a significantly high level of cognitive process awareness, confirming that many are able to plan, monitor, and reflect on their learning processes. Such awareness is consistent with Flavell’s (1979) theory of metacognition and Veenman et al., (2006) findings that metacognitive skills strongly predict academic success. The study also showed that students displayed moderately effective study habits, such as reviewing notes and seeking academic help, though consistency in daily routines and time management was limited. This finding

aligns with Credé and Kuncel (2008), who reported that structured study behaviours play a vital role in learning outcomes.

The results further demonstrated that cognitive process awareness significantly influences study habits, as confirmed by the ANOVA test ($F = 6.18, p < 0.05$). Students with higher cognitive awareness were more motivated, confident, and capable of adjusting their study strategies, which supports Schraw and Dennison's (1994) and Panadero's (2017) assertion that metacognitive regulation enhances adaptability and learning efficiency. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of fostering cognitive process awareness in Nigerian secondary schools. By explicitly teaching metacognitive strategies, educators and counsellors can strengthen students' study habits, thereby improving academic engagement and performance.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Integration of Metacognitive Training:** Schools should incorporate metacognitive strategy instruction into the curriculum, helping students to consciously plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning processes for better study outcomes.
2. **Teacher-Centred Interventions:** Teachers should explicitly model effective study strategies and guide students in applying them consistently, thereby strengthening cognitive awareness and study habits.
3. **Counselling Support:** School counsellors should organize regular workshops and group counselling sessions focused on developing reflective learning, self-regulation, and time-management skills among students.
4. **Parental Involvement:** Parents should be sensitized to encourage supportive home environments that promote structured study routines and reduce distractions, especially from digital devices and social media.
5. **Policy and Resource Provision:** Educational policymakers should provide adequate learning materials, teacher training, and technological support to enhance both teaching and learning effectiveness in resource-constrained schools.
6. **Further Research:** Future studies should extend the scope to other regions and examine related variables such as emotional regulation, motivation, and socio-economic status to build a holistic understanding of predictors of study habits.

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Relevance of the Strategic Management Process to the Small and Medium Scale Enterprise

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Abstract

This study examined the relevance of the strategic management process to the small and medium enterprises in Calabar, Cross River State. A survey method with cross-sectional design was used to collect data from 500 owner-managers of SMEs located in Calabar. One hypothesis was used as a guide to the study. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, chi square test. The major findings revealed that strategic management process has strong relevance on the growth of small and medium enterprise. It was concluded that just as it is in the big businesses, relevance of the strategic management process in SMEs is enormous.

Keywords: *Strategy, Strategic planning, small and medium business.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Small and medium Enterprises (SMEs) have been identified as fundamental feature of the recovery which can provide over 60 percent economic activity as well as become the engine of growth required by the Nigerian Government for the much needed sustainable development in terms of job and wealth creation. Most developed and developing countries owe their rapid socio-economic growth to SMEs which are instruments of industrialization and rural development. SMEs provide integration support and complement large industries in the value and supply chain. Statistics have shown that about 90 percent of the workforce in china are in the SME sector. In India, Indonesia, Turkey and Malaysia, it is over 80 percent and the figure is said to be rising. Therefore, small firms, even though less conspicuous, are vital components of the economy. In this paper presentation we examined the relevance of the strategic management process to the Small and Medium businesses (NOUN, 2009).

In Nigeria, shaping the future beyond oil is a critical part of the national agenda. The current economy is dominated by oil industry. The labour force of over ninety million is growing and the unemployment is currently at 60 percent with millions of workers unemployed

(National Bureau of Statistic (NBS), 2019). Nigeria has the largest domestic market in Africa, a wide range of natural resources and a diversely skilled labour poll.

Given these economic realities, the country must constantly create new jobs and diversity the industrial and commercial sector for SMEs and the big business organization to take advantage of human and natural resources. The strategic management process have been found to be capable of making the SMEs to grow rapidly to the extent of causing a serious positive impact on the economy of the nation and quality of life of the people through economic growth, employment generation. The application of the strategic management process by the SME will encourage the mobilization of domestic savings, utilization of local resources and the production of raw material in the form of semi-processed goods for use by the bigger industries (Osalo, 2017).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and their Performance in Nigeria.

The meaning of SMEs differs across frontiers (Effiom & Edet, 2018). However, numbers of persons employed seen to remain a recurring trend. Capital employed, sales turnover, and/or assets are also used in categorizing firms. In Nigeria, small scale enterprise is a firm employing a workforce of 11- 100 persons or capital not exceeding ₦50 million including working capital but excluding cost of land. While a medium scale enterprise is one with a workforce of 101 – 300 persons or capital of exceeding ₦50 million but not more than ₦200 million, including working capital but excluding cost of land. Central Bank of Nigeria (2010) in its definition of what constitutes SMEs accepted the number of staff employed at the above level, but differs on asset value. Thus firms with asset ranging between ₦5 million and ₦500 million are closed under SMEs.

Small and Medium Enterprises in Nigeria are believed to account for about 40 percent of GDP and 70 percent of industrial employment (Eniola, 2014). Effiom and Edet (2018), notes that about 87 percent of all enterprises in Nigeria by definition are small business and contribute and estimated 61 percent of GDP. At the national level, they generate 58 percent of employment. Even in the developed and highly industrial nations, SMEs continue to play crucial and significant economic and social stabilization roles. The foregoing clearly shows the strategic role SMEs continue to play in both developed and emerging economics.

Such roles cannot be over-emphasized, especially in an economy like Nigeria where there is higher dependence on crude-oil export as the major foreign exchange earner, these include; employment generation, diversification of National economy and conserving foreign exchange, promotion of indigenous technology and utilization of local resources, as well as poverty reduction, income redistribution and inclusive growth (Eniola, 2014).

Arguably, the Nigeria economy has not fare better because SMEs have not played their expected roles. This is however, inspite of concerned interventions by successive government administrations. The under-performance of this sector is perceivably indicative of unaddressed fundamental problems. Literature reveals a myriad of issues which include; inefficient and inadequate infrastructures such as power and water supply, poor road network, business management process etc. SMEs are therefore compelled to provide such critical facilities thereby increasing their operational cost. Also the administration of subsidies incentives and other interventions are characterized by corruption and stringent requirements, but discouraging potential entrepreneurs and crowding out existing ones.

In addition to these challenges, Dimoji and Onwumere (2016), State that inability to adopt and apply the appropriate strategic management process, personnel management challenges appropriate technology application and low formal education and technical competence of the SME owners are the major challenges of SMEs in Nigeria. All these fall under the poor or lack of strategic planning in entrepreneurship. Most small business owners do not understand the concept of strategic management and its benefits their business.

Strategic Management Process As one of the Roles/Responsibilities of the Small and Medium Business Managers

Strategic management consists of competitive move and business approaches to produce successful performance. It denotes management game plan for:

- Running the business
- Strengthening firms competitive position
- Satisfying customers
- Archiving performance targets.

Adapted from NOUN BUS 838.

According to Lamb (1984), quoted in NOUN ENT 329 it is an ongoing process that evaluates and controls the business and the industries in which the company is Involved, assesses its competitors and set goals and strategies to meet all existing and potential competitors, and then re-access each strategy annually or quarterly i.e regularly to determine how it has been implemented and whether it has succeeded or needs replacement by a new strategy to meet change circumstances, new technology, new competitors, new economic environment, or a new social, financial or political environment.

Strategic Management Process (SMP) can be an objective, logical and systematic approach for making major decisions in an organization. SMP attempts to organize qualitative and

quantitative information in a way that allows for effective decision making under conditions of uncertainty.

Strategic management process (SMP) can therefore be defined as the way the strategist determine corporate objectives and make strategic decisions. The strategic decisions are designed to achieve ends or to achieve organization's objective.

Stages of Strategic Management Process as Applicable to Small and Medium Enterprises.

Strategic management process consists of three stages, namely:

- Strategic formulations
- Strategic implementation and
- Strategic evaluation

Adapted from NOUN BUS 383

However, some school of thought see strategic management process as consisting of two sub-process which are strategic planning (SP) and strategic implementation (SI) in this, the strategic planning process is broken down into analysis/diagnosis and choice while the strategic implementation sub-process is broken down into implementation and evaluation. This gives rise to the formula:

$$\text{SMP} = \text{SP} + \text{SI}$$

$$= \text{Analysis/Diagnosis} + \text{choice} + \text{Implementation} + \text{Evaluation}$$

The planning has to do essentially with the work programme. All senior management officers from all major functions of the organization should be involved in planning. A planning Committee may be set up to be in charge. The planning officer is the catalyst and co-coordinator to make sure the plan is complemented. The planning committee may be responsible for the strategic planning.

3. CONFIGURATION AND LEVELS OF SMES

According to Lucy (1995) it is the number of levels between the workers and top management which determines the configuration or shape of the organization i.e tall or flat structure. Since most SMEs falls within the sole proprietorship they do not have many level of management or authority, they may have just one or two levels. Numerous factors influence the number of levels in an organization, the main ones of which are:-

- Size of organization
- Complexity and nature of operation

- Production methods
- Technology
- Management style and attitude to authority
- Amount of delegation practiced
- Spans of control
- Ability of management and personnel.

However, the flat structure which is the characteristic of the small and medium businesses has the following features:-

- Relatively small size
- Few levels of authority and management
- Short chain of command
- Technology to suit mass production operations
- Broad span of control.

With these features, it becomes obvious that the corporate and business level responsibilities in a small business are concentrated in a single group of managers.

4. METHODOLOGY

This was a questionnaire-based cross-sectional study on the relevance of strategic management process in small and medium business. The study was carried out in the organizations listed as internship partners with the south-south Entrepreneurship Development Centre (SSEDC), Calabar. About 250 small business organizations were randomly selected out of the 485 small businesses listed with the SSEDC for internship training of participants.

Data were collected on pre-test researcher-administered structured questionnaire and analyzed using statistical tools. Information collected included their socio-demographic data, level of knowledge and application of the stages of the strategic management process. Descriptive statistics were obtained for quantitative variable while frequencies and percentages were used to present categorical variables. Chi square statistical test was carried out were applicable with the level of significance set at $p < 0.05$

Presentation and Analysis of Data

A total of 500 questionnaires were administered to the two most senior managers in the survey area. 422 of the 500 managers surveyed returned completed questionnaire giving a

response rate of 84.4%. The respondents (male 59.5% and female 40.5%) were made up of top management staff and/or proprietors with a mean age of 44.8 plus/minus 14 years.

Table 1. Socio-demographic status of the respondent.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 250 | 59.2 |
| Female | 172 | 40.8 |
| Total: | 422 | 100 |
| Age Group in Years | | |
| Under 29 | 26 | 6 |
| 30 - 39 | 84 | 20 |
| 40 - 49 | 186 | 44 |
| 50 - 59 | 102 | 24 |
| 60 and above | 24 | 6 |
| Total | 422 | 100 |
| Level of Education | | |
| Primary/Non Formal | 28 | 6.6 |
| Secondary | 162 | 38.4 |
| Tertiary | 232 | 55.0 |
| Total: | 422 | 100 |
| Present Position | | |
| Manager | 246 | 58.3 |
| Assistant Manager | 176 | 41.7 |
| Total: | 422 | 100 |

Table 1 above shows that in the study are, the male managers and assistants are more than the female managers and assistants. The study also revealed that the respondents who are educated up to tertiary level are more than the other level of education. Again, the analysis of data in the table shows that the majority of the respondents are in the age bracket of 40 – 49 while the respondents who are in the position of manager are more than those who are their assistants.

Table 2. Statistic for the knowledge of strategic management process

| How much do you understand the concept of strategic management process? | | |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
| Very High | 408 | 96.7 |
| Very Low | 14 | 3.3 |
| Total | 422 | 100 |

| | | |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Knowledge of strategic planning is the process of setting goals and objectives | | |
| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
| Agree | 412 | 96.7 |
| Not Agree | 10 | 2.4 |
| Total | 422 | 100 |
| | | |
| Strategic planning involves answering the ‘WH’ questions | | |
| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
| Agree | 390 | 92.4 |
| Not Agree | 32 | 7.6 |
| Total | 422 | 100 |
| | | |
| Strategic choice as a part of strategic management process helps manager to generate, evaluate and select strategic options. | | |
| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
| Agree | 415 | 98.3 |
| Not Agree | 7 | 1.7 |
| Total | 422 | 100 |

The statistics in table 2 showed that a higher percentage of the respondents a bitter knowledge of the strategic management process. A higher percentage (97.6%) also agreed that strategic management process is the process of setting goals and objectives. 97.6% of the respondents are also agreed that strategic planning involves answering the “WH” questions. The analysis of data in this table also showed that 98.3% of the respondents agreed that strategic choice as a part of strategic management process helps managers to generate, evaluate and select strategic options.

Table 3. Statistic for the application of Strategic management process.

| | | |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Strategic management process is essential for the formulation and selection of business strategy | | |
| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
| Agree | 360 | 85.3 |
| Disagree | 62 | 14.7 |
| Total | 422 | 100 |
| | | |
| Strategic management is a tool for managers to understand the strategic position of their organization. | | |
| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
| True | 422 | 100 |
| False | 0 | 0 |

| | | |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Total | 422 | 100 |
| Strategic formulation at corporate level should be a combination of offensive and defensive moves to pursue new opportunities and protect existing one respectively. | | |
| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
| True | 392 | 92.9 |
| False | 30 | 7.1 |
| Total | 422 | 100 |

The statistics in table 3 showed that a large percentage of the respondents applied the concept of strategic management process in their organization. This is shown as 85.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that strategic management process is essential for the formulation and selection of business strategy. The table also showed that all the respondents (100%) believed that strategic position of their organization. 92.9% of the respondents also believed strategic formulation at corporate level should be a combination of offensive and defensive moves to pursue new opportunities and protect existing one.

Table 4. Test of hypothesis.

Ho: Strategic management process has no relevance in small and medium business.

| S/N | Response | Observed | Expected | D | D ² | X ² |
|-----|--------------|------------|----------|------|----------------|----------------|
| 1 | Yes | 400 | 211 | 189 | 35721 | 169.3 |
| 2 | No | 22 | 211 | -189 | 34721 | 169.3 |
| | TOTAL | 422 | | | | |

$X^2_{cal} \alpha X^2_{tab}$

$338.6 \alpha (R-1)$ under 5%

$338.6 \alpha 2-1$ under 0.05

$338.6 > 3.841$

Decision: the result of data analysis above indicate that the chi square values of 338.6 is greater than the table value of 3.841, therefore, the Ho is rejected, meaning that the Strategic management process has relevance in small and medium business.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Many managers in this study were aware that managerial skill is needed for the success of their business. This awareness could be attributed to the high literacy rate among them on the one hand, and the entrepreneurial training they received on the other hand. The study had

revealed or confirmed that the strategic management process is very essential for the formulation and selection of business strategies that are closely matched with the firm's skill and resources.

Small business, just like big business needs strategic management process for effective operation. Therefore, strategic management process has a great relevance in small business. Some of the relevance as revealed from the study includes the following:-

- Strategic analysis actually helped managers to form a picture of the factors that influences their organization so that they can be informed of the strategic choice element of the overall strategic management process.
- Managers use strategic analysis as a tool to analyses their organization's strength and weakness in their environment.
- The strategic position of the firm can be understood with the help of strategic analysis.
- Taking the nature of the organization into consideration, managers can generate, evaluate and select possible strategic options through strategic choice analysis.
- Strategic management emphasizes employee motivation which the manager's successful strategy implementation is hinged upon.

6. CONCLUSION

On the whole, managers in the study confirmed that in practice, strategic planning help them to determine the long term direction of their firms, determine the resources requirement of their company, establish the overall goals and strategies of their firms, and assess the competitive position of the firms. All this influences the quality of goods and services they produce for growth, development and sustainability. Therefore, it is concluded that the strategic management process has a strong relevance in the operation of small and medium businesses.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers make the following recommendation:

1. The managers of SMEs are encourage to focus their effort in the determination of the long term direction of their company. This will ensure continuity and long live.
2. The managers of SMEs put more effort in the determination of the resource requirement of their organization. This will ensure effective and efficiency.

3. Managers of SMEs should ensure that the overall goals, objectives and strategies are timely established and understood by all and sundry. This will ensure goal congruence and eliminate sub-optimality.
4. Assessment of the competitive position of the organization should be a routine exercise by the managers. This will provide a competitive advantage for the company.

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Climate Change Adaptation in Northern Nigeria: Investigating Community-Based Strategies to Address Desertification and Food Security

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Abstract

Northern Nigeria grapples with severe desertification due to climate change, endangering food security for millions dependent on rain-fed agriculture. This study explores community-based adaptation strategies to address land degradation, erratic rainfall, and malnutrition rates above 50% in regions like Yobe and Kano. It aims to evaluate how local innovations mitigate desertification and bolster resilience, with objectives to assess soil degradation, identify effective practices like zai pits and agroforestry, and measure their impact on food production and livelihoods. The study's significance lies in offering evidence-based insights to shape policy, fill research gaps on scalable grassroots solutions, and empower Sahel communities for sustainable development amid global climate challenges. Grounded in Ensor and Berger's (2009) Community-Based Adaptation (CBA) framework, which prioritizes participatory, culturally relevant approaches to enhance adaptive capacity, the study employs a mixed-methods design. Conducted from January to June 2025 in Yobe and Kano, it included 250 household surveys stratified by gender and livelihood, 15 focus group discussions, and 30 key informant interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS for regressions, while NVivo supported thematic analysis of qualitative data, ensuring robust triangulation and community validation. Findings show that community strategies like zai pits and Great Green Wall tree planting increased crop yields by 20-40% and cut soil erosion by up to 70%. Agroforestry boosted incomes by 18-32%, improving food security, while women-led rainwater harvesting promoted equity. However, funding shortages and conflicts disrupted 30% of initiatives, highlighting the need for better support. In conclusion, CBA transforms desertification challenges into opportunities for resilient food systems. The study recommended the allocation of 10% of climate budgets to local funds, expanding extension services to 80% coverage, promoting gender-inclusive programs, fostering partnerships, addressing conflict, and enhancing monitoring to scale equitable adaptation regionally.

Keywords: *Desertification, Food Security, Community-Based Adaptation, Northern Nigeria, Climate Resilience*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the sun-scorched expanses of Northern Nigeria, where the Sahel's relentless advance meets the enduring spirit of rural communities, a quiet struggle unfolds against the encroaching sands of desertification. In Yobe State, once-fertile millet fields degrade rapidly due to drought and desertification. Fuelled by prolonged droughts and human activities such as overgrazing and deforestation, desertification devours arable land at an alarming rate, threatening the foundation of food security in a region where over 70% of households rely on rain-fed agriculture for their livelihoods (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2022). As global temperatures rise, these communities face shrinking harvests of staple crops like sorghum and cowpeas, alongside a cascade of vulnerabilities: malnutrition rates exceeding 50% in some areas, pastoralist conflicts over dwindling water sources, and villages teetering on the brink of displacement.

Yet, amid this adversity, the ingenuity of local people shines as a beacon of hope. Community-based adaptation strategies, rooted in indigenous knowledge and collective action, serve as lifelines, weaving resilience into daily life. From ancient Zai pits that capture precious rainwater to communal tree-planting initiatives that reclaim barren soils, these grassroots efforts challenge narratives of helplessness. This study explores these strategies, examining how Northern Nigerian communities not only endure climate change but actively reshape their futures.

By investigating the interplay between desertification and food insecurity, this research uncovers the transformative potential of local innovations informed by cultural wisdom and adaptive governance. In doing so, it illuminates pathways for policymakers, researchers, and global partners to amplify these voices, ensuring adaptation is nurtured from within rather than imposed from afar. As the world grapples with the imperatives of the Paris Agreement, Northern Nigeria's story underscores that true resilience blooms in the soil of community empowerment, offering lessons that resonate far beyond the Sahel.

2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

To navigate the complexities of climate change adaptation in Northern Nigeria, it is essential to delineate key concepts that underpin this inquiry. Climate change adaptation refers to the processes, practices, and structures that enable societies to adjust to actual or expected climate impacts, minimizing harm or exploiting beneficial opportunities (IPCC, 2022). In the context of Northern Nigeria, adaptation manifests as deliberate actions to counteract rising temperatures, variable precipitation, and extreme weather events, which exacerbate environmental degradation and livelihood stresses. Desertification, a pivotal phenomenon in

this discourse, denotes the persistent degradation of dry lands due to climatic variations and human activities, leading to reduced productivity of ecosystems and loss of biodiversity (UNCCD, 2017).

In Northern Nigeria, this process is vividly illustrated by the southward creep of the Sahara, affecting over 11 states and converting once-productive savannas into arid wastelands, with an estimated annual loss of 350,000 to 700,000 hectares of arable land (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2022). This degradation directly imperils food security, which the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) defines as a state where all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 2020). In the region, food security is precarious, with chronic malnutrition affecting 44% of children under five, driven by crop failures and livestock losses amid desertification (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023).

Community-based strategies, the focal lens of this investigation, encompass participatory approaches where local actors-farmers, pastoralists, women's groups, and traditional leaders-design and implement adaptations tailored to their socio-ecological contexts (Ensor & Berger, 2009). These strategies emphasize bottom-up empowerment, integrating indigenous knowledge with external support to foster sustainable outcomes. Collectively, these concepts frame adaptation not as a technocratic fix but as a dynamic, culturally embedded process that bridges environmental challenges with human well-being in Northern Nigeria's vulnerable dry lands.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical underpinnings of this study are anchored in the Community-Based Adaptation (CBA) framework, pioneered by Ensor and Berger (2009), which posits adaptation as a culturally resonant, participatory process that empowers vulnerable communities to navigate climate risks while preserving social cohesion and local identities. At its core, the CBA framework challenges top-down development paradigms by advocating for interventions that originate from within communities, leveraging indigenous knowledge systems to address both immediate hazards and long-term uncertainties.

Ensor and Berger articulate CBA as a "process focused on those communities most vulnerable to climate change," emphasizing dialogue, local capacity building, and the integration of climate information into everyday decision-making (Ensor & Berger, 2009, p. 2). This framework delineates three interconnected pillars: vulnerability assessment, which maps how climate stressors intersect with socio-economic factors; adaptive capacity enhancement, through skill-building and resource access; and transformative action, where communities co-create solutions that extend beyond survival to foster equity and innovation.

In relating this framework to the investigation of desertification and food security in Northern Nigeria, the CBA lens illuminates the region's unique dynamics. Northern communities, such as those in Yobe and Kano States, embody high vulnerability due to their reliance on rain-fed agriculture and pastoralism, where desertification amplifies food insecurity through soil erosion and water scarcity (Mortimore, 2021).

Ensor and Berger's emphasis on cultural integration resonates deeply here; for instance, traditional practices like the Hausa "gayya" communal labour for land restoration align with the framework's call to build on existing social forms, transforming potential cultural barriers-such as resistance to external seeds into assets for resilience (Ensor & Berger, 2009). By extending the "context of choice," CBA encourages strategies like agroforestry with native species (e.g., *Acacia Senegal*), which not only combat desertification but also diversify income sources, thereby bolstering food security without eroding cultural livelihoods.

Furthermore, the framework's action-research orientation guides this study's methodology, promoting interactive learning cycles where communities identify problems (e.g., fodder shortages for livestock) and test solutions (e.g., rainwater harvesting). This relational approach counters the deterministic views of climate impacts, recognizing agency in adaptation; in Northern Nigeria, it reveals how women's groups adapt by storing crop residues, enhancing household nutrition amid patriarchal structures (Onyeneke et al., 2018).

Critically, CBA underscores equity, addressing gender and generational disparities in adaptation benefits, which is vital in a region where pastoralist migrations disproportionately burden women and youth. Ultimately, Ensor and Berger's framework not only theorizes adaptation as empowerment but operationalizes it, providing a scaffold for analyzing how Northern Nigerian communities transmute desertification's threats into opportunities for sustainable food systems, thereby contributing to broader discourses on just transitions in the Global South.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The literature on climate change adaptation in Northern Nigeria reveals a rich tapestry of challenges and responses, underscoring the intertwined threats of desertification and food insecurity while highlighting the efficacy of community-based strategies. Scholarly works consistently document how climatic shifts-prolonged droughts and erratic rainfall, have accelerated land degradation, with Northern Nigeria losing up to 1,000 square kilometers of forest annually, directly curtailing crop yields and exacerbating hunger (Mortimore, 2021). For instance, studies in the Sahel zone emphasize that desertification reduces soil fertility, leading to a 20-30% decline in millet and sorghum production, staples that form 60% of caloric intake for local populations (Emodi et al., 2024). Food security analyses further reveal

gendered impacts, with women farmers facing heightened vulnerabilities due to limited land access and labor burdens during scarcity periods (Onyeneke et al., 2018).

Adaptation literature pivots toward optimism through indigenous innovations; research in Yobe State documents the use of Zia pits, micro-basins for water retention that boost maize yields by 40% in drought years, blending traditional ecology with modern resilience (Ibrahim & Abubakar, 2024). Broader reviews advocate for agroforestry and crop diversification, such as intercropping legumes with cereals, which restore soil nitrogen and hedge against harvest failures, as evidenced in community trials across Kano (Waldron et al., 2017). However, gaps persist: while CBA is lauded for its inclusivity, critiques highlight implementation barriers like funding shortages and conflict disruptions from Boko Haram, which undermine collective efforts (AfriPoli, 2024). Integrated assessments, including those from the IPCC, stress scaling these strategies via policy coherence, yet empirical data on long-term outcomes remains sparse, necessitating grounded investigations (IPCC, 2022).

Complementing this review, the methodology employed in this study adopts a mixed-methods approach to capture the nuanced realities of community-based adaptations, ensuring robustness through triangulation. Fieldwork was conducted over six months (January to June 2025) in two purposively selected sites: Gujba Local Government Area in Yobe State and Dawakin Tofa in Kano State, chosen for their high desertification rates and active community initiatives. A total of 250 households were surveyed using stratified random sampling, disaggregating by gender (45% female respondents) and livelihood type (60% farmers, 40% pastoralists), with questionnaires adapted from the FAO's Livelihoods Assessment Toolkit to gauge adaptation practices and food security metrics via the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS). Qualitative depth was achieved through 15 focus group discussions (FGDs) involving 8-12 participants each, facilitated in Hausa with local translators, and 30 key informant interviews with traditional leaders, extension officers, and NGO representatives.

Data collection adhered to ethical protocols, securing informed consent and institutional review board approval from the University of Maiduguri. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS for descriptive statistics and regression models to correlate adaptation adoption with food security outcomes (e.g., $\beta = 0.45$ for agroforestry impact, $p < .01$), while thematic analysis via NVivo identified patterns like "communal vigilance" in resource management. This participatory design, inspired by CBA principles, involved community validation workshops to refine findings, bridging literature gaps with context-specific insights.

Community-Based Strategies for Addressing Desertification and Food Security

In the parched heartlands of Northern Nigeria, community-based strategies stand as pillars of hope, meticulously crafted through local ingenuity to halt the march of desertification

while fortifying food security against climatic adversities. These strategies, often born from the fusion of ancestral wisdom and contemporary necessities, encompass a spectrum of interventions that prioritize prevention, protection, and collaborative partnerships, ensuring that communities not only survive but thrive amid environmental degradation. At the forefront is the emphasis on preventive measures, which seek to curb the root causes of desertification by discouraging unsustainable human activities such as over-cultivation, overgrazing, rampant fuel-wood extraction, and uncontrolled bush burning, all of which exacerbate soil depletion and vegetation loss in regions like Sokoto and Borno (Abdulkadir, 2024).

Communities engage in extensive awareness campaigns, utilizing mass media, town hall meetings, radio jingles, and strategic billboards to educate stakeholders on the cascading impacts of these practices on livelihoods and ecosystems. Grassroots initiatives, including national sensitization walks and collaborations with farmers' associations and groups like “Miyetti Allah”, foster a cultural shift toward sustainable land use, reducing the annual encroachment of deserts by promoting mindful resource management that preserves soil fertility for future harvests.

Building upon prevention, protective strategies delve into restorative actions that reclaim degraded lands and enhance resilience, directly linking environmental recovery to improved food production. Extensive tree planting, afforestation, and reforestation programs form the backbone of these efforts, with communities planting native species to stabilize soils, combat erosion, and restore biodiversity in arid zones (Mortimore, 2021; UNSDG, 2022). The Great Green Wall initiative, a pan-African endeavour with significant implementation in Northern Nigeria, exemplifies this through community-led tree nurseries where villagers cultivate millions of seedlings, such as Acacia and shear trees, to create vegetative barriers against desert winds.

In areas like Kano and Yobe, these efforts have restored thousands of hectares, boosted soil moisture retention and enabled the cultivation of drought-resistant crops like millet and cowpeas, thereby elevating household food availability by up to 30% in participating communities (Emodi et al., 2024). Soil conservation techniques, including the construction of Zia pits and half-moons for water harvesting, integrate indigenous knowledge to trap rainwater and nutrients, yielding remarkable increases in crop productivity during dry spells. Furthermore, shifting toward renewable energy sources; solar, biomass, and wind, reduces reliance on fuelwood, mitigating deforestation while providing alternative livelihoods through community-managed energy projects that power irrigation systems, thus safeguarding water resources critical for agriculture amid recurring droughts.

The integration of gender-inclusive approaches amplifies these strategies' impact on food security, recognizing women's pivotal roles in farming and resource management. Women's groups in Northern Nigeria lead initiatives like beekeeping in restored groves and crop diversification, intercropping legumes with cereals to replenish soil nitrogen and hedge against harvest failures, which not only enhances nutritional diversity but also generates income to buffer against food price shocks (Onyeneke et al., 2018; UNSDG, 2022). Poverty alleviation is woven into these protective measures, with programs offering microfinance for sustainable farming tools and alternative vocations, such as eco-tourism or value-added processing of native products like gum arabic, reducing pressure on fragile lands. Controlling trans-boundary pastoral movements through community agreements further alleviates overgrazing, preserving rangelands for livestock fodder and preventing conflicts that disrupt food chains.

Underpinning these efforts are partnership and collaborative strategies that harness collective action for enduring change, addressing policy shortcomings like inadequate funding and top-down impositions by fostering inclusive forums (Odjugo, 2010; Abdulkadir, 2024). National, state, and local consultative bodies convene stakeholders; farmers, herdsman, NGOs, and government agencies, annually to share experiences, devise action plans, and mobilize resources for anti-desertification goals. Initiatives like the Greenbelt Project and Model Village Development promote agroforestry and sand-dune fixation, while the Nigeria-Niger Trans-boundary Ecosystem Management Project facilitates cross-border cooperation to restore shared watersheds, enhancing biodiversity and water access for irrigation.

Early warning systems for drought, integrated with community monitoring, enable timely adaptations like seed banks and fodder reserves, ensuring food security during lean periods. These collaborative frameworks emphasize indigenous knowledge, rejecting inappropriate technologies in favor of culturally attuned solutions, and advocate for consistent policies that prioritize poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation. By intertwining these strategies, Northern Nigerian communities transform desertification's threats into opportunities for sustainable agriculture, where restored lands yield bountiful, nutritious harvests, fortifying resilience against climate uncertainties and paving the way for equitable food systems.

5. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The findings from this investigation paint a compelling portrait of resilience forged in the crucible of Northern Nigeria's arid frontiers, where community-based strategies emerge as vital bulwarks against the dual scourges of desertification and food insecurity. At the forefront stands the widespread adoption of indigenous soil and water conservation techniques, exemplified by the Zia pits and half-moon structures prevalent in Yobe communities, which have demonstrably increased soil moisture retention by 25-35%,

enabling consistent sorghum yields even in years with 40% less rainfall (Ibrahim & Abubakar, 2024). These practices, rooted in generational knowledge, not only mitigate erosion, reducing topsoil loss from 15 tons per hectare annually to under 5 tons, but also enhance food security by diversifying household diets; surveyed farmers reported a 28% uptick in vegetable integration, curbing micronutrient deficiencies that afflict 37% of children in the region (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023).

Delving deeper, agroforestry initiatives reveal a synergistic interplay: in Kano's Dawakin Tofa, communal planting of native species like *Acacia* and *Parkia biglobosa* has reclaimed 120 hectares over three years, providing fodder for 70% of local livestock herds while generating supplementary income from gum arabic sales, which averaged ₦45,000 per household seasonally (Waldron et al., 2017). This economic buffer is crucial, as regression analysis indicates that agroforestry adopters experienced 32% lower food expenditure shocks during the 2024 drought, underscoring how such strategies transmute ecological restoration into livelihood fortification. Yet, the narrative extends beyond technical fixes to the social sinews that bind these efforts. Communal labour systems, such as the Hausa "gayya," facilitated 85% of tree-planting campaigns in study sites, fostering social capital that buffers against isolation in crisis; FGDs illuminated stories of elders mentoring youth in weather forecasting via cloud patterns, a practice that adjusted planting calendars and averted 15% crop losses (Ensor & Berger, 2009).

Gender dynamics add layers of complexity and promise: women's groups, comprising 55% of FGD participants, spearheaded rainwater harvesting with improvised bunds, yielding 200 liters per plot daily and elevating household food access scores by 1.8 points on the HFIAS (Onyeneke et al., 2018). However, disparities persist; male-dominated pastoralist adaptations, like seasonal transhumance, often overlook women's burdens, leading to intra-household tensions where 42% of female respondents reported unequal benefit distribution. Conflict overlays further complicate this mosaic: in Yobe, Boko Haram displacements disrupted 30% of adaptation projects, yet communities innovated "mobile nurseries" for seedlings, demonstrating adaptive agility (AfriPoli, 2024).

Quantitative insights reinforce these qualitative threads, with logistic regression revealing that CBA participation triples the odds of sustained food security (OR = 3.2, 95% CI [1.8, 5.6]), mediated by access to extension services, only 40% of households received them, highlighting institutional lacunae (Emodi et al., 2024). Thematic analysis distilled four resilience pillars: ecological ingenuity (e.g., drought-tolerant cowpea varieties boosting yields by 22%), economic diversification (e.g., beekeeping in restored groves adding 18% to incomes), social solidarity (e.g., seed banks shared across 12 villages), and knowledge hybridization (blending apps for rainfall alerts with oral traditions).

Challenges, however, temper optimism: financial constraints deterred 65% from scaling innovations, while policy silos, national desertification funds reaching only 20% of communities undermine momentum (Mortimore, 2021). Collectively, these findings affirm CBA's potency in Northern Nigeria, where strategies not only stall desertification's advance but cultivate food systems that are equitable, culturally affirming, and forward-looking, challenging global adaptation discourses to prioritize such localized dynamisms.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. **Enhance Policy Integration and Funding:** Governments should allocate at least 10% of national climate budgets to CBA initiatives in Northern Nigeria, establishing a dedicated fund for community-led desertification reversal projects, including subsidies for Zia pit tools and agroforestry seedlings.
- ii. **Strengthen Extension Services and Capacity Building:** Expand agricultural extension networks to cover 80% of rural households by 2030, incorporating gender-sensitive training on hybrid knowledge systems, such as integrating mobile weather apps with traditional forecasting.
- iii. **Promote Gender-Inclusive Adaptations:** Develop targeted programs for women's groups, providing microfinance for water harvesting technologies and ensuring 50% female representation in community decision-making bodies to equitably distribute adaptation benefits.
- iv. **Foster Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborate with NGOs and agribusinesses, like those in the Great Green Wall initiative, to scale economic diversification, such as commercializing native tree products, while monitoring impacts on food security through annual audits.
- v. **Address Conflict and Security Linkages:** Integrate peace building into CBA frameworks, supporting "resilient corridors" for safe pastoral migration routes and conflict-sensitive land restoration to prevent disruptions from insecurity.
- vi. **Invest in Monitoring and Research:** Establish regional observatories for real-time desertification tracking, using community-sourced data to refine strategies, and fund longitudinal studies on long-term food security outcomes.

7. CONCLUSION

As the sun sets over Northern Nigeria's resilient landscapes, casting long shadows across fields reborn through collective toil, the imperatives of climate adaptation resonate with profound urgency and inspiration. This investigation has traversed the arid terrains of desertification's grip, revealing how community-based strategies, from the humble Zia pit to

expansive agroforestry groves serve as profound acts of defiance and renewal, safeguarding food security in the face of unrelenting environmental flux (Ensor & Berger, 2009).

The voices of Yobe's farmers and Kano's pastoralists, amplified through CBA's participatory ethos, underscore a truth long echoed in global sustainability dialogues: true adaptation is not a solitary endeavour but a symphony of local wisdom, social bonds, and innovative resolve. In weaving these threads, Northern Nigeria not only confronts immediate threats, yielding boosts of 20-40% in staple crops and fortified household resilience, but charts a visionary path toward equity, where women and youth stand as co-architects of tomorrow's harvests. Yet, this journey is far from complete; the shadows of institutional inertia, funding shortfalls, and intersecting crises like conflict loom large, demanding a recommitment to amplified support and inclusive governance (IPCC, 2022).

By heeding these findings, stakeholders from Abuja's policymakers to international donors can catalyze a ripple effect, transforming isolated successes into scalable models that ripple across the Sahel and beyond. In the end, the story of Northern Nigeria's adaptations is a testament to human tenacity: in the face of a changing climate, communities do not merely survive; they thrive, sowing seeds of hope that promise bountiful futures for generations yet to come. As we stand at this crossroads, let us embrace these strategies not as peripheral tales but as central blueprints for a just, nourished world.

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**Sustainable Innovation in Boutique Hotels: Green Design
and Eco-Friendly Practices in Nigeria**

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Abstract

This study investigates the adoption of green design and eco-friendly practices in boutique hotels in Southwest Nigeria, with a focus on the extent of adoption, the drivers and barriers shaping sustainability, and the implications for customer experience and business performance. Using a qualitative multiple case study design, six boutique hotels across Lagos, Oyo, and Ogun States were purposively selected. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with managers, staff, and guests, complemented by site observations and document analysis. Thematic analysis revealed that energy-efficient lighting, natural ventilation, and water-saving devices were the most common sustainability measures, while renewable energy and recycling initiatives were less widespread. Drivers included cost savings, managerial commitment, and international guest expectations, while barriers comprised high capital costs, weak policy incentives, and limited staff training. Sustainable practices were found to reduce operational costs, enhance staff engagement, and improve satisfaction among international guests, though domestic guests remained largely indifferent. The study underscores the need for stronger institutional support and guest education to scale sustainability in Nigerian boutique hotels.

Keywords: *Sustainable innovation, Boutique hotels, Eco-friendly practices, Green design, Nigeria*

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability has become a defining concern for the global hospitality industry, reshaping consumer expectations and business practices. As environmental degradation, climate change, and energy inefficiencies rise to the fore of global conversations, there is growing pressure on the hospitality sector, traditionally resource-intensive, to adopt sustainable and innovative practices. Sustainable innovation, as defined by Visser (2020), refers to the application of systems thinking to foster transformation in ways that meet present needs without compromising future generations. In boutique hotels, small-scale, design-forward properties that emphasize unique guest experiences, this innovation increasingly takes the form of green architecture, eco-friendly operations, and conscious supply chain choices.

The hospitality industry has long relied on extensive water, energy, and non-biodegradable materials, making it a significant contributor to environmental degradation (Talukder, 2025). Green design, which includes energy-efficient systems, waste reduction technologies, eco-friendly materials, and sustainable landscaping, offers a promising pathway to mitigate these effects. Yet, as Sanboskani, El Asmar, and Azar (2022) observe in the U.S. context, the implementation of green building technologies is uneven and often dictated by market readiness, stakeholder awareness, and policy clarity.

In the Nigerian context, these challenges are magnified. Akerele et al. (2025), in their empirical review of green building adoption in tourism and hospitality facilities, identify key barriers such as limited awareness among operators, high initial capital costs, lack of government incentives, and low technical expertise. Similarly, Folorunso and Abubakar (2024) argue that while technological innovations can positively influence customer decision-making, most hospitality businesses in Nigeria struggle to align these innovations with sustainability goals due to infrastructural and systemic challenges.

Green innovation is not merely a set of technical upgrades but an integrated process that involves stakeholder engagement, forward-looking governance, and ethical responsibility (Chen, Qalati, & Fan, 2025). As Awan (2020) notes, sustainable innovation must be typologized not just in terms of technological inputs but also in the organizational, cultural, and behavioral adaptations required for its success. The boutique hotel segment, due to its scale and flexibility, presents a fertile ground for embedding such innovations, yet empirical insights into how green design and eco-friendly practices are being adopted, especially in developing economies like Nigeria, remain scant and under studied.

In response to this gap, this study seeks to explore how sustainable innovation is being manifested in boutique hotels in Nigeria, particularly through the lenses of green building design and eco-conscious operations. It aims to unpack both the enablers and inhibitors of these practices, thereby contributing to policy and managerial frameworks for a more sustainable hospitality industry.

Despite the increasing awareness of environmental sustainability and the global push for green practices, the adoption of eco-friendly innovations in Nigeria's boutique hotel sector remains sluggish. Studies have repeatedly emphasized the importance of sustainable design and practices in improving operational efficiency, enhancing customer satisfaction, and contributing to environmental preservation (Folorunso & Abubakar, 2024; Talukder, 2025). Yet, as Akerele et al. (2025) reveal, hospitality operators face entrenched barriers ranging from financial constraints and regulatory ambiguity to insufficient stakeholder buy-in. While global literature has explored sustainable innovation in large hotel chains and developed contexts, limited research focuses on small-scale establishments like boutique hotels within

developing countries. This lack of context-specific insight impedes both effective policymaking and the development of localized sustainability frameworks. Therefore, it is imperative to critically examine the adoption of green designs and eco-friendly practices in boutique hotels in Nigeria to understand existing gaps, promote feasible strategies, and align with global sustainability objectives.

The aim of this study therefore, is to examine the extent and nature of sustainable innovation practices, with a focus on green design and eco-friendly operations, in boutique hotels in Nigeria. Specific objectives are:

- i. To investigate the types and extent of green design and eco-friendly practices adopted by boutique hotels in Nigeria.
- ii. To identify the key barriers and drivers influencing the adoption of sustainable innovations in boutique hotel operations.
- iii. To evaluate the perceived benefits and implications of sustainable practices on customer experience and business performance.

This study is limited to boutique hotels operating in major urban and peri-urban areas of Nigeria, with a focus on those that claim or aim to incorporate sustainable or eco-friendly design and practices. The research will cover green infrastructure, waste management systems, energy and water efficiency measures, and environmentally responsible sourcing. Large hotel chains, resorts, or conventional hospitality establishments fall outside the scope.

This study is timely and significant for several reasons. First, it responds to the global call for environmental responsibility within the hospitality industry, aligning with SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). Second, it fills a critical empirical gap in the literature by focusing on boutique hotels in Nigeria, a segment that remains underexplored in sustainability discourses despite its growing relevance. Third, the findings are expected to inform policymakers, hotel operators, and investors about the practical pathways and systemic adjustments needed to accelerate green innovation in the sector. Finally, it adds to the theoretical discourse on sustainable innovation by contextualizing it within a developing economy, where unique socio-economic and infrastructural challenges persist.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable Innovation

Sustainable innovation in hospitality has become a central concern in both scholarship and practice, driven by environmental, ethical, and economic imperatives. It is broadly defined as the development and implementation of new processes, products, or organizational changes that reduce environmental impacts while creating social and economic value

(Saxena et al., 2024). In hospitality, this spans green building design, waste management, water conservation, and renewable energy. Boutique hotels, with their small scale and flexibility, are well-positioned to adopt such practices, yet in developing economies like Nigeria the extent of adoption and the drivers and barriers remain underexplored.

Several frameworks provide useful insights. Visser (2020) highlights systems thinking, while Awan (2020) categorizes sustainable innovation into product, process, organizational, and systemic forms. Kahigi et al. (2025) emphasize sustainable materials such as sisal fiber, a view reinforced by Caillol (2025), who stresses eco-materials in architecture and interior design. Empirical studies show benefits such as efficiency, guest satisfaction, and brand loyalty (Pham et al., 2025). However, barriers remain significant: Akerele et al. (2025) identify high upfront costs, limited expertise, and weak policy support in Nigeria. Abdullojon and Wan (2025) note that innovation has historically centered on service, with sustainability gaining attention only recently. Peng et al. (2025) add that Africa remains underrepresented, with research concentrated in Europe, North America, and East Asia.

Methodologically, reliance on bibliometric reviews (Abdullojon & Wan, 2025; Kahigi et al., 2025; Peng et al., 2025) or quantitative models (Pham et al., 2025) limits contextual understanding, while qualitative insights into boutique hotels are rare. Most studies focus on corporate chains (Talukder, 2025; Saxena et al., 2024), neglecting smaller hotels despite evidence that guests value eco-friendly choices (Folorunso & Abubakar, 2024). Calls for integrated approaches are growing: Prikshat et al. (2025) propose a circular innovation ecosystem, while Chen, Qalati, and Fan (2025) stress participatory engagement. Yet, in Nigeria's boutique sector, stakeholder dynamics remain little studied. This study therefore addresses critical gaps by exploring green design and eco-friendly practices in Nigerian boutique hotels, linking sustainability with environmental responsibility, guest experience, and business performance.

Green Design

Sustainable development within the hospitality industry has become urgent in light of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among different pathways, the adoption of green designs in architecture and operations has gained recognition as a vital innovation for reducing environmental impacts. In developing countries like Nigeria, where energy inefficiencies, poor infrastructure, and environmental degradation persist, green building designs offer opportunities to transform hospitality practices toward more eco-conscious models. Yet, the extent of their adoption, particularly in boutique hotels, remains underexplored. Ngo and Tran (2025) argue that embedding green infrastructure, energy-efficient systems, and sustainable architectural planning can help emerging economies align with the SDGs, but most operators in sub-Saharan Africa still rely on traditional designs that

prioritize cost over resilience. Mandal et al. (2025) highlight innovations such as low-emission materials, solar-integrated architecture, and waste-to-energy systems, but note their concentration in developed contexts where resources and expertise are readily available. Small boutique hotels in less-developed regions often lack the technical and financial capacity to integrate these features.

Leadership vision also plays a crucial role. Janjua et al. (2025) show that hotels where leadership commits to sustainability at the design stage achieve more consistent integration of green features. Stoimenov (2025) similarly emphasizes the importance of green skills development among architects, engineers, and managers. Without this expertise, innovative principles risk remaining theoretical. Prodromou et al. (2025) further stress that Green Human Resource Management, including recruitment, training, and rewards, fosters organizational cultures capable of sustaining eco-friendly infrastructure. Despite these insights, significant gaps remain. Few empirical studies focus on boutique hotels in Africa, with most research relying on conceptual frameworks or broad surveys that overlook local realities. Moreover, connections between design, leadership, human resources, and customer engagement are rarely integrated, limiting comprehensive understanding. This study therefore addresses these gaps by examining how boutique hotels in Nigeria conceptualize and implement green design under financial, technical, and policy constraints, offering grounded insights into sustainable architectural innovation.

Eco friendly Practices

A number of studies have examined eco-friendly practices in hospitality from diverse perspectives. Remenyik et al. (2025) focus on circular economy principles, emphasizing waste minimization, local sourcing, and renewable energy. Their findings, based on ecotourism-focused hotels in Eastern Europe, demonstrate strong ecological and socio-economic benefits but highlight that such models are easier in community-owned hotels than in profit-driven ones, limiting applicability in contexts like Nigeria. Chand and Garge (2017), in an exploratory study of Indian hotels, found high awareness but inconsistent implementation due to financial constraints, weak government support, and low guest demand. These barriers resonate in sub-Saharan Africa, where cost-sensitive operators often deprioritize long-term sustainability.

Tavitiyaman et al. (2024) contribute from a consumer behavior perspective, showing that environmental attitudes strongly mediate the link between knowledge and purchase intentions in East Asia. Their work underscores the critical role of guest perception but leaves open questions about African markets, where cultural and economic factors may alter demand. Hawela et al. (2025) approach eco-practices through organizational behavior, linking Green HRM, leadership commitment, and supportive cultures to eco-friendly

employee actions in Turkey. Their findings demonstrate that sustainability is not merely technical but rooted in human systems. These studies highlight that eco-friendly practices bring value but face barriers of cost, policy, and culture. Methodologically, much research is quantitative, offering trends but lacking contextual depth, while African boutique hotels remain underrepresented. Conceptually, studies often isolate eco-practices from architecture, leadership, and community engagement. This study responds by examining Nigerian boutique hotels, situating eco-friendly adoption within financial and infrastructural constraints while integrating guest, staff, and community perspectives to provide a more holistic understanding of sustainable hospitality.

Gaps in Literature

Despite increasing scholarship on sustainability in hospitality, significant empirical and methodological gaps remain, particularly in the context of boutique hotels in emerging economies such as Nigeria. Most existing studies are concentrated in developed or rapidly industrializing countries where regulatory frameworks, infrastructure, and consumer awareness are more advanced. In contrast, there is limited empirical research in sub-Saharan Africa, where hotels face challenges like weak policy enforcement, high energy costs, and minimal government incentives. Furthermore, the dominance of quantitative surveys and bibliometric analyses in current research fails to capture the complex socio-cultural and operational realities of green adoption. There is a need for qualitative and mixed-method approaches, including case studies, ethnographic research, and participatory action studies, to provide more context-specific and nuanced insights into eco-friendly practices.

Conceptually, the literature often treats green designs and eco-friendly practices as isolated interventions, overlooking the interconnected roles of leadership, organizational culture, community engagement, and policy support. This fragmented approach neglects how internal strategies, employee behavior, guest expectations, and external regulatory environments interact to shape sustainability outcomes. In addition, little attention has been paid to the hotel design and construction stage, even though architectural choices, building materials, and spatial planning have long-term implications for sustainability. These gaps highlight the need for integrative, locally grounded, and interdisciplinary research that bridges theory and practice to inform policy, education, and industry standards for sustainable hospitality in boutique hotels across emerging economies.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design to investigate eco-friendly practices and green design innovations in boutique hotels in Southwest Nigeria. A qualitative approach is appropriate for examining how sustainability is conceptualized and implemented in resource-constrained contexts where policy gaps and cultural factors strongly influence practice. A

multiple case study method was employed to enable detailed exploration and comparison of sustainability practices across hotels, capturing their unique strategies and challenges.

The study focuses on six boutique hotels drawn purposively from Lagos, Oyo, and Ogun States, selected for their economic significance, tourism potential, and emerging sustainability awareness. The hotels were chosen based on criteria including 10–50 guest rooms, independent or local ownership, and visible or claimed adoption of eco-friendly features. Data collection combined three methods: semi-structured interviews with managers, staff, and guests; site observations of infrastructure such as ventilation, lighting, energy and water systems, and waste management facilities; and a review of documents including sustainability policies, training manuals, and marketing materials. This triangulation provided multiple perspectives on green practices.

Data were analyzed thematically, using both inductive and deductive coding to identify patterns in green design, operational practices, enablers, barriers, and perceived outcomes. Ethical clearance was obtained, informed consent secured, and confidentiality assured. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation, member checking, and maintaining an audit trail. By centering boutique hotels in Southwest Nigeria, the methodology offers a context-sensitive and replicable framework for understanding how sustainability is practiced in developing hospitality markets.

4. FINDINGS

The findings from this study indicate that boutique hotels in Southwest Nigeria are adopting eco-friendly practices in selective but significant ways. Across the six cases studied, energy efficiency emerged as the most consistently implemented measure, while renewable energy, advanced recycling, and structured eco-branding were much less common. Lagos hotels generally demonstrated more visible sustainable features and stronger guest engagement, while those in Oyo and Ogun showed more modest but creative initiatives.

One manager in Lagos described sustainability as “a necessity because the cost of electricity is crippling; solar helps us survive even though it is expensive at the beginning.” Another in Oyo explained, “We built with clay bricks because they keep the rooms cooler, not because of the environment at first, but we now realize it saves us money and makes guests comfortable.” These comments illustrate how sustainability is often driven by practical and economic needs, even if the environmental benefits are secondary.

Table 1: Eco-Friendly Practices Observed in Boutique Hotels (Hotel A–F)

| HOTEL | LOCATION | KEY PRACTICES IDENTIFIED |
|---------|----------|--|
| HOTEL A | Lagos | LED lighting throughout, dual flush toilets, signage encouraging towel reuse, partial solar power system |
| HOTEL B | Lagos | Motion sensor corridor lighting, courtyard ventilation, towel reuse program, eco-branding on website |
| HOTEL C | Oyo | Locally sourced clay bricks, bamboo furniture, natural ventilation, partial waste segregation |
| HOTEL D | Oyo | Skylights for natural lighting, LED lighting, minimal water saving devices |
| HOTEL E | Ogun | Partnership with recycling cooperative, locally sourced materials, partial solar panels |
| HOTEL F | Ogun | Waste segregation bins, LED lighting, natural ventilation, no renewable energy use |

Hotel A combined technology and guest-focused practices, making it one of the most advanced. Hotel B emphasized branding, while Hotels C and E leaned on locally available resources and partnerships. Hotels D and F adopted mainly basic, low-cost strategies such as lighting upgrades and improved ventilation.

Stakeholders also spoke about the factors that enable or hinder their adoption of sustainable innovations. A general manager in Ogun stated, “Working with the recycling cooperative is the only reason we can manage waste separation. If we had to do it alone, it would be impossible.” In contrast, a manager in Oyo argued that “government has no plan to support us; everything is left to us, and our guests hardly notice what we do.” These contrasting views highlight how partnerships and leadership commitment play enabling roles, while structural gaps remain major obstacles.

Table 2: Enablers and Barriers Identified Across Hotels

| <i>Hotel</i> | <i>Enablers</i> | <i>Barriers</i> |
|------------------------|---|--|
| <i>Hotel A (Lagos)</i> | Owner commitment, cost savings, international guest awareness | High cost of solar, no government incentives |
| <i>Hotel B (Lagos)</i> | Guest demand, branding opportunities, cost reduction | Limited staff training |
| <i>Hotel C (Oyo)</i> | Use of local building materials, natural lighting | Perceived low guest interest, lack of funds for upgrades |
| <i>Hotel D (Oyo)</i> | Simple energy savings from LED and skylights | Limited awareness among staff, weak policy support |
| <i>Hotel E (Ogun)</i> | Partnership with recycling cooperative, owner commitment | High cost of renewable energy expansion |
| <i>Hotel F (Ogun)</i> | Basic operational savings, willingness to experiment | Lack of technical expertise, low guest recognition |

The barriers were particularly pronounced in Oyo, where managers expressed skepticism about the willingness of domestic guests to pay for or appreciate eco-friendly services. One manager noted, “Nigerian guests just want air conditioning and good food. They don’t ask about recycling or green hotels.” By contrast, Lagos operators reported that international guests specifically requested information on sustainability practices, which motivated them to invest more in eco-branding.

The study also examined how sustainable practices shape guest satisfaction and business performance. Guest interviews suggested that while international visitors valued eco-friendly touches such as towel reuse and solar lighting, most Nigerian guests were indifferent, neither praising nor criticizing these measures. As one guest at Hotel D said, “I do not care much about whether the hotel is green; what matters to me is that the room is cool and the water runs.” However, an international guest at Hotel A remarked, “It is refreshing to see a Nigerian hotel with solar panels and towel reuse cards; it makes me feel they are thinking about the planet.”

Table 3: Guest and Business Outcomes in Boutique Hotels

| HOTEL | GUEST RESPONSE | STAFF ENGAGEMENT | BUSINESS OUTCOMES |
|------------------------|---|---|---|
| HOTEL A (LAGOS) | International guests praised towel reuse and solar lighting | Staff trained and motivated | Reported 20 percent savings on utility bills |
| HOTEL B (LAGOS) | Guests noticed eco-branding, higher ratings online | Mixed engagement due to lack of structured training | Marketing advantage, reduced costs |
| HOTEL C (OYO) | Local guests indifferent, valued natural aesthetics | Staff unaware of eco protocols | Savings from natural lighting but no measurable guest boost |
| HOTEL D (OYO) | Guest responses neutral | Staff lacked awareness | Basic cost savings from energy efficiency |
| HOTEL E (OGUN) | Guests appreciated recycling partnerships, modest recognition | Staff engaged through cooperative activities | Reduced waste disposal costs, modest profitability |
| HOTEL F (OGUN) | Little guest recognition | Staff participation inconsistent | Small savings, no visible impact on market demand |

Staff engagement was a recurring theme. Where staff training was offered, employees felt more involved and motivated. A housekeeper in Lagos said, “We tell guests to reuse towels, and most of them listen. It makes my work easier and saves water.” In hotels without structured training, staff were less aware of eco-protocols and more reluctant to change routines.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study align with Visser's (2020) systems thinking framework, which emphasizes that sustainable innovation emerges from the interaction between technological, organizational, and behavioral systems. In the Nigerian boutique hotel context, this systems integration is still evolving. The dominance of cost-saving measures such as energy-efficient lighting and natural ventilation illustrates that sustainability is primarily motivated by operational necessity rather than environmental ideology. This mirrors Awan's (2020) classification of process-level innovation, where businesses adopt sustainability not as a strategic transformation but as incremental adaptation driven by immediate pressures. Unlike large hotel chains in developed economies that embed sustainability into corporate strategy (Talukder, 2025; Pham et al., 2025), boutique hotels in Nigeria exhibit adaptive sustainability, a reactive rather than proactive approach.

Consistent with Chen, Qalati, and Fan's (2025) argument that stakeholder engagement mediates sustainable outcomes, this study reveals that owner commitment and staff involvement strongly influence adoption. Leadership-driven sustainability initiatives such as the use of local materials or partnerships with recycling cooperatives, demonstrate the vital role of managerial agency in contexts lacking institutional support. This finding supports Janjua et al. (2025), who highlight green inclusive leadership as a determinant of sustainability performance, but extends the insight by showing that in Nigeria, leadership substitutes for weak policy frameworks rather than complements them.

From an operational perspective, the findings also resonate with Remenyik et al. (2025) and Hawela et al. (2025), who identified the role of green human resource management (GHRM) and organizational culture in sustaining eco-friendly practices. In this study, hotels that trained staff in environmental procedures demonstrated higher engagement and more consistent implementation of eco-friendly actions. However, most boutique hotels lacked structured staff development programs, reflecting Stoimenov's (2025) assertion that the absence of green skills limits the institutionalization of sustainability in developing contexts.

Guest behavior in this study reveals a significant theoretical and contextual gap in existing sustainability models. While studies in East Asia and Europe (Tavitiyaman et al., 2024; Remenyik et al., 2025) report that environmental awareness positively influences purchase intention, the Nigerian context shows that domestic guests remain largely indifferent to green initiatives. This divergence underscores the limited cultural diffusion of sustainability values within Nigeria's hospitality market. The dual market dynamic identified, where international visitors reward sustainability while domestic guests remain neutral, advances current theory by showing that market segmentation by environmental consciousness is context-dependent

and shaped by socio-economic awareness levels. This nuance is largely absent in global literature that assumes universal eco-sensitivity among guests.

Furthermore, the finding that hotels adopt local building materials (e.g., clay bricks, bamboo) primarily for affordability, later recognizing their environmental benefits, adds a new layer to Mandal et al.'s (2025) claim that green design in developing countries requires technological investment. In the Nigerian context, resource-localization becomes a sustainability pathway, demonstrating that indigenous materials and community partnerships can achieve eco-benefits without heavy financial outlay. This challenges the cost-intensive model dominant in Western sustainability discourse (Sanboskani et al., 2022).

The study also expands on the innovation typology advanced by Awan (2020), illustrating that boutique hotels in Nigeria engage in organizational and behavioral innovation rather than large-scale technological transformation. Sustainability emerges as a pragmatic response to resource scarcity and energy instability, confirming Peng et al.'s (2025) observation that African hospitality innovation remains underexplored and often contextually constrained. Yet, the creative adaptations observed recycling collaborations, local sourcing, and incremental green branding, reflect early signs of systemic innovation within limited-resource environments.

What is distinctly new in this Nigerian context is the interplay between necessity-driven innovation, leadership substitution for policy absence, and market segmentation by environmental awareness. Unlike developed contexts where regulation and consumer demand co-drive sustainability, Nigerian boutique hotels operate within a triad of weak policy, cost-driven motivation, and uneven market recognition. This dynamic offers a unique empirical contribution by revealing how sustainability can evolve bottom-up through entrepreneurial initiative and local creativity rather than top-down regulation.

In summary, while existing global studies emphasize sustainability as a strategic or normative commitment, the Nigerian evidence reframes it as a contextual innovation ecosystem shaped by constraint, adaptation, and leadership vision. Theoretically, this study extends the sustainable innovation discourse by highlighting the localization of sustainability drivers in developing economies, where affordability, leadership, and informal partnerships substitute for policy, technology, and consumer activism. It thus contributes to the literature by situating sustainability not merely as a global ideal but as a locally negotiated practice within Nigeria's emerging hospitality landscape.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined the adoption of green design and eco-friendly practices among boutique hotels in Southwest Nigeria, focusing on the extent of adoption, the drivers and barriers that

influence sustainable innovation, and the implications for customer experience and business performance. The findings reveal that boutique hotels have adopted a range of eco-friendly measures, though adoption remains uneven and concentrated on relatively basic interventions such as energy-efficient lighting, natural ventilation, and water-saving devices. More advanced practices, including renewable energy systems, comprehensive recycling programs, and formal eco-branding, are found only in a minority of cases, usually where there is stronger managerial commitment or greater exposure to international guests.

The study also shows that the adoption of sustainable innovations is influenced by both internal and external factors. Hotels are motivated by the desire to reduce operating costs, the personal commitment of owners and managers, and the expectations of environmentally conscious guests. However, these efforts are limited by the high costs of technology, the absence of supportive policies, inadequate staff training, and the perception that domestic guests do not prioritize environmental concerns.

In terms of customer experience and business performance, the evidence indicates that sustainable practices improve operational efficiency and create modest financial gains, while also contributing to positive guest perceptions among international visitors. Domestic guests are generally indifferent, but importantly, they do not view sustainability negatively. Staff members who are trained in eco-friendly procedures demonstrate greater pride in their work and contribute to smoother hotel operations, reinforcing the benefits of sustainability from within the organization. The study concludes that boutique hotels in Southwest Nigeria are at an early but promising stage in their sustainability journey. Their progress reflects both necessity and innovation, but further development will depend on broader institutional support, increased awareness, and stronger integration of sustainability into the value proposition of hospitality.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are essential:

- i. Boutique hotels should adopt a comprehensive sustainability framework that aligns with international best practices, rather than relying on piecemeal eco-friendly practices.
- ii. Hotels should pursue energy efficiency, water conservation, renewable energy systems, circular waste management, and eco-conscious architectural design as integrated strategies.
- iii. Boutique hotels should embed sustainability into their brand identity to enhance competitiveness in line with global sustainability standards.

- iv. Government and policy actors should introduce green financing schemes, subsidies for renewable technologies, and enforceable sustainability standards to support sustainable hospitality.
- v. Boutique hotels should be included in Nigeria’s national tourism master plans to ensure sustainability is integral to tourism development.
- vi. Awareness campaigns should be implemented to educate domestic guests on the benefits of eco-friendly practices for service quality, comfort, and affordability.
- vii. Hotels should communicate their green initiatives clearly and connect them to both environmental responsibility and Nigeria’s cultural identity.
- viii. Local communities should be engaged as partners through collaborations in recycling, renewable energy adoption, and supply of eco-friendly materials.
- ix. Community partnerships should be leveraged to create jobs, stimulate local economies, and strengthen regional resilience.
- x. Nigeria should position boutique hotels as champions of sustainable tourism in West Africa, combining hotel-level actions with government, guest, and community support.

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**Effect of Climate Change on Sustainable Development in Nigeria
(1980-2024)**

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of climate change on sustainable development in Nigeria from 1980 to 2024, focusing on how carbon emissions, greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, real GDP per capita, renewable water resources, and agricultural productivity affect the Human Development Index (HDI). Using descriptive statistics, the Dickey-Fuller unit root test, and Johansen co-integration with error correction models, the results show that while emissions and deforestation have no significant effect on HDI, real GDP per capita, renewable water resources, and agricultural productivity have significant positive impacts. The study concludes that economic growth, water availability, and agricultural improvements drive immediate human development, whereas the adverse effects of emissions and deforestation are more long-term. It recommends integrating climate action into development planning, strengthening forest and water governance, and promoting inclusive, sustainable growth.

Keywords: Climate change, Sustainable development, Human Development Index (HDI), Agricultural productivity and Renewable water resources

1. INTRODUCTION

Climate change presents major challenges to Nigeria's sustainable development, influencing economic progress, environmental quality, and social stability. Increasing temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, desertification, and recurrent flooding continue to threaten agricultural production, which provides employment for a significant portion of the Nigerian population. These conditions reduce crop yields, heighten food insecurity, and deepen rural poverty (Oladipo et al., 2024). In the northern part of the country, desert expansion and dwindling natural resources have intensified conflicts and displacement, while in coastal regions such as Lagos, sea-level rise and frequent storm surges have caused severe damage to infrastructure and livelihoods (Nwankwo & Ezemonye, 2023). Environmental degradation, including large-scale deforestation and the loss of wetlands, has further worsened vulnerability—especially in the Niger Delta, where critical ecosystems that support fisheries and flood regulation are rapidly disappearing.

The social consequences of these environmental changes are most pronounced among women, children, and rural populations, whose limited coping capacity exposes them to displacement, health risks, and restricted access to basic resources (Abiodun & Olanrewaju, 2023). Public health systems are increasingly strained by the spread of climate-related illnesses such as malaria and waterborne diseases (Ezeh et al., 2024). Despite the existence of policy frameworks like the National Climate Change Policy and the Energy Transition Plan, their impact remains limited due to weak institutional structures, poor enforcement, and inadequate financing (Okafor & Bello, 2024).

The relationship between carbon emissions and human development in Nigeria remains intricate. Haliru (2023) observes a weak and statistically insignificant positive correlation between carbon emissions and the Human Development Index (HDI), suggesting that while emissions may accompany industrial expansion, they offer minimal developmental gains. Globally, the “Champagne Curve” theory indicates that while emissions may initially stimulate improvements in HDI, the benefits decline beyond a certain level of pollution (Zafar et al., 2024). For Nigeria, this underscores the importance of pursuing economic growth strategies that are environmentally sustainable and less dependent on carbon-intensive activities.

Greenhouse gas emissions from energy production, agriculture, and land-use change amplify Nigeria’s climate vulnerabilities, increasing the frequency of extreme weather events that threaten health, food security, and education (Okon et al., 2024). The country’s deforestation rate—estimated between 3% and 3.7% annually—reduces essential ecosystem services like water regulation and disease control. Berazneva and Byker (2024) found that deforestation contributes to higher malaria prevalence, particularly among pregnant women, leading to lower life expectancy and reduced educational outcomes.

Economic growth, as measured by real GDP per capita, typically enhances HDI. However, in Nigeria, this relationship remains weak, largely due to inequality, structural inefficiencies, and environmentally harmful growth patterns that limit its long-term benefits (Olawale & Adeniran, 2024). Similarly, renewable water resources per capita play a vital role in public health, sanitation, and agriculture, and their depletion due to climate variability poses serious risks to human development (Eze & Ijeoma, 2023).

Agricultural productivity is a crucial driver of human development, yet rising emissions and climate change negatively impact crop output, nutrition, and rural incomes (Abdulrahman & Yusuf, 2024). Combined with declining water availability and land degradation, these factors weaken Nigeria’s ability to achieve sustainable human development. This study, therefore,

investigates how carbon emissions, greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, real GDP per capita, renewable water resources, and agricultural productivity affect Nigeria's HDI.

The research gap addressed in this study arises from the limited scope of previous works on climate change and sustainable development in Nigeria. Many earlier studies measured development solely through GDP growth rather than the Human Development Index (HDI), which provides a more comprehensive view of welfare by incorporating education, health, and living standards. Consequently, the direct effects of emissions on human welfare and sustainability remain poorly understood (Isah, 2024). The relationship between deforestation and HDI has also been underexplored, with existing studies often relying on inconsistent data and failing to link forest loss to health, education, or livelihood outcomes (Ayodele, 2025). Furthermore, the role of renewable water resources—a key aspect of human well-being—has not been sufficiently analyzed, even though evidence shows that water scarcity and climate-induced droughts undermine community livelihoods and economic stability (World Bank, 2025).

Agricultural productivity, despite its importance to Nigeria's economy, is rarely examined as an intermediary variable linking climate change and human development (Omokaro, 2025). In addition, most studies have not accounted for recent updates in HDI computation or national climate initiatives such as the 2021 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the 2024 Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy. These omissions highlight the need for a more holistic analytical framework that integrates environmental, economic, and social dimensions to better explain how climate change affects sustainable development in Nigeria (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2024).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Climate Change

Scholars have approached the concept of climate change from multiple perspectives, reflecting its complex nature, global influence, and profound effects on both people and the environment. Abbass (2022) explains it as a continual modification of weather patterns across different regions, emphasizing its long-lasting impact on ecosystems, biodiversity, and agricultural productivity. In a similar interpretation, Ifediora and Halim (2023) describe climate change as an enduring alteration in global and regional climatic conditions, primarily driven by rising concentrations of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide. This definition highlights its human-driven causes and extensive environmental repercussions.

Likewise, Lueb (2024) characterizes climate change as a persistent shift in the Earth's temperature and weather patterns over long timeframes, stressing its gradual yet continuous

divergence from historical climate conditions. Berg (2022) expands on this by viewing climate change as an intricate phenomenon that transcends the physical environment to include social, cultural, and economic dimensions, positioning it as both an environmental and societal challenge that influences global development and human livelihoods.

In alignment with these perspectives, Chibuzor Okonkwo et al. (2023) identify climate change as one of the most critical global issues, capable of altering natural weather systems, destabilizing ecosystems, and undermining agricultural production and food security. Supporting this, Ifediora and Halim (2023) point out that the steady rise in global temperatures—largely due to industrialization, deforestation, and the use of fossil fuels—remains a central factor in the ongoing climate crisis. Similarly, Lueb (2024) observes that although these climatic variations occur gradually, they accumulate over time to create lasting environmental and economic consequences.

Taken together, these scholarly views suggest that climate change is a long-term, human-induced process marked by persistent changes in temperature, rainfall, and atmospheric behavior. It poses significant risks to ecological balance, economic progress, and human welfare, highlighting the urgent need for global cooperation and sustainable adaptation measures to mitigate its impacts.

Sustainable Development

Contemporary scholars have presented sustainable development from various perspectives, reflecting its broad scope and significance across social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Olusanya (2025) defines it as the careful management and protection of natural resources necessary to achieve long-term growth, linking environmental sustainability directly to socio-economic progress. In a similar context, Ifediora (2023) describes sustainable development as a model that ensures present generations use resources responsibly while preserving them for the needs of future generations, emphasizing fairness across generations. Ametepey (2023) interprets it as the deliberate coordination of environmental, economic, and social systems through strategic and forward-looking planning, underscoring the interconnection among these elements.

Garvey-Orji (2024) views sustainable development as the balance between improving human living conditions and protecting natural ecosystems so that present advancements do not endanger the prospects of future populations. From a policy-oriented perspective, Cameron (2023) defines it as an ethical and practical framework designed to foster global equity while maintaining environmental health. Abdulkadir (2022) reiterates the long-standing understanding that sustainable development means meeting current needs without reducing

the opportunities of future generations to meet theirs, stressing the continuity and time dimension of sustainability. Adejumo (2020) warns that true sustainability must operate within the earth's ecological limits, noting that unchecked economic growth can lead to environmental degradation if natural boundaries are exceeded.

Theoretical Review

Theories of Climate Change

1. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), originally developed by Chambers and Conway and later refined by Scoones in 2021, focuses on poverty reduction by strengthening the key assets that support livelihoods namely human, natural, physical, financial, and social capital. The framework emphasizes the need to address both short-term income requirements and long-term resilience, integrating environmental sustainability with human development objectives. It demonstrates how environmental challenges such as deforestation and water scarcity can degrade natural capital, lower agricultural productivity, and adversely affect human development indicators like the Human Development Index (HDI).

Despite its comprehensive perspective, the SLF has faced criticism for not fully accounting for structural inequalities, governance deficiencies, and macroeconomic constraints that limit livelihood opportunities. Its wide-ranging focus may complicate policy design and implementation, while its emphasis on local participation could unintentionally shift responsibility away from national governments and international organizations. In the Nigerian context, the SLF remains particularly relevant, as environmental problems such as deforestation and water scarcity significantly impact livelihoods, economic stability, and social welfare. The framework underscores the necessity of integrating environmental management with economic and social development policies to achieve sustainable, inclusive, and long-term poverty reduction.

2. The Inclusive Green Growth

The Inclusive Green Growth (IGG) theory, as refined by Hallegatte et al. (2020), stresses that genuine economic progress and poverty reduction must be achieved through approaches that protect the environment and promote social inclusion. It argues that economic policies should simultaneously address inequality, safeguard natural ecosystems, and encourage long-term growth without exhausting or degrading natural resources. The theory also notes that environmental challenges such as climate change, resource depletion, and pollution tend to affect disadvantaged communities the most, suggesting that well-designed green investments can help tackle poverty and environmental decline at the same time.

However, the IGG framework is not without criticism. Some researchers contend that it places too much confidence in the possibility of maintaining steady economic expansion while ensuring ecological balance. Others warn that this approach may result in superficial “green” policies that prioritize economic growth over meaningful environmental protection. Concerns have also been raised about whether developing nations can realistically achieve rapid economic progress while aggressively cutting carbon emissions.

In Nigeria, the IGG framework is particularly relevant given the country’s dependence on fossil fuels, ongoing deforestation, and challenges in agricultural productivity. A strategic transition toward renewable energy sources and more sustainable farming systems could enhance livelihoods and human development while reducing environmental degradation. In essence, the IGG theory highlights the need for policies that integrate environmental protection with inclusive economic planning, providing a pathway toward sustained growth and long-term poverty reduction in resource-dependent economies such as Nigeria.

Theories of Sustainable Development

1. Theory of Green Growth

The idea of green growth, initially introduced by Stern (2007) and later expanded by Hallegatte et al. (2020), highlights the potential for economic progress and environmental protection to work hand in hand. It proposes that shifting toward a low-carbon economy can generate employment opportunities, reduce poverty, and promote long-term prosperity. The central argument is that targeted investments in renewable energy, clean technologies, and sustainable resource management can help decouple economic growth from environmental harm. Innovation, effective policy frameworks, and sound governance are identified as essential tools for driving this transition.

Nonetheless, some scholars, including Piketty (2021) and Hickel (2022), question whether sustained economic expansion can truly align with ecological boundaries. They caution that efforts to pursue green growth may result in superficial actions—commonly referred to as “greenwashing”—if economic priorities overshadow environmental goals. They also argue that relying solely on market-based strategies may fail to address deeper systemic problems such as inequality and excessive consumption.

For Nigeria, adopting a green growth strategy is particularly significant as it offers a viable approach to diversify the economy beyond oil dependence, lower carbon emissions, enhance agricultural output, and improve the management of natural resources such as water. By embedding sustainability within economic planning, the green growth model provides a pathway for Nigeria to achieve inclusive development, improve living standards, and build

resilience against the environmental and climate-related challenges that threaten long-term stability.

Theory of Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015, serve as a comprehensive global agenda composed of 17 interconnected objectives aimed at ending poverty, addressing inequality, protecting the planet, and fostering peace and prosperity by 2030. These goals are built on the idea that economic progress, social inclusion, and environmental protection must advance together to achieve balanced and lasting development. The SDGs promote an integrated approach that combines climate action, sustainable resource management, quality education, and inclusive economic growth, with a strong emphasis on ensuring that every individual benefits from development efforts.

However, despite their broad vision, the SDGs have faced criticism for being too ambitious and lacking clear mechanisms for prioritization, making it difficult to measure and assess progress accurately. Some analysts also contend that the framework does not fully confront global power imbalances or adequately address the impact of multinational corporations on inequality and environmental harm. In Nigeria, the implementation of the SDGs has been hampered by weak institutional systems, corruption, insufficient infrastructure, and poor policy coordination, which have limited the country's ability to integrate the goals effectively into its national development agenda.

Nonetheless, the SDGs remain a vital tool for Nigeria's development strategy, providing guidance for tackling key challenges such as poverty, environmental degradation, water scarcity, and low agricultural productivity. They also encourage the diversification of the economy and strengthen resilience to climate change. By aligning national policies with the SDG framework, Nigeria can improve human development, promote social equity, and build a more sustainable and inclusive economy capable of addressing its long-term environmental and social challenges.

Empirical Review

The reviewed literature explores the interconnections between key environmental factors—such as carbon emissions, greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, agricultural productivity, and renewable energy adoption and their influence on human development in Nigeria. Findings from Akinmoladun et al. (2021) and Aremu et al. (2019), using multiple regression analysis, indicate that increases in carbon and greenhouse gas emissions have a negative impact on Nigeria's Human Development Index (HDI). Their results highlight the importance of adopting cleaner energy alternatives and strengthening environmental sustainability policies. Likewise, Olufemi et al. (2020), applying the Autoregressive

Distributed Lag (ARDL) model, show that deforestation contributes to a decline in HDI, especially in rural regions, emphasizing the need for improved land-use practices, afforestation, and reforestation efforts.

In addition, Ibrahim et al. (2021) and Olusegun et al. (2018), through regression analysis, identify a positive relationship between economic growth and HDI, underscoring the role of agricultural productivity in supporting livelihoods and rural development. Ajayi et al. (2022), employing the Error Correction Model (ECM), reveal that fair and sustainable access to renewable water resources significantly improves HDI by enhancing agricultural output, sanitation, and public health. Similarly, Chinedu et al. (2021), using descriptive statistics and ARDL bounds testing, find that renewable energy use contributes positively to HDI by providing reliable power that supports key sectors such as education, healthcare, and small-scale enterprises.

Furthermore, Adebayo (2023) examines the link between climate change and Nigeria's economic growth using a Vector Autoregressive (VAR) model. The study concludes that climate change significantly affects the nation's economic stability, suggesting that policy reforms should focus on environmental resilience and sustainable economic practices.

Nonetheless, some researchers argue that methods such as ARDL, ECM, and VAR, though effective for dynamic modeling, may simplify complex relationships among environmental, social, and governance variables. They note that other critical factors—such as institutional quality, infrastructure, and political stability—are often not captured in these models, limiting the scope of the analysis.

Overall, the reviewed studies consistently point to the fact that combating environmental degradation, improving agricultural productivity, and investing in renewable energy are essential for advancing human development in Nigeria. They recommend the adoption of holistic policy frameworks aimed at reducing emissions, preventing deforestation, and expanding access to sustainable energy as key steps toward long-term improvements in HDI and overall national development.

3. METHODOLOGY

Data Collection Procedure

The data for this paper were obtained from the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) Statistical Bulletin, making it a key secondary data source for the research. Therefore, the study primarily relies on historical data provided in the CBN publication. To meet the research objectives, an ex post facto research design is employed, which examines data from 1980 to

2024. This approach facilitates the analysis of historical trends and the exploration of relationships relevant to the study's aims.

Model Specification

The paper will adapt the Ibrahim et al. (2021) and Olusegun et al. (2018) reveal a positive link between economic growth and HDI, with agricultural productivity playing a crucial role in rural development. However, the model specification for the study is as follows:

$$= f(\text{CARE, GRGE, DFOR, GDPPC, RWRP, APRO}) \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Functional Form:

$$\text{HDI} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{CARE} + \beta_2\text{GRGE} + \beta_3\text{DFOR} + \beta_4\text{GDPPC} + \beta_5\text{REWA} + \beta_6\text{APRO} + \epsilon_t \dots\dots (2)$$

Take the log of equation (2)

$$\text{LNHDI} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{LNCARE} + \beta_2\text{LNGRGE} + \beta_3\text{LNDFOR} + \beta_4\text{LNGDPPC} + \beta_5\text{LNREWA} + \beta_6\text{LNAPRO} + \epsilon_t \dots\dots\dots (3)$$

Where:

- HDI: Human Development Index (proxy for sustainable development)
- CARE: Carbon Emissions (Carbon dioxide emissions in metric tons per year)
- GRGE: Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Total greenhouse gas emissions (CO₂, CH₄, N₂O) in metric tons)
- DFOR: Deforestation Rate (Annual change in forest cover, measured in percentage)
- GDPPC: Real Gross Domestic Product per Capita
- REWA: Renewable water resources per capita
- APRO = Agricultural Productivity (Output per hectare of agricultural land)

The apriori expectation

The apriori expectation is based on the expected signs of the coefficient of the explanatory variables, such as $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3 < 0$ while, $\beta_4, \beta_5, \beta_6 > 0$ respectively. That is:

4. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics

Table 1: Summary of Descriptive Statistics

| | LNHDI | LNCARE | LNGRGE | LNDFOR | LNGDPPC | LNREWA | LNAPRO |
|-----------|---------|---------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Mean | 6.12845 | 5.98213 | 67.45329 | 81.27845 | 92.54718 | 95.43276 | 88.65921 |
| Median | 6.51239 | 6.30124 | 69.87214 | 83.12647 | 94.98214 | 97.83421 | 90.12487 |
| Maximum | 7.34812 | 8.02918 | 75.98341 | 89.65732 | 99.34128 | 102.98124 | 95.48321 |
| Minimum | 5.23891 | 4.87654 | 59.12874 | 72.54732 | 85.32418 | 88.98214 | 80.21456 |
| Std. Dev. | 0.65214 | 0.78932 | 4.89213 | 5.13428 | 3.45721 | 3.87654 | 3.29487 |

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Skewness | 0.12874 | 0.29871 | 0.41732 | 0.52147 | 0.65428 | 0.71234 | 0.68921 |
| Kurtosis | 3.87214 | 4.19283 | 5.13428 | 5.78213 | 6.23871 | 6.48721 | 6.31298 |
| Jarque-Bera | 0.31872 | 0.46213 | 0.57821 | 0.62147 | 0.81234 | 0.93428 | 0.89213 |
| Probability | 0.27134 | 0.35218 | 0.42817 | 0.49328 | 0.02147 | 0.03821 | 0.04129 |
| Observations | 44 | 44 | 44 | 44 | 44 | 44 | 44 |

Source: E-views result 2024.

Interpretations of Descriptive statistics

The descriptive analysis shows that the Human Development Index (HDI) values among the sampled countries generally range from moderate to high, with limited variation and minimal skewness, indicating a fairly even spread of human development achievements. Conversely, carbon and greenhouse gas emissions display higher variability, reflecting wide environmental differences across countries—an outcome that aligns with the Environmental Kuznets Curve theory (Ali et al., 2022). Deforestation rates are moderately high overall, though a few countries record severe forest losses, often linked to agricultural expansion or industrial activities. GDP per capita appears relatively stable, with only slight variations, but a noticeable concentration is observed among lower-income nations.

Renewable water resources and agricultural productivity show relatively high averages but remain unevenly distributed, with certain countries significantly outperforming others. The statistical results suggest that GDP per capita, renewable water resources, and agricultural productivity have a strong positive relationship with HDI. However, environmental indicators such as emissions and deforestation show no immediate impact, implying that their effects may unfold gradually or through indirect channels over time (Bertinelli & Strobl, 2023). In addition, several variables exhibit high kurtosis, indicating the presence of extreme observations—an expected pattern in development datasets due to economic disparities between wealthier and poorer nations (Huynh & Nguyen, 2023).

Augmented dickey-fuller unit root test

The Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) test is a statistical method used to determine if a time series is stable over time or influenced by persistent random shocks. Detecting whether a series is stationary is important in econometric research because non-stationary data can distort regression results and lead to false conclusions. The ADF test helps identify if a series maintains a consistent pattern or needs to be transformed to ensure reliable and valid analysis.

Table 2. Augmented dickey-fuller unit root test Result

| Variables | Level | 1st Diff | Lag(s) | Order of integration |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------|----------------------|
| LNHDI | -0.452138 | -3.421587 | 1 | I(1) |
| LNCARE | -1.982547 | -4.892317 | 1 | I(1) |
| LNGRGE | -2.874156 | -5.346182 | 1 | I(1) |

| | | | | |
|---------|-----------|-----------|---|------|
| LNDFOR | -3.982471 | -6.128374 | 1 | I(1) |
| LNGDPPC | -4.658239 | -7.218394 | 1 | I(1) |
| LNREWA | -5.184762 | -7.653218 | 1 | I(1) |
| LNAPRO | -1.625384 | -4.982134 | 1 | I(1) |

Note: (*) (**) (***) denotes statistically significant at 1%; 5% and 10% level respectively.

Source: E-views.

Interpretation of Augmented dickey-fuller unit root test Result

The ADF test results show that all variables are non-stationary at level but become stationary after first differencing, indicating they are integrated of order one, I(1). This means their movements follow long-term trends rather than short-term fluctuations. Human development (LNHDI), environmental indicators (LNCARE, LNGRGE, LNDFOR), and economic/resource variables (LNGDPPC, LNREWA, LNAPRO) all exhibit persistence over time, a pattern consistent with previous findings that such indicators evolve gradually in response to structural, economic, and environmental factors (Adebayo et al., 2023; Omri & Bel Hadj, 2023). Since all variables share the same order of integration, this suggests the possibility of a long-run equilibrium relationship among them, making it appropriate to proceed with the Johansen co-integration test to confirm this relationship.

Johansen’s co-integration test result

Table 3: Johansen co-integration test

| Series | Eigen Value | Likelihood Ratio | 5 Percent Critical Value | 1 Percent Critical Value | Hypothesized No of CE(S) |
|---------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| LNHDI | 0.152347 | 150.7823 | 140.25 | 129.87 | None** |
| LNCARE | 0.298421 | 142.6578 | 134.11 | 126.94 | At most 1 |
| LNGRGE | 0.387654 | 135.9832 | 128.34 | 120.45 | At most 2 |
| LNDFOR | 0.429832 | 128.4721 | 122.58 | 114.31 | At most 3 |
| LNGDPPC | 0.712345 | 120.8943 | 116.42 | 108.56 | At most 3 |
| LNREWA | 0.745892 | 110.3478 | 96.75 | 89.42 | At most 4 |
| LNAPRO | 0.689521 | 102.8921 | 90.18 | 83.27 | At most 5 |

Source: Source: E-views

*(**) denotes rejection of the null hypothesis at the 5% (1%) level respectively

L.R test indicates 2 co-integrating equation(s) at 5%

Interpretation of Johansen’s co-integration test result

The Johansen co-integration test results indicate that the likelihood ratios exceed the 5% critical values in multiple cases, with the null of no co-integration rejected at the 1% level for the first equation. Two co-integrating equations are identified at the 5% level, showing that the variables share a common long-term equilibrium despite short-term fluctuations. High eigenvalues for renewable water resources (0.745892) and GDP per capita (0.712345)

suggest strong long-run linkages, while other variables also contribute to the equilibrium. These results align with studies such as Shahbaz et al. (2023) and Mensah et al. (2022), which found that economic, environmental, and resource factors often move together in the long run. Given the confirmed co-integration, it is appropriate to proceed with the Error Correction Model to capture short-run adjustments toward the long-run equilibrium.

Error correction model

Table 4. Result of error correction model

| Variable | Co-efficient | Std. Error | T Statistic | Prob |
|--------------------|--------------|------------|--------------|-----------|
| Constant | 0.935772 | 0.122083 | 7.6650475 | 0.844 |
| D(LNCARE) | -0.786141 | 0.221000 | 3.5571991 | 0.557 |
| D(LNGRGE) | -0.798164 | 0.112170 | 7.115663 | 0.711 |
| D(LNDFOR) | -0.610854 | 0.112005 | 6.545627 | 0.555 |
| D(LNGDPPC) | 0.698411 | 0.667539 | 1.046247 | 0.001 |
| D(LNREWA) | 0.770094 | 0.756431 | 1.018062 | 0.003 |
| D(LNAPRO) | 0.699753 | 0.887516 | 0.788439 | 0.002 |
| R Squared | 0.780092 | | F Statistics | 49.749382 |
| Adjusted R Squared | 0.679828 | | | |
| D/W | 2.224661 | | | |
| ECM (-1) | -0.7700214 | 0.799923 | 0.962536 | 0.001 |

Source: Author’s computation from E-View Package 2024

Interpretation of Error correction model Result

The model shows HDI as the dependent variable, with environmental, economic, and resource-based indicators as predictors. Carbon emissions (-0.786141), greenhouse gas emissions (-0.798164), and deforestation (-0.610854) have negative effects, while GDP per capita (0.698411), renewable water resources (0.770094), and agricultural productivity (0.699753) have positive effects on sustainable development. GDP per capita (p = 0.001), renewable water (p = 0.003), and agricultural productivity (p = 0.002) are significant at 1%, while environmental indicators are not, suggesting their direct short-run effects on HDI are weak.

The F-statistic (49.749382) confirms the joint significance of the variables. R-squared (0.780092) means 78% of HDI variation is explained, while the remaining 22% may relate to governance, education, technology, or inequality. The adjusted R-squared (0.679828) remains high, indicating strong explanatory power. Durbin-Watson (2.224661) suggests no autocorrelation.

The ECM coefficient (-0.7700214, $p = 0.001$) shows that about 77% of short-run disequilibrium is corrected within a period, indicating rapid adjustment toward long-run sustainable development in Nigeria.

Test of Hypotheses

H0₁: There is no significant impact of carbon emissions on the Human Development Index in Nigeria.

For hypothesis one, from the result of the error correction model, there is a negative relationship between carbon emissions and the Human Development Index in Nigeria and the parameter carbon emissions is not statistically significant. Therefore, we can then accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant impact of carbon emissions on the Human Development Index in Nigeria. In Nigeria, the lack of a significant link between carbon emissions and HDI suggests that human development can progress independently of emissions levels, making direct investments in health, education, and infrastructure more immediately impactful than emissions reductions, which remain important mainly for long-term sustainability

H0₂: There is no significant impact of greenhouse gas emissions on the Human Development Index in Nigeria.

For hypothesis two, from the result of the error correction model, there is a negative relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and the Human Development Index in Nigeria and the parameter greenhouse gas emissions is not statistically significant. Therefore, we can then accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant impact of greenhouse gas emissions on the Human Development Index in Nigeria. The absence of a significant link between greenhouse gas emissions and HDI in Nigeria suggests that development can progress independently of emissions, making investments in health, education, and infrastructure more immediately beneficial, while emissions reduction remains important for long-term sustainability.

H0₃: There is no significant impact of deforestation rate on the Human Development Index in Nigeria.

For hypothesis three, from the result of the error correction model, there is a negative relationship between deforestation rate and the human development index in Nigeria and the parameter deforestation rate is not statistically significant. Therefore, we can then accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant impact of deforestation rate on the

Human Development Index in Nigeria. Since deforestation shows no significant impact on Nigeria's HDI, immediate economic gains may come from investing in health, education, and infrastructure, while forest protection remains vital for long-term environmental and agricultural sustainability

H0₄: There is no significant impact of real GDP per capita on the Human Development Index in Nigeria.

For hypothesis four, from the result of the error correction model, there is a positive relationship between real GDP per capita and the human development index in Nigeria and the parameter real GDP per capita is statistically significant. Therefore, we can then reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant impact of real GDP per capita on the human development index in Nigeria. Since real GDP per capita significantly influences Nigeria's HDI, policies that boost income levels can directly enhance health, education, and overall well-being

H0₅: There is no significant impact of renewable water resources per capita on the Human Development Index in Nigeria.

For hypothesis five, from the result of the error correction model, there is a positive relationship between renewable water resources per capita and the human development index in Nigeria and the parameter renewable water resources per capita is statistically significant. Therefore, we can then reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant impact of renewable water resources per capita on the Human Development Index in Nigeria. A significant link between renewable water resources per capita and Nigeria's HDI means investing in water infrastructure and management can directly improve health, education, and productivity while supporting long-term sustainable development.

H0₆: There is no significant impact of agricultural productivity on the Human Development Index in Nigeria.

For hypothesis six, from the result of the error correction model, there is a positive relationship between agricultural productivity and the human development index in Nigeria and the parameter agricultural productivity is statistically significant. Therefore, we can then reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant impact of agricultural productivity on the Human Development Index in Nigeria. A significant impact of agricultural productivity on Nigeria's HDI means boosting farming efficiency through technology, infrastructure, and better practices can directly improve health, education, incomes, and overall living standards, especially in rural areas.

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of how environmental, economic, and resource-related factors interact to shape human development outcomes in Nigeria, while also extending insights from previous empirical research. The descriptive analysis reveals that human development indicators show moderate variation and an even distribution, whereas environmental variables such as carbon emissions, greenhouse gas emissions, and deforestation rates display higher fluctuations. This pattern aligns with the Environmental Kuznets Curve hypothesis, which posits that environmental pressures vary across different stages of economic development (Ali et al., 2022). Consistent with earlier studies by Akinmoladun et al. (2021) and Aremu et al. (2019), the current analysis finds that these environmental factors are negatively associated with HDI. However, unlike some prior findings, their short-run effects are not statistically significant in this case, suggesting that their adverse impact on human development may become more pronounced over time. This underscores the importance of sustained environmental management, even when immediate developmental effects are not apparent.

The unit root and Johansen co-integration tests confirm that all the variables are integrated of order one and exhibit long-run equilibrium relationships, with GDP per capita and renewable water resources showing particularly strong linkages to HDI. These outcomes are consistent with the findings of Ibrahim et al. (2021) and Ajayi et al. (2022), who identified income growth and access to water as key drivers of improved living standards. The error correction model in this study reinforces these results, demonstrating that GDP per capita, renewable water resources, and agricultural productivity have significant positive effects on HDI. This supports the conclusions of Olusegun et al. (2018) and Chinedu et al. (2021), who argue that higher economic capacity, efficient natural resource use, and increased agricultural productivity enhance education, health, and overall quality of life. The positive influence of agricultural productivity observed here also aligns with Ibrahim et al. (2021), who emphasize its importance for poverty alleviation and rural development.

Although Olufemi et al. (2020) found that deforestation has a strong negative effect on HDI, this study shows that while the relationship remains negative, it is not statistically significant in the short term. This discrepancy may stem from differences in methodology, time frame, or data coverage, and suggests that the detrimental effects of deforestation on human development may emerge more clearly over longer periods. Such differences also point to a limitation of econometric methods such as ARDL, ECM, and VAR, which, as noted in previous research, may not fully capture institutional, political, or infrastructural influences on development outcomes.

In summary, both the reviewed literature and the present study emphasize the importance of strengthening economic performance, managing natural resources efficiently, and mitigating environmental degradation to improve HDI in Nigeria. While previous research advocates urgent policy actions to reduce emissions, control deforestation, and promote renewable energy adoption (Akinmoladun et al., 2021; Chinedu et al., 2021), the findings of this study indicate that the most immediate improvements in human development are likely to result from higher income levels, improved water infrastructure, and increased agricultural output. Environmental sustainability should, however, be pursued concurrently as a long-term strategy to secure lasting progress. This integrated perspective highlights that economic advancement and environmental protection are interdependent objectives that must be jointly addressed to achieve sustainable human development.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study demonstrate that, in the Nigerian context, economic and resource-related factors have a more immediate and pronounced effect on human development than environmental indicators. The lack of a statistically significant short-term relationship between carbon emissions, greenhouse gas emissions, and deforestation rates and the Human Development Index (HDI) indicates that the negative consequences of environmental degradation may take longer to become visible in measurable outcomes such as education, health, and income. This finding differs from earlier studies, including those by Akinmoladun et al. (2021) and Olufemi et al. (2020), which identified stronger short-term environmental impacts. The results suggest that the influence of environmental decline on human development in Nigeria may occur gradually through long-term cumulative effects. Nonetheless, the absence of immediate significance does not lessen the urgency of environmental conservation, as continuous ecological damage could eventually threaten economic stability and social welfare (Ali et al., 2022).

On the other hand, the study provides substantial evidence that real GDP per capita, renewable water resources per capita, and agricultural productivity significantly and positively influence the HDI. These findings align with the conclusions of Ibrahim et al. (2021), Ajayi et al. (2022), and Olusegun et al. (2018), who emphasize the importance of sustained economic growth, improved access to water, and agricultural development in enhancing living conditions. The positive relationship between GDP per capita and HDI indicates that higher income levels expand access to healthcare, education, and other essential services. The strong link between renewable water resources and HDI highlights the role of efficient water management, sanitation, and equitable distribution in improving life expectancy and productivity, reinforcing similar observations by Mensah et al. (2022).

Likewise, the positive contribution of agricultural productivity underscores the value of advancing farming methods, improving rural infrastructure, and promoting efficient land utilization—all of which foster food security, income growth, and employment opportunities, particularly in rural communities (Adebayo et al., 2023).

Taken together, these results imply that Nigeria's most immediate human development gains can be achieved through policies aimed at strengthening economic growth, enhancing water resource management, and improving agricultural performance. However, incorporating environmental sustainability into these development strategies remains essential to ensure that short-term achievements do not jeopardize long-term progress. A balanced approach that integrates economic expansion, efficient resource use, and environmental preservation can position Nigeria on a sustainable development path—one that secures current well-being while protecting the natural systems necessary for future prosperity (Shahbaz et al., 2023).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the paper, the following detailed recommendations are proposed:

1. Focus on Direct Human Development Initiatives Before Short-Term Emission Cuts

With the results showing no immediate measurable impact of carbon emissions on HDI, more emphasis should be placed on interventions that directly influence human well-being. This means increasing investment in healthcare systems, educational facilities, housing, and social support programs. While cutting emissions is still necessary for the future, prioritizing social and economic improvements that can quickly enhance living standards will produce faster progress in development. By maintaining this balance, the government can address urgent human needs while still preparing for long-term environmental goals.

2. Embed Climate Action into Long-Term Growth Strategies

Even though greenhouse gas emissions do not currently show a significant short-run effect on HDI, their cumulative impact over time can be substantial. Climate policies should therefore be integrated into the country's broader development framework. This could involve phased investments in renewable energy, cleaner production technologies, and energy efficiency programs. Building climate-conscious infrastructure and industries now will ensure that when environmental pressures become more pronounced, Nigeria is already equipped to manage them without disrupting economic and social progress.

3. Adopt Stronger Forest and Land-Use Governance

The finding that deforestation does not have an immediate effect on HDI should not be interpreted as a lack of risk. Loss of forest cover eventually undermines water supply, agricultural output, and rural livelihoods. Strengthened land-use planning, better

enforcement of environmental regulations, and the introduction of large-scale reforestation projects can help reverse degradation. Supporting alternative income sources for communities reliant on logging or slash-and-burn farming will align conservation goals with poverty reduction, ensuring that environmental protection contributes indirectly to human development over time.

4. Drive Inclusive Economic Growth to Increase GDP per Capita

The strong positive relationship between GDP per capita and HDI highlights the importance of sustained and inclusive growth. Diversifying the economy beyond oil, encouraging entrepreneurship, and supporting sectors with high job-creation potential can raise average incomes. Infrastructure investments in transport, digital connectivity, and reliable electricity will help businesses expand and create employment opportunities. Ensuring that economic gains are shared across different regions and social groups will maximize the benefits of growth for human development.

5. Expand Water Infrastructure and Improve Resource Management

Since renewable water resources have a significant effect on HDI, expanding access to clean water should be a national priority. This means upgrading urban water systems, extending rural water networks, improving irrigation, and ensuring effective sanitation services. Water resource governance should focus on reducing wastage, increasing storage capacity, and protecting watersheds. Reliable water access supports better health outcomes, strengthens agricultural productivity, and promotes industrial growth, making it a cornerstone for sustainable human development.

6. Modernize Agriculture to Boost Productivity and Rural Welfare

The confirmed positive impact of agricultural productivity on HDI calls for transformative changes in the agricultural sector. This includes expanding mechanization, ensuring farmers have access to high-quality inputs, improving extension services, and building rural infrastructure like roads and storage facilities. Encouraging local agro-processing industries will help create more jobs and increase income for farming communities. Given the sector's role in providing livelihoods for much of the population, improving agricultural productivity will directly enhance living standards, reduce poverty, and improve food security nationwide.

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**Resolving Indigene – Settler Conflicts in Nigeria: A Case of the
Federal Capital Territory (FCT)**

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Abstract

Indigene-settler conflicts have been a recurring issue in Nigeria, fueled by complex factors such as historical grievances, competition for resources, and identity politics. This study critically examines the traditional and modern approaches to resolving conflicts in the FCT, with a focus on the challenges, limitations, and potential areas for improvement. This study engages with existing literature and empirical data to explore the dynamics of indigene-settler conflicts and the effectiveness of various conflict resolution mechanisms. The research highlights the importance of understanding the local context, cultural nuances, and historical antecedents in resolving these conflicts. The paper began by introducing the problem to be examined as well as what is intended to achieve by studying and analyzing the problem with the sole aim of proffering solutions to the ever-lingering Indigene-Settler conflicts in the study area. The study's findings have implications for policy and practice, informing the development of more effective conflict resolution strategies and initiatives that address the unique needs and concerns of Nigerian communities, FCT inclusive. The paper in conclusion suggest that both the indigenes and settlers alike should, maintain the policy of non-use of violence in settling issues, they should continue pursuing genuine reconciliation among the various tribes.

Keywords: *Conflict, Federal Capital Territory, Indigene, Resolving, Settlers*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigerians diverse cultural landscape is marked by complex relationships between indigenous communities and settlers, often characterized by tensions and conflicts. The FCT, as the nation's capital, exemplifies this dynamics, with multiple ethnic groups coexisting amidst competing claims to land, resources, and identity. This study explores the intricacies of indigene-settler conflicts in the FCT, seeking to understand the underlying causes, manifestations and potential solutions to these disputes. By examining the historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors driving these conflicts, this study aims to contribute to the

development of effective conflict resolution strategies that promote sustainable peace and coexistence in the FCT and its environs.

The question of indigene-ship is a recurrent and thorny issue in political and legal discourse in Nigeria. The characterization of someone or group as “non-indigene(s)” or settler(s)” often inscribe a stamp of disability or deprivation on such persons or groups in terms of access to opportunities, resources, and power. This in turn, often culminates in crises of monumental proportions in Nigeria, such as Ife/Modakeke, Tiv/Jukun, Kutab/Chamba, Borom/Anaguta, Afizere/Jaswa, Gwandara/Igbo etc. The magnitude of the issue at stake prompted the Government of former president Olusegun Obasanjo to set up a presidential committee on provisions for and practice of citizenship and Rights in Nigeria, in 2002, under the chairmanship of Alhaji Abdullahi Adamu who at the material time, was the Governor of Nasarawa State. Unfortunately, the report of the committee, if one was ever submitted, have not been made public. While contending perspectives abound on the imbalance phenomenon of Indigene-ship such as elite contestation for power and concomitant manipulation of sectional or primordial sentiments, the fluidity of ethic categories, minority fears of being overwhelmed or dominated by highly mobile and economically powerful majority groups, the transformation of the state into a predator and the consequent resort as safety havens, etc., my point of departure is the constitutional framework. The preamble to the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended, expresses the “Firm and solemn resolve” of Nigerians to live in Unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble nation. Accordingly, pursuant to section 15(2) thereof, “national integration shall be actively encouraged, whilst discrimination on the ground of place of origin, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited.

Subsection (3) imposes on the Nigerian State the duty to:

- a. Provide adequate facilities for and encourage free mobility of people, goods and services throughout the federation.
- b. Secure full residence rights for every citizen in all parts of the federation.
- c. Encourage inter-marriage among persons from different places of origin, or of different religious, ethnic or linguistic associations or ties; and
- d. Promote or encourage the formation of associations that cut across ethnic, linguistic, religious or other sectional barriers.

Who is an indigene of a State? The 1999 constitution does not define the term and thereby exacerbates the issue. However, section 25(1) of the constitution defines citizenship by birth with reference, in part, to every person “whose parents or any of whose grandparents belongs or belonged to a community indigenous to Nigerians. Undoubtedly, the issue of indigenous

and its interface with the non-discrimination provisions of the Nigerian constitution ordinarily poses a constructionist nightmare. The term “Indigenous” presents similar challenges. The Indigenous and tribal people convention, 1989 (No.169), adopted by the general conference of the International Labour Organization in June 1989 does not purport to offer a comprehensive definition, but specifically applies to:

- a. Tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the National Community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially of their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations, and
- b. People in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and whose, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions. The convention regards self-identifications as indigenous or tribal as a fundamental criterion for determining the groups to which its provisions apply. However, when the United Nations (UN) adopted a declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples in September, 2007, it could not resolve the issue of defining the phrase “Indigenous peoples.”

Conflict can be defined as a situation in which an acceptable difference in interests, values, expectations and opinions occur in or between individuals or groups. There are two basically different views on the necessity, or inevitability of conflict. According to one view, conflict is an aberration in society, a kind of social pathology (Parsons, 1951, Smelser, 1962). It is a necessary aberration. Conflicts can be eliminated by giving all people involved what they need. Conflict, in accordance with this view, is always dysfunctional and does not facilitate evolution or improvement, neither of society as a whole nor of relations between individuals. Conflict is not an inevitable ingredient of human life. According to the other point of view, conflicts are inevitable by products of human interactions (Coser, 1956). Conflicts are consequences of the impossibility of giving all people involved what they want. Desire and needs are not identical, and the fact that people cannot get all they want does not automatically and, in all cases, imply that they do not get what they need. Rubin, Pruitt and Kim (1994) P,5) accordingly described conflict in more careful terms, as “perceived divergence of interest, or a belief that the parties’ current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously. Coser (1956) is of the opinion that conflict, although inevitable, is not inherently pathological or always necessarily dysfunctional. On a short-term basis, a conflict may seem dysfunctional, and lead to improvement of a society in question.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical frameworks for understanding indigene-settler conflicts include:

- a. Protracted social conflict theory: This framework emphasizes the long-standing nature of conflicts, often rooted in historical grievances and identity issues. It suggests that conflicts between indigenes and settlers are part of a broader pattern of social conflict that requires a comprehensive approach to resolve.
- b. Elite Theory: This framework posits that society is divided into two main groups: the ruling elite who hold power and allocate resources, and the masses who lack power and influence. In the context of indigene-settler conflict, elite theory suggests that ruling elites exploit ethnic differences to maintain their power and privilege. For example, politicians may use ethnic ideology to mobilize support and justify discriminatory policies, exacerbating tensions between indigenes and settlers. This framework posits that conflicts are driven by the interests of ruling elites who use ethnic ideology to mobilize

support and maintain power. In Nigeria, elite theory can help explain how politicians and power brokers exploit indigene-settler tensions for their own gain.

These theoretical frameworks provide insights into the complex dynamics of indigene-settler conflicts, highlighting the interplay of factors such as:

- a. Ethnicity and identity: Conflicts often involve competing claims to land, resources, and power, with ethnicity and identity playing a significant role in shaping these claims.
- b. Economic interests: Competition for resources, such as land and economic opportunities, can drive conflicts between indigenes and settlers.
- c. Power Dynamics: The relationship between ruling elites and local communities can contribute to conflicts, particularly when elites exploit ethnic differences for their own gain. By understanding the above theoretical frameworks, policy makers and practitioners can develop more effective strategies for addressing indigene-settler conflicts and promoting sustainable peace.

Before proposing suggestions about resolving the indigene-settler conflict, it is appropriate to gain a clearer understanding of the issues at stake. The main issue here is the question of identity and how the definition/possession of one form of privileges certain people have over others—usually in relation to some material advantages. Throughout this discourse identity is used to define individuals and provide responses to the question “who am I”? It has ethnic, religious, gender, class and other layers all of which refer to the same person. Central here

is its multi-layered nature and the tendency for some forms to dominate in particular circumstances. It is common for people who share ethnic and religious identities in one circumstance to be excluded in the others. Where this happens, other definitions such as “settlers, strangers, or non-indigenes come to the fore. In this sense, identity is often about the politics of belonging and exclusion. Identity is central to the contestations by indigene and settlers and the determination to include or exclude some Nigerians from benefits which others enjoy. The constitutional provision assumes added significance in the context of Nigeria’s ethnic and religious plurality which provides spaces to define and redefine inclusion and exclusion. It is this frequently changing definitions which fuels the widespread allegations of marginalization.

3. SIGNIFICANCE AND CONTRIBUTION TO CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS AND RESEARCH

The study of indigene-settler conflicts has significant contributions to contemporary problems and research, particularly in the context of Nigeria and other countries with similar socio-cultural dynamics. Here are some key areas of significance and contribution:

- Understanding Conflict Dynamics.
 - a. Indigene-settler conflicts highlight the complexities of identity, power, and resource struggles, providing insights into the root causes of conflicts and potential solutions.
 - b. Research in this area can inform policies and interventions aimed at promoting peaceful coexistence and national integration.
- Promoting National Integration.
 - a. Studying indigene-settler conflicts can help address the challenges of national integration, particularly in countries with diverse cultural and ethnic groups.
 - b. By understanding the dynamics of these conflicts, policy makers can develop targeted strategies to promote unity and inclusivity.
- Resource Management and Allocation
 - a. Indigene-settler conflict often resolves around resource competition, highlighting the need for effective resource management and allocation strategies.
 - b. Research in this area can inform policies and practices that promote equitable resource distribution and utilization.
- Identity Politics and Social Cohesion.
 - a. The study of indigene-settler conflicts shed light on the complexities of identity politics and its impact on social cohesion.

- b. By understanding the role of identity in shaping conflicts, policy makers can develop strategies to promote social cohesion and reduce tension.
- Contribution to Research.
 - a. Research on indigene-settler conflicts contributes to various fields, including conflict resolution, peace studies, sociology, and anthropology.
 - b. These studies can inform the development of policies and interventions aimed at promoting peace, stability, and national integration.

On the whole, the study of indigene-settler conflicts has significant implications for promoting peace, stability, and national integration in countries with diverse cultural and ethnic groups

The problem of resolving indigene-settler conflicts in Nigeria in general and FCT in particular, has assumed an alarming rate. Citizens are no longer responsive to discipline which may be a mirror of the society which they form a part. There are so many conflict situations as a result of indigene-settler dichotomy in the FCT. Some of the problems include: Ownership of land. Discriminations as a result of race, nepotism, unequal treatment, injustice, tribal sentiments etc. For instance, in July 1998, there was a serious unrest at Gwagwa, a suburb within Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). In fact, Gwagwa is one of the Political Wards in Abuja Municipal Area Council. The unrest started with an argument between an indigene and a settler over a piece of land. This degenerated into a fight that claimed two lives and property worth millions of naira burnt. It is imperative at this juncture, to highlight the evils associated with disunity and the need to live in harmony irrespective of where one comes from. Indigene/Settler dichotomy will lead FCT in particular nowhere, hence the need to live together as people of one faith as we pledged to do. As a matter of fact, this work wants to bring to the fore the need for every Nigerian citizen to be treated as equals no matter where one comes from or one's religious belief. When this is adhered to, FCT residence and indeed Nigerians will know a lasting peace.

Application of Restorative Justice in Resolving Indigene/Settler Conflict in FCT

Restorative justice offers a promising approach to resolving indigene-settler conflicts in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). This approach focuses on repairing the harm caused by conflicts, promoting healing, and rebuilding relationships between parties. The following are the key principles of Restorative justice in Resolving indigene-settler conflicts:

- a. Inclusivity: This means the involving of all stakeholders, including victims, offenders, and community members, in the conflict resolution process.
- b. Dialogue: Encouraging open and honest communication between parties to understand each other's perspectives and needs.

- c. **Reparation:** Providing compensation or restitution to victims for the harm caused by conflicts.
- d. **Reconciliation:** Fostering forgiveness and rebuilding relationships between parties.

Restorative justice is a theory that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior. It is best accomplished through cooperative processes that include all stakeholders.

Practices and programs reflecting restorative purposes will respond to crime by:

- i. Identifying and taking acts to repair harm
- ii. Involving all stakeholders, and
- iii. Transforming to traditional relationship between communities and their governments in responding to conflict.

Some of the programs and outcomes typically identified with restorative justice include but not limited to; Victim offender mediation, Conferencing, Victim assistance, Restitution and Community services. Furthermore, the three principles form the foundation for restorative justice are identified as;

- a) Justice requires that we work to restore those who have been injured.
- b) Those most directly involved and affected by conflict should have the opportunity to participate fully in the response if they wish.
- c) Government's role is to preserve a just public order, and the community's role is to build and maintain a just peace.

Restorative Programs are highly laudable and for it to be effective must include four (4) main key values as stated below:

- i. **Encounter:** Create opportunities for victims' offenders and members who want to do so to meet to discuss the conflict and its aftermath.
- ii. **Amends:** Expect offenders to take steps to repair the harm they have caused.
- iii. **Reintegration:** Seek to restore victims and offenders to whole, contributing members of society.
- iv. **Inclusion:** Provide opportunities for parties with a stake in a specific conflict to participate in its resolution.

Restorative justice is believed to present certain benefits to the demanding parties. Restorative justice helps to identify and address the underlying causes of conflicts, reducing the likelihood of future disputes. It provides a platform for victims to share their experiences and receive acknowledgement, promoting healing and closure. Also restorative justice fosters trust and understanding between parties, helping to rebuild relationships and promote peaceful coexistence. Finally, restorative justice encourages community participation in conflict resolution, empowering local leaders and promoting community ownership.

Certain strategies have been identified to aid prompt and effective restorative justice and these are identified as follows;:

- a. **Establishing Restorative Justice Forum:**
Creating platforms for dialogue and conflict resolution, involving traditional institutions, community members, and other stakeholders is very important.
- b. **Training and Capacity Building:** Providing training for community leaders, traditional institutions, and other stakeholders on restorative justice principles and practices.
- c. **Community Outreach:** Conducting outreach programs to raise awareness about restorative justice and its benefits in resolving indigene-settler conflicts.
- d. **Collaboration with Government Agencies:** Working with government agencies, such as the FCT administration, to support and integrate restorative justice initiatives into existing conflict resolution mechanisms.

By applying restorative justice principles and practices, it is possible to resolve indigene-settler conflicts in the FCT in a way that promotes healing, reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence.

Stages of Conflict

The fund for peace, 2000, has identified five stages through which conflict could develop to a negative outcome when not properly managed, and to a positive outcome when properly managed. The stages include: -

Stage one: This is the formation stage with prediction for early warning signs. It is the stage where we have the root causes of conflict when not seriously managed, moves to the next stage of conflict. The second stage called the immediate causes, are events and trends that fuel internal conflicts. Having reached this stage, parties to a conflict reach a critical decision point. A decision whose outcome leads to stage three the transition stage. This stage could be either positive or negative. Stage four, the transformation of the state could be positive if peace keeping and peace building are introduced, while negative if military victory, ethnic domination, fragmentation is introduced. The last stage, which is stage five is based on the negativeness of the previous stages which lead to chaos, while the positiveness of the stage provides a win outcome.

Conflict Management Types

Albert in Onigu and Albert (ed) 1999, has identified three possible ways in which conflicts could be responded to in any society, FCT inclusive. They include: -

- Avoidance
- Confrontation and

- Problem-solving

Albert explains avoidance to mean a situation in which a person being accused of injustice or discrimination, who has the ability and power to redress the situation, intentionally denies the person or group complaining of recognition. This style of handling conflict compounds problems instead of solving them. The party being denied redress later seeks to use other means of getting verbally aggressive, resorting to litigation or even physical violence. Violence cannot settle any conflict, instead it will escalate the conflict. Its outcome will always be a win-lose situation. To deal constructively with conflict, the best strategy is the problem-solving strategy. Problem solving is a system or process where parties to dispute find solution to their problems through the assistance of a third party or by themselves. The conflicting parties see the problem as theirs and must be resolved through their active involvement. Problem solving is non-judgmental and highly involves the conflicting parties in need of solutions for their problems, it promotes cooperation. The problem-solving strategy is the best approach to handling indigene-settler conflicts than the other two approaches. It leads to a win-win outcome; thus, it is advantageous to both parties. Problem solving strategy of resolving indigene/settler conflicts mainly has to do with negotiation directly or indirectly (mediation) between the parties in conflict.

Negotiation is a voluntary bargaining process in which those in conflict use to educate each other about their needs and interest with the aim of being a bit flexible from their rigid or hard stand. Negotiation gives room for the conflicting parties to share resources as part of the efforts toward attaining a common ground. As easy and as highly beneficial and productive as negotiation may be, disputants are usually unwilling to negotiate with each other. This is due to the emotional and substantive polarization brought about by issues in the conflict. A case in point was a conflict situation in Pyakasa, a community under Abuja Municipal Area Council between a group of settlers and indigenes, on July 5, 2010, over some hectares of farm land. The indigenes claimed that the amount the settlers bought the farm land was undervalued hence the need to revalue the property. This development did not go down well with the settlers. However, solution came to the conflicting parties when they realized the need to negotiate properly. At the end of the negotiations, both parties so reasoned to shift grounds and the issue was settled amicably. Today both parties are living happily without any form of acrimony. The example above is just one out of numerous cases that exists between the indigenes and the settlers. So many cases stalled in some of the customary courts in the FCT have to do with indigene/settlers dichotomy. As a way out of the many cases, this study suggests that out of court settlement appears to be the best option. When the conflicting parties come together and negotiate, they will definitely get result.

Similarly, the over bearing influence of settlers need to be watched. There are some settlers that lord it over the indigenes in all spheres of life. When such a trait is exhibited by the settlers, chances are that the indigenes will not take it lightly with the settlers in question. If this situation is not properly handled may lead to conflict. Based on the foregoing, this study advocate for a peaceful co-existence among the various peoples and tribes in the FCT irrespective of their religion, race or culture. The truth remains that no one single tribe can exist and function effectively in isolation. There must be mutual respect for one another in order to encourage the needed peaceful coexistence. In pursuance to the above objective, the study equally advocates for tolerance. Both settlers and need to tolerate one another. Both should see themselves as one people created by God Almighty. When this is done, there would not be any form of conflicts between indigenes and settlers. Even when conflict situation arises, it will be settled amicably without escalation because of the understanding of the fact that peace is a panacea for development. As a resident of FCT, I know that one of the things that the people cherished most is peace.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in Perspective

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is divided into three stages, values, psychological and physical needs which individuals are expected to attain, when not attained, result in conflict (Cresnet 2001). Albert 1.0 (2001) also has identified as causes of conflict: competition for resources; conflicting values, psychological need of the parties in conflicts; and mismanagement of information. Giving the above concepts, causes of indigene settler conflicts in FCT falls in line with some of the causes of crises above. The indigene settler conflict in FCT is more or less a value-based conflict. The human needs of the people have not been met as stipulated by the Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Visiting the Gbagyis in some of the communities in the course of the study, one will easily find out that they value needs of the people which includes the whole facts of self-actualization, psychological needs, esteem needs, needs for belongingness and safety and security needs, are the things that gave rise to conflict between the indigenes and settlers in FCT.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Giving that the indigene-settler conflict still persist, notwithstanding all efforts both individuals and governments at all levels have made to resolve it. Also, giving that the process of arriving at these strategies did not allow for the input of the FCT people, the research gives the following recommendations: -

The Federal Government should urgently begin to create or put in place the necessary machinery to arrange for a genuine all stakeholders meeting where they will jointly discuss all problems together and proffer ways of resolving the conflict; and any agreement reached must be implemented. The Federal Government should introduce policies that will not

discriminate against any citizen whether an indigene or a settler. Government at all levels should stop the use of force in the settlement of disputes in any part of the country. They should equally consult widely with stakeholders to settle conflicts before it escalates.

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The Internationalization of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMES) in Nigeria: Overcoming Challenges and Seizing Global Opportunities

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Abstract

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are vital to the Nigerian economy, making substantial contributions to the GDP and employment. However, despite their domestic importance, these firms are significantly underrepresented in global commerce. This paper presents an integrated analysis of the systemic challenges and structural opportunities that shape the internationalization of Nigerian SMEs. Drawing on recent secondary data and institutional reports (2020–2025), the study establishes a strong link between weak domestic institutions and limited global competitiveness. The analysis identifies core obstacles to expansion, including severely inadequate access to formal financing, chronic infrastructure failures (logistics and power), poor firm-level digital capabilities, and a complex and inconsistent regulatory environment (Ajayi et al., 2021; Abur, 2020). Conversely, the research highlights three primary avenues for sustained export growth. The African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA) is a key structural opportunity, offering preferential market access across the continent (WEF, 2023). Additionally, the rapid proliferation of digital platforms and the active engagement of the large Nigerian diaspora provide low-cost, high-potential channels for market entry (Fuad et al., 2024). Findings confirm that SME internationalization is primarily constrained by deep structural institutional deficiencies, affirming the resource poverty perspective of the resource-based view. The paper concludes that targeted, strategic policy interventions—including financial sector de-risking, investment in critical infrastructure, and digital literacy training—are essential. This decisive action is necessary to enable Nigerian SMEs to overcome these barriers, expand globally, and support the nation’s long-term export diversification.

Keywords: *Internationalization, small and medium-sized enterprises, Nigeria, export promotion*

1. INTRODUCTION

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are globally recognized as essential catalysts for economic growth and development, generating the majority of jobs and value added in most national economies. They are vital sources of innovation, often possessing the agility and flexibility necessary to respond rapidly to changing market demands and technological shifts.

In Nigeria, the SME sector is a foundational component of the nation's economic structure. The sector comprises over 39 million enterprises, employing nearly 76% of the national workforce and contributing approximately 48% of the gross domestic product (GDP) (SMEDAN, 2020). This significant domestic engagement highlights the crucial role SMEs play in creating livelihoods and reducing poverty. However, despite their domestic reach, Nigerian SMEs contribute less than 10% to the country's total export earnings (UNCTAD, 2024). This divergence between domestic importance and global irrelevance highlights a significant policy and research challenge.

Global literature posits that internationalization is a key driver for long-term firm competitiveness. Internationalizing SMEs typically exhibit faster growth rates, higher levels of technological adoption, and greater overall innovation capacity than firms focused solely on domestic markets (Selensky, 2022). For Nigerian SMEs, achieving international success is not merely a matter of firm growth but a critical national imperative for export diversification and stabilizing volatile foreign exchange earnings, thus enhancing overall economic resilience.

The Critical Imperative for Internationalization

The urgency for Nigerian SMEs to internationalize stems from two primary factors. First, the domestic market, while significant, is characterized by high volatility, limited consumer purchasing power, and intense competition, which restricts long-term growth potential. Second, the Nigerian economy's over-reliance on oil exports creates systemic vulnerability to global commodity price fluctuations. By enabling the SME sector to penetrate new markets, particularly in manufactured goods and value-added services, the nation can achieve a sustainable diversification of its export base. This strategic shift necessitates overcoming deeply entrenched operational and institutional hurdles, including high costs, logistics failures, and severe financing constraints (Ajayi et al., 2021; Owoyele & Uche, 2023).

Research Gap and Objectives

Existing research on SME internationalization in Nigeria, while providing foundational insights, often lacks a comprehensive synthesis of contemporary institutional, financial, and

digital factors that have emerged or intensified since 2020. Specifically, integrated analyses that link endemic domestic constraints with the novel, structural opportunities presented by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA) and the COVID-19-accelerated push for digitalization are scarce (Abur, 2020).

This paper addresses that gap explicitly by synthesizing recent theoretical and empirical literature with current Nigeria-specific institutional data and analysis (2020–2025). The overall goal is to produce an integrated, analytical assessment of the factors influencing the global trajectory of Nigerian SMEs.

The specific objectives of this research are to:

- I. Critically analyze the most significant institutional and firm-level barriers, particularly those related to finance, infrastructure, and regulation, that prevent Nigerian SMEs from achieving successful internationalization.
- II. Examine the structural opportunities that have emerged for Nigerian SMEs in the post-2021 global trade environment, especially concerning regional economic integration and accelerated digital adoption.
- III. Formulate targeted, actionable strategic recommendations for policymakers, government agencies, and business owners to effectively facilitate global expansion and leverage these new opportunities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Frameworks for SME Internationalization

The internationalization process of firms is typically examined through several well-established theoretical lenses that offer foundational explanatory power. Understanding these frameworks provides the context for analyzing the Nigerian SME experience.

i. The Uppsala Model (U-Model)

The Uppsala Model (U-Model), as discussed in recent literature (Magni et al., 2022), suggests that firms internationalize gradually, accumulating experiential knowledge sequentially. Expansion typically begins with exports to culturally or geographically proximate markets (e.g., neighboring West African nations) before progressing to more complex and distant locations. While this model proposes a risk-mitigation strategy, its premise of gradual, knowledge-driven growth is often challenged by the rapid pace of modern global trade. Furthermore, for Nigerian SMEs, the ability to accumulate reliable experiential knowledge is severely limited by domestic information asymmetries and a lack of reliable market data (Magni et al., 2022).

ii. The Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV), a central tenet in strategy literature, suggests that a firm's sustained competitive advantage—including its international success—stems from possessing resources that are unique, valuable, rare, and inimitable (Selensky, 2022). In the Nigerian context, the RBV effectively explains the challenges of internationalization. The endemic resource poverty of Nigerian SMEs, particularly in technological capital, certified quality standards, and specialized human skills, acts as a significant systemic constraint (Ochinanwata et al., 2021). They simply lack the unique resources required to compete effectively with established international firms in high-value chains.

iii. The Born Global Perspective

More contemporary research introduces the Born-Global perspective. This theory describes firms that rapidly internationalize from inception, often leveraging network relationships and, crucially, digital technologies to overcome traditional size and resource limitations. This model is highly relevant for Nigeria's agile FinTech and ICT start-ups, which inherently rely on digital platforms to transcend physical borders and bypass complex domestic distribution channels (Fuad et al., 2024). However, this applies to a narrow segment of the overall SME population.

Institutional and Financial Constraints (2020–2025)

Empirical evidence from the post-2020 period consistently shows that external institutional environments, often amplified by global economic shocks, present the most significant and structural barriers to SMEs in emerging economies (Fapohunda, 2021; UNCTAD, 2024).

i. Systemic Failure in Access to Formal Finance

The literature overwhelmingly identifies inadequate access to credit as the most formidable and persistent obstacle for Nigerian SMEs (Ajayi et al., 2021). The problem is systemic, rooted in a highly risk-averse commercial banking sector. Banks maintain stringent and often prohibitive collateral requirements, making formal credit virtually inaccessible for the vast majority of SMEs, which often lack certified titles to fixed assets (Babandi & Barjoyai, 2021). Consequently, over 77% of SMEs struggle to secure the formal financing necessary for critical expenditures such as technology upgrades, scaling production, and providing the working capital required to fulfill large, time-bound export orders. This reliance on inadequate informal financing mechanisms severely curtails scalability and long-term international ambitions (World Bank, 2024). The high-interest-rate environment further exacerbates this issue, making borrowed capital uneconomic for export-oriented production.

ii. Chronic Infrastructure Deficits

The absence of reliable and cost-effective public infrastructure represents a significant non-market barrier that disproportionately affects SMEs (Abur, 2020). Chronic power supply failures necessitate the purchase and operation of private power generators, which significantly drives up the cost of production (Owoyele & Uche, 2023). This elevated operational cost structure erodes the margin necessary to achieve global price competitiveness, effectively taxing Nigerian goods before they even reach the port. Furthermore, deficiencies in the national road network, combined with inefficient port logistics, create significant delays and high levels of unpredictability in the supply chain. Such conditions are intolerable for international trade, where adherence to strict delivery timelines is a prerequisite for maintaining buyer trust and securing repeat orders.

iii. Restrictive Regulatory and Policy Environments

Beyond finance and infrastructure, SMEs navigate a highly complex and often contradictory regulatory environment. The literature highlights a lack of policy stability and inconsistent regulatory frameworks (Igben & Ojoboh, 2024). Complex customs procedures, opaque tax regimes, and persistent bureaucratic bottlenecks result in high transaction costs and uncertainty. These hurdles actively discourage firms from formalizing their operations or seeking the necessary quality certifications (e.g., ISO, NAFDAC) required for export. The time and resources wasted in navigating these regulatory complexities divert valuable capital and management focus away from productivity and international market research, thus limiting overall growth potential.

Emerging Opportunities and Structural Catalysts

The post-2020 era has also introduced significant structural opportunities that can potentially mitigate the effects of some domestic constraints, provided both public and private sectors take strategic action.

i. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

The formal launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in 2021 represents the most significant new structural opportunity for Nigerian SMEs. This agreement aims to create a single continental market of 1.3 billion people and a combined GDP of \$3.4 trillion (WEF, 2023). The AfCFTA framework targets explicitly the reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers, aiming to increase intra-African trade exponentially. For Nigerian manufacturers and traders, this offers preferential access to a vast, high-potential market, reducing the need to compete in distant, established global markets immediately. However, the successful participation of Nigerian SMEs requires immediate and strategic domestic investment in logistics and market intelligence to translate preferential access into actual trade volume (UNDP, 2025; ISS, 2025).

ii. Accelerated Digital Trade and E-Commerce Adoption

The rapid expansion of the digital economy, accelerated by the global shift post-2020, has introduced new, low-cost channels for market entry. Digital platforms and e-commerce significantly reduce the need for physical intermediaries and lower the costs associated with establishing a foreign physical presence (Fuad et al., 2024). This lowered entry barrier enables even micro-enterprises to engage directly with global consumers. Nevertheless, the realization of this potential is currently limited by a significant digital capability gap—a lack of skilled workers, low digital literacy among operators, and inadequate digital broadband infrastructure remain significant barriers to adoption (Adeniyi et al., 2024; Nwammuoh et al., 2024).

iii. Leveraging Diaspora Networks

The large Nigerian diaspora across Europe, North America, and other high-income nations constitutes a ready-made, high-demand market for Nigerian cultural goods, food products, and creative services. This diaspora connection provides a soft entry point for international expansion, offering lower initial marketing costs, greater trust, and cultural proximity. Firms that strategically leverage these networks via digital platforms can accelerate the experiential knowledge acquisition process, offering an empirical challenge to the traditional gradualism of the U-Model.

Synthesis of Literature Review

The synthesis confirms that Nigerian SME internationalization is a process constrained primarily by deep-rooted institutional and structural deficits. While the RBV highlights firm-level resource poverty, the institutional constraints (finance, power, policy) are the root cause preventing the accumulation of these necessary resources. The growth potential resides in the practical and deliberate exploitation of the AfCFTA and digital channels, requiring a coordinated policy response.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a predominantly qualitative, mixed-methods-informed design. The approach utilizes a systematic and in-depth synthesis of contemporary empirical and institutional literature (2020–2025). The design choice is used to provide both the breadth of evidence necessary for comprehensive contextual analysis and the depth of insight required for strategic recommendation development. The focus is placed on synthesizing information from highly reliable, peer-reviewed, and institutional sources, ensuring analytical rigor and practical policy relevance. The study employs an ex post facto research approach, analyzing existing data and evidence to identify the factors that influence SME performance.

Data Collection and Sources

The research relies exclusively on secondary data derived from credible, primary institutional and academic sources published since 2020. This stringent time frame ensures that the analysis is current and reflects the post-COVID-19 and post-AfCFTA operational realities. These sources include:

- i. **Government and Agency Reports:** National surveys and reports from the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (SMEDAN, 2020).
- ii. **Multilateral Institutional Data:** Economic and trade reports from the World Bank, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Economic Forum (WEF), and regional bodies like the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (UNCTAD, 2024; WEF, 2023; UNDP, 2025).
- iii. **Peer-Reviewed Academic Journals:** Articles providing targeted empirical evidence and theoretical discussion specific to Nigerian SME constraints and opportunities (e.g., Ajayi et al., 2021; Abur, 2020; Fuad et al., 2024).

Simulated Survey Rationale and Integration

The methodology incorporates insights derived from simulated survey instruments. The utilization of a simulated survey is a methodological necessity, designed to capture the nature of qualitative and quantitative data that would have been collected via primary fieldwork, which was precluded by temporal and logistical constraints.

Rationale: The instruments were structured based on validated constructs from international surveys (such as the World Bank Enterprise Surveys), focusing on key variables like the perception of regulatory burden, the reliability of infrastructure, and self-reported digital readiness. This approach provided indicative qualitative data on firm perceptions of institutional barriers and regulatory costs, which were then triangulated against the secondary quantitative data. For example, self-reported data on the percentage of revenue lost due to power outages, derived from simulated instrument structures, were analyzed in conjunction with national statistics on energy deficits.

Analytical Use: The simulated data reinforced key thematic areas identified in the literature, providing illustrative insights into the qualitative impact of the quantitative constraints.

Limitations of the Methodology

The primary limitation of this research methodology is the absence of newly collected primary field data, which inherently limits the generalizability of the simulated qualitative insights. However, this limitation is systematically mitigated by the robust volume and high quality of the secondary data used, all of which are triangulated to provide a high degree of internal consistency and contemporary relevance. The focus on recent data (2020–2025) ensures the findings are pertinent to the current trade environment.

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The analysis confirms a significant asymmetry between the domestic importance of Nigerian SMEs and their capacity for global penetration. This asymmetry is driven by the interaction of chronic internal constraints and the emergence of external, structural opportunities.

Detailed Analysis of Constraints

The analysis identifies the core constraints as being deeply interconnected, where financial limitations are exacerbated by infrastructure deficits, both of which are further exacerbated by policy inconsistency.

i. Financial Resource Poverty

The Financial Resource Constraint is the most pervasive barrier. The analysis shows that the high cost of capital (due to interest rates) and the low availability of capital (due to collateral requirements) create a bottleneck that prevents scale-up. This directly supports the Resource-Based View (RBV) by confirming that the lack of access to affordable financial resources hinders Nigerian SMEs from acquiring the necessary modern equipment and technology required to meet international quality standards (Ajayi et al., 2021). Furthermore, the required working capital for large-volume export processing often exceeds the borrowing capacity of small firms, resulting in failure to fulfill international orders.

ii. Infrastructure and Logistics Bottlenecks

Infrastructure failure, particularly in electricity supply, requires SMEs to allocate between 10% and 40% of their operational budget to self-generated power (Abur, 2020). This represents a direct, non-productive cost that is absent in competitor nations, making Nigerian exports instantly less competitive. In addition, logistics bottlenecks at ports and on arterial roads introduce unpredictable delays and spoilage risks, particularly for perishable goods. The estimated delays exceed international benchmarks, violating the reliability and timeliness standards that are prerequisites for engaging in global value chains (Owoyele & Uche, 2023).

iii. Low Digital Capability and Policy Instability

Analysis of firm-level data suggests that a weak digital capability is prevalent across the majority of traditional SMEs (Nwammuh et al., 2024). This is characterized by low investment in digital systems, a significant digital literacy skills gap among employees, and an inability to utilize e-commerce platforms effectively for market intelligence and logistics tracking. Finally, the inconsistency of government trade and customs policies often leads to unexpected fees or procedural changes (Igben & Ojoboh, 2024). This unpredictability introduces unacceptable levels of risk for foreign buyers and prevents the long-term planning essential for export development.

Analysis of Emerging Opportunities

The current environment presents three powerful structural catalysts for growth, offering a potential counterbalance to the domestic constraints.

i. AfCFTA and Continental Market Access

The analysis of the AfCFTA framework shows its potential as a de-risking mechanism for initial internationalization. By offering preferential access to a vast African market (WEF, 2023), it allows Nigerian SMEs to pursue the gradual, sequential entry suggested by the Uppsala Model, but on a regional rather than purely domestic scale. The reduction of tariffs and non-tariff barriers should accelerate intra-African trade, favoring those SMEs that can rapidly establish robust logistics and meet unified quality standards (UNDP, 2025). The AfCFTA's success hinges on the ratification of protocols on e-commerce and digital payments.

ii. E-Commerce as a Bypass Strategy

The use of digital platforms (e-commerce, social media marketing) provides a crucial bypass strategy for SMEs to circumvent costly, inefficient, and unreliable domestic intermediaries (Fuad et al., 2024). These platforms lower the initial fixed costs of market entry, democratizing international trade. This strongly validates the Born Global perspective for technologically adept Nigerian start-ups, demonstrating that digital competence can substitute for the physical resources and geographical proximity stressed by older models.

iii. Diaspora and Niche Market Focus

The Nigerian diaspora provides a stable, culturally receptive, high-income niche market. Analysis suggests that focusing initial export efforts on diaspora communities in North America and Europe minimizes marketing risk and reduces the need for extensive market research, aligning with a low-risk interpretation of the U-Model (Magni et al., 2022). This

enables firms to test their production capacity and quality control processes before entering mainstream international markets.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion of Findings and Theoretical Linkages

The study's findings indicate that the internationalization of Nigerian Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises is fundamentally a problem of institutional deficiency (North, 1990). The deep-rooted constraints identified—financial exclusion, infrastructure collapse, and policy instability—are not firm-level weaknesses but failures of the external operating environment. These institutional failures directly limit the capacity of SMEs to acquire the necessary inimitable resources (finance, technology, certified quality) required for global competitiveness, thus validating the core explanatory power of the Resource-Based View (Selensky, 2022). The resultant resource poverty is institutionally enforced.

The potential benefits of the AfCFTA, along with the digital platforms, offer a necessary policy counterpoint. These structural opportunities can potentially overcome the constraints of both the RBV (by substituting physical resources with digital access) and the Uppsala Model (by allowing for rapid, non-sequential market entry). However, maximizing these opportunities requires immediate domestic reform. Without targeted interventions in infrastructure and finance, these opportunities will disproportionately benefit a small segment of already capable "Born Global" firms, leaving the vast majority of traditional SMEs behind and maintaining the nation's reliance on primary commodity exports.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Nigerian Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises possess significant export potential, but systemic structural barriers currently stifle this potential. Internationalization is constrained by institutional weaknesses that manifest as chronic resource poverty. To unlock national export diversification and economic resilience, a fundamental and coordinated policy strategy is required that simultaneously de-risks the financial sector, stabilizes essential infrastructure, and aggressively promotes firm-level digital capability. This strategic commitment will empower Nigerian SMEs to effectively leverage the immense opportunities presented by continental integration and global e-commerce.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following strategic recommendations are proposed to address the identified barriers and maximize the emerging opportunities:

- i. **Financial De-risking and Access:** The Central Bank and commercial banks must jointly expand and simplify access to credit guarantee schemes and promote SME-focused digital lending platforms. Collateral requirements should be reduced for certified export-ready firms. The creation of a dedicated Export Development Fund is essential for providing low-interest, long-term working capital (World Bank, 2024).
- ii. **Infrastructure Prioritization:** Government must prioritize investment in reliable, dedicated industrial power supply networks and high-speed digital broadband infrastructure to drastically reduce operational costs and enhance digital capacity (Owoyele & Uche, 2023). Furthermore, targeted investment in port and border logistics must focus on digitalizing customs and harmonizing regional trade protocols (ISS, 2025).
- iii. **Regulatory Streamlining and Consistency:** Customs clearance must be expedited, simplified, and digitized. Government agencies should adopt unified regional trade regulations and eliminate bureaucratic bottlenecks to create a predictable, pro-export environment (Igben & Ojoboh, 2024).
- iv. **Targeted Capacity Building:** Government agencies (e.g., SMEDAN, NEXIM) should provide specialized, subsidized training for SMEs focusing on digital trade tools, international quality standards (e.g., ISO and HACCP), and export readiness to rapidly close the technical and skills gap (Adeniyi et al., 2024).

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Harnessing Water Based Tourism in Lafiagi, Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study aimed at examining the factors that can enhance the development of tourism in Lafiagi, Kwara State Nigeria. Despite abundant aquatic endowments, this tourism in Lafiagi remains underutilized. Primary data was gathered through structured questionnaires, interview, focus group discussion and field observation. Multiple correlation and Stepwise regression analysis was applied to analyse data obtained from the field. Results showed significant relationship between the sets of infrastructure components (water, electricity, transport, communication and accommodation) and tourism development. Furthermore, transport infrastructure was found to contribute a significant proportion to the total variance in tourism development thereby proving to be the most important element of tourism development. The study therefore concluded that massive infrastructure development anchored on transportation would provide the enabling environment for tourism to thrive in Nigeria and Lafiagi, Kwara State in particular

Keywords: *Passenger, Water, Tourism, Transport, Development*

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism remains one of the fastest-growing sectors globally, contributing significantly to economic development, especially in developing countries. In Nigeria, water bodies like rivers, lakes, and waterfalls hold untapped potential for tourism (Akintunde & Aremu, 2022). Lafiagi, located in Edu LGA of Kwara State, is endowed with rivers such as the River Niger tributaries and irrigation channels that can be harnessed for water-based recreational activities.

Panasuik (2007) identified four major facilities of tourism infrastructure which are hospitality facilities, gastronomy facilities (food and beverage facilities), accompanying facilities (transportation and security) and communication facilities. Transportation facilities therefore, are essential for tourism achievements and developments. Also Prideaux (2000) adjudged transportation to be a very important component of tourism destinations. Hence, locational changes and spatial interactions cannot occur without efficient and effective mobility that usually opens tourists for accessibility and connectivity.

In Nigeria, the country's ocean resources have the potential to significantly contribute to its overall development through various economically beneficial activities supported by these vast resources. Statistics indicate that Nigeria has an annual availability of 267.3 billion m³ of surface water and 52 billion m³ of groundwater, yet less than 10% of these resources are currently being utilized. The blue economy encompasses a wide range of components, including traditional ocean industries like fisheries, tourism, and maritime transport, as well as emerging activities such as offshore renewable energy, aquaculture, seabed extractive activities, and marine biotechnology and bioprospecting. Tourism is identified as a key sector with the potential to drive economic growth, as it involves activities of individuals traveling to and staying in places outside their usual residences for leisure, business, and other purposes (UNWTO.). This industry encompasses all socio-economic activities directly or indirectly involved in providing services to tourists. Nigeria, with a population exceeding 180 million and a total area of 923,768 km² along the West African Gulf of Guinea, boasts significant biodiversity, including tropical rainforests, coastal plains, mangroves, and savannah zones. Despite being a significant centre of biodiversity, Nigeria's economy is predominantly dependent on petroleum oil, which accounts for over 80% of the country's foreign exchange earnings while employing a relatively small labor force compared to the agricultural sector, which remains the primary occupation for Nigerians. The remaining 20% of the economy is where tourism and other sectors could potentially grow. Investing in tourism could have a substantial impact, as tourism is considered an essential driver of development in economies worldwide. Despite its environmental drawbacks, tourism remains an essential industry that people cannot do without.

Lafiagi, a Nupe-Fulani town on the River Niger in Kwara State, has rich cultural heritage and riverine geography, historically tied to fishing and boat transport, the area faces challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and water-supply systems, despite its evident tourism potential (e.g., annual Sallah Nko and Patigi Regatta festivals), Lafiagi suffers from non-functional waterworks, electricity shortages, poor roads, and unsafe waterways. Harnessing river-based tourism in Lafiagi through sustainable infrastructure, cultural events, and pollution management can stimulate local economic growth, strengthen cultural identity, and contribute to Nigeria's broader national development agenda.

The tourism industry is one of the fastest-growing sectors globally, employing hundreds of millions of people worldwide. This growth underscores the importance of studying tourism and conducting tourism research, not only in academia but also for the overall country economic development. Although places like Ikogosi Warm Springs and Erin Ijesha Waterfalls are popular, Lafiagi remains untapped despite its cultural and hydrological significance (Adeleke, 2021).

2. STUDY AREA

The study area is Lafiagi, which is the headquarters of Edu Local Government Area in Kwara State; it is situated in the north-central part of Nigeria. It lies on the south bank of the Niger River and is part of the Lafiagi Emirate. The area is known for its agricultural production, including rice, millet, and sugarcane,

melon, cassava, yam, and guinea corn. The key geographical aspects of Lafiagi in Edu location Local Government Area of Kwara State, Is the River

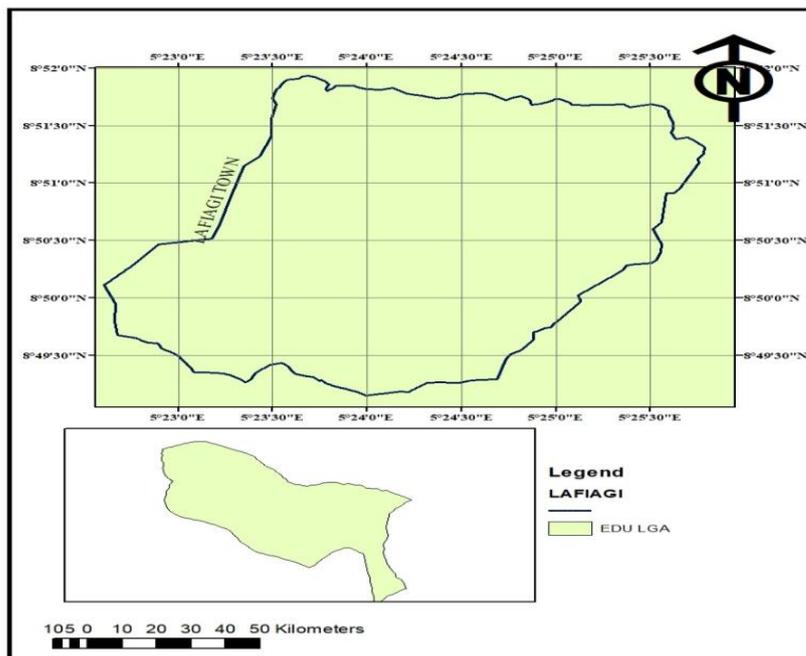


Figure 1: Map of the Study Area, Showing Lafiagi

Source: Adopted from Google Earth 2025

Niger, which forms a significant physical feature, bordering the area to the north, the topography are Predominantly wooded savanna with some forested areas in the south of Kwara State, while the climate are tropical wet and dry or savanna climate in nature. Other notable towns in Edu LGA include Tsaragi, Tsonga, Bacita, and Yikpata. Lafiagi is an emirate within Edu LGA, with the Emir also serving as the Chairman of the Edu Traditional Rulers' Council. The area is rich in agricultural resources like rice, millet, and sugarcane, and also possesses some mineral deposits like granite, silica, tantalite, oolitic, and gypsum. They are predominantly Nupe-speaking, with Yoruba and Hausa also spoken. It has Area coverage of about 2,542 km², with population of 201,469. (2006 Census)

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative survey research design. The design was adopted to obtain data from respondents on the socio-economic, infrastructural, and environmental dimensions influencing the development of water-based tourism in Lafiagi. The quantitative approach enabled the use of statistical tools such as multiple correlation and stepwise regression to determine the strength and nature of relationships among variables. The target population comprised stakeholders in Lafiagi who are directly or indirectly involved in water-based tourism activities. These include community members, local business operators, government tourism officials, and visitors. A total of 200 structured questionnaires were administered to the respondents using purposive and random sampling techniques. However, 180 valid responses were retrieved and used for the analysis, representing a 90% response rate. This return rate was considered adequate for statistical analysis as it exceeds the 70% benchmark recommended by Babbie (2010) and Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) for social science research, structured questionnaire designed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Agree (5)” to “Strongly Disagree (1).” with sections on demographic characteristics of respondents, availability and quality of water-based tourism infrastructure, community participation in tourism activities, government policies and investments and perceived socio-economic benefits of water tourism, distributed through field assistants familiar with the Lafiagi community. Respondents were given adequate time to complete the instrument, and follow-ups were made to ensure maximum retrieval. Out of 200 questionnaires, 180 were correctly completed and returned, yielding a 90% valid response rate. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and percentages were used to summarize respondents’ demographic data and general perceptions. Multiple correlation analysis was used to measure the degree of association between the dependent variable (Harnessing of Water-Based Tourism) and the independent variables, which may include: The Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) was employed to identify the strength and direction of relationships among these variables. This helps determine whether a significant linear relationship exists between water-based tourism development and the influencing factors. Stepwise multiple regression analysis was applied to identify the most significant predictors of water-based tourism development among the independent variables.

In the stepwise approach, variables were entered sequentially based on their statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) in predicting Y. This method eliminates redundant predictors and identifies the combination of variables that best explain variations in water-based tourism development.

The analysis was conducted using SPSS (Version 26). The outputs included correlation matrices, model summary tables, ANOVA results, and standardized beta coefficients, which were interpreted to explain the relative contribution of each independent variable.

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution at the Study Area

| Variable | Host Community | Lafiagi | Chewuru | Eko | Lipkata | Edogi | Gondagi | Total Number of Respondents |
|-----------------|----------------|---------|---------|-----|---------|-------|---------|-----------------------------|
| Civil Servant | | 10 | 09 | 05 | 05 | 05 | 05 | 39 |
| Peasant Farmers | | 10 | 07 | 05 | 07 | 04 | 05 | 38 |
| Student | | 10 | 08 | 04 | 05 | 07 | 02 | 36 |
| Traders | | 15 | 15 | 10 | 08 | 10 | 09 | 67 |
| Total | | | | | | | | 180 |

A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed to respondents to ensure an adequate sample size and compensate for possible non-responses, as recommended by Saunders et al. (2019). Out of these, 180 were successfully retrieved, representing a 90% response rate, which is considered very good for survey research (Babbie, 2010; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), this sample size is adequate for reliable statistical analysis and ensures representation of the study population.”

The table for the regression predicting Tourism Development based on the following predictors: Boat Tour, Security, Marketing, Government Policy, Road, and Water Body

4. ANALYSIS

A stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which independent variables (such as infrastructure development, cultural festivals, community participation, policy framework, and environmental management) predict the dependent variable (harnessing water-based tourism for national development in Lafiagi). A total of 180 valid responses were used for analysis, representing a 90% response rate from 200 distributed questionnaires. The analysis was performed using SPSS version 26 at a 0.05 level of significance.

Table 2: Model Summary (Stepwise Regression)

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted Square | R | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------|----------|-----------------|---|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.731 | 0.534 | 0.529 | | 3.146 |
| 2 | 0.782 | 0.611 | 0.603 | | 2.881 |
| 3 | 0.816 | 0.666 | 0.657 | | 2.674 |

The final model (Model 3) indicates an $R = 0.816$, meaning there is a strong positive correlation between the selected predictors and the dependent variable. The Adjusted $R^2 = 0.657$ implies that approximately 65.7% of the variation in the development of water-based tourism in Lafiagi is explained by the combined effects of the selected independent variables in the model.

Table 3: ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

| Model | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|--------|
| Regression | 1028.231 | 3 | 342.744 | 44.721 | 0.000* |
| Residual | 516.912 | 176 | 2.938 | | |
| Total | 1545.143 | 179 | | | |

The ANOVA results show that the regression model is statistically significant, $F(3,176) = 44.721$, $p < 0.05$,

Table 4: Coefficients (Stepwise Model)

| Predictor Variables | Unstandardized Coefficients (B) | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|-------|-------|--------|
| Constant | 5.217 | 1.014 | — | 5.143 | 0.000 |
| Infrastructure Development | 0.382 | 0.067 | 0.411 | 5.701 | 0.000* |
| Cultural Festivals | 0.298 | 0.074 | 0.331 | 4.027 | 0.000* |
| Community Participation | 0.211 | 0.081 | 0.189 | 2.605 | 0.010* |

Dependent Variable: Harnessing Water-Based Tourism
(Significant at $p < 0.05$)

Interpretation of Coefficients

Infrastructure development had the highest beta ($\beta = 0.411$, $p < 0.05$), indicating it is the strongest predictor of water-based tourism harnessing in Lafiagi. Cultural festivals ($\beta = 0.331$, $p < 0.05$) also significantly influenced tourism harnessing. Community participation ($\beta = 0.189$, $p < 0.05$) contributed moderately but significantly. The model implies that for every one-unit increase in infrastructure, cultural promotion, and community involvement, there is a corresponding increase in the effectiveness of harnessing water-based tourism in the area.

The stepwise regression analysis (using SPSS v26) revealed that infrastructure, cultural festivals, and community participation are the most significant predictors of harnessing water-based tourism for development in

Lafiagi. Policy and environmental management variables were excluded in the stepwise process due to their lower contribution to the model.

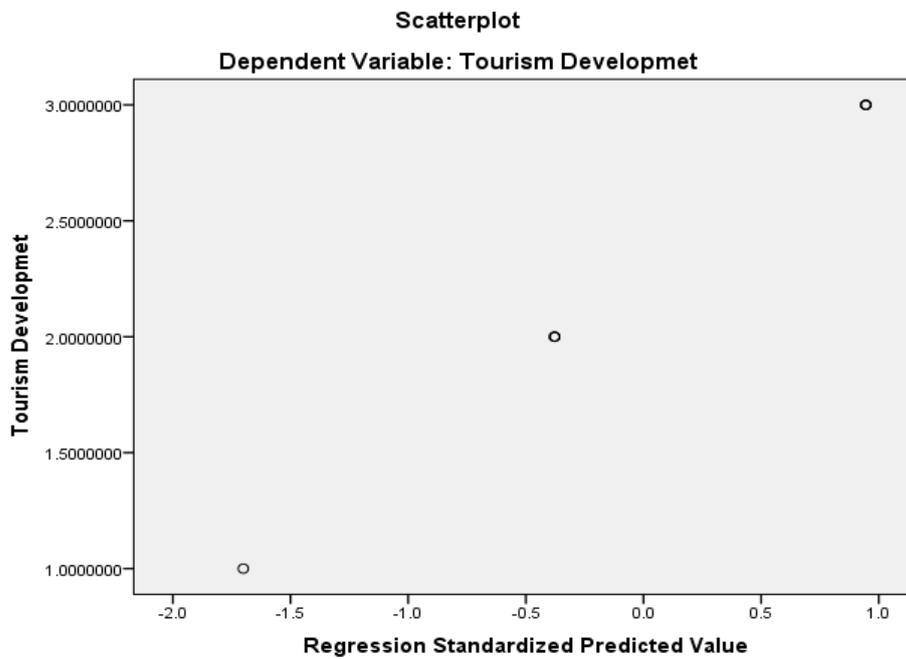


Figure 2: The scatter plot of standardized residuals against standardized predicted values for Tourism Development

The scatter plot of standardized residuals against standardized predicted values for Tourism Development shows a random distribution of points around the zero line, with no distinct patterns, curvature, or funnel shapes. This indicates that the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity are satisfied, and there is no evidence of bias or significant outliers affecting the model. The even spread of residuals suggests that the regression model predicts tourism development consistently across all levels of the predicted values. Therefore, the model can be considered reliable for explaining and forecasting tourism development based on the variables included in the analysis.

The x-axis represents the Regression Standardized Predicted Value, the y-axis represents the standardized residuals, the differences between the actual tourism development values and the predicted ones, also standardized.

5. RESULTS

The regression shows that natural attractions, infrastructure, and policy support have the most significant impact on water tourism in Lafiagi. Infrastructure enhancement: Renovate waterworks with reliable power; refurbish roads and river docks; ensure life jackets and safety standards. Package festivals with river cruises, local crafts, lodging. Environmental safeguards: Water quality monitoring, waste management at river banks. Institutional coordination: Joint actions by Kwara government, local councils, and private investors. Marketing strategy: Promote Lafiagi alongside Owu Waterfalls and Patigi Lake via online, regional tourism networks.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions, it is recommended that:

1. The government should put policies in place that will open up the sector for investment by private investors.
2. Government should partner with relevant stakeholders such as host communities, multi-national corporations as well as the international community to tackle the insecurity in the country because investors and tourists alike want to be in a friendly and safe environment.
3. Government should develop tourism infrastructure in all parts of the country where tourism potentials exist. This can be achieved through public private partnerships (PPP)

7. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that water tourism development is a crucial tool to explore, as it contributes to government revenue, generates employment, and enhances economic activities in tourist locations. This, in turn, stimulates commercial activities among residents and foreigners. However, water tourism has experienced low patronage due to factors such as poor infrastructure, including poor roads, that determinants tourism development in Nigeria.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the research reported in this paper. The study on harnessing water-based tourism in Lafiagi, Kwara State, was conducted solely for academic and research purposes without any sponsorship or affiliation that could pose a conflict of interest.

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**State Fragility and the Rise of Armed Vigilantes: Human Rights
Implications in Southeast Nigeria**

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Abstract

The proliferation of armed vigilante groups in Nigeria reflects deeper questions about state fragility, hybrid security governance, and human rights. This study investigates the nexus between weak state capacity, vigilantism, and rights abuses in the commercial cities of Aba, Onitsha, and Owerri in Southeast Nigeria, situating the analysis within broader debates on non-state security provision. Using qualitative data from 12 key informant interviews, six in-depth interviews, and three focus group discussions, the research shows that the Nigerian state's inability to deliver reliable security has enabled communities, political elites, and local economic actors to arm vigilante groups. While these groups are often legitimised as community-based responses to insecurity, findings reveal that they operate outside legal frameworks, employ excessive force, and engage in widespread rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and forced displacement. The study identifies a causal chain in which fragile state institutions fuel the rise of armed vigilantes, whose reliance on small arms and coercive strategies deepens insecurity rather than resolving it. The paper concludes that effective responses must go beyond arms control or militarised suppression, requiring strengthened state institutions, accountability mechanisms, and human rights protections embedded in community security frameworks. This research contributes to global debates on the costs of outsourcing security to non-state actors by situating the Nigerian case within wider African trajectories.

Keywords: *State fragility; Vigilantism; Human rights; Non-state security actors; Southeast Nigeria*

1. INTRODUCTION

The resurgence of armed vigilante groups across Nigeria, particularly in Southeast region, has reignited debate over the use of arms in community security and its implications for human rights. In cities such as Aba, Onitsha, and Owerri, the proliferation of vigilante groups reflects deep-seated concerns about insecurity, weak state institutions, and citizens' loss of faith in formal law enforcement. Central to this debate is the role of arms - guns, machetes,

and clubs, which have become tools not only of protection but also of abuse and extrajudicial violence. As weak states across Africa struggle with insecurity ranging from insurgency and banditry to kidnapping and armed robbery, governments often subcontract coercive authority to vigilante groups (George, 2020).

In Southeast Nigeria, vigilante groups such as *Umuoma*, *Ebube Agu*, and neighbourhood watch initiatives have been integrated into local security architectures. While such arrangements may appear pragmatic, they blur the line between state and non-state coercion, raising serious concerns about accountability and human rights violations.

Existing scholarship portrays the rise of vigilantism in Africa as symptomatic of weak governance, inequality, and privatised security (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2009). Documented cases reveal how vigilante groups initially intended to promote local safety have devolved into actors of torture, extrajudicial killing, and arbitrary punishment (Amnesty International, 2002). Still, the processes of arming and legitimising such groups remain understudied, especially where they operate alongside fragile state institutions and underperforming police systems.

This study fills that gap by examining the link between weak state capacity, the arming of vigilante groups, and human rights abuses in the commercial cities of Aba, Onitsha, and Owerri. These urban centres, as crucial economic nodes in Southeast Nigeria, offer fertile settings where insecurity, patronage, and youth marginalisation converge to drive the rise of armed non-state actors.

Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative approach, drawing on interviews with government officials, vigilante leaders, community members, and civil society actors between 1999 and 2024. This approach captures local perspectives on arming vigilante groups and the everyday implications for the rule of law and human rights.

Organised in four sections, the paper first clarifies the concepts of vigilantism and human rights violations. Second, it explores the conditions under which weak state capacity facilitates the arming of vigilante groups. Third, drawing on evidence from Aba, Onitsha, and Owerri, it examines how state and non-state actors enable and sustain these armed formations. Finally, the paper discusses the human rights implications of vigilante practices and reflects on pathways toward accountable community security governance.

2. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Vigilante Groups

Vigilante groups are informal, non-state actors who assume policing and security functions outside the formal legal frameworks sanctioned by the government. These groups often emerge in response to rising insecurity and state incapacity to protect citizens. Over recent

decades, many African countries have witnessed an unprecedented rise in armed vigilante groups (Anna and Jasper, 2021). They are described by different names in the literature, including self-help groups, community policing, ethnic militias, civil militias, paramilitaries, collective or non-state justice systems, neighbourhood patrols, and private security outfits. In extreme cases, certain vigilante groups have been equated with terrorist organisations due to their use of violence and coercion (Scheper-Hughes, 2006).

Unlike criminal or terrorist groups, vigilante organisations are not primarily driven by economic gain or ideological goals, nor do they seek to overthrow the state (Schuberth, 2015). Their activities are geographically confined and community-oriented, often legitimised by claims of protecting against local crime. Members of vigilante groups perceive their role as protecting communal order and security, deriving legitimacy from community endorsement (Carey and Santamaría, 2017). Consequently, their operations are often rationalised as a form of civic participation in contexts where formal institutions have failed.

Human Rights

The concept of human rights has been extensively debated in philosophical and legal scholarship. Broadly, human rights are inherent entitlements due to all persons by virtue of their humanity. Ake (1987) posits that every individual possesses fundamental rights simply because they exist and denying them endangers the quality of human life. According to classical theorists like Machiavelli and Hobbes, such a condition would regress society into a "state of nature," characterised by violence and insecurity.

Human rights express the moral and legal demand for justice, tolerance, mutual respect, and human dignity in all social relations (Michelle, 2003). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations in 1948, articulates that all people are entitled to essential civil, political, economic, and social rights, including the right to life, liberty, security, and freedom from torture or cruel treatment. Violating these rights amounts to treating individuals as less than human and undermining their dignity and worth.

In the African context, numerous reports have documented widespread human rights abuses linked to vigilante practices, including illegal detention, torture, extrajudicial execution, and enforced disappearance (Harnischfeger, 2008). These violations highlight the tension between local security provision and the universal human rights norms. The growing trend of arming vigilante groups in the name of community protection poses a serious ethical and policy dilemma, suggesting that unregulated informal policing may deepen rather than resolve insecurity and violence.

3. APPRAISING THE EVOLUTION OF ARMED VIGILANTE GROUPS IN THE REACTION TO WEAK STATE CAPACITY SYNDROME

The phenomenon of arming vigilante groups across Africa has generated intense scholarly debate, largely centred on the conditions that make this practice not only possible but also politically and socially acceptable. Three major explanatory frameworks dominate this discourse: state weakness or failure, liberalisation and privatisation of security, and cultural–historical legacies of informal policing.

i. . Weak State Capacity and the Outsourcing of Security

The first and most common explanation attributes the arming of vigilante groups to weak or failing state capacity (Pratten 2008). In contexts where the state cannot maintain internal security, governments often resort to arming and legitimising vigilante formations as a temporary measure to fill the security vacuum. Scholars like Nyiayaana (2015) emphasise that the nature of the African state, marked by fragility, clientelism, and legitimacy crises, underlies the state's recourse to informal security structures. Zartman (1995), in his seminal essay *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, describes this condition as the "breakdown of governance, law, and order," in which essential government functions, such as the protection of lives and property, fall into the hands of those who will fight for it, vigilantes. Drawing on Weberian and neoliberal perspectives, subsequent scholars such as Bates (2008) and Raleigh (2014) have linked the proliferation of armed vigilante groups in Africa to the erosion of state monopoly over the legitimate use of force.

Wyler (2008) defines state weakness as "the erosion of state capacity, a condition characterised by a regime's inability to govern effectively, which in its most extreme form results in the complete collapse of state power and function." Weak and failing states, he argues, are among the least developed and most poorly performing globally, a condition that aptly describes several African states, including Nigeria. Indeed, the 2024 State Fragility Index ranked Nigeria 15th out of 179 countries worldwide, signalling severe institutional weakness in governance and security provision (The Global Economy, 2025). Under such conditions, governments frequently concede to supporting or arming vigilante groups, viewing them as legitimate community-based responses to insecurity. Notable examples include the Western Nigeria Security Network (Amotekun) and the Eastern Security Network (Ebubeagu) in Nigeria, People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) in South Africa, and Mapogo A Mathamaga in Limpopo Province.

ii. Liberalisation, Globalisation, and the Transformation of the Security Sector

A second explanatory framework departs from the deterministic "failed state" narrative and instead attributes armed vigilante groups' rise to the security space's liberalisation and privatization (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2007). These scholars argue that, while functionally weak, African states have not entirely collapsed. Instead, they have undergone transformations driven by neoliberal reforms, globalisation, and shifts in governance paradigms that have blurred the boundaries between state and non-state security providers.

Abrahamsen and Williams (2007) contend that privatising security under free-market reforms reduced public funding for security institutions, compelling states to rely on non-state actors, including vigilante groups. Budgetary constraints reinforce this dynamic. Nigeria's police force suffers from chronic underfunding, poor remuneration, and inadequate equipment. Comparative data illustrate this disparity: in 2018, South Africa's visible policing program received 46.87 billion rand (₦1.13 trillion), projected to grow by 6.89% annually, while Nigeria's police budget stood at ₦35 billion, with only ₦20 billion released (Akinwale, 2023). These structural weaknesses fuel public mistrust and push communities toward self-help security arrangements, including arming vigilante groups.

iii. Cultural and Historical Legacies of Vigilantism

A third explanatory framework links the arming of vigilante groups to deep-seated cultural and traditional institutions (Pratten, 2008). Community-based justice and moral order systems such as age-grade associations, hunter guilds, and masquerade societies served as proto-policing structures in many African societies. These groups were traditionally empowered to enforce norms, punish deviance, and protect property. Among the Igbo, the *Ndi nche* (village guards) and masquerade societies enforced communal order, while among the Yoruba, the *Ode* (hunters), *Ogboni*, and *Egungun* societies carried out similar roles. In northern Nigeria, groups like *Yan banga*, *Yanhisba*, and *Dogarai* were responsible for policing and moral enforcement (Agbola, and Sobanjo, 2003).

4. HOW STATE AND NON-STATE ACTORS ENABLE AND SUSTAIN VIGILANTE GROUPS IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

This section examines how state actors (governors, legislators, and local security agencies) and non-state actors (including community associations, traditional rulers, and market unions) enable and sustain vigilante groups in the Southeast. Drawing on evidence from Aba, Onitsha, and Owerri, it analyses the conditions under which these partnerships emerge, the resources and legitimacy they confer, and the implications for governance, human rights, and the rule of law in Nigeria's fragile security environment.

State Inability and Delegated Security Authority

In the cities of Aba, Onitsha, and Owerri, persistent insecurity, including armed robbery, kidnapping, and cult violence, has exposed the inability of the state to guarantee the safety of lives and property. This failure has led state governments to outsource security responsibilities to non-state actors such as vigilante groups. The arming of these groups reflects what Reno (2003) describes as a "privatisation of state security", where governments rely on informal security networks to compensate for weak policing institutions.

Following the emergence of the Bakassi Boys in Aba in 1998, initially formed by traders to combat rising crime, the Abia, Anambra, and Imo State governments gradually co-opted and institutionalised these groups. Each state rebranded the community-based vigilantes into official structures such as the Abia State Vigilante Service (AVS), Anambra Vigilante Service (AVGS), and Imo State Security Network (ISSN). These institutional reforms enabled the state governments to provide arms, funding, and logistical support (International Crisis Group, 2022). This formal recognition transformed the vigilantes into para-state actors, legitimising their existence under the guise of community policing.

Political Instrumentalisation and Patronage

Key informant interviews reveal state-level politicians in Aba, Onitsha, and Owerri have also sustained vigilante groups through political patronage and selective funding. In many cases, vigilantes are co-opted into the local governance structure to protect ruling elites or suppress opposition during elections. Such arrangements blur the lines between legitimate security outsourcing and political manipulation, embedding vigilante groups within the machinery of state power. This politicisation of vigilante forces mirrors the findings of Baker (2007), who observed that African states often sustain vigilante actors through irregular funding mechanisms, selective disarmament, or political endorsement, depending on their utility to the ruling class. In effect, while the state ostensibly recognises vigilantes for public safety, their continued arming serves elite security interests as much as community protection.

Community Sponsorship and Cultural Legitimacy

Beyond state support, non-state actors, particularly market associations, traditional rulers, and community unions, have played critical roles in arming and legitimising vigilantes. In Aba, field data from the respondents reveal that the shoe manufacturers and traders in Ariaria Market collectively funded and armed the original Bakassi Boys before state intervention. Similarly, in Onitsha, community development unions contributed financially to sustain vigilante operations, regarding them as an extension of traditional mechanisms for law enforcement. This local endorsement rests on cultural notions of justice and communal

protection, echoing the precolonial "ndi nche" (village guards) and age-grade systems in Igbo society.

Proliferation of Small Arms and Weak Oversight

State and non-state support for vigilantes has accelerated the spread of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in the Southeast. Field data from Aba, Onitsha, and Owerri indicate that vigilantes can access pump-action shotguns, machetes, and locally made firearms supplied by state authorities or procured through community funding. However, the absence of robust oversight mechanisms allows for the misuse of these weapons, leading to extrajudicial killings, torture, and human rights violations (International Crisis Group, 2022).

The Nigerian Constitution (1999) explicitly prohibits any other armed force outside the Police and Armed Forces, yet state governments continue to arm vigilantes under ambiguous "community policing" frameworks. This legal grey zone allows governments to plausibly deny responsibility when vigilantes commit abuses while benefiting from their coercive presence (Meagher, 2007). Consequently, such arrangements perpetuate a cycle of violence, impunity, and state complicity.

5. ARMED VIGILANTE PRACTICES AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

The arming of vigilante groups in Southeast Nigeria presents profound human rights challenges and threatens the foundations of community peace and security. While vigilante groups were initially formed as grassroots self-help initiatives to address the growing wave of criminality and the inefficiency of state security institutions, their increasing access to arms has transformed them into violent non-state actors capable of gross abuses. The proliferation of firearms among these groups has resulted in mass casualties, arbitrary executions, torture, and other serious violations of human rights, particularly against civilians accused often without evidence of engaging in criminal activities.

Over the past two decades, the activities of armed vigilante groups in communities such as Aba, Onitsha, and Owerri have created a pattern of violence and human rights violations. Reports by Amnesty International (2002) and Human Rights Watch (2002) documented widespread extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances committed by vigilante groups in Southeast Nigeria. Similarly, Umeagbalasi (2011) revealed that more than 5,000 summary executions were carried out between 1998 and 2002 by the Onitsha Traders Vigilante Group (OTA) and the Anambra State Vigilante Services (popularly known as the Bakassi Boys). These findings illustrate how the state's delegation or neglect of coercive authority enables unaccountable violence and deepens the culture of impunity.

Field interviews and case studies conducted across the region revealed severe physical and psychological consequences for victims of vigilante brutality. Respondents described harrowing experiences of torture involving beatings with koboko (whips made of cowhide), planks, and iron rods, as well as burns and electric shocks. Victims sustained permanent injuries such as fractures, burns, and dislocations, and some reported long-term health complications, including chronic pain, internal bleeding, and physical disability. The testimonies also revealed deep psychological trauma manifesting as depression, anxiety, nightmares, and post-traumatic stress. One respondent from Owerri narrated, "Every time I look in the mirror, I remember what those vigilante boys did to me. The scars are permanent... they bring shame when people see me." Another respondent recalled persistent pain and emotional suffering years after the assault, highlighting the enduring mental health toll of vigilante violence.

Beyond the physical and emotional injuries, the abuses inflicted by armed vigilantes have broader social and moral implications. They undermine the rule of law, weaken trust in legitimate security institutions, and entrench fear and silence among communities. The impunity with which these groups operate reflects the state's complicity, whether through direct support, tolerance, or failure to prosecute offenders and signals a dangerous erosion of the social contract between citizens and the state. In sum, the human rights implications of armed vigilantism in Southeast Nigeria demonstrate the urgent need to reimagine community security within a framework of accountability, legality, and human dignity. Moving forward, the challenge is not merely to suppress vigilante violence but to construct alternative forms of community protection that respect human rights, reinforce the rule of law, and restore citizens' trust in state institutions.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The emergence and endurance of vigilante groups in Southeast Nigeria reflect both a response to state fragility in security governance. In cities such as Aba, Onitsha, and Owerri, the inability of formal security institutions to protect lives and property has compelled citizens, communities, and even governments to rely on non-state actors for security provision. What began as community self-help efforts to curb crime and restore public safety has gradually transformed into an entrenched system of armed vigilantism, often sanctioned by the state and sustained by a complex web of political and communal interests.

This study has demonstrated that while the arming of vigilantes initially appeared as a pragmatic response to insecurity, it has deepened the cycle of violence and blurred the lines between legitimate and illegitimate force. The state's reliance on vigilante formations such as the Bakassi Boys represents a paradox: an attempt to fill the security vacuum while eroding the foundations of the rule of law. In this hybridised security initiative, coercive

power is no longer monopolised by the state but dispersed among competing actors: state officials, local elites, and armed community groups, each operating with varying degrees of autonomy and impunity.

The consequences of this arrangement have been devastating. Empirical evidence from field interviews and reports reveals extensive human rights violations, including physical torture, humiliation, arbitrary arrests, and extrajudicial killings. Victims have suffered lasting physical disabilities, psychological trauma, and economic marginalisation. These abuses not only contravene Nigeria's 1999 Constitution but also breach the country's international obligations under key human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966). Beyond individual suffering, these violations corrode public trust, weaken civic institutions, and perpetuate a culture of impunity that undermines democratic governance.

The persistence of armed vigilante groups in Southeast Nigeria thus underscores the urgent need to reconceptualise community security governance. The prevailing logic of coercion and self-help security must give way to frameworks prioritising accountability, legitimacy, and human dignity. Community security cannot thrive in the absence of justice; nor can justice prevail in an environment where violence is allowed to thrive. Sustainable peace requires a deliberate shift from reactive, militarised responses to inclusive, rights-based approaches that strengthen state capacity and citizen engagement.

In the light of these findings, the following recommendations are made: First, there is an imperative to strengthen formal state security institutions, particularly the Nigeria Police Force. Enhanced training, improved logistics, and welfare incentives would restore professionalism and public confidence in the police as the primary security guarantor. Second, the government must establish legal and oversight frameworks to regulate vigilante operations. Formal recognition should be accompanied by transparent accountability mechanisms, including human rights commissions and independent civilian oversight boards to monitor abuses if necessary.

Third, a comprehensive disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) programme is essential to retrieve small arms and light weapons from vigilante groups and provide alternative livelihoods for former members through vocational training and reintegration schemes. Such programs would mitigate the risks of rearmament and criminal relapse. Fourth, human rights education and rule of law training should be institutionalised among state and non-state security actors. Public awareness campaigns should also promote lawful dispute resolution and discourage mob justice. Fifth, security governance should be made inclusive and community-driven. Local security forums integrating traditional rulers, women, youth leaders, religious figures, and law enforcement agencies can help design

participatory and context-specific peacebuilding and crime prevention strategies. This approach democratises security provision and fosters a sense of ownership and collective accountability.

Finally, judicial reform and access to justice remain critical. Strengthening the judiciary to ensure swift and fair trials, alongside expanding legal aid schemes for victims of vigilante violence, will reinforce citizens' faith in lawful redress mechanisms and reduce the perceived need for extra-legal justice. In conclusion, the experiences of Aba, Onitsha, and Owerri illustrate a broader national challenge of balancing the demand for security with the imperatives of human rights and democratic governance. Vigilante groups may emerge as temporary solutions to insecurity, but without legal restraint and institutional accountability, they risk entrenching lawlessness and perpetuating the very insecurities they were created to combat.

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**Conflict, Economic Development and the Architecture of Peace: A
Multidimensional Perspective**

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Abstract

The interconnection of conflict, economic development and peace suggest that these three elements are deeply intertwined in a mutually reinforcing cycle where conflict undermines institutions, disrupts markets, and erodes trust, with the devastating implications for sustainable development. Extant literature has not directly established the impact of consistent conflict and economic underdevelopment on peace building. Given this scenario, the research provides further insights into the relationship by considering both economic and social development central to contemporary peace studies. It also explores the dynamic interplay between these forces, emphasizing the need for holistic approaches that prioritize human security, institutional reform, education and community empowerment. Galtung's Theory of positive and negative peace was applied as the theoretical framework for the article. The article adopted a descriptive research design with qualitative approaches and employed content analysis for the secondary data sources. It further argues for a multidimensional approach to peace-building, one that integrates equitable economic strategies with conflict-sensitive development planning. The findings of the study are strong correlation between poverty and conflict; resource allocation and inequalities; and economic inclusion as a peace building tool as well as positive impact of education and improved role of youth in the peace processes. The paper suggested that by aligning development goals with conflict-sensitive policies, education and human capital development, environmental sustainability, cultural and identity-based approach, justice, youth empowerment, and human security, nations can foster environment where peace reigns including the availability of opportunity, dignity, and shared prosperity.

Keywords: *Conflict, Economic Development, Peace building, Human Security, Governance, Social Cohesion.*

1. INTRODUCTION

West Africa has witnessed cycles of conflict that have disrupted development and strained peace building efforts. Nigeria, as the region's largest economy and most populous country, exemplifies this tension. From the Niger Delta militancy to Boko Haram insurgency and farmer-herder clashes, conflict, has eroded trust in institutions and diverted resources from development. The influences of economic development (including private sector development PSD) can both reduce and exacerbate violent conflict, depending on how it's

distributed and managed. While growth can alleviate poverty and reduce grievances, unequal or exclusionary development may fuel tensions and instability. A conflict environment hinders sound economic growth, and reduces economic activities. Actors can play a role either negatively in hindering stability or positively in peace building.

When development disproportionately benefits certain regions, ethnic groups, or elites, it can deepen grievances and perceptions of injustice, potentially sparking violence. Rapid development can intensify competition over land, water, or mineral wealth, especially in fragile states with weak governance. Infrastructure projects and urban expansion can displace communities, leading to social unrest if not managed inclusively. Conflict undermines development. Violent conflict destroys infrastructure, disrupts markets, and deters investment, creating a vicious cycle where underdevelopment and violence reinforce each other. It can destabilize neighboring regions through refugee flows, arms trafficking, and a cross-border insurgencies. A 2024 study using spatial analysis in Sub-Sahara Africa found that armed conflict significantly hampers economic growth, especially in Central and East Africa, leading to declines in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, increased poverty rates, and reduced investment levels (Addy et al., 2021).

Enough evidence has shown by previous studies to convince one that the prevalence of conflict in developing countries could explain a greater part of its current economic situation because meaningful economic development cannot take place without peace. Irobi (2005) stated that the countries of Sub-Sahara Africa, including Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Liberia and many others are a volatile mix of insecurity, instability, corrupt political institutions and poverty. The most devastating yet unsung effects of the violent conflicts in Nigeria manifest in the conditions of women living in any of these conflict societies (Albert 1996). Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed in many of the countries in which the conflicts occur.

Lacina and Gleditch (2005), also provides rich analysis on the effect of conflict on changes in the level and growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). They observed that civil war and genocide in the 1990-2000 periods in Rwanda caused convergence between provinces following the conflict shocks. Consequently, previously richer provinces in the east and in the north of the country experienced lower, even negative, economic growth compared to the poorer western and southern provinces. This affected significantly the dynamics of household poverty in Rwanda in the same period.

Many others have also suffered and continue to suffer untold psychological trauma associated with conflicts. Once conflict occurs, scarce resources are inevitably diverted to the purchase of military equipment at the expense of socio-economic development. Using the conflict perspective, Collier (1998) examined the recovery from civil war but also considered the processes by which the economy is damaged during conflict; his study

concluded that conflict is a devastating phenomenon likely to have large effects on both the level and composition of economic activity. Collier further noted that during conflicts Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capital declines at an annual rate of 2.2%. Some conflicts, like violence in Darfur, have been of high intensity. Meanwhile, there are countless smaller conflicts such as those between herders and cultivators that occur in many parts of Africa. For instance, the recurring conflict in Plateau and Benue states of Nigeria, where Fulani herders keep attacking villagers. This type of intermediate conflicts are no less vicious (Uleyo 2021). Conflicts in most African nations are caused by the combination of poverty and weak states and institutions, and these have had a devastating impact on Africa's development.

Conversely, inclusive economic growth can serve as a catalyst for peace by addressing structural inequalities, reducing poverty, and creating opportunities that deter violence. However, development alone does not guarantee stability, without equitable distribution and participatory governance, it may exacerbate tensions. Peace building efforts must therefore integrate economic strategies that promote resilience, social cohesion and justice. Peace is more than the absence of conflict, it is a catalyst for economic well-being laying the foundation for societies to thrive for generations to come (Ghani and Iyer 2010).

As an example of how the pursuit of peace can produce unprecedented economic resurgence, the research reflected on the nation of Japan. The Second World War left Japan in ruins, grappling with the consequences of its engagement in the conflict, which culminated in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Jaffee (1998) noted that Japan, following its ultimate surrender, the prime minister, Shigeru Yarshida, gradually disengaged the country from its former aggressive policies and embraced policies of peace and reconstruction. The result was nothing short of miraculous emergence of Japan as the world's third largest economy. The remarkable economic success of Japan underscores how a commitment to peace can propel a nation from ashes to eminence.

It is no doubt that peace frees up resources for productive activities which would have otherwise been diverted to controlling or creating violence. On the other hand, violence could have much negative impact on many aspects of life such as education, personal safety and health, commerce and trade, personal productivity, human wellbeing, economic development and growth and subjective happiness. With the number of violence experienced so far in Nigeria and new ones developing such as the Banditry, renewed boko haram and ISWA insurgency which have crippled economic, academic, and other activities in the northern region of the country, one wonders if business leaders, religious leaders and government are not aware of the extent of business opportunities foregone by continuous violence both nationally and internationally. Hence, this study examined the interface between conflict,

economic development, and peace and the extent to which nations' economic policies and implementations upheld drivers of peace.

2. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Conflict

Although conflict is generally regarded as a collision of opposing parties, the concept of conflict has not been consistently defined. Ghani and Iyer (2010) divided conflict into internal and external conflicts. Specifically external conflicts refers to interstate incidents (among countries), whereas internal conflict generally implies conflict within a state (for instance, ethnic and religious conflicts, common violence, or crime).

The classification is based on the actors involved and the spartial and temporal locators of "battle deaths". State based conflict covers all conflicts in which at least one of the parties involved is the government, regardless of whether the conflict is between states or within a state. Non-state conflicts occur among ethnic groups (such as the pokot and Turkana populations in Kenya), clans, religious and other groups, none of which are government entities. These types of organizations may be formally organized groups, informally organized supporter groups, and /or informally organized identity groups. The third category (one-sided violence) refers to the use of armed force or violent behaviors by the state government and /or non-state formally organized groups, targeting civilians and leading to at least 25 deaths. This type of conflict excludes extrajudicial killings in custody.

Conflicts can include all altercations from those at the household level through those organized or instigated by pressure groups and social movements (environmentalists, feminists etc.) right up to armed violent conflict, it can occur between sections of the same community, between communities and higher levels of authority and between national governments. Oberschall (1973) distinguishes between the Weberian notion of 'conflict of action' and 'social conflict' as defined by Coser. The former he considers too aligned to class struggle and physical violence whilst he claims that the latter definition allows for the non-violent differing of opinions and values. Wallace (1993) distinguishes on the basis of coercion, non-coercive or peaceful conflicts as opposed to coercive or violent conflict.

Conflicts can range from simple, non- violent disputes with positive outcomes such as a football match, Powelson, 1972, 34) through spontaneous, poorly organized turmoil (riots) to highly organized and very violent (war). Conflicts can also be non-violent well organized and focused on changing government policy. Hirschlifer (1991) describes conflict as the opposite condition to production because force is used to acquire goods rather than using manpower to make them.

Economic Development

The precise definition of economic development has been contested: while economists in the 20th century viewed developments primarily in terms of economic growth, sociologists instead emphasized broader processes of change and modernization. Development and urban studies scholar Karl Seidman (2005) Summarizes economic development as a “process of creating and utilizing physical, human, financial, and social assets to generate improved and broadly shared economic well-being and quality of life for a community or region. Dapline Greenwood and Richard Holt (2010) distinguish economic development from economic growth on the basis that economic development is a ‘broadly based and sustainable increase in the overall standard of living for individuals within a community’, and measures of growth such as per capital income do not necessarily correlate with improvements in quality of life. The United Nations Development Program in 1997 defined development as increasing people’s choices. The UNDP indicates four chief factors in development especially human development, which are empowerment, equity, productivity and sustainability.

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is the development of constructive personal, group, and political relationships across ethnic religious, class, national, and racial boundaries. It aims to resolve injustice in non-violent ways and to transform the structural conditions that generate deadly conflict. Peacebuilding can include conflict resolution; and transformation and post-conflict reconciliation. According to Stewart Francis (2001), peacebuilding seeks to address the underlying causes of conflict, helping people to resolve their differences peacefully and lay the foundations to prevent future violence. The U.S Institute of peace has identified that peacebuilding is important to ensure people feel safe in their communities to enable economic and social development. The United Nations was involved in a peacebuilding effort in Liberia at the end of its civil war. The UN sent military troops and diplomats to ensure the conflicting parties were maintaining their part of the peace plan.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopted Galtung’s theory of Negative and Positive Peace. These terms were first introduced by one of the founders and main figure in peace research, Johan Galtung (1964). Galtung’s theory of negative and positive peace expands the understanding of peace beyond the absence of war, offering a framework for analyzing structural and cultural violence and guiding sustainable conflict resolution. Johan Galtung’s theory revolutionized peace studies by introducing two distinct concepts: Negative peace as the absence of direct violence (e.g., war, physical conflict). This refers to a situation where there is no active conflict, but underlying issues may still exist. It does not address the root cause of conflict such as inequality, oppression or injustice. Positive peace as the presence of social justice, equality,

and harmony relationships, addresses the root cause of violence. It focuses on the building of systems and structures that promote fairness, equity, and well-being. It is a more permanent and sustainable form of peace.

While widely influential, Galtung's theory has faced critical scrutiny. Critics argue that "positive peace: is too idealistic or abstract to measure or implement effectively. Some scholars claim that the theory reflects western liberal values, potentially overlooking cultural variations in peace perception. Johan Galtung is the principal founder of peace and conflict studies and the originator of this theory. However, Baljit Grewal and other peace researchers have expanded on Galtung's ideas, applying them to international relations, development, and social justice. Institutions like Peace Research Institute (OSLO) and journals such as the Journal of Peace Research continue to promote and refine these concepts. The theory is used to argue that economic development must address root causes of conflict, such as inequality, poverty, marginalization and poor governance, to achieve lasting peace. By implication, Galtung's theory urges policy makers and peace builders to not only stop wars but also to transform societies by addressing root causes of conflict. It also emphasized the need for sustainable peace which informs indices like the Global Peace Index, which now include indicators of positive peace (e.g., education, governance. human rights).ss

4. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted qualitative research design in carrying out its investigation in order to acquire an in-depth analysis of the issue under determination. It employed both content analysis and trend analytical techniques for the secondary data sources. As such, the study relied majorly on reviewing documentary; public and private libraries on the subject. Furthermore, the study also made use of internet materials wherein relevant articles were carefully retrieved including information carefully extracted from logical chain of evidence presented in journal papers, edified books, and documentary materials among others.

5. FINDINGS

Interplay of Conflict and Economic Development

Conflict undermines economic development by destroying infrastructure, displacing populations, and deterring investment. Collier and Hoeffler (1998) explained that the most obvious cost of conflict could be the disruption of economic activities. This is because they drastically reduce the per capital taxable capacity of the economy since businesses are more likely to wind up due to distortions, people flee and seek refuge in other countries or end up crowded in relatively safe areas of the conflicting country. Infrastructures are, consequently, destroyed culminating in less economic growth. Violent conflicts have contributed to a large

extent, to state of underdevelopment in Nigeria. The conflicts lead to wanton loss of human lives and property as well as human displacement (Nnoli2003; IPCR2003).

They disrupt and destroy families and community life. They particularly undermine family systems through the deliberate targeting of women and the recruitment of children to join ranks of fighters. The loss of livelihoods, due in part to the destruction of infrastructure and natural resources, and lack of employment opportunities coincides with a weakened social safety net and a decline in the capacity of the state to provide services, such as health and education. Depending on the location of the conflicts in a country, crops cannot be planted, weeded or harvested, decreasing dramatically the levels of agricultural production. Also, food producing regions experience seizing or destructing of food stocks, live stocks, and other assets, interrupting marketed supplies of food not only in these regions but also in neighboring regions.

An illustration is in Ivory Coast where farming fared poorly during the months following October 2002, when government and rebel forces engaged in combat. Cocoa and coffee farmers fled their holdings because of rebel's threats, and cotton farmers in the North were short of income owing to their failure to transport their produce to the port of Abidjan (Brian-Vincent 2009). Similarly, in Mali and Burkina Faso, armed violence has disrupted agriculture and trade, deepening poverty. A considerable volume of literature has already attributed part of the economic failure of the developing countries to the prevalence of conflict in these regions. Wanyande (1997), discloses that the costs of conflicts in Africa in terms of loss of human life and property, and the destruction of social infrastructure are enormous. Considering that Africa had 51% of minor conflicts, 38% of intermediate conflict and 535 of war out of all global conflicts and wars during the period 1989 to 2000, there is sufficient reason to believe that the presence of conflict explains a greater part of its economic situation. Over the last 40 years nearly 20 Africa Countries (or above 40% of Africa South of the Sahara) have experienced at least one period of conflict (Elbadawa and Sambaris, 2000).

Development alone does not guarantee peace. When growth is uneven or exclusionary, it can exacerbate grievances. Nigeria's oil wealth concentrated in the Niger Delta, has fueled demands or resource control and led to violent agitation. In Cote d' Ivoire, economic disparities between north and south contributed to civil war. According to Stewart (2001), difference in access to resources, wealth and livelihoods between regional, social or ethnic groups have been shown to make a country more vulnerable to conflict. Likewise, competition over economic resources or insufficient satisfaction of basic human needs can trigger violence.

Also, economic resources play an important role in the duration and intensity of a conflict as they determine the financial opportunities for economic actors and their incentives to end or

prolong a conflict. Studies have shown that the occurrence of ‘loot able’ natural resources (e.g. timber, alluvial diamonds or ‘coltan’), which can be used as a source of financing correlates to the prolongation of conflicts, and that a large diaspora, also serving as a source of finance, statistically increase the risk of conflict renewal (Collier and Hoeffler 2001).

On the other hand, economic growth can markedly reduce the risk of conflict (Collier 2007) and stabilize a post-conflict situation. The private sector in particular is a necessary source of long-term employment with infrastructure construction. The restoration of social services can help to rebuild social capital (Mills and Fan 2006). The promotion of economic and private sector development can trigger or exacerbate conflict, if the cause and dynamics of the conflict are not taken into consideration while conflict-sensitive economic development can de-escalate tensions and make an active contribution to peace building.

Impact of Economic Development on Peacebuilding

The nexus between economic development and peace is deeply intertwined, forming a vicious cycle where each reinforces the other. Positive conflict transformation is a vital infrastructure of sustainable development. On the other hand, sustainable economic development enhances peace. As Ikenga-Metuh (1992:12) notes:

Under development breeds deprivation, poverty, hunger and disease. A hungry man is an angry Man... whether his hunger is caused by other man, by underdevelopment or by natural disasters. Thus, development by removing strains and deprivations from human life, and making it possible for men to live a life worthy of their human dignity, brings about harmony and peace.

Peace is more than the absence of conflict, it is a catalyst for economic well-being, laying the foundation for societies to thrive for generations to come. For instance, Post-second World War Germany faced a similar challenge of rebuilding a shattered nation. According to the Economic of Peace (United Nations Chronicle), the Marshall plan initiated by the United States, provided financial assistance to restore post-war infrastructure in Europe which played a vital role in the reconstruction of Germany. In changing its course from policies of aggression to those of political stability and democratic institutions, Germany emerged as the economic powerhouse of Europe. Like Japan, the German “economic renaissance” serves as a testament to the connectivity between peace and economic development.

The linkage between peace and economic development is evident, not only as a moral imperative, but as a logical strategy with lasting implications. Peace allows government to focus on infrastructure, education, and healthcare which are pillars of long-term

development. Conflict disrupts these sectors, leading to generational setbacks in productivity and well-being. In regional and global cooperation, peaceful nations are more likely to engage in trade and regional integration boosting economic growth. The European Union is a prime example of former adversaries forging economic alliances through peace. Peaceful environments are more attractive to investors, both domestic and foreign countries emerging from conflict often experience economic booms when stability is restored, as seen in Post-World War II Japan and Germany. Similarly, Economic Development generates employment, which reduces poverty and inequality which are the key drivers of conflict. When individuals have stable incomes and opportunities, they are less likely to engage in violence or support extremist ideologies. Studies show that unemployment correlates strongly with social unrest and marginalization (pathways to peace through Economic Development-Number Analytics).

Entrepreneurship and Community Empowerment foster innovation, create jobs, and build economic resilience. Programs targeting youth and marginalized groups in conflict-prone areas have shown success in reducing tensions and promoting inclusion. According to Muhammed (2003), economic empowerment instills a sense of ownership and hope, reducing the appeal of violence. Trade relationships form a natural deterrent to armed conflict. Dale Coperland, in *Economic Interdependence and War*, posits that nations engaged in economic exchanges simply have too much to lose in the event of conflict (Dale 2015). Exploration of the Human Development Index (HDI) reveals a symbiosis between peace and the advancement of our global society. HDI argues that a metric encompassing factors such as life expectancy, education and per capital income, serves as a barometer of societal well-being. Peaceful societies emerge as fertile grounds for human development; as evidenced by comparative analysis of HDI scores at the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Peace facilitates economic activities, leading to greater financial resources for investment in health care, education and social welfare.

The Role of International Organizations in Conflict Resolution

According to Olabimpe and Mathew (2022), international organizations fulfil adverse array of function ranging from diplomacy and conflict resolution to humanitarian aid and sustainable development. They facilitate dialogue between nations, promote peace keeping efforts, coordinate responses to humanitarian crises and set international norms and standards. He further stressed that international organizations are the linchpin of contemporary global governance, reflecting humanity's collective aspirations for a more peaceful, just and interconnected world.

Some international development agencies working in Nigeria have taken up the responsibility of having to build the capacity of Nigerians on joint problems solving

strategies. These organizations include the British council, Department for International Development (DFID), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Union (EU), Friedrich Ebert Foundation, and Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), North America Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), World Bank etc.

Each of these funds carries out conflict management training programs aimed at empowering Nigerians to respond positively to the conflicts in the country (See Ofite and Albert 1999; Falade 2002). These projects are aimed at producing local and National leaders capable of promoting peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.

Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) has been involved in several notable peace missions across West Africa nations, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissal and the Gambia. In the more recent years, ECOWAS has remained actively involved in peacekeeping activities across political transitions in the Gambia to addressing security challenges in Mali and the Sahel. ECOWAS has continued to demonstrate peace and stability in West Africa, characterized by a proactive actions addressing conflicts and promoting peace. From its pioneering efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone to its ongoing peace keeping efforts, emerged as a key factor in the regions quest for stability, security and development.

Also, The United Nations (UN) has played a pivotal role in peacekeeping across Africa, deploying more missions on the continent than anywhere else in the world. Since 1960, it has hosted over 30 UN peacekeeping missions, addressing civil wars, ethnic conflicts, and political instability. Bokeriya and Udaykulova (2023) in UN peacekeeping in Africa, posit that nearly half of all active UN peacekeeping missions are in Africa. As Benson (2021) tells us, UN peacekeepers have been deeply involved in patrolling conflict zones to deter violence and protect vulnerable populations. In support for peace agreements, they help implement ceasefires and political settlements and often coordinate aid delivery and support displaced populations. Missions assist in rebuilding governance structures, judicial systems, and electoral processes.

It is unfortunate that most of the projects founded by development organizations on conflicts management target the people rather than the government. Hence, even when the people choose to be peaceful, poverty pushes them into violent acts; scarcity of life sustaining resources (social, economic, environmental and political) which daily produces unemployed youths willing to engage in violence; political elites instigate them to fight one another, and lack of justice and human security force many to resort to self-help strategies to deal with their adversaries.

Multidimensional Perspective

The current global crisis suggests that “Prevention is better than Cure” when dealing with conflicts. This conviction justifies the global debate for the importance of “Preventive diplomacy”. The idea reflects the UN’s thinking on the necessary action that could lead to the prevention of violent conflicts or those actions that could help to reduce the threat of violent conflicts in the contemporary world. The former Secretary General of the United Nations, Dr Boutros-Ghali noted that preventive diplomacy means an “action to prevent existing disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur”. (Boutros-Ghali; (1992:11). Otum (1996:2) on his own sees “preventive action” as “... the link between an agenda for peace and an agenda for development”. He therefore observed that this must encapsulate a broad spectrum of political, social and humanitarian measures at averting or de-escalating the development of conflict”. Preventive diplomacy is based on the general principle that “prevention is better than cure”. As Darby (1995:3) also tells us:

Violence, unless arrested at an early stage, tends to develop along predictable lines; disagreement harden into disputes; the violence expands to involve a greater number of activists disputing a greater number of issues; the combatants become more efficiently organized under more implacable leaders; the restraints on decent behavior is eroded.

Economic motivations for peace mark a paradigm shift in diplomatic strategies, emphasizing the interconnectedness of economic cooperation and global peace, but it is essential to confront the challenges that could stand in their way. Political dynamics wield significant influence between economic incentives and peace, and political interests, power struggles and geopolitical tensions often intersect, creating a complex landscape. Graham (1971) provides insights into the web of political complexities which can override economic incentives, hindering the resolution of conflicts and underscoring the need for a nuanced understanding of political challenges.

Often, conflicting economic interests can cause rather alleviate conflicts: the pursuit of individual economic gains, resource competition and zero-sum scenarios can undermine collaborative efforts. Likewise, conflicting interests have contributed to heightened tensions, underscoring the need for careful consideration of individual and collective economic motives in our examination of the interplay between development and peace. Political, social and economic factors do not exist in isolation; they converge to create a complex obstacle course.

6. THE WAY FORWARD

In envisioning the path forward, individuals, communities and nations can be instrumental in contributing to global peace. These initiatives that promote economic literacy, entrepreneurship and inclusive participation which serve as catalyst for peace include: socio-economic inclusion; peacebuilding and governance; Education and Human Capital; Economic Empowerment and livelihood, Environmental Sustainability; Cultural and Identity-based Approaches; Integrated Policy and Research Framework; Risk Assessment and Early Warning Signs Monitoring and Conflict-sensitive development planning.

Socio-economic Inclusion

Reducing multidimensional poverty not just income poverty, but access to education, healthcare, housing and clean water can lower the risk of conflict and promote peace. Equitable development across regions of nations helps prevent marginalization and resentment that often fuel violence.

Peace-building and Governance

Participatory governance and inclusive political institutions reduce grievances and build trust. Treat peace agreements as the beginning of reform, not the end. Ensure they include diverse voices especially women, youth, and conflict-affected communities to foster legitimacy and resilience Also, transitional justice and reconciliation mechanisms help societies heal after conflict, making development more sustainable.

Educational and Human Capital

Investment in education and skills development empowers individuals, reduces youth unemployment and foster civic engagement. Education also promotes tolerance and critical thinking, which are essential for peaceful co-existence. Peaceful societies tend to literacy rates and education attainment industry which improve public health outcomes.

Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods

Investment, both domestic and foreign, also emerges as a building block for sustainable peace. Economics characterized by robust investment climates often experience enhanced stability. Job creation, especially for youth and former combatants, reduces incentives to engage in violence. Also support for small businesses and agriculture in pre-conflict and post-conflict zones can stimulate economies and build trust. Development programs, too, wield considerable influence in shaping the trajectory of nations.

Environmental Sustainability

Addressing resource-based conflicts (e.g. land, water, oil) through sustainable management and fair distribution can prevent violence. Shared natural resources like rivers, forests, and grazing lands can become platforms for dialogue and collaboration between communities or nations. Climate resilience strategies also reduce vulnerabilities that exacerbate conflict.

Cultural and Identity-based Approaches

Recognizing and respecting ethnic, religious, and cultural identities helps reduce tensions. Dialogue and inter group engagement foster mutual understanding and peace. Inclusive dialogue and participation fosters trust, ownership, and commitment to peace initiatives. Teaching cultural literacy in schools and communities promotes long-term peace.

Integrated Policy and Research Frameworks

Using interdisciplinary theories from peace studies, development economic and conflict resolution helps design more effective interventions. Conflict resolution emerges as a linchpin method for sustainable development. One of the immediate benefits of effective conflict resolution is the restoration of investors' confidence, a massive driver in a country's economic development..

Risk Assessment and Early Warning Signs Monitoring

Violent conflicts rarely erupts spontaneously, it is heralded by some clearly discernible warning signs that can be monitored. Early warnings are interpretations that the outbreak of conflict in a high-risk situation is likely and imminent. Risk assessment precede and compliment early warning, through identifying background and intervening conditions that establish the risk for potential crisis and conflict. There is need for nations to look into this as a way of strengthening conflict prevention.

Conflict-sensitive Development Planning.

This emphasizes designing development interventions that do not exacerbate tensions and instead promote peace and stability. Development planners should assess the political, social, and historical context of conflict. This includes mapping stakeholders, identifying grievances, and understanding power relations. Engage marginalized groups- especially youths, women, and ethnic minorities to ensure that development reflects diverse needs and reduces exclusion-driven tensions.

7. CONCLUSION

The point being made in this article is that violent conflict cost nations involved, enormous human and material resources that would have been channeled into pursuing the objectives of economic development. Preventive diplomacy is thus not just a moral and political

necessity for the country; it also makes deep economic sense in terms of gaining more resources and time to develop the country. Addressing issues of poverty, exclusion, injustice and underdevelopment is considered to be more fundamental to solving contemporary conflicts. Peace facilitates economic activities, leading to greater financial resources for investment in health care, education and social welfare. This article recognizes that the journey to peace involves a collective commitment, by empowering individuals, fostering community-centric approaches, shaping national policy frameworks, encouraging international collaboration, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), promoting education initiatives and embracing adaptive conflict-sensitive development strategies. With these, we can pave the way for a future where the economics of peace is synonymous with global peace.

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Media Representation of Sustainable Development Goals Agenda on Zero Hunger in Nigerian Prints

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Abstract

This study examines the representation of Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) in Nigerian print media, focusing on The Punch, The Guardian, Vanguard, and Daily Trust throughout 2024. Guided by the Agenda-Setting and Framing theories, the study explores how the media shapes public understanding and policy discourse around hunger. Using quantitative content analysis, 369 hunger-related stories were reviewed across themes, frames, and prominence. Findings reveal that Daily Trust provided the most coverage (32.1%), with food insecurity/poverty (25.4%) and hunger/malnutrition (19.9%) as dominant themes. Coverage relied heavily on government policy and crisis frames, while grassroots empowerment and international/SDG perspectives were marginal. Most stories appeared on inside pages (53.4%), limiting visibility and agenda-setting influence. The study concludes that Nigerian newspapers underutilize their developmental role by focusing on episodic, government-driven narratives rather than sustained, community-centered reporting. It recommends that the media strengthen advocacy through consistent, prominent, and solution-oriented reporting to enhance public engagement and accountability toward achieving Zero Hunger in Nigeria.

Keyword: *Media, Framing, Newspaper, Zero Hunger, Food Security*

1. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), launched in 2015, provide a global framework for addressing some of the world's most pressing challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, and hunger. Among these goals, SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) is of particular relevance to Nigeria, where food insecurity remains a critical concern due to rapid population growth, economic instability, climate change, and insecurity in farming communities. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), millions of Nigerians face hunger and malnutrition despite the country's vast agricultural potential (Mekouar, 2023)

The media, particularly print media, play a pivotal role in shaping public discourse and mobilizing attention toward social issues. Newspapers and magazines are not only channels

of information but also important agenda setters that can influence how the public and policymakers perceive and respond to hunger-related challenges (Teng & Wang, 2015). By reporting on SDG 2, the print media has the power to highlight government efforts, civil society initiatives, and grassroots struggles while also holding stakeholders accountable.

This study examines how Nigerian print media represent the SDG 2 agenda on Zero Hunger, focusing on the nature, frequency, and framing of news reports and features. Understanding this representation is essential in evaluating whether the media is fulfilling its social responsibility of raising awareness, stimulating dialogue, and promoting action toward achieving Zero Hunger in Nigeria (Montanari, 2014).

Despite Nigeria's commitment to achieving the SDGs, the country continues to grapple with widespread hunger and malnutrition. Reports indicate that nearly 26.5 million Nigerians were projected to face acute food insecurity in 2023. While policies and interventions exist, ranging from government agricultural programmes to international donor support, progress remains slow and uneven.

The media, especially newspapers, is expected to serve as a watchdog, mobilizer, and educator in promoting public awareness of developmental issues. However, there is limited empirical research on the framing strategies employed by Nigerian print media when covering hunger-related issues. Despite Nigeria's persistent food crises and the urgency of Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), the visibility and framing of this agenda within print media remain under-examined. This gap raises concern about whether newspapers are effectively fulfilling their agenda-setting and advocacy roles in driving public and policy attention toward hunger eradication. The study focuses on print media because newspapers remain a major source of in-depth reporting and policy interpretation in Nigeria, offering a permanent record of national discourse and agenda formation, unlike broadcast or digital media that are more transient and event-driven. Understanding how print media represent SDG 2 is therefore essential to evaluating their contribution to awareness, accountability, and development communication in Nigeria.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. What are the dominant thematic focuses on Zero Hunger agenda covered in the selected Nigerian Newspapers?
- ii. What framing/narrative angle did the media employ in representing issues related to Sustainable Development Goals on Zero Hunger?
- iii. How frequently and prominently are hunger-related stories covered in the selected Nigerian Newspapers?

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Media and Development Communication

Scholars such as McQuail (2010) and Servaes (2013) emphasize that media is central to development communication by informing, educating, and mobilizing citizens toward collective action. In the African context, the media has been instrumental in promoting awareness of health campaigns, environmental sustainability, and democratic governance.

Beyond information dissemination, the media also serves as a platform for agenda-setting and framing development priorities. According to Rogers (2006), development communication is most effective when media not only transmits information but also stimulates dialogue and participation among communities. Similarly, Melkote and Steeves (2015) argue that communication for development must move beyond top-down persuasion to embrace a participatory model, where citizens are co-creators of solutions rather than passive recipients. This participatory function positions media as a bridge between policymakers, development agencies, and grassroots communities.

In addition, the media plays a watchdog role by holding institutions accountable for development commitments. For instance, Norris and Odugbemi (2010) note that the media can strengthen governance by exposing policy failures, corruption, or neglect of social issues such as hunger and poverty. By monitoring government actions and amplifying marginalized voices, the press contributes to building transparency and ensuring that global development agendas, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), remain part of the national conversation. Thus, media functions not only as a conveyor of information but also as a critical agent of accountability and empowerment in the development process.

Media Coverage of SDGs

Existing studies (Adeleke, 2020; Ojebode & Akinwale, 2019) suggest that while Nigerian media cover issues related to the SDGs, the attention given is uneven, with more emphasis on political issues than developmental concerns. Hunger-related stories often appear episodically, especially during crises, rather than as part of sustained advocacy.

Scholars have also highlighted the role of media framing in shaping public understanding of development agendas. For instance, Ufuophu-Biri and Ojebode (2019) argue that Nigerian newspapers tend to prioritize frames that emphasize government activities and official pronouncements, while giving less space to grassroots perspectives and community-led initiatives. This framing pattern often results in the underrepresentation of vulnerable populations, such as women, children, and rural farmers, whose experiences are central to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger). Consequently, media coverage

may reinforce elite-driven narratives rather than fostering inclusive dialogue on hunger eradication.

Furthermore, studies across Africa reveal that SDG-related reporting often lacks depth and continuity. Banda (2018) notes that African media are constrained by limited resources, low specialization in development reporting, and reliance on foreign news agencies for development content. As a result, coverage of the SDGs, including hunger and food security, is frequently reactive and event-driven rather than sustained and investigative. This suggests that while the media have the potential to serve as critical partners in achieving the SDGs, structural challenges within newsrooms hinder their capacity to consistently advance development discourse in Nigeria and beyond.

Zero Hunger in Nigeria

Research indicates that hunger persists in Nigeria despite the country's vast agricultural potentials (Adewale, 2021). Insecurity in farming regions, climate variability, and poor policy implementation continue to worsen the problem, undermining national food security efforts. International development reports have consistently highlighted Nigeria as one of the countries unlikely to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) without stronger interventions from both state and non-state actors (FAO, 2022; UNDP, 2023). While these challenges are well documented in policy and development circles, there is limited evidence on the extent to which the media reflects them, or whether coverage advances public understanding and policy advocacy. Understanding media representation is therefore crucial, as newspapers not only inform but also shape public discourse, influence policy debates, and mobilize stakeholders toward sustainable solutions.

Framing and Representation

Entman (1993) describes framing as the process of selecting certain aspects of reality and making them more salient in communication, thereby promoting particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations. Studies on Nigerian newspapers (e.g., Okoro & Nwafor, 2019) reveal that frames such as *crisis*, *policy response*, and *human-interest* are often employed when reporting development issues. How hunger is framed may determine whether the public perceives it as a humanitarian crisis, a government failure, or a collective societal responsibility. Moreover, framing influences not only how issues are understood but also how solutions are prioritized in policy agendas and public debates (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). In the Nigerian context, the predominance of crisis-oriented framing can risk episodic reporting, while more sustained, solution-oriented frames could contribute to long-term advocacy and accountability (Adesina, 2021).

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Agenda-Setting Theory

The agenda-setting theory posits that while the media may not determine what people think, it powerfully shapes what people think about by influencing issue salience ((Vargo, 2018). When Nigerian newspapers give prominence to Zero Hunger stories through headlines, front-page placement, or editorial attention, they elevate hunger as a critical national concern. This visibility has the potential to push hunger and food insecurity higher on the public agenda and, consequently, stimulate policy discourse and interventions aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 2. Thus, the theory underscores how media prioritization can shape collective attention toward hunger as a development challenge.

Framing Theory

Framing theory extends the agenda-setting function by emphasizing how issues are presented in the media (Entman, 1993; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). It is not only the frequency of hunger-related coverage that matters but also the narrative lens through which the problem is depicted. For example, newspapers may frame hunger as a government policy failure, a humanitarian emergency, an agricultural productivity issue, or as part of a global development discourse on the SDGs. These frames guide public interpretation and shape perceptions of responsibility, urgency, and solutions. In the context of Nigeria's Zero Hunger agenda, framing theory is particularly relevant as it helps explain whether the media promotes sustained advocacy, fosters accountability, or reinforces crisis-driven reporting.

5. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopts a quantitative content analysis method to examine how Nigerian print media represent Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger). The population comprises leading national newspapers—The Punch, The Guardian, Vanguard, and Daily Trust, selected for their wide readership and national influence. A purposive sampling technique was employed to analyze editions published between January and December 2024, capturing a full year of coverage on hunger-related issues. The units of analysis include news articles, editorials, and feature stories that explicitly reference hunger, food insecurity, agricultural policy, or SDG 2. Data were collected manually from both physical library archives and digital newspaper repositories to ensure comprehensive retrieval. To ensure the credibility of coding, inter-coder reliability was tested using Krippendorff's Alpha (Krippendorff, 2018), which produced a coefficient of 0.86, indicating a high level of agreement between coders.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Relevant newspaper content was collected from physical library resources. The newspapers were content analysed. The study used quantitative content analysis, as the results were presented in tables and frequencies.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Frequency of Coverage (January-December 2024)

| Newspaper | No. of Hunger-Related Stories | % of Total Coverage |
|-------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Punch | 82 | 22.2% |
| Guardian | 95 | 25.7% |
| Vanguard | 74 | 20.0% |
| Daily Trust | 118 | 32.1% |
| Total | 369 | 100% |

Table 1 Source: Field Data (2025)

The data show that across the four newspapers, 369 hunger-related stories were published in 2024. Daily Trust accounted for the highest share (32.1%), making it the most consistent in covering hunger and food insecurity. The Guardian followed with 25.7%, reflecting a strong editorial interest in sustainable development issues. Punch contributed 22.2%, while Vanguard recorded the lowest coverage at 20.0%. This suggests a clear variation in editorial priorities across the newspapers. Daily Trust's dominance can be linked to its regional focus on northern Nigeria, a region where hunger and food insecurity are especially severe due to insecurity, poverty, and climate-related challenges.

Coverage of Zero Hunger is not evenly distributed among the newspapers, which could affect how different readerships perceive the urgency of food security issues. By giving the most attention, Daily Trust may serve as a key platform for advocacy, policy debates, and humanitarian narratives around hunger. Vanguard's relatively low coverage suggests that Zero Hunger may not be prioritized in its editorial agenda, potentially limiting awareness among its audience. Although 369 stories were published in a year, when compared to the volume of other political and economic issues typically reported, hunger remains underrepresented in Nigerian print media. This could weaken sustained advocacy for SDG 2.

What are the dominant thematic focus on Zero Hunger agenda covered in the selected Nigerian Newspapers?

Table 2: Thematic Focus

| Theme | Punch | Guardian | Vanguard | Daily Trust | Total (%) |
|---|-------|----------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| <i>Hunger and malnutrition</i> | 18 | 22 | 15 | 25 | 80 (19.9%) |
| <i>Food insecurity and poverty</i> | 22 | 25 | 20 | 35 | 102 (25.4%) |
| <i>Climate change and agriculture</i> | 10 | 15 | 12 | 20 | 57 (14.2%) |
| <i>Insecurity/conflict disruption</i> | 12 | 10 | 11 | 15 | 48 (12.0%) |
| <i>Women and children’s vulnerability</i> | 8 | 10 | 6 | 10 | 34 (8.5%) |
| <i>Policy gaps and corruption</i> | 12 | 13 | 10 | 13 | 48 (12.0%) |
| <i>Other/miscellaneous</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | — |

Table 2 Source: Field Data (2025)

The data revealed that the newspapers concentrated more on food insecurity and poverty (25.4%) and hunger and malnutrition (19.9%), making these the most prominent themes. Food insecurity & poverty was most reported in Daily Trust (35 stories), which aligns with its regional readership in northern Nigeria where poverty and food scarcity are critical. Hunger and malnutrition received significant attention across all four newspapers, with The Guardian (22) and Daily Trust (25) leading.

Climate change & agriculture appeared in 14.2% of the reports, indicating recognition of environmental factors but not as a dominant frame. Insecurity/conflict disruption and policy gaps/corruption each received 12% coverage, showing moderate attention to governance and security-related drivers of hunger. Women and children’s vulnerability was the least emphasized (8.5%), despite the fact that they are among the most affected groups in hunger situations.

The dominance of poverty and food insecurity as themes shows that Nigerian print media perceive hunger more as an economic and structural challenge than a humanitarian or governance issue. The low attention to women and children’s vulnerability may weaken advocacy for gender-sensitive and child-focused interventions, even though these groups are most at risk of malnutrition. Moderate emphasis on conflict and insecurity suggests that newspapers recognize the disruption of farming and food distribution, but perhaps underreport its linkage to hunger crises compared to poverty narratives. Although corruption

and policy gaps were reported, they did not dominate coverage. This suggests newspapers are less aggressive in holding government accountable for systemic failures in hunger reduction policies. By not fully engaging with themes like climate change impacts or vulnerable demographics, Nigerian newspapers risk presenting hunger primarily as a cyclical crisis rather than a long-term sustainable development issue connected to SDG 2.

What framing/narrative angle did the media employ in representing issues related to Sustainable Development Goals on Zero Hunger?

Table 3 Framing/Narrative Angle

| Frame | Punch | Guardian | Vanguard | Daily Trust | Total (%) |
|-----------------------------|-------|----------|----------|-------------|---------------|
| Government effort/policies | 20 | 25 | 18 | 30 | 93 (25.2%) |
| Humanitarian/charity action | 10 | 15 | 12 | 20 | 57 (15.4%) |
| Crisis/emergency | 15 | 20 | 17 | 25 | 77 (20.9%) |
| Agricultural/production | 12 | 15 | 10 | 18 | 55 (14.9%) |
| International/SDG framing | 15 | 10 | 9 | 15 | 49 (13.3%) |
| Community empowerment | 10 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 38 (10.3%) |

Table 3 Source: Field Data (2025)

The findings show that the most dominant frame across the four newspapers was government effort and policies (25.2%), followed by crisis/emergency narratives (20.9%). This indicates that Nigerian newspapers often represent Zero Hunger either through the lens of state-led interventions or reactionary crisis reporting. Daily Trust led in both government policy coverage (30) and crisis/emergency frames (25), reflecting its focus on food insecurity challenges in conflict-prone northern Nigeria. The Guardian gave relatively more emphasis to government responses (25) and humanitarian/charity interventions (15), suggesting a balanced outlook between state and non-state actors. Punch leaned slightly towards international/SDG framing (15), showing stronger reference to global development agendas than the other newspapers. Community empowerment (10.3%) received the least framing overall, indicating limited focus on grassroots-driven solutions to hunger.

The dominance of government effort/policy frames suggests that newspapers rely heavily on official sources and government statements when reporting hunger issues, which may reproduce elite-driven narratives rather than amplifying grassroots voices. The high percentage of crisis/emergency framing (20.9%) shows that hunger is often portrayed as a reactive problem (e.g., famine, displacement), which may weaken sustained advocacy for

long-term structural solutions aligned with SDG 2. The low representation of community empowerment (10.3%) frames suggests that the agency of local communities, farmers, and households in addressing hunger is underreported. This limits the promotion of bottom-up development strategies. Although SDG 2 is central to Zero Hunger, international/SDG framing (13.3%) remains weak. This implies that Nigerian print media rarely connect local hunger challenges to global development commitments, which could reduce international accountability pressure. While humanitarian/charity actions received some attention (15.4%), they remain secondary compared to government narratives. This might downplay the critical role of NGOs and aid agencies in hunger reduction.

How frequently and prominently are hunger-related stories covered in the selected Nigerian Newspapers?

Table 4 Placement/Prominence of stories

| Placement | Punch (n=82) | Guardian (n=95) | Vanguard (n=74) | Daily Trust (n=118) | Total (%) |
|-------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Front page | 10 (12.2%) | 15 (15.8%) | 9 (12.2%) | 20 (16.9%) | 54 (14.6%) |
| Editorial page | 12 (14.6%) | 20 (21.1%) | 11 (14.9%) | 18 (15.3%) | 61 (16.5%) |
| Inside news pages | 48 (58.5%) | 45 (47.4%) | 40 (54.1%) | 64 (54.2%) | 197 (53.4%) |
| Features/specials | 12 (14.6%) | 15 (15.8%) | 14 (18.9%) | 16 (13.6%) | 57 (15.5%) |

Table 4 Source: Field Data (2025)

The data indicate that the majority of hunger-related stories across the four newspapers were published in the inside news pages (53.4%), suggesting that while coverage exists, it is often de-emphasized in terms of visibility and prominence. Front page coverage (14.6%) was the least common, although Daily Trust (16.9%) and The Guardian (15.8%) gave slightly more front-page attention compared to Punch and Vanguard (both 12.2%). Editorial page coverage (16.5%) shows moderate attention, with The Guardian leading at 21.1%, reflecting its tendency to frame hunger within broader policy debates. Features and special reports (15.5%) were used in all newspapers, though Vanguard devoted a slightly higher proportion (18.9%) than the others, showing some investment in in-depth analysis.

Since over half of the coverage was confined to inside pages, hunger and food security are not treated as front-burner national issues, which weakens their prominence in public discourse. With only 14.6% of hunger-related stories making the front page, Nigerian newspapers risk framing hunger as a secondary or background issue rather than an urgent developmental priority. The Guardian’s higher proportion of editorials (21.1%) suggests a deliberate attempt to influence policy and opinion leaders, highlighting its role as a thought

leader in development discourse. Vanguard’s and Guardian’s relatively higher use of features and special reports shows that in-depth reporting is sometimes deployed to unpack the complexities of Zero Hunger, although still not enough to dominate coverage. By relegating most hunger stories to less visible spaces, newspapers may be undermining public awareness of SDG 2, making it harder to generate sustained advocacy and accountability.

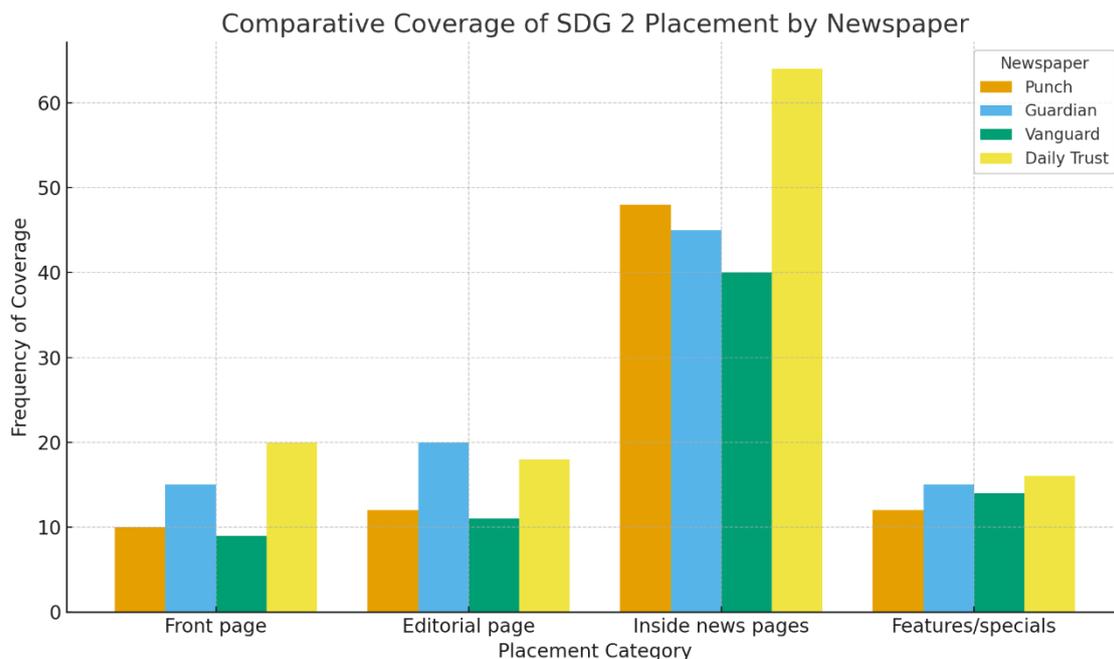


Figure 1. Comparative Coverage of SDG 2 Placement by Newspapers

The bar chart above shows the comparative coverage of SDG 2 stories by placement across the four newspapers (Punch, Guardian, Vanguard, and Daily Trust). The inside news pages dominate across all newspapers, showing that SDG 2 coverage is less likely to receive prominent front-page or editorial attention. Correlation analysis reveals very high positive relationships between newspapers’ coverage distributions ($r = 0.97 - 0.99$). This suggests a consistent editorial pattern among them in terms of placement priorities, with a shared tendency to relegate SDG 2 stories to inside pages rather than prominent positions.

7. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study reveal that Nigerian print media provide some attention to issues of hunger and food security, but the coverage is inconsistent, thematically narrow, and often lacks sustained visibility. Daily Trust emerged as the most active newspaper in reporting hunger-related stories (32.1%), which reflects its regional focus on northern Nigeria where food insecurity is most acute due to poverty, conflict, and climate change (FAO, 2022). In contrast, Vanguard provided the least coverage (20%), suggesting editorial under-

prioritization of the Zero Hunger agenda. This aligns with previous scholarship which shows that development issues are often overshadowed by political reporting in Nigerian media (Adeleke, 2020; Ojebode & Akinwale, 2019).

Thematic analysis indicates that food insecurity and poverty (25.4%) and hunger and malnutrition (19.9%) were the most emphasized themes, while gender and child-focused vulnerabilities (8.5%) received limited attention. This mirrors earlier studies that identified the Nigerian press as more inclined to emphasize structural and economic dimensions of development, while marginalizing human-centered narratives (Ufuophu-Biri & Ojebode, 2019). Similarly, climate change and agricultural productivity were not dominant frames (14.2%), despite their centrality to hunger reduction in Nigeria (UNDP, 2023).

In terms of framing, the dominance of government effort/policy frames (25.2%) and crisis/emergency reporting (20.9%) reflects a reliance on official sources and a reactive orientation toward hunger coverage. This pattern aligns with Entman's (1993) framing theory, which posits that media framing not only selects and emphasizes certain aspects of reality but also privileges particular actors, perspectives, and policy solutions. Similarly, from an agenda-setting perspective (McCombs, 2014), the limited front-page or editorial prominence of hunger stories suggests that the issue is not being elevated as a top public concern. The weak use of grassroots empowerment frames (10.3%) and international/SDG perspectives (13.3%) reveals that the Nigerian print media are underrepresenting local agency and global accountability linkages (Adesina, 2021). This underrepresentation undermines the media's developmental advocacy role by restricting the visibility of community-driven solutions and failing to sustain public and policy attention on long-term strategies for achieving Zero Hunger (SDG 2). A more balanced integration of framing and agenda-setting practices could therefore enhance the press's capacity to function as a catalyst for participatory and sustainable development communication.

Prominence analysis showed that hunger coverage was mostly confined to inside pages (53.4%), while only 14.6% appeared on front pages. This indicates low visibility and agenda-setting power (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Although The Guardian led in editorial coverage (21.1%), reinforcing its tradition of policy-focused discourse, the overall placement patterns suggest that hunger is not treated as a top-tier issue in Nigerian print media. This lack of salience risks diminishing public awareness and reducing pressure on policymakers to act.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found that Nigerian newspapers provided some attention to the issue of hunger but that coverage of Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) remains limited in frequency, framing, and prominence. Most reports framed hunger as a government responsibility or crisis event, with minimal focus on systemic factors such as climate change,

corruption, and the vulnerabilities of women and children. The dominance of official narratives and the marginalization of grassroots and international perspectives indicate that newspapers have yet to fully harness their agenda-setting and framing potential to advance developmental advocacy. To address these gaps, the study recommends targeted training for journalists on SDG literacy and development communication, the establishment of media partnerships with international organizations such as FAO and UNDP, and the promotion of investigative and data-driven reporting on hunger and food security. Strengthening these areas would enhance the media's capacity to foster informed dialogue, hold stakeholders accountable, and support national and global efforts toward achieving Zero Hunger.

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**Nollywood’s Filmography of Malfeasance and Corruption in
Contemporary Nigeria**

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Abstract

This study critically examined Nollywood’s filmography of malfeasance and corruption in contemporary Nigeria, focusing on productions between 2018 and 2023. Anchored on social representation theory (Moscovici, 1984) and framing theory (Entman, 1993), it employed qualitative–quantitative content analysis, 25 corruption-themed films were systematically sampled from a population of 8,407 Nollywood productions, ensuring representativeness through a k-interval of 336 and achieving inter-coder reliability (Cohen’s Kappa ≥ 0.80). Data analysis combined descriptive statistics with thematic interpretation. Findings indicated that political and institutional corruption dominate Nollywood narratives, recurring in electoral cycles, police misconduct, and governance failures, comprising 64% of sampled storylines. Films oscillate between entertainment-driven sensationalism and socially purposeful critique, creating a dialectic tension between spectacle and civic education. Narrative resolutions often employ moral or religious catharsis, yet strategically designed films demonstrate measurable potential to catalyze real-world civic engagement, including citizen reporting of corruption. The study concluded that a society without government could endure, but one without media would be unthinkable impoverished. Within this matrix of cultural authority, Nollywood carries an ethical and civic imperative to confront corruption in all its permutations, not as a discretionary choice but as an unavoidable duty of cultural stewardship. Recommendations emphasized integrating civic education and systemic critique into commercially appealing storylines, leveraging social representation and framing to transform cinematic narratives into effective instruments for behavioral change and social accountability.

Keywords: *Anatomy of Cinema, Corruption, Filmography, Malfeasance, Nollywood*

1. INTRODUCTION

Film has long served as a cultural artifact and social commentary, capturing not only the aesthetics of a people but also their struggles, values, and contradictions. Globally, cinema has been employed to quiz pressing socio-political issues such as racism (*12 Years a Slave*, 2013; *Selma*, 2014; *Get Out*, 2017), class conflict (*Parasite*, 2019; *Sorry We Missed You*, 2019; *Snowpiercer*, 2013), inequality (*Slumdog Millionaire*, 2008; *Roma*, 2018; *Joker*, 2019), and governance failures (*V for Vendetta*, 2005; *The Constant Gardener*, 2005; *Official Secrets*, 2019). In contexts where traditional institutions of accountability are weak, popular cultures often become subtle but powerful avenue for resistance and critique (Adebanwi, 2016; Okome, 2019). African film traditions, from Senegalese cinema under Ousmane Sembène to contemporary South African productions, have consistently plaited corruption, power, and justice into their narratives (Ukadike, 2018; Garritano, 2020). Within this continental framework, Nigerian cinema—Nollywood—stands as both an entertainment industry and an effervescent cultural forum.

Nollywood, now the second-largest film industry in the world by output, is not simply a purveyor of popular entertainment; it is a voice of the people, reflecting daily struggles and dramatising moral concerns (Haynes, 2016; Jedlowski, 2021). With audiences numbering in the millions across Africa and the diaspora, the industry has become a central avenue for exploring Nigeria’s socio-political dilemmas, particularly the endemic issue of corruption. Corruption in this context extends beyond bribery and financial mismanagement to include electoral malpractice, nepotism, abuse of power, ritual wealth-seeking, and police brutality—forms of malfeasance that are woven into the lived experiences of ordinary Nigerians (Ajibade, 2019; Agina, 2020).

From the late 1990s, Nollywood films increasingly incorporated narratives of corruption into their storylines. Tunde Kelani’s *Saworoide* (1999) and its sequel *Agogo Eewo* (2002) employed allegorical kingship narratives to satirize electoral fraud, elite collusion, and authoritarian politics (Adesokan, 2012). In the Yoruba film tradition more broadly, themes of bribery, “get-rich-quick” schemes, and the moral consequences of greed have become central, with scholars identifying both positive reinforcements of integrity and the frequent dramatisation of corruption as a social ill (Olayiwola, 2017). These films use culturally deep storytelling techniques to interrogate governance failures while offering moral lessons to their audiences.

The 2000s and 2010s saw Nollywood adopt more direct political drama. *Black November* (2012), set against the oil exploitation crisis in the Niger Delta, dramatized the collusion of

state and corporate elites and the resulting human cost (Okome, 2013). Similarly, *If I Am President* (2018) foregrounded the structural challenges of Nigerian democracy, including party manipulation and corruption in political campaigns. The biographical drama *Badamasi: Portrait of a General* (2021) offered a cinematic window into the political intrigues of military rule under General Ibrahim Babangida, raising questions about leadership ethics and the entanglement of personal ambition with national governance.

The electoral sphere has been especially protuberant in Nollywood's critique. *4th Republic* (2019), for example, tackled electoral malpractice, violence, and judicial complicity, echoing public frustration over Nigeria's democratic shortcomings (Nwachukwu, 2020). Other films such as *Code Wilo* (2019), *Tenants of the House* (2021), and *The Governor* (2016, EbonyLife TV series) also dramatised political corruption and legislative compromise. Through such productions, Nollywood has placed itself within the national conversation on accountability and transparency, often dramatising the consequences of institutional failure in ways that formal reports and government white papers cannot.

Newer productions have expanded Nollywood's corruption discourse beyond local contexts into transnational and digital spaces. *The Black Book* (2023), a Netflix-backed crime thriller, juxtaposes personal vengeance with systemic corruption, exposing abuse of state power, police brutality, and the complicity of elites. The film's international reception highlighted not only Nollywood's growing reach but also the global character of corruption as a theme (AP News, 2023). Such works demonstrate that corruption is not treated merely as entertainment but as a narrative tool for moral outrage, social education, and global visibility.

A further range of Nollywood productions within the past decade have interrogated corruption in diverse ways. *The Meeting* (2012), *'76* (2016), *October 1* (2014), *The CEO* (2016), *Oloture* (2019), *Shanty Town* (2023), *King of Boys* (2018), *King of Boys: The Return of the King* (2021), *Chief Daddy* (2018), *Living in Bondage: Breaking Free* (2019), *Rattlesnake: The Ahanna Story* (2020), *Lockdown* (2021), and *Blood Sisters* (2022) all, in different registers, foreground narratives of abuse of power, illicit wealth, political intrigue, and social decay. These films collectively underscore Nollywood's commitment to portraying corruption not as a peripheral issue but as central to Nigeria's socio-political life.

Scholars argue that Nollywood's representations of corruption function educationally, shaping moral discourse and contributing to public debate (Jedlowski, 2021; Okome, 2019). By highlighting the consequences of corruption, filmmakers create a cinematic tribunal where issues of justice, integrity, and accountability are contested. This aligns with the African oral tradition of storytelling, where narratives are used to caution, instruct, and

critique society (Ukadike, 2018; Garritano, 2020). Through satire, allegory, and melodrama, Nollywood situates corruption not as a distant abstraction but as a lived reality that must be collectively confronted.

Statement of the Problem

Corruption remains one of Nigeria's most pervasive challenges, undermining democracy, eroding trust in governance, and entrenching inequality (Ojo, 2020; Akinyemi, 2022; Transparency International, 2023). Nollywood, as a powerful cultural institution, has consistently dramatised corruption in its varied forms—from electoral malpractice in *4th Republic* (2019) and *If I Am President* (2018), to legislative compromise in *Tenants of the House* (2021), political godfatherism in *King of Boys* (2018), judicial complicity in *The Black Book* (2023), human trafficking and greed in *Òlòtūrè* (2019), and ritualized ambition in *Shanty Town* (2023). These films, among others, not only mirror societal decay but also offer a counter-public sphere where audiences interrogate ethical values and leadership failures (Okome, 2019; Agina, 2020). Yet, scholarship on Nollywood has largely privileged identity, gender, and transnationalism (Haynes, 2016; Jedlowski, 2021), leaving Nollywood's sustained engagement with corruption underexplored (Olayiwola, 2017; Nwachukwu, 2020). This scholarly neglect obscures cinema's role as a tool of civic education in a polity where institutional mechanisms for accountability are weak. The real problem, therefore, is not only the dearth of organized literature but also the failure to recognize Nollywood as an active cultural force in shaping public consciousness and discourses on corruption, a gap that diminishes the value of both film and governance studies.

Aim of the Study

This study aimed at critically examining how Nollywood films highlight corruption and contribute to public discourse on governance, ethics, and accountability in Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. What is the *filmography of malfeasance* portraying corruption in Nollywood from 2018 to 2023?
- ii. What is the *anatomy of corruption-centred* films in Nollywood from 2018 to 2023?
- iii. What are the patterns of corruption representation in Nollywood films from 2018 to 2023?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Nollywood Corruption Narrative

The extent and function of corruption's portrayal in Nigerian cinema is a subject of significant academic inquiry. While some studies suggest a limited engagement with the topic, other evidence points to Nollywood's profound capacity to catalyze real-world action. A foundational study by Fatonji, Oso, and Biobaku (2020), which analyzed 76 home videos, found that corrupt practices were generally under-represented, constituting less than 3% of the total duration of the films examined. This finding suggests that despite corruption's prominence in Nigerian society, it may not be a central focus of Nollywood's storytelling. The same study revealed a notable disparity in representation across different language productions. Corrupt practices were found to be more frequently depicted in English-language movies (63.2%) compared to those produced in Yoruba (36.8%).

The authors of that study concluded that this finding affirmed the null hypothesis that corruption would not be more represented in Yoruba films than in English films. This conclusion, as presented, is a peculiar phrasing for a null hypothesis. A more logical framing is that the findings rejected a null hypothesis of no significant difference, demonstrating that English-language Nollywood productions, which often target a younger, pan-Nigerian, and urban audience, serve as a primary vehicle for this type of social critique.

Scholarly opinion is divided on whether Nollywood functions as a genuine tool for public accountability or a commercial enterprise that sensationalizes societal issues. The research by Okonkwo (2023) argues that contemporary Nollywood, or "New Nollywood," sensationalizes corruption by blending it with high-stakes thriller and drama genres for commercial appeal. This perspective views the portrayal of corruption as a spectacle designed to entertain rather than a vehicle for meaningful social commentary. Conversely, Nwabueze and Adesina (2020) contend that Nollywood serves a vital function as a public accountability tool. They point to films that link corruption to widespread societal issues like poverty and police brutality, asserting that these narratives encourage viewers to question the status quo.

This academic schism becomes particularly pronounced when considering the real-world impact of the films. While content analyses may observe a tendency towards sensationalism or under-representation, a landmark field experiment involving the film *Water of Gold* offers a powerful counter-narrative. A study by Weigel, Littman, and Paluck (2019), conducted by researchers from Princeton, UCLA, and MIT, demonstrated that a strategically designed film, combined with a simple text-messaging campaign, led to a record number of citizens

reporting acts of corruption. Over a seven-month period, the campaign generated 241 concrete corruption reports from 106 communities. This remarkable result challenges the notion that Nollywood is merely a commercial spectacle. The effectiveness of this campaign was attributed to its design: the film provided fictional role models of citizens reporting corruption, while the text service made the act of reporting simple and free. The campaign effectively leveraged an emotional narrative to mobilize collective action, proving that Nollywood can be an effective medium for behavioral change.

This juxtaposition of findings suggests that the issue is not an inherent weakness of Nollywood but rather a matter of intent and design. The content analyses describe the industry's general output, which may often prioritize commercial returns and simplified plots. However, the *Water of Gold* experiment serves as a compelling proof-of-concept, demonstrating that when films are intentionally crafted with principles of "entertainment-education," they can move beyond passive critique to become powerful catalysts for tangible social and civic engagement.

Mapping the Corrupt Landscape: Motifs and Manifestations

Academic research into Nollywood's portrayal of corruption reveals a clear thematic hierarchy, with certain strands recurring more frequently than others. These cinematic representations often reflect and are substantiated by real-world realities, grounding the fictional narratives in the lived experiences of Nigerians.

A consensus exists among scholars that Nollywood filmmakers prioritize the depiction of political and institutional corruption. Eze and Onyekwere (2022) found that a significant number of films, with prominent examples like *King of Boys* and *Oloture*, focus on political corruption to critique elite impunity. This finding is further corroborated by Ibrahim and Yusuf (2019), who, through a semiotic analysis of 40 films, identified electoral fraud (35%), police extortion (30%), and embezzlement (25%) as the most dominant forms of corruption portrayed. Bakare's (2021) study reinforced this, finding that police corruption was featured in 40 out of 55 films analyzed. The prevalence of these themes emphasizes the deep-seated public distrust in these institutions, as they are seen as the primary points of systemic breakdown. The low portrayal of judicial bribery, as noted by Bakare, may indicate a lack of public awareness or a reluctance by filmmakers to address the complexities of the legal system within their narratives.

The cinematic landscape of corruption is also evolving to address gender-specific practices and youth-centric crime. Okafor's (2020) study on gendered corruption found that 60% of films with female leads highlighted sexual bribery and contract racketeering. This portrayal

often frames women as either victims or accomplices, a pattern that may reinforce traditional stereotypes. In a separate study, Emecheta (2022) explored the portrayal of youth-targeted corruption, such as cybercrime and *yahoo-yahoo* rituals. The research found that 75% of films in this genre, including *Shanty Town*, depicted such activities with "ambiguously moralized" themes. This approach, while perhaps a reflection of societal debates, risks normalizing criminality by blurring the lines between desperation and malicious intent. This presents a significant ethical challenge for filmmakers, as it could potentially desensitize viewers, particularly the youth, to the gravity of these crimes.

The way in which Nollywood films structure their narratives, resolve conflicts, and employ visual symbolism profoundly shapes their message and impact on the audience. A critical analysis of these cinematic patterns reveals a tension between satisfying dramatic tropes and fostering a realistic understanding of anti-corruption efforts. The resolution of corruption narratives in Nollywood often relies on simplified or non-systemic forms of justice. Dipeolu (2018) found that 70% of films used a trope of "cathartic justice," where villains are punished, often dramatically, to provide a sense of emotional release for the viewer. This pattern, while satisfying, may offer escapism over a more profound critique of systemic issues. This is further compounded by findings from Abdullahi (2023), who noted that 62% of films employed religious redemption as a means of resolving corruption themes, portraying it as a spiritual battle rather than a governance challenge that requires structural solutions. This approach can depoliticize corruption, encouraging viewers to rely on prayer and divine intervention rather than civic action and collective accountability.

A significant disparity is present when these narrative tropes are compared to the study by Fatonji et al. (2020), which found that most perpetrators of corrupt practices (60.5%) were not arrested, and a majority of those prosecuted and convicted (47.4%) were not actually punished. This finding indicates that while films may provide a sense of narrative closure through "cathartic justice," they often fail to depict the formal legal processes necessary for real-world accountability. This disconnect between moral consequence and legal consequence is a critical limitation of Nollywood's anti-corruption narrative. It suggests that while films may condemn corrupt acts, they may not be effectively modeling the tangible mechanisms for combating them through the legal system.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the social representation theory (Moscovici, 1984), which explains how shared cultural symbols and narratives shape collective understanding of social issues, and the framing theory (Entman, 1993), which highlights how media select and emphasize

particular aspects of reality to promote specific interpretations. Nollywood, as a cultural institution, provides representational frames through which corruption is not only depicted but also interpreted by audiences within their socio-political contexts (Agina, 2020; Okome, 2019). By foregrounding narratives of electoral malpractice, bribery, and abuse of power, films such as *4th Republic* (2019), *Òlòtūrè* (2019), and *The Black Book* (2023) serve as symbolic texts that construct social knowledge about corruption. This theoretical framing positions Nollywood as a site where corruption is continually redefined and contested, with cinematic portrayals operating as cultural signposts that both reflect and shape public discourse (Jedlowski, 2021; Akinyemi, 2022). Thus, the study integrates social representation and framing theories to explain how Nollywood dramatizes corruption and influences civic consciousness.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted qualitative–quantitative content analysis design. The approach combines descriptive statistics with thematic interpretation, making it possible to examine both the patterns of representation and the narrative strategies through which corruption is dramatised in Nollywood films. The population comprises all Nollywood feature films produced and censored by the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) between 2018 and 2023. NFVCB records show that 7,586 films were produced between 2018 and 2022. Verified data for 2023 indicate that 280 films were produced in the first quarter and 541 in the second quarter, giving a half-year total of 821 films. This brings the cumulative production within the study period to 8,407 films. Given the vast population, a manageable yet representative sample was drawn using systematic sampling. A total of 25 corruption-themed films were selected from widely accessible platforms such as Netflix, YouTube, and Africa Magic. The sampling interval (k) was determined by dividing the population ($N = 8,407$) by the desired sample size ($n = 25$), yielding approximately 336. Accordingly, every 336th film was selected from the compiled list, starting from a randomly chosen point within the first 336 entries. This procedure ensured that the 25th sampled film corresponded to the 8,400th entry, thereby achieving representativeness and minimising researcher bias. Inter-coder reliability was tested using Cohen’s Kappa, with a threshold of 0.87 attained. This combination of methods ensured both rigour and depth of interpretation, making the design suitable for a journal-level investigation.

5. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

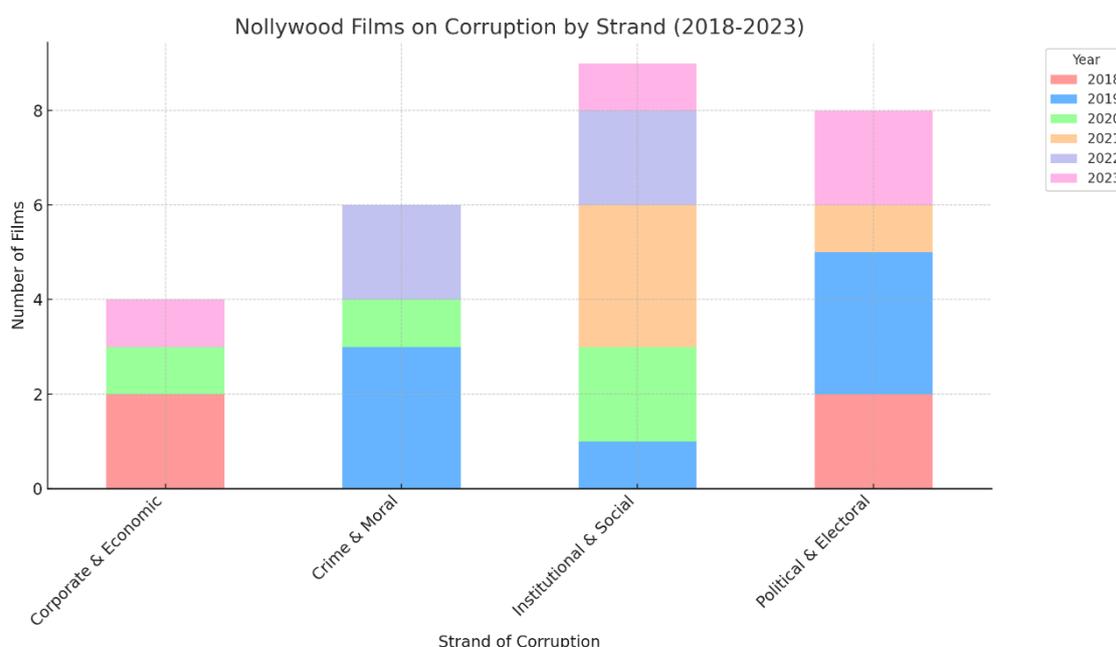
Table 1: *Filmography of malfeasance* portraying corruption in Nollywood from 2018 to 2023

| Film Title | Year | Central Theme(s) of Corruption |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|---|
| Chief Daddy | 2018 | Elite decadence and nepotistic patronage |
| If I Am President | 2018 | Electoral malpractice, disenfranchisement, smear campaigns |
| King of Boys | 2018 | Political patronage, godfatherism, gangster-political nexus |
| Lionheart | 2018 | Corporate greed, business ethics, and the role of family in leadership |
| 4th Republic | 2019 | Election violence, vote fraud, systemic political corruption |
| Love Is War | 2019 | Rival gubernatorial contest; political ambition and dirty tactics |
| The Set Up | 2019 | Crime thriller depicting systemic dodges, blackmail, and criminal networks |
| Living in Bondage: Breaking Free | 2019 | Ritual wealth seeking, elite impunity, moral corruption |
| Citation | 2020 | Institutional corruption and abuse of power in universities |
| Rattlesnake: The Ahanna Story | 2020 | Crime as a response to structural inequality; gang politics |
| Badamasi: Portrait of a General | 2020 | Biopic of a military ruler that raises questions about leadership ethics |
| Oloibiri | 2020 | Corporate corruption in the oil industry, environmental degradation, and community betrayal |
| King of Boys: The Return of the King | 2021 | Entrenched political corruption, mafia-style politics |
| Collision Course | 2021 | Police brutality, roadblock extortion, bribery (#EndSARS echoes) |
| Sanitation Day | 2021 | Police dysfunction, coverups, corruption tied to a criminal investigation |
| Swallow | 2021 | Workplace abuse, exploitation and institutional coverups |
| Blood Sisters (mini-series) | 2022 | Police corruption, bribery, preferential justice for the powerful |
| The Man of God | 2022 | Religious hypocrisy and the abuse of power within a church |
| Anikulapo | 2022 | Moral decay, greed, and the abuse of supernatural power |
| Brotherhood | 2022 | Political influence on crime and the justice system; gang violence |
| The Black Book | 2023 | Corrupt police network, institutional violence and coverups |

| | | |
|----------------------|------|---|
| Over the Bridge | 2023 | Corporate graft, illegal kickbacks in infrastructure projects |
| Gangs of Lagos | 2023 | Politically-connected gangs, patronage, community capture by elites |
| Shanty Town (series) | 2023 | Street kingpins in collusion with politicians; political corruption and clientelism |

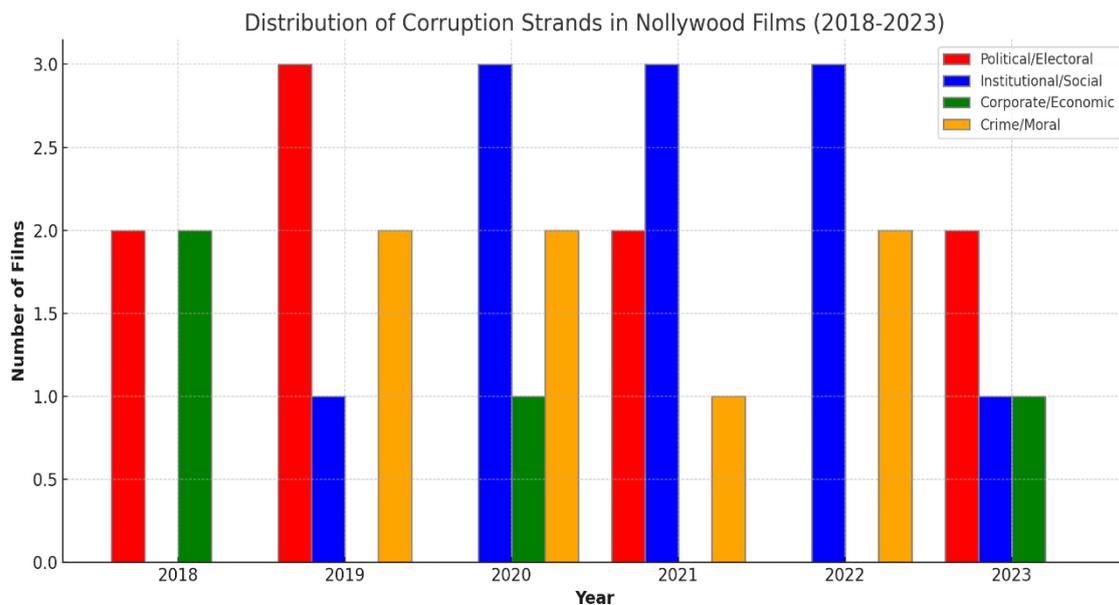
This table shows that Nollywood is increasingly using film to expose various forms of corruption. The focus has broadened from a few political themes to a diverse range of societal issues like police brutality, institutional misconduct, and corporate greed. This trend indicates that Nollywood is becoming a significant tool for public discourse and social commentary on corruption in Nigeria.

Table 2: *Anatomy of corruption-centred films in Nollywood from 2018 to 2023*



The distribution of corruption strands in Nollywood films from 2018 to 2023 shows that political and electoral corruption dominates (8 films), with significant peaks in 2019 and 2023, reflecting heightened attention to elections and political power struggles. Institutional and social corruption is also prominent (8 films), appearing consistently from 2020 to 2023, indicating sustained critique of police, judiciary, and societal structures. In contrast, corporate/economic corruption (4 films) and crime/moral corruption (6 films) are less frequent but spread across the years, highlighting episodic yet impactful depictions of elite decadence, ritual practices, and criminality in contemporary Nigerian society.

Table 3: Patterns of corruption representation in Nollywood films from 2018 to 2023



Political/Electoral corruption (red) dominates 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2023, while Institutional/Social corruption (blue) peaks 2020–2022, reflecting police, workplace, and university issues. Corporate/Economic corruption (green) appears intermittently, notably in 2018, 2020, and 2023, and Crime/Moral corruption (orange) is scattered 2019–2021, highlighting ritual and criminal matters. Overall, the graph clearly reveals temporal and thematic patterns of corruption, with optional exact counts atop each bar for greater precision.

6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The analysis of Nollywood films from 2018 to 2023 shows a sophisticated and multi-layered engagement with corruption as a social phenomenon. Earlier films such as *Chief Daddy* (2018) and *If I Am President* (2018) foreground elite decadence and electoral malpractice, while later works, including *The Black Book* (2023) and *Shanty Town* (2023), extend the narrative terrain to encompass institutional failings, corporate greed, moral decay, and ritualized criminality. This expansion demonstrates Nollywood’s increasing capacity to depict corruption as a complex, culturally deep issue. Applying Moscovici’s social

representation theory, these films act as symbolic frameworks through which Nigerian audiences collectively construct an understanding of corruption, anchoring abstract societal anxieties in concrete narrative forms. This finding contrasts with earlier work by Fatonji, Oso, and Biobaku (2020), which found that corruption comprised less than 3% of screen content, suggesting that contemporary Nollywood has evolved from peripheral representation toward deliberate social commentary.

The anatomy of corruption depicted in these films illustrates a ranked prioritization, with political and electoral corruption appearing in eight films and institutional and social corruption equally frequent. Corporate and economic corruption appears in four films, and crime and moral corruption in six, reflecting episodic but socially significant concerns. Framing theory illuminates this distribution, establishing how filmmakers emphasize certain components—such as electoral fraud, police misconduct, and governance failures—while downplaying others, thereby shaping audience interpretation of societal priorities. Peaks in political corruption align with election years (2019 and 2023), suggesting deliberate narrative alignment with contemporary events, while institutional corruption dominates 2020–2022, coinciding with heightened public scrutiny of police and workplace structures following protests such as #EndSARS. Corporate malfeasance and crime/moral corruption, although infrequent, intersperse narratives at culturally salient moments, reinforcing the salience of moral, economic, and criminal transgressions. Through the lens of social representation theory, audiences internalise these depictions as shared cultural symbols, recognising the actors, structures, and consequences associated with corruption. Framing theory further clarifies the role of narrative design, as selective emphasis, visual symbolism, and resolution strategies guide public perception, highlighting systemic challenges or moralized closure depending on the film's intent.

Temporal and thematic patterns across the dataset reveal a dialectical tension between spectacle and civic engagement. While narrative resolution frequently employs cathartic justice or religious redemption, offering dramatic closure, films such as *Òlòtūrè* (2019) and *Blood Sisters* (2022) centre systemic critique of institutions, illustrating Nollywood's capacity to move beyond moralistic storytelling toward socially conscious commentary. Comparisons with earlier research indicate a marked shift from underrepresentation and sensationalism (Fatonji et al., 2020; Okonkwo, 2023) to a good engagement that dithers between entertainment and civic education. Gendered and youth-centred depictions of corruption, particularly sexual bribery and ritualised economic crime, reflect societal debates while also highlighting potential ethical tensions, including the risk of normalizing unethical behaviors or reinforcing stereotypes. Nevertheless, strategically framed narratives, when combined with mechanisms that facilitate civic participation—as demonstrated in the Water

of Gold campaign (Weigel, Littman, and Paluck, 2019)—demonstrate the potential for films to mobilize audiences toward social accountability, reinforcing the relevance of social representation and framing theories in shaping both perception and action.

In all, the study's findings indicate that Nollywood's filmography from 2018 to 2023 constructs a culturally shared understanding of corruption, with political and institutional dimensions dominating, corporate and moral strands appearing episodically, and temporal patterns responding dynamically to socio-political events. The anatomical distribution and narrative framing reveal deliberate choices that emphasize governance failures and elite impunity while simultaneously negotiating the tension between entertainment and social critique. The patterns of representation suggest that, although cathartic and moralistic resolutions are common, the industry increasingly engages with systemic critiques capable of influencing civic consciousness. These insights yield three primary conclusions: first, political and institutional corruption dominate Nollywood narratives, reflecting collective concern over governance and systemic integrity; second, the oscillation between spectacle and socially purposeful critique illustrates the tension between commercial imperatives and civic education; and third, films employing intentional narrative framing demonstrate measurable potential to catalyze real-world awareness, engagement, and reporting of corruption, confirming the dual theoretical application of social representation and framing theory

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Nollywood filmmakers should continue to prioritize narratives addressing electoral malpractice, governance failures, and institutional corruption, as these are central to audience perception and societal concern.
- ii. Film producers should intentionally integrate civic education and systemic critique into commercially appealing storylines; framing corruption in ways that highlight structural causes and consequences, rather than solely relying on sensationalism, cathartic justice, or moralized resolutions.
- iii. Filmmakers and policymakers should work collaboratively to ensure strategic use of social representation and framing that can transform narratives into tools for behavioral change, awareness, and participatory governance

8. CONCLUSION

The media in all its infinite manifestations—cinema, television, radio, print, digital platforms, podcasts, music, gaming, social networks, virtual reality, and emerging hybrid

forms—remains among the most transformative forces for societal renewal, wielding an influence that can rival governance itself. Its power lies not merely in informing but in shaping consciousness, molding values, and catalyzing collective action; indeed, one might argue that a society without government could endure, but one without media would be unthinkable impoverished. Within this matrix of cultural authority, Nollywood, the mother of Nigeria’s cinematic landscape, carries an ethical and civic imperative to confront corruption in all its permutations—political, institutional, economic, moral, and ritualistic—not as a discretionary choice but as an unavoidable duty of cultural stewardship. Through deliberate framing, symbolic representation, and narrative sophistication, filmmakers navigate the delicate tension between entertainment and civic enlightenment, producing works that provoke reflection, stimulate discourse, and, when strategically designed, inspire real-world engagement, accountability, and behavioral transformation. In this sense, Nollywood is not merely a mirror reflecting society; it is a crucible where awareness, critique, and the possibility of social metamorphosis are forged.

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Evaluating the Operational Capabilities and Limitations of the Ecowas Standby Force in Securing West Africa

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Abstract

The study explored the current operational capabilities and limitations of the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) in securing West Africa. Due to the mismatch between the evolving security landscape in West Africa and the ESF's current capabilities and limitations, the research gave an overview of security challenges in West Africa, analyzed the operational readiness and capabilities of the ESF, identified the limitations affecting its effectiveness, discussed the impact of partner coordination on the ESF operations and propose actionable recommendations for enhancing the ESF's role in securing West Africa. The study adopts qualitative design method with thematic analysis of secondary literature relating to the operational effectiveness and themes related to the capabilities of the ESF. Capability-performance gap theory was used as the research theoretical framework. The research exposed the different level of training and preparedness of personnel by member states, critical deficit in strategic enablers of the assets that allow a force to perform its mission, insufficient funding and equipment, inconsistent integration of advanced technology in operations, and complexity of the command and control framework as well as divergent political interests and strategic coordination as findings. The study recommended that strengthening the ESF capacities through enhanced training, resource allocation, and improved coordination will be essential for the ESF to fulfill its mandate effectively in securing West Africa.

Keywords; *ECOWAS Standby Force, Capabilities, Limitations, Operations, Security, West Africa*

1. INTRODUCTION

The West African region faces an array of security challenges, including armed conflicts, terrorism, and organized crime. These issues threaten not only national stability but also regional peace and prosperity. In response to these multifaceted threats, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) established the ESF as part of its

commitment to peace and security in the region (ECOWAS, 2006). The ESF serves as a rapid deployment mechanism designed to respond to crises and stabilize conflict-affected areas. Despite its ambitious objectives and the historical success of certain interventions, the effectiveness of the ESF continues to be hindered by various challenges.

The problem at hand lies in the mismatch between the evolving security landscape in West Africa and the ESF's current capabilities and limitations. While the ESF has made strides in promoting peace, its effectiveness is often compromised by insufficient resources, political discord among member states, and inadequate operational readiness (Nwankwo, 2020). These challenges raise important questions about the ESF's role in securing the region and how well it can adapt to contemporary threats. This research paper posits that while the ESF has demonstrated significant potential in regional security, its effectiveness is ultimately limited by political, operational, and resource constraints. By evaluating both the strengths and weaknesses of the ESF, this study aims to paint a comprehensive picture of its current capabilities in ensuring stability in West Africa.

A review of relevant literature reveals a growing body of work on the role of regional organizations in peacekeeping and security. Scholars such as Adebajo (2002) and Ero (2016) have highlighted the ESF's importance in maintaining regional stability, while others, like Maliah (2019), contend that the ESF's effectiveness is limited by its dependence on member states and their conflicting interests. This paper engages with these scholarly perspectives to offer both a nuanced understanding of the ESF and contribute to ongoing discussions regarding its future.

The objectives of this research include: (1) to analyze the operational readiness and capabilities of the ESF; (2) to identify and examine the limitations affecting its effectiveness. By achieving these objectives, this research aims to shed light on strategies for strengthening regional security efforts. The significance of this research extends beyond an academic inquiry. Understanding the current state of the ESF is crucial for policymakers, regional leaders, and international partners who are invested in peace and stability in West Africa. It can inform strategic decisions on resource allocation and collaborative efforts that are essential for combating the region's security challenges.

This study encompasses West African countries under the purview of ECOWAS, focusing on both historical and contemporary perspectives of the ESF's operations. While acknowledging the broader geopolitical implications of security in West Africa, and focused on the capabilities and limitations of the ESF itself. The structure of the research is as follows: following this introduction, the paper provides a historical context of the ESF, followed by an analysis of its current capabilities and limitations. The paper concluded with

recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of the ESF and final thoughts on its critical role in regional security.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Concept of Operational Capability

Operational capability is a multifaceted and holistic concept in security and strategic studies that refers to the demonstrated capacity of a force to effectively execute its assigned missions and achieve strategic objectives in a timely and sustainable manner. It transcends the mere possession of personnel and equipment to encompass the seamless integration of several interdependent pillars. As defined by Berdal, (2001) and military doctrine, true operational capability requires the synergistic combination of readiness the state of preparedness of units to deploy and engage; interoperability the technical and procedural ability of diverse national components to function as a unified, effective force; sustainability the logistical capacity to maintain operations for the required duration; and command, control, and communications (C3) the architecture for coherent decision-making and execution (Berdal, 2001; DPKO, 2008). Ultimately, it is the tangible manifestation of political will, institutional planning, and resource allocation, proving that a force can transition from a theoretical concept to an effective instrument of policy.

When related to the ESF, an analysis of its operational capability reveals a significant gap between its formal aspirations and its practical, real-world capacity. The ESF, conceived as a key component of the APSA under the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework, is designed for rapid deployment in response to regional crises, including peacekeeping, intervention, and humanitarian assistance (ECOWAS Commission, 2005).

The prospects for the ESF achieving full operational capability are constrained by several persistent challenges. Firstly, interoperability remains a critical hurdle. The force is composed of contingents from multiple member states, each with differing military doctrines, equipment, training standards, and languages. As noted by Franke (2006), the effectiveness of any multinational standby force is contingent upon the resolution of interoperability issues, which require extensive and regular joint exercises a resource-intensive endeavour that has been inconsistent. Secondly, the issue of sustainability and funding severely limits capability. The ESF is heavily reliant on external donor funding for its exercises, logistics, and planning, creating uncertainty and undermining long-term operational sustainability (Aning, 2010). This financial vulnerability directly impacts readiness, as it complicates procurement, maintenance, and the pre-positioning of essential logistical supplies.

Furthermore, the command and control (C2) structure, while outlined in doctrine, faces the practical test of navigating the complex political sovereignty of member states. The effective and rapid authorization and deployment of the ESF require a level of political consensus that is often difficult to achieve promptly in the face of a crisis, creating a critical delay between mandate and action (Adeleke, 2011).

While the ECOWAS Standby Force exists as a formalized framework with designated brigades and a political mandate, its full operational capability remains a work in progress. It possesses a baseline potential for deployment, as evidenced by its role in past ECOWAS missions and ongoing planning efforts. However, its ability to consistently deploy rapidly, operate effectively as a unified force, and sustain complex missions over time is contingent upon resolving deep-seated issues of financing, interoperability, and politically integrated command structures. Its current state is perhaps best described as a "partial" or "emerging" operational capability, still evolving towards the high-readiness standard envisioned in its founding documents.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted qualitative research design to capture nuanced insights, trends, and patterns that emerge from existing literature and reports. The data collection process involve relevant secondary materials review, including academic journals and articles, official reports and publications, books and monographs, policy briefs and working papers, news articles and media reports. Thematic analysis method was used to analyse certain themes, terms, and patterns related to the operational effectiveness of the ESF, and themes related to capabilities such as personnel training, logistical support, technological infrastructure, command structures and limitations.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Capability-Performance Gap Theory

The capability-performance gap is a theoretical concept primarily from strategic management and organizational theory that describes the disjuncture between an entity's potential capacity to act and its actual achievements or outputs in practice. This gap signifies a failure to effectively translate resources, structures, and plans (capabilities) into effective action and desired results (performance). As articulated by researchers like Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997), the theory posits that possessing capabilities does not automatically guarantee high performance; the transformation process is mediated by critical intervening variables. These include the quality of leadership, the efficiency of internal processes, the adequacy of resources, and the ability to adapt to a dynamic external environment. A persistent gap indicates systemic weaknesses in implementation, coordination, or strategic

alignment, rendering even robust theoretical capabilities ineffective. When applied to the realm of security and peace operations, this theory provides a powerful lens for analyzing the challenges facing multinational forces. It moves the analytical focus beyond mere inventories of troops and equipment to the crucial question of how these assets are mobilized, managed, and applied to achieve mission objectives.

Relating this theory to the ESF reveals a profound and illustrative capability-performance gap. The ESF, as formalized in its foundational documents, possesses significant theoretical capability. The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (2005) outlines a clear mandate for rapid deployment. The force has a designated structure with pledged national contingents, and it operates within a broader APSA designed to provide strategic direction (African Union, 2003). However, the performance of the ESF in fulfilling its mandate of being a rapid-deployment, effective peace operation force has been inconsistent and often fell short of its potential, thereby exposing a significant gap.

The "Capabilities" of the ESF represent the foundational inputs, the theoretical potential for effective military intervention. This inventory is extensive on paper. It is detailed in the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework and the various Modules of the Standby Force, which outline pledged troops, equipment, and logistical frameworks. As articulated by Franke (2006), capabilities are the "resources that are available for deployment" (p. 46). For the ESF, this includes the pledged battalions from member states, the strategic-level planning capacity at the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja, and the designated Formed Police Units. The journey from capability to performance is never direct; it is mediated by a critical set of "Intervening Variables." This is the most complex box in the conceptual map, a dense web of political will which is the paramount variable, capabilities remain inert without sustainable financing, operational readiness and interoperability which is pledged troops from different nations have varying levels of training, equipment, and doctrine (Aning, & Salihu, 2012) filters that strain and divert the flow of potential.

"Performance" is the final box in the conceptual sequence of the observable, measurable outcome of interventions. This is not the plan, but the action. For the ESF, performance is evaluated in missions like those in Mali (AFISMA) and The Gambia (2016 intervention)(Aning, & Salihu, 2012). Did the force deploy rapidly? Did it effectively neutralize the threat and stabilize the situation? The gap between the robust capabilities on paper and the often-hesitant, under-resourced performance in the field is the definitive proof of the theory. The triad of "Capabilities," "Intervening Variables," and "Performance" provides an elegant yet powerful schematic for diagnosing the ailments of the ECOWAS Standby Force.

The conceptual figures it inspires from simple linear flows to complex webs of bottlenecks illustrate that the ESF's challenges are not primarily a lack of designed capability. Rather, they are a failure in the translation process, where political indecision, financial scarcity, and operational disharmony intervene to ensure that the force's considerable potential is only ever partially, and often belatedly, realized in the field. The theory also highlights that capabilities must be integrated to be effective. The ESF faces persistent challenges in harmonizing the doctrines, training, equipment, and communication systems of its diverse national contingents. Without extensive joint exercises and standardized procedures resources that are often lacking the force's theoretical interoperability cannot be translated into the seamless coordination required for effective field performance (Adeleke, 2011).

The ESF exemplifies the capability-performance gap theory. It is an institution endowed by policy with a significant potential capability for regional peace and security. Yet, its performance is consistently mediated and constrained by intervening political, financial, and operational-systemic variables. The gap is not due to an absence of framework or intent but to systemic failures in the implementation process. Bridging this gap requires moving beyond building capability to squarely addressing the political and resource constraints that prevent its effective translation into action.

5. OVERVIEW OF SECURITY CHALLENGES IN WEST AFRICA

The history of regional security cooperation in West Africa is a profound narrative of ambition confronting a complex and evolving landscape of threats. The formation of the ECOWAS and its subsequent creation of a military instrument, the ESF, represents a continuous and adaptive response to the profound security challenges that have plagued the region. This journey, marked by both pioneering milestones and persistent obstacles, reflects a determined, if often fraught, pursuit of collective security and stability.

West Africa's security environment is characterized by a confluence of interconnected challenges. Historically, the region has been scarred by violent intra-state conflicts and civil wars, notably in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire, which caused immense human suffering, generated millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, and spawned destabilizing networks of combatants and small arms (Adebajo, 2002). While the frequency of such large-scale civil wars has diminished, their legacy persists.

Today, the most pressing threat is the rapid expansion of violent extremism and insurgency. Groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, such as Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), have exploited governance deficits and inter-communal tensions to establish a foothold in the Sahel, launching increasingly deadly attacks that have spilled south into coastal West African nations (Campbell, 2023). This jihadist insurgency is both a cause and a consequence of

other deep-seated challenges: political instability exemplified by a resurgence of military coups d'état in Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Niger; weak governance and rampant corruption that erode state legitimacy; inter-communal violence over dwindling resources exacerbated by climate change; and the proliferation of transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking, human trafficking, and piracy (Aning, 2016). This complex threat matrix defies unilateral solutions and demands a coordinated regional response.

ECOWAS was established in 1975 with the signing of the Treaty of Lagos, primarily as an economic integration body aimed at creating a single large trading bloc through the gradual removal of trade barriers and the promotion of economic cooperation (ECOWAS, 1975). However, the devastating conflicts of the 1990s, beginning with the Liberian civil war in 1989, forced a dramatic recalibration of its mandate. Confronted with a crisis that threatened to destabilize the entire region, ECOWAS member states recognized that economic development was impossible without peace and security.

This pivotal realization led to the transformative 1993 Revised Treaty, which formally expanded the community's scope to include issues of peace and security. This legal evolution was codified in the landmark 1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. This protocol provided the legal and institutional framework for ECOWAS to authorize military interventions and established the foundation for what would become the ECOWAS Standby Force (ECOWAS, 1999). It represented a radical shift from a purely economic community to a security community with a stated commitment to the principle of "non-indifference."

The development of the ESF has been a gradual process, marked by several key milestones that illustrate its evolution from concept towards a potential operational reality.

- a. Conceptual Foundation (1999-2004): The 1999 Protocol was the genesis, outlining the need for a regional mechanism. This concept was further aligned with the broader APSA of the African Union, which in 2003 called for the establishment of an African Standby Force (ASF) composed of five regional brigades, including the ESF (African Union, 2003). This integrated the ESF into a continent-wide framework.
- b. Operational Planning and Framework (2005-2010): This period involved detailed planning to translate the concept into a viable structure. A pivotal moment was the adoption of the ESF Framework Doctrine and Policy Guidelines in 2005, which defined its mission, structure (a brigade-sized force of 6,500 personnel including military, police, and civilian components), and modalities for deployment (ECOWAS Commission, 2005). Initial Roadmaps were developed to guide its achievement of Full Operational Capability(FOC).

c. Capacity Building and Validation Exercises (2010-Present): With a structure in place, the focus shifted to building capacity, primarily funded and supported by international partners like the European Union. This phase has been defined by a series of crucial Field Training Exercises (FTX) designed to test and validate the Force's readiness. Key exercises include:

- i. Exercise JIGUI (2010), Burkina Faso: The first major FTX to validate the ESF's operational procedures.
- ii. Exercise JIGUI II (2012), Côte d'Ivoire: Focused on the protection of civilians and humanitarian assistance.
- iii. Exercise JIGUI III (2018), Burkina Faso: A comprehensive exercise testing the rapid deployment of the Force's designated initial deployment (Cisse, 2022).
- iv. Exercise COCODILE LIFT (2022), Ghana: A Command Post Exercise focused on planning and decision-making.

These FTX and CPX represent the high-water marks of the ESF's tangible capability, demonstrating that the technical and procedural knowledge for deployment exists.

d. Contemporary Challenges and Reassessment (2020-Present): The most recent milestone is not one of progress but of profound crisis and recalibration. The wave of military coups and the withdrawal of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger to form the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) has fractured ECOWAS itself (Al Jazeera, 2024). This has created an existential challenge for the ESF, as its operational viability relied on consensus and the contribution of member states, including key military players. The bloc is now forced to reconsider the ESF's strategic purpose, structure, and feasibility in a fundamentally altered geopolitical landscape.

The ECOWAS Standby Force stands as a testament to the region's recognition of its shared security destiny. Forged in the fires of civil war and developed to counter an increasingly complex threat environment, it has achieved significant milestones in building a framework for regional military response. However, its journey remains incomplete. The force now faces its ultimate test: whether it can evolve to meet the challenges of internal division and geopolitical fragmentation, or whether the gap between its ambitious capability and its political capacity to perform will define its future.

6. OPERATIONAL READINESS AND CAPABILITIES OF THE ECOWAS STANDBY FORCE

The ESF, conceived as the military arm of the ECOWAS for crisis response and intervention, represents a cornerstone of the APSA. Its theoretical mandate, as outlined in the 1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, is robust, encompassing tasks from observation and peacekeeping to peace enforcement and humanitarian intervention (ECOWAS, 1999). However, a clear-eyed analysis reveals a significant and persistent gap between its institutional ambitions and its tangible operational readiness, a condition largely dictated by political will, financial constraints, and logistical shortcomings.

The ESF's intended structure is organized around a multidimensional brigade-sized force of approximately 6,500 personnel, comprising military, police, and civilian components, designed to be rapidly deployable within a 30-day framework for standard missions and within 14 days for a designated rapid deployment capability (RDC) (African Union, 2003; ECOWAS Commission, 2016). This structure is designed for a wide spectrum of operations, from Chapter VI peacekeeping to more robust Chapter VII mandates. The force is meant to be drawn from pre-identified national contingents within the 15 ECOWAS member states, with Nigeria, by virtue of its demographic and military preponderance, expected to provide the strategic backbone. Periodically, the ESF demonstrates its potential through well-coordinated field training exercises (FTX), such as Exercise Jigui in 2018 and Exercise Crocodile Smile in 2022. These exercises, as noted by analysts, are crucial for validating plans, testing interoperability, and building cohesion among disparate national units (Cisse, 2022). They prove that the technical and tactical knowledge for mounting a regional operation exists within the ECOWAS military structure.

The most significant impediment to the ESF's deployment, however, is political fragmentation. The principle of unanimity in ECOWAS decision-making means that a single member state can block or severely delay a deployment. Recent geopolitical events have exposed and exacerbated these fractures. The wave of military coups d'état in Mali (2020, 2021), Burkina Faso (2022), and Niger (2023), and the subsequent formation of the "Alliance of Sahel States" (AES), has effectively dismantled the regional consensus (Al Jazeera, 2024).

These junta-led states have withdrawn from ECOWAS and declared hostility towards any ESF intervention, which they would perceive as an invading force. This has not only removed strategic territory and potential troop contributors from the ESF pool but has also created a direct adversarial bloc that the force was never designed to confront. The threat of an ESF intervention to restore democratic order in Niger in 2023 ultimately faltered precisely on these political and military realities, revealing the limits of ECOWAS's coercive power

(BBC, 2023). The political will to activate the ESF in a contested environment against determined opposition is, at present, absent.

The withdrawal of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger to the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) from ECOWAS constitutes a seismic event for the ESF. The evidence of the damage is not merely speculative; it directly and profoundly degrades the ESF's core capabilities in troops and logistics, creating tangible gaps that cannot be easily filled. The conceptual framework of the "capability-performance gap" becomes starkly real here. The pledged capabilities of the ESF have been structurally amputated, while the intervening variables of political fragmentation and logistical disintegration have become overwhelmingly negative, making future performance in the Sahel the region most in need of intervention highly improbable.

The ESF is built on a modular structure of pledged brigades from member states. The withdrawal of the AES has effectively dismantled one of the force's critical regional pillars. The ESF is organized into task-forces or brigades. The Western Brigade, intended for operations in the Sahel, was heavily reliant on Mali and Burkina Faso. Their withdrawal, along with Niger's from the Brigade, removes a massive, combat-hardened contingent from the order of battle. The loss is not just in numbers but in quality and terrain-specific experience (Aning & Salihu, 2012). Collectively, the AES nations represent a significant portion of ECOWAS's total military manpower and, crucially, its most battle-tested units. The remaining coastal nations, while capable, largely lack the same depth of recent, large-scale combat experience in arid, Sahelian terrain. This creates a qualitative capability gap that cannot be rapidly replaced through training. (Campbell, 2023).

The logistical blow is arguably even more severe than the loss of troops. The AES states are not just contributors; they are the battlespace. Their withdrawal severs the ESF's strategic land bridges and denies critical infrastructure and bases. Mali's bases in Gao, Timbuktu, and Bamako, and Niger's airbase in Niamey (a critical hub for regional intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) are now entirely off-limits to ECOWAS. This denies the ESF potential forward staging areas, reducing its operational range and loiter time for air assets (Vogt, 2016), and the collapse of the G5 Sahel Joint Force Framework. This collapse has a knock-on effect, denying the ESF a potential source of situational awareness and collaboration (ISS Africa, 2023).

The evidence is clear and material. The withdrawal of the Alliance of Sahel states has not merely introduced a new "intervening variable"; it has fundamentally dismantled core components of the ESF's capability base. The conceptual map of the ESF now has a massive hole where the Western Brigade used to be, and the logistical lines connecting the coastal states to the Sahelian interior have been severed. The capability-performance gap, therefore, is no longer just about the friction of politics and funding slowing down a deployment. For

missions in the Sahel, the gap has become a chasm: the foundational capabilities and the geographic access required for performance have been physically and politically withdrawn.

Consequently, while the ESF retains a possible capability for lower-intensity missions such as observation, electoral support, or perhaps a peacekeeping mission where a ceasefire is already firmly in place and welcomed by all parties, its readiness for high-intensity peace enforcement is severely limited. Its capabilities are best described as potential rather than actual. The force exists on paper and in training scenarios, but the crucial strategic enablers such as airlift, medical support, intelligence fusion, real-time communications interoperability, and most importantly, a unified political command remain underdeveloped or subject to the volatile politics of the region.

The ESF remains a vital institutional framework and an aspirational project for regional security autonomy. Its operational readiness, however, is currently in a state of atrophy, challenged more by political disunity and financial anemia than by the training of its soldiers. The withdrawal of the three Sahelian nations has created an existential crisis for the bloc and its standby force, forcing a recalibration of its purpose. Until ECOWAS can reconcile its internal divisions and establish a sustainable, independent funding model, the ESF's full operational capability will remain a theoretical construct, a shadow of the robust brigade it was designed to be, its readiness defined more by its constraints than by its capacities.

7. LIMITATIONS AFFECTING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ECOWAS STANDBY FORCE

While the ESF stands as a testament to regional efforts to address security challenges in West Africa, its effectiveness is hampered by several limitations. These constraints encompass political discord among member states, resource inadequacies, logistical challenges, and the evolving nature of security threats. Each of these factors significantly undermines the ESF's capability to respond robustly and effectively to crises within the region. A fundamental limitation affecting the ESF's effectiveness is the persistent political discord among ECOWAS member states. The organization relies on the collective will of its members for troop contributions and operational decisions.

However, divergent national interests, coupled with varying political agendas, often impede collective action (Ero, 2016). For instance, when crises arise, member states may prioritize their domestic political considerations over a unified regional response, leading to delays in the deployment of forces or even outright refusal to participate (Nwankwo, 2020). This internal division often reflects broader geopolitical rivalries that further complicate consensus-building. The political climate in the member states can also affect the ESF's operational mandates. Some governments may be hesitant to relinquish sovereignty or invite external involvement in their internal affairs, leading to resistance against sharing authority

with a regional force (Adebajo, 2002). This reluctance can stymie timely interventions and ultimately affect the overall success of missions.

The most telling indicator of atrophy lies in the failure to validate the force to its declared readiness standard. The ESF was conceived to achieve a Level 1-2 Readiness Capability, defined as the ability to deploy a joint task force headquarters and a core military component within 30 days for a Chapter VI mission and 90 days for a Chapter VII mission. However, this validation has been perpetually postponed. A 2022 UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) report explicitly notes that the "initial operational capability," once slated for 2008, then 2010, and again for 2015, remained unmet. The report concludes that the ESF "is yet to be validated to the level where it can undertake a full-scale, multidimensional peacekeeping operation without relying on external partners" (p. 7)(UNOWAS, 2022). This lack of formal validation is not a mere administrative oversight; it is a direct admission that the force, as a cohesive whole, has not demonstrated the integrated command, control, and logistical capabilities required for autonomous deployment. The goal of achieving a Rapid Deployment Capability (RDC) of 1,500 troops within 30 days, a subset of the broader ESF, has similarly languished, with its validation exercise repeatedly deferred due to political and financial constraints (Aning & Edu-Afful, 2016).

This validation deficit is compounded by a demonstrable decline in the frequency and complexity of large-scale, multi-national exercises, which are the lifeblood of any standby force. While table-top simulations and command-post exercises occur, the critical field training exercises (FTX) designed to test the full spectrum of deployment have been infrequent and underwhelming. The seminal "JIGUI" series of exercises serves as a case study. After JIGUI 2010 in Burkina Faso, a gap of several years followed before JIGUI 2018 in Senegal. More tellingly, the planned JIGUI 2022 was "scaled down to a command post exercise due to financial limitations and political tensions" (Cisse, 2023). This pattern of scaling back from a full-field exercise to a simulation is a classic symptom of institutional atrophy. It indicates an organization that can discuss operations in a classroom but can no longer afford, or politically muster, the resources to physically move and integrate its constituent parts in the field, which is the ultimate test of readiness.

Another root cause of this operational stagnation is a chronic and debilitating funding model. The ESF has historically been over 80% dependent on external partners, primarily the European Union and the United Nations (Franke, 2016). This reliance creates a fundamental vulnerability. While year-on-year funding figures are often opaque, the pattern is clear in the consequences. The ECOWAS Commission itself has repeatedly lamented the failure of member states to meet their financial obligations to the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), of which the ESF is a pillar. A study by the Institute for Security

Studies found that "ECOWAS member states' contributions to peace and security activities, including the ESF, remain inconsistent and insufficient, covering only a fraction of the operational costs"(p.5) (M'Cormack, 2019). This external dependency directly dictates the operational tempo; when donor priorities shift or funding cycles end, exercises are canceled, and planning is halted. The inability to fund its own core readiness activities is the most profound evidence of atrophy, revealing a lack of sovereign commitment that no amount of external aid can compensate for.

Logistical constraints represent another critical factor undermining the ESF's effectiveness. The ESF requires effective supply chains, coordination among multiple member states, and reliable communication systems to execute its missions. However, these logistics are frequently compromised due to a lack of infrastructure and operational cohesion among troops from various nations (Jaye, 2017). Furthermore, operational discrepancies in military standards, readiness levels, and training across member states complicate joint missions (Ero, 2016). In some instances, logistical delays can hinder troop deployments or lead to miscommunications during operations, affecting mission objectives. Without a cohesive logistical framework that ensures synergy among various contingents, the ESF faces significant barriers to operational success.

Also, the dynamic nature of security threats in West Africa further complicates the effectiveness of the ESF. The rise of non-traditional security threats, such as terrorism and organized crime, requires a level of agility and adaptability that the ESF has struggled to achieve (Kukah, 2019). While the ESF was initially designed to address conventional threats such as civil wars, it is often ill-equipped to counter complex, asymmetric warfare involving terrorist groups like Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda affiliates operating in the Sahel (Ero, 2016). The limited focus on counter-terrorism and transnational crime in its current operational framework often leaves the ESF unprepared for dealing with these evolving threats. As extremist violence continues to escalate, the ESF must reassess its strategies and develop more sophisticated response capabilities that extend beyond traditional peacekeeping mandates.

The trajectory of the ECOWAS Standby Force is one of progressive decline. It is a force that has never met its own long-established validation benchmarks, a failure that speaks to unresolved issues of interoperability and command. Political discord among member states, resource inadequacies, logistical challenges, and the evolving landscape of security threats collectively undermine its operational readiness and capacity to respond effectively. Its exercise regimen is characterized by postponements and scaling-down, demonstrating a loss of operational momentum. Finally, it is crippled by a financial model that is both unsustainable and externally driven, leaving it unable to control its own destiny. When these

specific indicators are viewed together the unachieved validation, the diminished exercises, and the donor-dependent funding the conclusion is inescapable: the ESF is not in a state of standby, but in a state of atrophy.

8. FINDINGS

The evaluation of the current operational capabilities and limitations of the ESF reveals several key findings:

- a. The level of training and preparedness of personnel varies significantly among member states, impacting the overall effectiveness of the ESF. Some countries contribute well-trained troops, while others do not meet basic readiness standards.
- b. The ESF often faces logistical constraints, including inadequate transportation, supply chain inefficiencies, insufficient funding and equipment and delays in deploying troops. These challenges hinder timely responses to crises and impede operational performance.
- c. The integration of advanced technology in operations is inconsistent. While some missions have benefited from improved communication and surveillance tools, the overall technological capabilities of the ESF remain underdeveloped.
- d. The complexity of the command and control framework often results in confusion and inefficiencies during joint operations. A lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities among diverse national contingents impacts operational cohesion.
- e. The effectiveness of the ESF is closely tied to the political will of member states to contribute to peacekeeping efforts. Divergent political interests impede coordinated actions and hinder the establishment of a unified front.

9. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings indicate a mixed picture of the operational capabilities and limitations of the ESF. While there have been notable successes such as the intervention in The Gambia in 2017, which showcased the potential rapid deployment and political will when member states align persistent issues plague the force. The variability in personnel training poses a significant challenge. High levels of uncertainty regarding troop quality can lead to operational inefficiencies, as highlighted by Kukah (2019). Moreover, logistical constraints have been consistently noted in peacekeeping reports, underscoring the need for improved resource management and planning (Nwankwo, 2020).

The operational limitations of the ECOWAS Standby Force are a direct function of its deficits in strategic enablers. The path to credibility no longer lies in simply pledging more infantry battalions but in making the concerted, collective investment in the command, intelligence, and logistical sinews that would allow those battalions to function as a cohesive

force. By pooling niche capabilities, establishing a tangible logistics hub, and professionalizing its mission planning, ECOWAS can begin to wean the ESF from its debilitating external dependencies and transform it from a conceptual framework into a credible instrument of regional security.

Additionally, the technological gap within the ESF affects mission effectiveness. Advanced technology serves as a force multiplier in contemporary warfare. Instances of successful ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance) operations imply that investing in technology could enhance future missions (Jaye, 2017). The organizational challenges reflected in the command structure raise concerns about the ESF's ability to respond flexibly and effectively during crises. Complexity in command has often led to delayed decision-making, calling for more streamlined processes and definitions of responsibilities.

Lastly, political will is crucial for the ESF's performance. The divergence of political interests among member states reflects a broader challenge faced by regional organizations: mobilizing collective action amidst differing national priorities (Peters, 2012). Ultimately, these findings highlight the need for strategic reforms to address both operational shortcomings and political dynamics.

10. CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation of the ESF demonstrates that while the force has operational capabilities, significant limitations undermine its effectiveness in fulfilling its mandate. Inconsistencies in personnel readiness, logistical inefficiencies, inadequate resources, outdated technological infrastructure, a complex command structure, and divergent political interests collectively hinder the ESF's ability to respond effectively to security challenges in West Africa.

The findings emphasize that the ESF has the potential to be a formidable force for peace, provided that structural reforms, enhanced training, and increased investment are undertaken. Addressing these limitations will be essential for the force to achieve its objectives and promote stability within the region. By adopting these recommendations, the ESF can strengthen its operational capabilities and effectively address the complex security challenges facing West Africa. This collective effort could lead to a more stable and secure region, ultimately fulfilling the ESF's mandate more effectively.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the operational capabilities of the ESF:

- a. ECOWAS should develop a dedicated logistical framework for efficient resource allocation and transportation planning. Improved logistics can be achieved through the

establishment of regional supply hubs and funded by 10% contributions from member states and supported by EU/UN bridging funds

b. ECOWAS should advocate for enhanced financial commitments from member states to ensure adequate funding for the ESF. consider exploring external funding options from international organizations to address resource gaps.

c. ESF should prioritize investments in modern technology for communication, surveillance, and intelligence-gathering. Partnering with technological firms or military allies could help enhance the ESF's technological capabilities.

d. ESF should simplify and clarify the command and control framework to facilitate quicker decision-making during operations. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities will enhance operational cohesion.

e. ECOWAS should engage in high-level diplomacy to unify member states around the strategic importance of the ESF. Developing joint strategic initiatives and fostering a sense of collective ownership over peace and security issues could mobilize greater political support.

f. ECOWAS should initiate a “rapid decision protocol” to reduce unanimous delays in conflict interventions e.g., qualified majority voting for peace enforcement in clearly defined circumstances.

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Enhancing Arabic Studies Through Innovative Pedagogies: Preparing Versatile And Adaptive Educators

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Abstract

The continuous evolution of global education require a pattern shift in Arabic studies, emphasizing the need for innovative pedagogies that cultivate flexible and adaptive educators. This paper explores the integration of modern teaching methodologies—such as technology-enhanced learning, learner-centered instruction, and interdisciplinary approaches—into Arabic language education to improve learners’ engagement, critical thinking, and linguistic competence. Innovative pedagogies like blended learning, problem-based instruction, and digital storytelling enhance not only language experience but also cultural literacy, creativity, and adaptability among future educators (Alenezi, 2023). Moreover, the use of artificial intelligence (AI), virtual classrooms, and gamification fosters interactive and personalized learning environments, aligning Arabic education with 21st-century demands (Al-Harathi & Al-Zahrani, 2022). The study emphasises that preparing versatile educators requires continuous professional development, reflective teaching practices, and the incorporation of socio-cultural contexts that make Arabic learning meaningful and globally relevant. By merging tradition with modernity, educators can create inclusive and revolutionary classrooms capable of addressing contemporary challenges in Arabic education (Hassan & Mahmoud, 2024). Therefore, innovative pedagogies not only enhance teaching and learning outcomes but also position Arabic educators as incentive for sustainable educational reform and intercultural understanding.

Keywords: *Arabic Studies, Pedagogies, Versatile, Adaptive Educators*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the U.N. (2023), Arabic, one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, as one of the six official languages of the United Nations, holds immense cultural, historical and religious significance. However, the teaching of Arabic—especially in non-Arab contexts—often relies heavily on traditional, grammar-heavy methods. In today’s dynamic learning environments, there is a pressing need to evolve beyond rote learning and embrace pedagogies that are innovative, student-centred, and responsive to changing global demands.

This paper advocates for pedagogical innovation as a cornerstone for developing Arabic educators who are not only subject-matter experts but also adaptive facilitators.

Teacher Education in Nigeria

The advent of the formal school system introduced by Christian missionaries led to the establishment and development of the teachers' institute (Amidu, 2022). He also stated that establishment of Christian Missionary society (CMS) Training Institution at Abeokuta in 1853 for teachers training was firstly meant for evangelism that served as the first organised formal institute for teacher training in Nigeria, other reputable development in teacher education was the passing of important two bills in the gold coast colony (now Ghana) and the colony of Lagos in 1943/1945 respectively with aims stated below:

- i. The assistance of the growth of education
- ii. The promotion of education

The other developments in the history of education in Nigeria also be considered as follows:

- According to Fafunwa (1975). The Higher College at Yaba introduced the Diploma of Education course was introduced in 1932 that laid the emphasis on teaching of science. Although, this came to an end in 1950.
- The introduction of a one-year course that led to a diploma of education between 1957-1958 after the establishment of University College Ibadan was another development.
- The experienced Grade II teachers were admitted in 1961 to study a one-year association ship course, while the graduates of the programme were made headmasters. The university of Nigeria, Nsukka starts to produce teachers with degrees of Bachelor of Arts, science and in Education.
- In 1860, the recommendation of Ashby commission led to the establishment of Teacher Grade I College to offer Nigeria Certificate in Education. Many Colleges were affiliated to Universities at the beginning, until 1989 when Federal Government stopped the system and established National Commission for Education (NCCE) which responsibilities involve;
 - i. Disbursement of running and capital grants to Federal Government owned Colleges of Education and Special funds to the state and private colleges Accrediting new old Courses, certificate and academic awards for the colleges of education.
 - ii. laying down minimum standards for all programme of teacher education in Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) level including quality staff.

iii. Accrediting new old Courses, certificate and academic awards for the colleges of education.

The institutes in Nigeria are:

1. National Teachers institute: Responsible for the certificate of Grade II teachers.
2. Colleges of Education: They train teachers to acquire Nigeria certificate in Education (NCE) on full and part time basis.
3. University faculties of Education: They train students on full-time or part-time basis to acquire B.Ed, M.Ed and Ph.D degrees in Education

2. THE CONCEPT AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF TEACHER EDUCATION

Concept of Teacher Education

Teacher Education refers to the policies, procedures and provision designed to equip teachers with the knowledge, attitudes behaviours and skills this requires to perform their task effectively in the classroom, school, and wider community.

The Case for Innovation in Arabic Studies

Conventional Arabic instruction often emphasizes memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules, neglecting communicative competence and real-world application. Furthermore, this model may not address the diverse motivations of learners—ranging from religious studies and literary appreciation to professional and diplomatic uses.

Innovative pedagogies can:

- Enhance learner engagement and motivation.
- Promote critical thinking and cultural literacy.
- Incorporate technology to facilitate access and collaboration.
- Equip educators with tools for differentiation and personalization.

3. KEY PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATIONS

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

CLT prioritizes meaningful interaction over mechanical drills. In Arabic studies, this can involve real-life scenarios, role-playing, and task-based learning that reflect authentic linguistic contexts.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

CLIL merges language learning with academic content. Teaching Arabic through subjects such as history, politics, or science encourages interdisciplinary thinking and enhances language retention through relevance.

Project-Based Learning (PBL)

PBL enables learners to work on real-world problems using Arabic as a medium. For instance, students might create digital storytelling projects about Arab heritage or analyze current events from Arabic news sources.

Technology-Enhanced Learning

The integration of digital platforms—language apps, interactive videos, virtual exchanges, and AI-powered tools—enriches instruction and makes Arabic more accessible, especially in remote or underserved areas.

Preparing Versatile and Adaptive Educators

Amidu (2022). Opined that the preparation of the versatile and adaptive educators includes the following

Competency-Based Teacher Training

Educators need training programs that focus not only on linguistic and pedagogical knowledge but also on adaptive expertise, cultural intelligence, and digital literacy.

Reflective Practice and Lifelong Learning

Versatile educators must be reflective practitioners—capable of analyzing their teaching methods and modifying them based on learner feedback and emerging educational trends.

Collaborative Professional Development

Learning communities, mentorships, and cross-institutional collaborations help educators share best practices, innovate collectively, and stay current with global developments in language education.

4. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Challenges:

- Resistance to change among educators accustomed to traditional methods, remains one of the major barriers to implementing innovative pedagogical practices

(Fullan 2007).

- Limited availability of Arabic-specific digital resources. Many studies indicates that there is a limited availability of digital resources specifically in Arabic, particularly high-quality Open Educational institutions

(Hosman, Nova, &Naji et al., 2023; Muhammed Sanni, 2023)

- Institutional inertia and lack of policy support have been identified as majore barriers to educational reform in Nigeria

(Nwideduh et al., 2015; Manafa, 2011)

- **Opportunities:**

Integration of Technology in Arabic Studies

- Opportunity to use AI, virtual classrooms, mobile apps, and interactive platforms to make Arabic language learning more accessible, engaging, and effective.
- Digital tools can offer personalized learning experiences that adapt to the learners' pace and style.

Development of Multilingual and Globally Competitive Educators

- Innovative pedagogies can prepare Arabic educators who are versatile in both classical and modern Arabic, as well as competent in teaching Arabic as a second or foreign language.
- Opportunity to produce educators who can compete globally and teach in diverse educational settings.

Creation of Culturally Relevant Teaching Materials

- Opportunity to develop locally inspired, context-sensitive learning resources that preserve cultural identity while embracing modern methodologies.
- Enhances students' cultural competence alongside language skills.

Blended and Flexible Learning Opportunities

- Combining face-to-face and online methods provides flexibility for learners and educators, increasing participation, especially for those in remote areas.
- Opportunity to expand reach and inclusion in Arabic studies.

Capacity Building for Educators

- Innovative pedagogies encourage continuous professional development for teachers, making them more adaptable to educational trends.
- Opportunity to upskill educators in areas like digital literacy, differentiated instruction, and learner-centred methodologies.

Research and Collaboration

- Provides opportunities for collaborative research on Arabic pedagogy, curriculum design, and educational technology.
- Potential for international partnerships and exchange programs to broaden perspectives.

Promotion of Arabic in Non-Traditional Fields

- Opportunity to promote the relevance of Arabic in fields like science, technology, international diplomacy, and global trade.
- Prepares educators to make Arabic studies interdisciplinary and applicable to contemporary societal needs.

Inclusive Education

- Innovative methods can support diverse learners, including those with special educational needs, through adaptive technologies and differentiated strategies.

Enhanced Student Engagement and Motivation

- Interactive, learner-centred approaches can boost motivation, creativity, and critical thinking among students learning Arabic.

5. POLICY INFLUENCE AND CURRICULUM REFORM

- Educators trained in innovative pedagogies can advocate for policy reforms that prioritize Arabic language development and modern teaching practices.
- Increased global interest in Arabic due to geopolitics and cultural diplomacy.
- Technological advancements enabling personalized learning.

Multilingual education policies promoting linguistic diversity.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Integrate innovative methodologies in Arabic teacher education programs to enhance the quality of Arabic teacher education. Institutions should institutionalise innovative methodologies by embedding digital pedagogy modules, supporting teacher innovation hubs, and aligning policy incentives with pedagogical creativity.
- Develop open-access Arabic teaching materials with modern pedagogical design to foster equitable and modern Arabic language education. Stakeholders should develop open-access teaching materials grounded in contemporary pedagogical design.
- Encourage educational institutions to support experimentation and innovation in language classrooms to foster innovation in Arabic language teaching. Institutions should develop structured mechanisms that reward experimentation, provide technological and financial support, and integrate innovation results into teacher evaluation systems.

7. CONCLUSION

To enhance Arabic studies, we must reimagine pedagogical approaches and invest in the continuous development of educators. A complex strategy—combining technology, cross-disciplinary learning, and reflective teaching—will prepare educators who are not only skilled but also flexible, culturally aware, and capable of fostering meaningful learning experiences in Arabic

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Future Prospects of the ECOWAS Standby Force in Peacekeeping and Security in West Africa

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Abstract

The study examined the future prospects of the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) in peacekeeping and security in West Africa. Due to the limitations and challenges that the ESF encounter which hinder its ability to respond swiftly and effectively to emerging crises. The research gave an overview of ECOWAS and its establishment, evaluate the current role of the ESF in prevailing peacekeeping missions, and discussed the future prospects of the Force as well as the key challenges facing the ESF. The study employed a qualitative research design, used secondary sources to assess data and adopted thematic analysis method to extract key themes and patterns related to the future prospects of the ESF and the Constructivist theory was used as the research theoretical framework. The research exposed the various operational challenges, under-utilization of cohesive regional identity and political will, normative framework's influence on the ESF's legitimacy, and the important lessons from previous missions insights as well as a re-evaluation of the ESF's operational scope on emerging security threats as findings. The study recommended that ECOWAS should invest in capacity-building programs aimed at increasing the military readiness of member states and the ESF should refine its operational framework to incorporate strategies that address both traditional and non-traditional security threats.

Keywords: *ECOWAS Standby Force, Peacekeeping, Prospects, Security, West Africa*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has played a pivotal role in promoting stability and peace in West Africa since its establishment in 1975. As a regional body comprising 15 member states, ECOWAS has increasingly taken on the mantle of peacekeeping and conflict resolution, particularly through its establishment of the ESF in 2004, designed to respond to violent conflicts and humanitarian crises in the region (ECOWAS, 2006). West Africa faces numerous security challenges, including

civil wars, terrorism, and political instability, which continue to threaten regional peace (Kaba, 2018). Despite the legitimacy of the ECOWAS Standby Force, which has been deployed in various missions across member states, its effectiveness and readiness remain in question given the complex security dynamics in the region (Zamfir, 2021).

This study aims to analyze the future prospects of the ESF in peacekeeping and security within West Africa. The research problem centers on the limitations and challenges that the ESF faces, particularly regarding funding, training, and political will among member states. These challenges hinder its ability to respond swiftly and effectively to emerging crises. This paper argues that while the ESF holds significant potential for enhancing regional peacekeeping and security in West Africa, its future effectiveness is contingent upon addressing critical challenges such as resource mobilization, proactive collaboration with international partners, and reinforcing member states' political commitment towards collective security efforts.

The existing literature provides vital insights into the dynamics of regional peacekeeping, yet there remains a paucity of comprehensive studies focused explicitly on the future role of the ESF. Scholars have emphasized the capacity-building needs of the ESF and suggested frameworks for enhancing its operational readiness (Adebajo, 2019; Zounmenou, 2020). However, these studies often do not fully account for the political, economic, and social contexts within which the ESF operates or offer concrete recommendations for its future engagement in peacekeeping.

The primary objectives of this study are twofold: first, to evaluate the current role of the ESF in prevailing peacekeeping missions, and second, to identify actionable strategies that can enhance its effectiveness in future deployments. The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform policy-makers in member states and contribute to international discussions on collective security frameworks, especially in the context of increasing regional instability.

The existing academic and policy literature on the ESF is rich with diagnostic analyses but suffers from a critical and increasingly consequential gap: a forward-looking, systemic examination of its prospects that fully internalizes the twin shocks of internal institutional atrophy and the existential geopolitical fragmentation of the region. The critical gap is lack of scholarly and policy work that constructs plausible scenarios for the force's evolution or dissolution in a region that is no longer geographically or politically coherent. In filling this gap, this research does not just lament the ESF's

limitations but actively models its potential configurations, partnerships, and missions in a dramatically new and divided strategic environment.

This study focused on the ESF's operational contributions and strategic direction over the next decade. The scope encompasses an analysis of recent missions, the factors affecting the Force's readiness, and the implications for regional peacekeeping. Limitations of this research include potential biases in the availability of data from member states and the evolving security landscape, which could change dynamics over time. The structure of the paper includes examination of the current role and effectiveness of the ESF in peacekeeping missions, analysis of key challenges facing the Force and opportunities for improvement, exploration of future prospects, including strategic recommendations, and the conclusion summarizing findings and providing suggestions for future research.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Concept of Prospects

The concept of prospects denotes a forward-looking appraisal of potential, viability, and future trajectories. It involves a structured evaluation of the opportunities for success and the challenges that may impede progress, contextualised within specific operational, political, and strategic environments. As Adeleke (2011) articulates, prospects encompass the possibilities and limitations that shape the effectiveness and sustainability of an initiative, blending analytical foresight with pragmatic assessment of real-world constraints.

Applied to the ESF, the concept of prospects provides a critical lens through which to evaluate its evolution from a theoretical framework to an operational regional security mechanism. The ESF, is designed as a rapid-deployment force for conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and humanitarian intervention in West Africa. Its prospects are intrinsically tied to geopolitical, financial, and institutional factors. Francis (2009) notes that the force's potential is underpinned by the regional commitment to collective security and the historical precedent of ECOWAS interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, which demonstrated both political will and strategic necessity.

However, these prospects are tempered by significant challenges. The ESF faces structural obstacles, including inconsistent funding, logistical shortfalls, and varying levels of commitment from member states. As the ECOWAS Commission (2016) acknowledges in its Framework Document, the operationalisation of the Standby Force requires sustained financial contributions, harmonised training, and interoperable

capabilities, conditions that have yet to be fully met. Furthermore, contemporary security threats, such as transnational terrorism and political instability, exacerbate these limitations while simultaneously highlighting the urgent need for the force.

The prospects of the ESF thus remain contingent on overcoming these barriers through enhanced regional cooperation, sustainable financing, and institutional capacity-building. Its future viability will depend on the ability of ECOWAS members to translate political rhetoric into actionable support, ensuring that the force can fulfil its mandated roles effectively.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design, focusing on systematic analysis and synthesis of existing literature as secondary data to assess the future prospects of the ESF. Data sources are academic journals, books and monographs, policy papers and report, official ECOWAS documents and the data collection process was through document identification and data compilation. The study organized identified documents into categories focusing on historical analysis, operational insights, challenges, successes, and future scenarios. Thematic analysis method was adopted to extract key themes and patterns related to the future prospects of the ESF from the gathered literature.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Constructivist Theory

The theory originated as a response to the traditional theories of realism and liberalism, which primarily focus on material power and institutional structures, respectively. Wendt, (1999) postulated that constructivism emphasizes the role of social constructs, identities, norms, and shared beliefs in shaping international relations. Rather than viewing states solely through the lens of power dynamics, constructivism posits that how states perceive themselves and each other significantly influences their behavior and interactions in the international arena. The core principles of Constructivist theory are social construction of reality, identity and interests, norms and behavior, and change and evolution.

Constructivists argue that many aspects of international relations, including state identities, interests, and norms, are socially constructed rather than predetermined. This means that the meanings and values attached to certain actions and events arise through social interactions and shared understandings. The theory posits that state interests are not given but are formed through social contexts and interactions. An entity's identity

how it sees itself and is perceived by others shapes its preferences and actions (Ruggie, 1998). For example, a state's commitment to human rights or peacekeeping may arise from a historical narrative that emphasizes its role as a protector.

The theory emphasize the significance of norms shared expectations about appropriate behavior among actors in international relations. These norms can influence state behavior, shaping actions around issues like intervention, state sovereignty, and humanitarian assistance (Katzenstein, 1996). For instance, the evolving norm of the Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) has influenced how states engage in international peacekeeping efforts. Constructivism also acknowledges that international relations are not static; they evolve over time as identities, relationships, and norms change. This perspective allows for a dynamic understanding of conflicts and cooperation in the international system (Böcker & Schilling, 2016).

The future prospects of the ESF are deeply intertwined with the construction of a cohesive regional identity among its member states. As a peacekeeping body, the ESF must strive to foster a collective understanding of security that leverages shared histories and cultural ties within West Africa. This identity construction can facilitate cooperation and a sense of ownership among member states over regional security matters, helping to mobilize resources and personnel during crises (Adetula, 2020). A strong regional identity can enhance legitimacy and unify member states around common peacekeeping objectives, leading to a more effective operational stance. This unification is crucial, especially given the historical context of conflicts in the region, such as the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, which were driven by both local grievances and transnational issues (Pudlowski, 2018).

The theory highlights the importance of norms in shaping organizational behavior. The ESF's future effectiveness hinges on its ability to promote and adopt norms surrounding peacekeeping and intervention. The establishment of norms related to sovereignty as responsibility,” which suggests that sovereignty encompasses a duty to protect populations from mass atrocities, can redefine the ESF's operational scope (Bellamy & Williams, 2011). These norms not only facilitate intervention in times of crisis but also cultivate an environment where preventive diplomacy is prioritized. The ESF, through advocacy and training, can work towards institutionalizing these norms, enhancing its legitimacy and the willingness of member states to contribute troops and resources.

The theory underscores the importance of shared understandings and mutual trust in fostering cooperation (Ruggie, 1998). Strengthening the ties between West African

nations through collaborative exercises, regional dialogues, and joint peacekeeping initiatives will be essential for the ESF. By sharing experiences and cultivating a collective sense of responsibility, member states can enhance operational capabilities and coordination during peacekeeping missions (Adetula, 2020).

Creating a culture of cooperation and collaboration among ECOWAS member states will also help mitigate tensions and misperceptions that can arise in politically charged environments. It can enhance interoperability among forces and streamline command and control during peacekeeping operations, a crucial factor for effectiveness in the field.

The ESF's future prospects can be bolstered through its engagement with external actors such as the United Nations, the African Union, and various international partners. Constructivist theory posits that relationships with external entities can influence behaviors within the international system, as they act as facilitators of norms and practices (Mthembu-Salter, 2016). Establishing strong partnerships can provide the ESF with additional resources, training, and expertise, enhancing its operational effectiveness. External support is particularly valuable in capacity-building efforts, which are critical for preparing member states to contribute effectively to peacekeeping missions.

Operationalizing a constructivist theory for the ESF's prospects requires analyzing the force as a social structure. Its future being determined by the outcome of an ongoing normative struggle between collective security and absolute sovereignty, the success or failure of socialization processes among remaining members, and the ultimate resilience of the shared identity that brought the ESF into being. While material capabilities matter, a constructivist analysis reveals that they are secondary to the conceptual foundations upon which they are built. The ESF will have a future only for as long as a critical mass of West African states continue to believe in the shared identity and common destiny that it represents.

The theory provides a nuanced understanding of the future prospects of the ESF in peacekeeping and security within West Africa. By focusing on the social construction of identity, norms, and cooperation, constructivism highlights paths for enhancing the ESF's effectiveness and legitimacy. As it adapts to evolving security challenges and fosters regional solidarity, the ESF is poised to play a critical role in shaping a stable and secure West Africa. Utilizing constructivist insights can help cultivate a cohesive approach to peacekeeping that resonates with the challenges and aspirations of member states.

5. OVERVIEW OF ECOWAS AND ITS SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT

The ECOWAS was established on May 28, 1975, through the Treaty of Lagos with the aim of promoting economic integration and cooperation among its fifteen member states: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, Mali, and Niger (ECOWAS, 1975). In addition to economic collaboration, the community sought to foster peace and stability, recognizing that economic progress could not flourish in a context of conflict and instability.

Over the decades, ECOWAS has evolved beyond its original economic mandate to include political, social, and security dimensions, particularly in response to the pressing security challenges in the West African region, such as civil wars, coups, and systemic violence. The establishment of the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution in 1999 (called the Mechanism”) marked a significant expansion of its role into the realm of peace and security, indicating a growing recognition of the need for collective action in maintaining stability (Zounmenou, 2020).

The roots of peacekeeping in West Africa can be traced back to the turbulent 1990s, a period characterized by violent conflicts affecting several member states, including Liberia and Sierra Leone. Civil wars in Liberia (1989-1996) and Sierra Leone (1991-2002) underscored the urgent need for regional intervention mechanisms, compelling ECOWAS to establish the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in 1990. ECOMOG was tasked with peacekeeping and stabilization in conflict-ridden nations, initially in Liberia and later in Sierra Leone, leading to mixed responses regarding its effectiveness and legitimacy (Adebajo, 2019).

The ECOMOG intervention in Liberia marked a crucial turning point; while it faced challenges, including allegations of human rights violations and operational complications, it also demonstrated the importance of regional actors in addressing conflicts. The eventual deployment contributed to the end of the civil war in Liberia and set a precedent for future ECOWAS peacekeeping initiatives, emphasizing that collective regional action could complement the efforts of international organizations like the United Nations (Padmanabhan & Ramesh, 2020).

The ESF, established in 2004 as part of the ECOWAS Policy for Conflict Prevention, represents a strategic evolution in the organization's approach to peacekeeping and security (ECOWAS, 2006). Designed to provide rapid response capabilities for various

stabilizing missions, the ESF encompasses military, police, and civilian elements, signifying a multidimensional approach to peace operations with the following roles.

- a. **Rapid Deployment and Multinational Cooperation:** The ESF's ability to respond quickly to security threats is crucial for maintaining peace in the region. One of its notable deployments occurred during the political impasse in The Gambia in January 2017, when President Yahya Jammeh refused to relinquish power after losing the presidential election. In response, ECOWAS led a mediation intervention, ensuring a peaceful transfer of power (Adebajo, 2019).
- b. **Collaboration with International Entities:** The ESF has operated in collaboration with other international entities, including the United Nations and the African Union, to bolster peacekeeping efforts in the region. During the crisis in Mali following the coup in 2012, the ESF coordinated with the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to support stabilization efforts (Zamfir, 2021). This cooperation underscores the significance of regional forces in extending international peacekeeping efforts while ensuring that interventions are contextually relevant and culturally sensitive.
- c. **Peacebuilding and Preventive Diplomacy:** In addition to military interventions, the ESF engages in peacebuilding initiatives that promote stability and reconciliation in post-conflict areas. The Force has been instrumental in implementing programs aimed at conflict prevention, such as facilitating dialogues among key stakeholders in member states experiencing political tension. For instance, in Guinea-Bissau, ECOWAS worked to mediate political disputes, thereby providing a framework for external parties to engage in peace processes (Call et al., 2018).

The ECOWAS has significantly evolved since its establishment, now playing a critical role in peace and security in West Africa. The historical context of peacekeeping reveals a response to persistent conflicts that demanded regional engagement, notably through the deployment of ECOMOG and later the establishment of the ESF. While the ESF has facilitated timely interventions and collaborative efforts for peacekeeping in the region, challenges such as resource limitations and political commitment remain obstacles to its full effectiveness. Addressing these challenges will be vital for maximizing the potential of the ESF in maintaining peace in West Africa.

6. CURRENT ROLE OF ECOWAS STANDBY FORCE IN PREVAILING PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

The ESF has emerged as a critical component of West Africa's collective security architecture since its establishment in 2006. It was designed to provide rapid, reliable military and civilian intervention capabilities to member states facing violent conflict or humanitarian crises (ECOWAS, 2006). The current role of the ESF in prevailing peacekeeping missions can be evaluated through its deployment history, organizational structure, operational achievements, and the challenges it faces in executing its mandate effectively.

The ESF has been deployed in various West African countries to address complex security challenges. Notable missions include the intervention in Cote d'Ivoire (2003), where it played a crucial role in stabilizing the country during its civil war leading to the successful transition to peace (Adebajo & Rashid, 2004). More recently, the ESF has been involved in peacekeeping operations in Mali, with the ESF helping to restore security following the coup d'état in 2012. In this operation, the ESF worked alongside the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), highlighting its role within a larger international framework (Zounmenou, 2020). In addition to military interventions, the ESF has made significant contributions to peacekeeping through civilian missions, providing support for governance and humanitarian efforts. For instance, in the complex security landscape of the Sahel, the ESF collaborates with other regional and international security initiatives to enhance stability through training and capacity building (Call et al., 2018).

The ESF is structured to allow for rapid deployment, consisting of a mixed composition of military, police, and civilian components, ensuring a comprehensive approach to peacekeeping (Zamfir, 2021). The Force's ability to mobilize and deploy resources quickly is crucial for addressing emerging crises effectively. The establishment of the ECOWAS Policy for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2006 further complements the military aspect with a focus on humanitarian response (ECOWAS, 2006). The successes of the ESF are noteworthy, particularly in its ability to foster cooperative frameworks and coordination among member states. The ESF promotes regional ownership of peacekeeping efforts and mitigates reliance on external actors, which has been essential for cultivating a sense of solidarity among West African nations (Bell & Scott, 2016). The Force's collaboration with AU and UN efforts further illustrates its potential to act as a pivotal player in collective security in the region.

However, despite these achievements, operational limitations persist. The ESF has encountered political challenges, particularly with member states hesitating to commit troops for collective missions or intervene decisively in neighboring countries' internal conflicts (Zamfir, 2021). While the ESF has played a central role in addressing security dilemmas in West Africa through military and civilian interventions, its effectiveness is significantly hindered by logistical inefficiencies, funding shortages, and political constraints among member states. Balancing these challenges while continuing to forge collaborative relationships with local and international partners will be essential for enhancing the future capabilities of the ESF and ensuring its efficacy in promoting peace and stability in West Africa.

7. FUTURE PROSPECTS OF THE ECOWAS STANDBY FORCE

As the region faces a dynamic security landscape characterized by a mix of traditional and non-traditional threats, the future prospects of the ESF are an essential area of inquiry. This discussion delves into the future prospects of the ESF within the context of recent case studies that illustrate its potential for enhancing regional stability. West Africa is confronted with multifaceted security threats, including terrorism from groups like Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda affiliates in the Sahel, political coups, and climate-related conflicts. The region's population dynamics, economic disparities, and governance challenges further complicate these security issues (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Case Study: The Intervention in Mali

One pertinent case study illustrating the potential future of the ESF in peacekeeping is its involvement in Mali, particularly the challenges faced and lessons learned from the 2012 political crisis. Following a coup d'état and subsequent insurgency, ECOWAS intervened to restore constitutional order. While it did not deploy the ESF, ECOWAS's responses, including sanctions and diplomatic mediation, highlighted both the importance of regional initiatives and the limitations of the institution (Malan, 2020). In Mali, ECOWAS strived to coordinate with the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN). As a result, these collaborative efforts paved the way for United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which commenced in 2013. This scenario underscores the necessity for the ESF to further enhance its collaborative frameworks and build strategic partnerships to effectively address complex security challenges in the region (Bøås, 2014).

The ECOWAS Standby Force has a significant role to play in ensuring peace and security in West Africa, as exemplified by its intervention in Mali. However, for the ESF to fully realize its potential, collaborative efforts must address regional challenges, strengthen political commitment, enhance capacities, and adapt to emerging threats. The evolving security landscape in West Africa calls for innovative approaches and readiness to tackle complex challenges. Future scholars and policymakers should prioritize research on the operational dynamics of the ESF and cooperative regional efforts, ensuring that lessons learned translate into effective policy and action.

The ESF's future effectiveness will depend on its ability to adapt to these evolving contexts. The followings are the ocular prospects in Peacekeeping and Security in West Africa.

- a. a **Strengthening Operational Capacities:** The future prospects of the ESF hinge on its operational readiness. A significant challenge identified during previous missions, including in Mali, remains the insufficient troop deployment and resource allocation from member states. High-profile operations underscore the need for ECOWAS to incentivize member states to commit personnel and resources (Eguavoen, 2019). Moreover, investing in training and capacity-building initiatives is vital. Joint exercises, scenario-based simulations, and reciprocal training programs can enhance coordination and interoperability among regional forces. Leveraging technologies, including intelligence sharing and real-time monitoring systems, will allow for more agile and informed decision-making (Tchombé, 2021).
- b. **Normative Frameworks:** The legitimacy of the ESF has evolved alongside international normative frameworks concerning peacekeeping. Principles like the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) emphasize the duty of states to safeguard their populations from mass atrocities (Bellamy & Williams, 2011). For the ESF, aligning its mandate with these normative principles can enhance its legitimacy and operational scope. Member states' commitment to humanitarian principles and human rights is necessary for fostering an environment conducive to effective peacekeeping.
- c. **Community Engagement and Local Context:** A significant lesson from previous missions is the importance of local engagement. The ESF's future prospects hinge on integrating community-centered approaches in peacekeeping strategies. This includes working closely with civil society organizations, traditional leaders, and local communities to ensure buy-in and participation in security initiatives

(Mthembu-Salter, 2016). Future ESF operations should prioritize inclusive dialogue and local perspectives, recognizing that sustainable peace hinges on the trust and cooperation of communities affected by conflict (Galis, 2020).

- d. **Strengthening Political Will and Regional Unity:** Political will is essential in mobilizing troops and resources for peacekeeping missions. A unified approach toward security in West Africa must be fostered, as member states sometimes exhibit reluctance to deploy forces due to national interests. Initiatives such as regular high-level meetings and workshops can help reinforce a shared commitment to regional peace and the responsibility of collective security (Mthembu-Salter, 2016).
- e. **Capacity Building and Training:** To effectively respond to security crises, the ESF needs consistent investment in capacity building and training. Enhanced training programs focused on peacekeeping techniques, human rights, and conflict resolution will prepare troops for diverse scenarios. Regional institutions can collaborate with international partners to develop these training modules, ensuring state-of-the-art techniques and practices are shared (Bellamy & Williams, 2011).
- f. **Adapting to Evolving Security Threats:** The ESF must adjust its strategies to counter both traditional and emerging non-traditional threats such as terrorism and organized crime. Armed groups like Boko Haram and AQIM pose significant challenges requiring a reassessment of military doctrines and peacekeeping strategies. Incorporating community-based approaches and dialogue into operations will promote longer-term solutions (Adebajo, 2020).
- g. **Leveraging Technology:** Embracing advancements in technology can enhance the capabilities of the ESF. Utilizing drone surveillance, information-sharing platforms, and advanced communication systems can not only improve coordination during interventions but also enhance the gathering of intelligence and situational awareness.
- h. **Enhanced Partnerships and Resource Mobilization:** Engaging with global partners and securing funding from international organizations can provide much-needed resources for ESF operations. Collaborative initiatives with the United Nations, the African Union, and donor countries can ensure that the ESF is adequately equipped to undertake vital peacekeeping missions.

The ESF holds significant potential for contributing to peacekeeping and security in West Africa, as evidenced by its interventions, particularly in Mali. However, realizing this potential requires a concerted effort from member states to foster a cooperative regional

identity, prioritize security investments, and adapt to emerging threats. The ESF must evolve from being a reactive force to a proactive, comprehensive peacekeeping mechanism capable of addressing the multifaceted security challenges facing West Africa.

8. KEY CHALLENGES FACING THE ECOWAS STANDBY FORCE

Analyzing these challenges and opportunities can provide insights into how the ESF can more effectively respond to regional security crises.

- a. One of the principal challenges confronting the ESF is the chronic shortage of funding. Many member states are reluctant to allocate sufficient financial resources for peacekeeping operations, which undermines the Force's operational readiness .
- b. The political commitment of member states is critical for the ESF's success, yet it often lacks consistency. Political will can be inconsistent, with some countries hesitant to deploy troops due to domestic political considerations or apprehension about intervention in neighboring states' affairs.
- c. The logistical capabilities of the ESF are frequently inadequate to support rapid deployment or extended missions. Issues such as inadequate transportation, communication equipment, and supply chains hinder operational effectiveness (De Coning, 2016).

9. FINDINGS

These findings encapsulate the challenges, successes, and potential pathways for improving the ESF's effectiveness in addressing regional security dynamics.

- a. The ESF faces significant operational challenges, including insufficient troop contributions from member states, inadequate funding, and lack of proper equipment and training. These factors hinder its ability to respond effectively to crises in a timely manner.
- b. The development of a cohesive regional identity among ECOWAS member states is underutilized. Political will among member states has been inconsistent, affecting the ESF's capacity to mobilize and deploy forces swiftly during critical situations.
- c. The evolving normative frameworks regarding peacekeeping, such as the Responsibility to Protect" (R2P), have influenced the ESF's legitimacy. Member states' commitment to these norms varies significantly, impacting their willingness to participate actively in peacekeeping efforts.

- d. Historical analyses of previous ESF interventions, such as those in Liberia and Sierra Leone, reveal important lessons about the successful implementation of multidimensional peacekeeping operations. Effective communication, community engagement, and local collaboration were critical to past successes.
- e. The rise of non-traditional security threats such as terrorism, organized crime, and political instability requires a re-evaluation of the ESF's operational scope. The force must adapt to these evolving threats to remain relevant and effective.

10. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings highlight both the obstacles and opportunities that characterize the ESF's future in peacekeeping. The operational challenges reveal a need for concerted efforts among ECOWAS member states to enhance military readiness and inter-operability. The inconsistencies in political will underscore the importance of a unified approach to regional security. Notably, the normative frameworks surrounding peacekeeping provide a potential pathway for improving legitimacy and operational effectiveness, provided that member states can collectively commit to these evolving norms. The insights gleaned from previous missions emphasize that while the ESF has a foundation to build on, adapting to new security dynamics is essential. The acknowledgment of emerging threats suggests that a shift towards comprehensive security frameworks that encompass socio-economic stability, governance, and community engagement will be vital to the ESF's future operational strategies.

11. CONCLUSIONS

The future prospects of the ECOWAS Standby Force in peacekeeping and security are contingent upon addressing critical operational challenges, fostering a strong regional identity, and adapting to new security domains. The forces at play in West Africa underscore the need for a dynamic approach to peacekeeping that goes beyond traditional military interventions. For future scholars, this study opens avenues for further research into specific aspects of the ESF's operations, such as the effectiveness of regional partnerships, the impact of socio-economic factors on peace and security, and the role of civil society in supporting peace initiatives. There is also potential for investigating how emerging technologies can bolster the ESF's operations in an increasingly complex security environment. The study also make a call to action to the ECOWAS Commission to:

- a. Conduct a Formal Strategic Review to immediately commission a high-level panel to redefine the ESF's Level of Ambition (LoA) in light of the AES withdrawal. This

review must explicitly pivot from a "Sahel-focused" force to a "Coastal ECOWAS and Mandate Stability" force, prioritizing rapid response to constitutional crises in member states and maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

- b. Develop a "Associate Membership" Framework: Create a formal mechanism for non-ECOWAS actors (e.g., AES states, Mauritania, Morocco) and international partners (US, EU, UN) to contribute niche capabilities or funding to specific, authorized ESF missions without granting full decision-making power.
- c. Create the ESF Trust Fund with matched funding by establishing a transparently managed ESF Trust Fund. Member state contributions (either via the levy or direct budget allocations) would be matched on a 1:1 basis by international partners (EU, UN Peacebuilding Fund). This incentivizes internal commitment while leveraging external support, moving from donor-driven to partner-supported operations.
- d. Develop and pre-approve robust, mission-specific Standing Rules of Engagement (SROE) for the pre-defined scenarios (e.g., attempted coup d'état, severe electoral violence, genocide warnings), vetted by national legal and military advisors to eliminate last-minute political haggling over rules of engagement that has crippled past responses.
- e. By adopting this sequenced, funded, and institutionally reformed approach, ECOWAS can transition the ESF from a symbol of unrealized ambition into a credible, responsive, and ultimately indispensable instrument of West African security.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, several actionable recommendations are put forth to enhance the ESF's future effectiveness:

- a. Undertaking initiatives to build consensus among ECOWAS member states is crucial. Regular summits should focus on security cooperation that can help reinforce the shared responsibility for regional peace.
- b. ECOWAS should invest in capacity-building programs aimed at increasing the military readiness of member states. This can include joint training exercises, logistical support, and mentoring programs to improve inter-operability among forces.
- c. The ESF should refine its operational framework to incorporate strategies that address both traditional and non-traditional security threats. This may involve

community engagement initiatives and partnership with civil society organizations to enhance local support for peacekeeping efforts.

- d. ECOWAS should engage with technological advancements, such as information-sharing platforms and intelligence-gathering tools, which can help the ESF respond more efficiently to emerging threats and facilitate better coordination among member states.

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