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Financing Strategies for Startups in Business: Evidence of Provision Sellers in Gwagwalada, FCT, Nigeria

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Abstract

In the face of prevailing economic challenges in Nigeria, innovation and the ability to transform ideas into viable ventures have become essential for individual and national growth. These attributes define startups in today's business environment. However, despite having sound ideas, readiness, and proper planning, many startups struggle to actualize their visions due to inadequate funding. When appropriate financing is secured, other business processes that drive the startup's vision become more effective and sustainable. This paper examines the financing strategies available to startups in Nigeria, with a specific focus on provision sellers in Gwagwalada, a suburb of the Federal Capital Territory. The study provides insights into various funding opportunities accessible to startups and highlights the challenges entrepreneurs face in securing such funds. Findings reveal that while several financing avenues exist, they are often difficult to access, compelling entrepreneurs to rely on personal resources, which may not yield the desired business outcomes or long-term growth.

Keywords: *Business, Financing, Startup, Strategies*

1. INTRODUCTION

Startups are beginners with valuable ideas on how to grow their businesses. The startup stage is considered the starting point where the entrepreneur attempts to convert an idea into a viable business opportunity (Berger & Udell, 1998). Startups often fall into various categories and sizes, and are excited by their innovations, yet often bewildered by certain limitations. Some of these limitations include location, marketing strategies, personnel, management and funding. Prominent among all these listed limitations is the issue of financing. Access to funding is paramount for business growth; thus, a startup's primary concern is always to overcome the barrier of fundraising for the business's sustainability. For small-sized businesses, often referred to as startups, matters relating to a sustainable capital base have attracted considerable attention because they are frequently run by individuals with limited resources.

Understanding the importance of financing for start-ups is essential for entrepreneurs as they navigate the inspiring journey of building a successful business. Availability of funds helps an entrepreneur to bring all the factors of production i.e, Land, labour, capital, technology, natural resources and so on together in the business. The importance of finance in production process is considered as grease to the production function. Financing enterprises whether large or small sized firms found to be crucial element in development of business units. Many start-ups though potentially viable and successful, failed because of their financing decisions i.e., undercapitalization and overcapitalization. Hence, it is necessary for an entrepreneur to chalk out the financial requirements before setting up the venture as these will continue to revolve around the lifecycle of the business. This assertion was justified by Berger & Udell (1998) who stated that the financial needs of the startups are in stages and cycles which changes from one stage of the business to another. They rightly pointed out that, there are changing financial needs in the financing growth cycle of small firms and these ranges from the startup stage to the growth stage and at these different levels, the financial needs of the metamorphoses requiring more fund for its sustainability. It is therefore in the light of the above assertions that this paper addresses some of the concerned of startups as stated above with major focus on fund generating strategies. For purpose of clarity and full understanding, pertinent questions have been raised in pursuit of this study and these include;

- i. What are the known types of startup businesses?
- ii. What are the sources of finance available for Provision Sellers in Gwagwalada as small “Stat-up” firms?
- iii. What are the strategies by which Provision Sellers in Gwagwalada as startups can attract funding?

Furthermore, the objectives of this study will include the following;

- i. to examine the known types of startup businesses
- ii. to examine the sources of finance available for Provision Sellers in Gwagwalada as small “Stat-up” firms
- iii. to examine the strategies by which Provision Sellers in Gwagwalada as startups can attract funding

Thus, this study provides an overview of financing strategies for start-ups businesses which, encompasses equity and debt financing, alternative funding sources, government support programs, strategic partnerships, international expansion, fintech innovations, and risk management practices. The study further espouses several considerations which informs business owner’s decision of the source of financing to employ in the startup business in the light of the assertion of Desai and Gupta (2019) who stated that the sources of finance for startups are both internal and external depending on the amount of financing required.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This work encompasses both conceptual and theoretic review. Necessary and important terms which aligns with the study are carried out in this work in order to foster a proper understanding of the focus of discussion.

Definition and Types of Startups

According to Tamoor Tariq (2013), start-ups has different definitions but numerous criteria like number of employees; annual sale; or net profit are some of the dimensions that could help differentiate between the definition for large and small startup firms. He rightly, pointed out that there are two types of startup firms. Citing the work of Leach & Melicher (2012), he stated that the first type of startup is referred to as the state of “Entrepreneur”, “Where an individual who thinks, reasons and acts to convert the ideas into commercial opportunities and to create value”, while the second type explains the startup firms that have started functioning as a firm already and performing working phase; however, they are yet to achieve the status of a small developed and operating firm. This second type is what term “the Operational Start-up is In his description, the first type encompasses the stage even before the Birth or startup stage of the firm lifecycle. Describing it in a nutshell; this type is just before setting the foundations of the firm, where the owner (Entrepreneur) plans to convert an idea into a profitable opportunity, by planning to start a firm.

Aurelian (2008) also embark on the definition of startups as two types. He stated that the first type of startups is; firms where the initial business concept is formed with the initial products and services that are to be offered are observed. This first type is regarded as the “founder” or “entrepreneur” being the major personnel and the capital requirements are small as main funding sources are owner’s capital, family, friends & colleagues. The risk of failing to deliver is very high. He defined the second type in the words of Dilger (2012) using the European and American context. According to Dilger (2012), European version of definition refers to a small startup firm of having less than 50 employees and annual turnover of not more than 10 million Euros, whereas on the other hand American version of definition for small size startup firm is one with not more than 250 employees and annual sales of not more than 1\$ million. Another definition can be discussed here as well. According to Beck, Kunt & Maksimovis (2008), small firm can be said to be a startup if the employee are from 5-50; Hence diverse definitions of the startups can be observed. Thus, from the foregoing, this work delimits the definition and types of startups to the following;

- a) the startups that are about to start their business operations or the (prestart up) stage and

- b) the firms that are already in operating phases but are considered to be still in the startup stage of the firm life cycle.

Typical Financial Challenges of Startup

To have adequate finance for startups, its imminent challenges must be identified and understood, this will help to determine the correlative strategies to meet such challenges. Some of these financial challenges are examined as follows;

1. **Capital Constraints:** Accessing sufficient capital is one of the most critical challenges for startups. Initially, they may struggle to secure funding from investors or traditional lenders due to their unproven business models or lack of assets.
2. **Cash Flow Management:** Dealing with cash flow effectively is important, especially when revenue streams are inconsistent or when there are delays in receiving payments from clients. Poor cash flow management can lead to operational disruptions or even bankruptcy.
3. **Budgeting and Financial Planning:** Startups often lack the experience or resources to create detailed financial plans and budgets. Without these, they may overspend in certain areas or underestimate costs, leading to financial strain.
4. **High Operating Costs:** Startups may face high costs related to product development, marketing, hiring talent, and technology infrastructure. Keeping these costs under control while scaling the business can be challenging.
5. **Profitability and Revenue Generation:** Achieving profitability is often delayed as startups focus on growth and market penetration. Generating consistent revenue streams can be difficult, especially in competitive or niche markets.
6. **Debt and Financial Obligations:** Accumulating debt through loans or credit lines is common for startups, but managing debt levels and ensuring timely repayments can be a burden

Importance of financing for start-ups

It is worthy of note that funding is very important for startups because without adequate financing, founders may struggle to kick start their venture and bring their ideas to fruition. Some of the importance of Financing are hereby discussed as follows:

1. **Fueling Growth and Expansion:** Financing enables start-ups to level up their operations, enter new markets, and expand their customer base. Whether it's hiring additional staff, investing in marketing and sales efforts, or acquiring new technology, access to capital is essential for driving growth.

2. **Attracting Talent:** Competing for top talent in the market is challenging, especially for start-ups with limited resources. Adequate financing allows start-ups to offer competitive salaries, benefits, and equity options to attract skilled professionals who can contribute to the company's success.
3. **Research and Development:** Innovation is at the core of many start-ups, and financing plays an important role in funding research and development initiatives. Whether it's improving existing products, exploring new technologies, or conducting market research, investment in R&D is essential for staying competitive and meeting evolving customer needs.
4. **Navigating Market Challenges:** Start-ups often face various market challenges, including competition, regulatory hurdles, and economic downturns. Having access to financing provides a buffer that allows start-ups to weather these challenges and adapt their strategies accordingly.
5. **Building Infrastructure and Systems:** As start-ups grow, they need to establish robust infrastructure and systems to support their operations effectively. This includes implementing scalable technology platforms, setting up logistical processes, and ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. Financing is crucial for building these foundational elements of the business.
6. **Building Credibility:** Securing finance from reputable investors or financial institutions can enhance a start-up's credibility and reputation in the market. It signals to potential customers, partners, and stakeholders that the start-up has a viable business model and strong growth prospects.
7. **Flexibility and Agility:** Access to financing provides start-ups with the flexibility and agility to seize opportunities as they arise. Whether it's launching new products, pursuing strategic partnerships, or exploring acquisition opportunities, having capital on hand allows start-ups to act swiftly and decisively.

Type of Financing

Tamoor Tariq (2013) citing Leach & Melicher (2012) stated that there are different financing options available to startup and these he said can be determined by the level of growth of the startups from the beginning stage of the firm life cycle to the concluding stages along with their development and production scale. He thereafter identified four types of financing that are most available for startup and these are examined as follows:

- a) **Seed financing:** In the early stages when an entrepreneur is having different ideas and want to transform the idea into a business opportunity, the entrepreneur might

not have enough funds to cover up the requirements. This is when seed financing comes in; Seed financing is required in order to aid the entrepreneur to develop the business concept. It is important for the two start-ups. It comes under the category of the insider financing, where needs for finance are fulfilled by the startup team comprising of entrepreneur's own assets together with finance from the family, friends and colleagues. Seed financing stage investing is important for the good beginning of the startups.

- b) **Startup financing:** once the first phase is successfully reached, Startup financing is organised in order to meet financing needs of the entrepreneur. Like the seed financing, startup financing is also important for both types of startup. In the start-ups financing; funds are needed to take a startup firm from having an established business opportunity to the initial stage of production and sales. This type of financing has major sources like “Business Angels” and “Venture Capitalists” (Robb & Robinson, 2012).
- c) **First round financing:** this financing is crucial for this stage of start-ups, it is important for the 2nd type of the startups in order to decide if the startup will succeed through its lifecycle. By nature, first round is formal and the equity is provided externally to cover the shortfalls in the required finance for the startups to meet their expenses. Making sure the availability of first round finance, the options include commercial banks, suppliers and customer, and grants from the governments. The requirements for receiving finance from commercial banks and asking for the Trade credit represents it a formal type of financing option for the startups. Formal type of financing is in the sense of collateral requirements to be fulfilled by the startups in order to access for finance. First round financing is crucial since it decides the fate and the direction of the startups
- d) **Second round financing:** this is required when the startup firms needs to expand its core activities or operations. This type of financing is required for the second types of startups where additional finance is needed to expand firm's operational activities. There is a direct relation between the growth and purchases, since as the growth increases, earning generated are used to pay the expenses which reduces the earnings and therefore the startups have to look for the second round of finance. The sources are still the commercial banks and suppliers & customers based on the phenomenon of previous history and trade credit respectively (Leach & Melicher, 2012)
- e) **Mezzanine financing:** this is a type of financing instrument, where funds is required for the marketing expenditure, expansion projects and for the improvement in products and services of the startup firm. Mezzanine finance is usually obtained through debt in the form of warrants. Warrants are the rights or options to purchase a venture's stock at a specific price within a specified time frame. The major use of

mezzanine finance is for the plant expansion, marketing expenditures, product or service improvement and working capital. The major players involved to make sure the smooth availability of mezzanine finance are the Investments banks and commercial banks. Investment banking firms are firms that advise and assist corporations regarding the timing and the costs of issuing new securities (Leach & Melicher, 2012). Mezzanine instruments exist essentially as hybrid financial securities that contain both debt and equity characteristics along with a range of possible designs. Mezzanine finance is usually available in the later stages of the startup firms and to all the types of firms, it is considered to be an important source of finance for the startups in their later stages along with Venture capitalists and Strategic investors (Aurelian, 2008)

Strategies for Startup Financing

Begenau and Salomao (2019) found that funding needs, financial capacity, and firm size determined the choice to use equity or debt financing for funding the business. Several authors have lent their opinion in this regard supporting the postulation of Begenau and Salomao (2019). Notwithstanding other authors have particularised possible strategies for financing a startup. Desai and Gupta (2019) noted that business owners employed asset sale financing when their funding requirement was relatively small and equity financing when a large amount of funding was needed. Ibitoye (2018) also stated that personal savings and soft loans from family and friends often make up the SMEs' initial capital base. Nevertheless, start-ups might want more finances that they can get from only internal sources to keep and Gain growth and expansion (Apollos et al., 2018). Start-ups owners may also apply for and access personal loans to add value to the business for which the owner acts as the loan holder (Briozzo & Vigier, 2014). The authors mentioned personal loans obtained by the owner from credit markets are often absorbed into the company as a loan from the owner and treated as the owner's capital contribution. Other sources of funding to complement internally generated funds are crowd funding; debt funding; equity funding; or a combination of these options (SimonOke, 2019). Funding the business through equity involves the investment of an external party's funds in the business which confers control of the company on the equity holder to the value of the funds obtained and is recorded as an asset to the business (Tordee et al., 2020). Funding through equity financing involves the sale of the firm's shares and a dilution of the firm's ownership structure. Equity financing comprises venture financing, angel investing, crowd funding, and accelerators (Drover et al., 2017; Mallon et al., 2018). Business owners are also known to finance the business first through internal funds from personal savings at inception or retained earnings in successive years of operations before considering loans from informal or formal sources and would only opt for funding through equity financing as a last option.an alternative capital sources available to firms and posited

business owners ranked sources of finance based on which source was easiest to secure and had the least risk. On his own part, Viswanath (2017) posited that managers of undervalued firms may prefer issuing stock to using earnings when faced with external funding alternatives. According to Viswanath, equity financing does not necessarily reveal an overvalued company. Several considerations inform business owners decision of the source of financing to employ. Gill et al. (2016) on their own part interviewed some SME owners in India to determine their preferences when sourcing capital from non-residents and found 16 that start-ups financing for SMEs in India were usually either funds from family or loans from financial institutions. Gill et al. also found that business owners choose internal debt over external debt, short over long-term debt, and debt to equity funding as a source of external funding mainly because they wanted to retain control of the firm; thus, equity was found to be the least attractive means of funding for smaller businesses (Balboa et al., 2017). Debt financing is the preferred source of external funding for most business owners who prioritize control of the business. Such business owners seldom use equity to generate funds for their business (Coleman et al., 2016). Equity holders and creditors may provide funds for businesses through capital injections or investments and debt respectively (Berger & Udell, 1998). However, the capital outlay and cost of equity funding is higher than debt financing.

For proper and effective understanding some of these strategies are itemised and briefly examined as follows:

- i. **Equity Financing:** Equity financing involves raising capital by selling shares of ownership in the company. Researchers such as Kaplan and Strömberg (2003) have explored the implications of equity financing for firm value and growth. Studies have analyzed the role of venture capital in providing equity financing to start-ups, examining factors influencing venture capital investment decisions (Gompers, 1995).
- ii. **Bootstrapping and Self-Financing:** Bootstrapping refers to funding a business using personal savings, revenue reinvestment, and minimal external financing. Cassar (2004) has studied the prevalence and performance implications of bootstrapping among start-ups. Literature has explored strategies for effectively managing cash flow and maximizing internal resources to support growth without relying heavily on external financing (Ucbasaran et al., 2006).
- iii. **Crowd funding:** Crowd funding platforms enable start-ups to raise funds from a large number of individual investors. Agrawal, Catalini, and Goldfarb (2015) have examined the impact of crowd funding on innovation and entrepreneurship. Studies have investigated the determinants of crowd funding success, including project characteristics, campaign design, and social network effects (Mollick, 2014).

- iv. **Government Support Programs:** Governments often offer grants, subsidies, and tax incentives to support start up growth and innovation. Researchers have evaluated the effectiveness of government support programs in stimulating entrepreneurship and economic development (Acs et al., 2009). Literature has also examined the role of public policy in promoting access to finance for startups, addressing market failures, and reducing regulatory barriers (Block and Sandner, 2009).
- v. **Corporate Partnerships and Strategic Alliances:** Start-ups can form strategic partnerships with established corporations to access resources, expertise, and distribution channels. Gulati (1998) has explored the dynamics of strategic alliances and their implications for firm growth and innovation. Studies have investigated the factors driving successful collaborations between start-ups and corporate partners, including complementary capabilities, trust, and alignment of objectives (Lavie, 2006).
- vi. **Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) and Secondary Offerings:** IPOs enable start-ups to raise capital by selling shares to the public for the first time. Ritter (1991) has analysed the long-term performance of IPOs and the factors influencing underpricing and aftermarket returns. Literature has examined the motivations behind IPO decisions, the timing of offerings, and the impact of IPOs on firm value and growth (Loughran and Ritter, 2004).
- vii. **International Expansion and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):** Start-ups can pursue international growth strategies by expanding into foreign markets through FDI or strategic acquisitions. Rugman and Verbeke (2001) have studied the determinants of internationalization strategies and the role of FDI in enhancing firm competitiveness. Researchers have analysed the challenges and opportunities associated with operating in global markets, including cultural differences, regulatory environments, and entry mode choices (Dunning, 1988).
- viii. **Financial Technology (Fintech) Solutions:** Fintech innovations such as peer-to-peer lending, digital payment systems, and block chain technology offer alternative financing options for start-ups. Literature has examined the impact of fintech on traditional banking and financial services, as well as its potential to improve access to finance for underserved entrepreneurs (Cumming et al., 2019). Researchers have also explored regulatory challenges, cyber security risks, and ethical considerations associated with fintech adoption in start-ups financing (Zhang et al., 2020).
- ix. **Risk Management and Financial Sustainability:** Effective risk management practices are essential for start-ups to mitigate financial risks and ensure long-term sustainability. Studies have investigated strategies for identifying, assessing, and managing financial risks, including market risk, credit risk, and operational risk (Hull, 2018). Literature has also examined the role of financial resilience in helping

start-ups withstand economic downturns, industry disruptions, and other external shocks (Mian and Sufi, 2018).

Dissimilarity Between Equity Funding and Debt Financing

Funding the business through equity involves the investment of an external party's funds in the business which confers control of the company on the equity holder to the value of the funds obtained and is recorded as an asset to the business (Tordee et al., 2020). Funding through equity financing involves the sale of the firm's shares and a dilution of the firm's ownership structure. Equity financing comprises venture financing, angel investing, crowd funding, and accelerators (Drover et al., 2017; Mallon et al., 2018). Debt financing does not transfer any part of the firm's ownership to the creditor on account of the funds put in the business. Instead, creditor's funds are liabilities to the business and amounts accrued to creditors are settled before equity shareholders if 17 business failures occur as equity owners are considered owners of the firm. Hence, equity owners have a greater stake in the business than the creditors (Bhama et al., 2018). Some pecking order theorists also examined the relationship between a firm's debt and cash flow. Edmans and Mann (2019) advocated the selling of assets as an alternative to issuing equity when sourcing for business funding. The authors noted that the sale of assets as a source of business funding had three effects: (a) balance sheet effect, (b) camouflage effect, and (c) correlation effect. The balance sheet effect reflects the claim of financiers on the organization's balance sheet when using sale of asset financing. Information asymmetry, the value of funding required, and uncertainty in collateral asset values inform the business owners' choice. The camouflage effect describes a covering of the need for funds in a business by selling certain assets rather than issuing equity. Correlation effect relates to the relationship between two or more instruments and a funding option

3. THEORETICAL REVIEW

This study employed "Financial Growth Cycle Theory". The financial growth cycle theory examines the criteria for sourcing business funding through the life cycle phases of the business. Berger and Udell (1998) explained that the financial growth cycle theory is used to explain funding options available to an entrepreneur at the beginning of the business cycle and as the business expands its operations. According to the authors, start-ups businesses have a financial growth cycle in which financial needs and options change as the business gains momentum. Financial growth cycle theorists assess the type, cost, and availability of funding options at different phases of start-ups' operations (Walid, 2019). Walid noted that there was a relationship between the funding policies adopted by a business and the life cycle phase of the business. In a study of the financing history of 70 business owners in Tunisia, Walid (2019) observed that start-up SME owners predominantly used debt financing for

short-term funding and internal funding sources such as retained earnings and initial public offerings (IPOs) were used for long-term investment in the business. The financial growth cycle is based on the idea that information asymmetry has a dynamic Character over the lifespan of companies (Cumming et al., 2019; Oskouei & Zadeh, 2017).

4. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a survey research design to investigate the financing strategies utilized by provision sellers in Gwagwalada, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria. The survey design was considered appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection of quantitative data from a large population, enabling the identification of patterns and relationships among key variables related to startup financing and business performance.

A total of 120 respondents were selected from major markets within Gwagwalada using a combination of purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was employed to target active provision sellers who had operated for at least one year and had experience seeking startup or expansion funding. Simple random sampling was then used to ensure fair representation across different market clusters and to minimize selection bias. The sample size of 120 was deemed adequate based on prior small-business financing studies conducted in similar local contexts, ensuring sufficient statistical power for correlation and chi-square analyses.

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire comprising both closed- and open-ended items. The instrument was divided into sections covering demographic characteristics, sources of startup capital, financing challenges, and business performance indicators. To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to expert review by three specialists in entrepreneurship and small business finance, and a pilot test was conducted with 15 respondents in a nearby market. Feedback from these processes informed revisions that improved clarity and content relevance. Reliability of the instrument was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.78, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, to summarise respondents' characteristics and financing patterns. Inferential statistics, specifically chi-square and Pearson correlation tests, were employed to examine the relationships between financing strategies and business performance outcomes. The chi-square test was used to assess the associations between categorical variables, such as funding source and business growth, while the correlation analysis evaluated the strength and direction of relationships among continuous variables, including investment level and

profitability. These tests were deemed suitable due to their robustness in analyzing survey data of this nature.

Ethical principles were strictly adhered to throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after the study’s objectives were clearly explained. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their information. Data collected were used solely for academic purposes.

The study employed a survey research design to investigate financing strategies adopted by provision sellers in Gwagwalada, FCT, Nigeria. A sample of 120 respondents was selected across major markets using purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires that contained both closed-ended and open-ended questions, focusing on sources of startup capital, financing challenges, and growth outcomes. Validity of the instrument was ensured through expert review and pilot testing, while reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.78. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, and inferential tests (chi-square and correlation) to examine relationships between financing strategies and business performance. Ethical procedures, including informed consent and confidentiality, were duly observed.

5. FINDINGS

The study investigated financing strategies adopted by provision sellers in Gwagwalada, FCT, Nigeria, with a focus on the sources of capital, accessibility of funds, and challenges associated with financing startup businesses. The major findings are summarized below:

1. Sources of Startup Capital

Results indicate that a majority of respondents relied on **personal savings (45%)** and **family or friends (25%)** as primary funding sources, while only **15%** accessed bank loans and **10%** benefited from cooperative societies. Very few respondents (**5%**) reported receiving any form of government or non-governmental financial support.

Table 1 presents the distribution of startup funding sources.

Table 1

Sources of Startup Capital among Provision Sellers (n = 120)

Source of Capital	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Personal savings	54	45.0
Family and friends	30	25.0
Bank loans	18	15.0
Cooperative societies	12	10.0
Government/NGO support	6	5.0
Total	120	100.0

Most respondents, therefore, depend on informal funding channels, reflecting limited inclusion in formal financial systems.

2. Financing Challenges

A large proportion (**68%**) of respondents identified *limited access to credit facilities* as their major constraint, while **20%** cited *high interest rates* and **12%** mentioned *stringent collateral requirements*. This suggests systemic financial exclusion among small-scale entrepreneurs in the study area.

Table 2 shows the distribution of perceived financing challenges.

Table 2

Major Financing Challenges of Startups

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Limited access to credit	82	68.3
High interest rates	24	20.0
Stringent collateral requirements	14	11.7
Total	120	100.0

Constrained of Unmarketable Location: getting a good space or marketable location for a business demands a huge capital in the Gwagwalada area. Commercial complexes and spaces are very costly and because the startup in this environment lacks enough funding, they are constrained to areas within their meagre resources and most often those areas does not encourage or promote business development.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, this work reinstates that financing is essential for start-ups at every stage of their journey, from inception to growth and beyond. It enables founders to turn their vision into reality, fuel innovation, drive growth, and navigate the complexities of the market. By understanding the importance of financing and leveraging the right funding sources, start-ups can increase their chances of success in today's competitive business landscape. This study recommends that Start-ups should initially fund themselves through self-funding (bootstrapping) and generate revenue from early sales to demonstrate traction and viability to potential investors. A startup should bootstrap, as long as feasible, to retain control over the business and increase valuation before seeking external funding. Startups should also target investors who align with their startup's mission, values, and long-term vision to ensure a mutually beneficial relationship.

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Policy Responses to Brain Drain and Repatriation in Nigeria

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Abstract

Brain drain remains one of the most pressing challenges facing Nigeria's development, as the continuous migration of skilled professionals has weakened critical sectors such as health, education, and technology. This paper examines the policy measures adopted by the Nigerian government to address brain drain and encourage the repatriation of its citizens abroad within the period 2014 to 2024. It focuses on key initiatives such as the National Diaspora Policy of 2017, the establishment of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM), and other programmes designed to facilitate return migration and harness the skills and resources of the diaspora community. Using a qualitative document analysis approach, the paper draws on policy documents, official reports, and relevant literature to assess the effectiveness of these measures. It finds that weak implementation, poor institutional coordination, inadequate incentives, and the absence of a clear migration framework have limited the success of existing policies. Persistent economic hardship, unemployment, and insecurity also continue to discourage the return of skilled Nigerians. Nonetheless, initiatives such as diaspora investment platforms and professional exchange programmes present opportunities for reversing the trend of brain drain. The paper concludes that Nigeria must strengthen migration management systems, improve economic conditions, and ensure transparent governance to transform brain drain into an opportunity for national development.

Keywords: *Brain Drain, Nigeria, Repatriation, Migration Policy.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Nigeria experienced a significant surge in skilled migration that significantly reshaped its socio-economic and developmental outlook between 2014 and 2024. The migration of professionals and graduates seeking better opportunities abroad has evolved into one of the

most persistent challenges to the nation's growth and sustainability. Often described as brain drain, this phenomenon involves the extensive departure of skilled individuals, particularly in fields such as medicine, engineering, academia, and information technology (Akinyemi, 2020; Adepoju, 2021). It has become increasingly evident that the depletion of Nigeria's human capital makes it more difficult for the country to compete in the global economy and achieve its development goals.

Over the past decade, worsening economic conditions, rising unemployment, and insecurity have pushed many Nigerians to seek stability and fulfillment abroad (Okafor, 2021). Professionals in public institutions face stagnating salaries, delayed payments, and limited career progression. For instance, in the health sector, thousands of doctors and nurses have emigrated to countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Saudi Arabia, contributing to a serious shortage of qualified medical personnel in Nigerian hospitals. Similarly, the academic sector has suffered from the departure of lecturers and researchers who move abroad in search of better working environments (Ojedokun, 2023).

This migration wave has been popularly referred to as the "Japa syndrome," a social expression that captures the growing enthusiasm among Nigerians, especially the youth, to leave the country in search of greener pastures (Ojedokun, 2023). The term "Japa," derived from the Yoruba word meaning "to flee," has evolved into a symbol of widespread disillusionment with Nigeria's socio-economic conditions and a collective desire for better prospects abroad. The trend intensified after the COVID-19 pandemic, as remote work opportunities and simplified visa systems made international migration more accessible (IOM, 2022). According to the Nigerian Medical Association (2023), approximately 12,000 Nigerian doctors are currently practising abroad. Meanwhile, university reports indicate that more than 6,000 lecturers have migrated in the last five years in search of better pay and working conditions. These losses have placed additional strain on Nigeria's health and education sectors, resulting in staff shortages, service decline, and increased dependence on expatriate or underqualified personnel.

The "Japa" phenomenon, therefore, represents not just a migration trend but a broader reflection of systemic challenges that undermine national development and human capital retention. The brain drain has also produced a complex chain of effects on national development. The continuous outflow of skilled labour disrupts institutional continuity, weakens innovation systems, and reduces productivity in critical sectors (Adebayo, 2019). For instance, the exodus of healthcare workers has contributed to longer patient wait times, poor access to quality care, and overburdened hospitals. In universities, the absence of experienced scholars has impacted research output and the quality of mentorship, further

threatening the educational pipeline (Akinyemi, 2020). Moreover, the financial expense of training professionals who later depart is a direct economic loss to the Nigerian state.

In response to these challenges, successive Nigerian governments have developed various policy frameworks to address brain drain and promote repatriation or productive engagement with the diaspora community. The establishment of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM) in 2019 further provided a platform to coordinate diaspora affairs, attract investment and facilitate skills transfer. NIDCOM's mandate includes strengthening communication with diaspora professionals, promoting knowledge-sharing programmes, and organizing forums to link skilled Nigerians abroad with local industries and government agencies.

Statement of Problem

Nigeria continues to experience a persistent outflow of skilled professionals despite various government efforts to curb brain drain and encourage repatriation. Over the past decade (2014–2024), numerous policies and institutions, such as the National Diaspora Policy and the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM), have been established to harness the potential of Nigerians abroad. However, these initiatives have yielded limited results. Weak policy implementation, poor institutional coordination, inadequate incentives for returnees, and unstable socio-economic conditions have hindered the effectiveness of these measures. The continued migration of skilled workers has depleted critical sectors, reduced productivity, and weakened national development capacity. While the Nigerian diaspora contributes significantly through remittances and investments, the absence of a coherent and sustainable migration management framework has prevented the country from fully converting brain drain into brain gain. This study therefore seeks to examine the effectiveness of Nigeria's policy responses to brain drain and repatriation between 2014 and 2024, identifying existing gaps and proposing strategies for improving migration governance and national development outcomes.

Research Questions

1. How have government policies addressed the issue of brain drain in Nigeria?
2. What factors influence the implementation of repatriation policies in Nigeria?
3. How effective are Nigeria's policy responses in promoting the return of skilled professionals?

Purpose and Scope of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to examine Nigeria's policy responses to brain drain and the repatriation of skilled professionals within the period 2014 to 2024. It seeks to evaluate the

effectiveness of government initiatives designed to address the loss of human capital and to promote the return and reintegration of Nigerian professionals abroad. Particular attention is given to key policy measures such as the National Diaspora Policy of 2017, the establishment of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM) in 2019, and other related programmes aimed at strengthening diaspora engagement and harnessing the skills, resources, and expertise of Nigerians living overseas.

This study is intended to assess the degree to which these policies have achieved their stated objectives, identify challenges that have hindered their implementation, and propose practical strategies for transforming brain drain into brain gain. By focusing on a ten-year timeframe (2014–2024), the study captures recent developments in Nigeria’s migration governance and provides insight into how policy interventions have evolved in response to changing socio-economic conditions (Adepoju, 2021; Okafor, 2022). The scope of the study is limited to national-level policies and institutions directly involved in migration management and diaspora relations. It does not extend to individual migration experiences or policies of sub-national governments. Data for the study are drawn from official policy documents, government publications, and scholarly literature. This scope provides a balanced framework for understanding how Nigeria’s policy efforts over the past decade have influenced patterns of skilled migration, repatriation, and national development (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2017; NIDCOM, 2022; Ogunyemi, 2022). This study adopts a qualitative content analysis of Nigeria’s migration and diaspora policies to assess their implementation and impact between 2014 and 2024

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Brain Drain

Brain drain refers to the large-scale migration of skilled professionals, intellectuals, and experts from developing countries to more advanced nations in search of better working conditions, political stability, and higher living standards (Docquier & Rapoport, 2012). In Nigeria, this phenomenon has become a significant national concern, particularly in critical sectors such as healthcare, education, and technology (Akinyemi, 2020). The migration of highly trained professionals weakens institutional capacity, reduces innovation, and slows national development, as the nation loses both its human resources and the investments made in training them.

The causes of brain drain in Nigeria are multifaceted. Poor remuneration, unemployment, insecurity, political instability, and inadequate infrastructure have made the domestic environment unattractive for skilled workers (Obi, 2021). The rise of the “Japa” trend among

Nigerian youths highlights the growing desire to relocate in search of better opportunities (Eze & Okonkwo, 2023). Many professionals seek environments that offer better welfare, structured professional development, and the possibility of career advancement, resulting in the erosion of Nigeria's intellectual capital.

Repatriation

Repatriation refers to the voluntary or organized return of migrants to their home country, often accompanied by reintegration programs that promote job placement, investment, or skills transfer (Black & Gent, 2020). Successful repatriation depends on stable socio-economic conditions and the presence of institutions that facilitate the productive reabsorption of returnees. In Nigeria, initiatives such as the National Diaspora Policy (2017) and the establishment of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM) in 2019 have been developed to harness diaspora expertise and promote return migration for national development.

Policy Responses to Brain Drain and Repatriation in Nigeria

Over the past decade, Nigeria's policy responses have largely focused on engaging its diaspora community rather than restricting migration. The National Diaspora Policy (2017) provides a strategic framework for diaspora engagement, encouraging remittances, investment, and knowledge exchange. Similarly, NIDCOM has coordinated programs aimed at connecting skilled Nigerians abroad with opportunities at home through mentorship and business ventures (NIDCOM, 2022). Despite these initiatives, their effectiveness has been hindered by weak implementation, limited funding, and lack of coordination among government agencies (Ogunyemi, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

Migration and human capital mobility have been interpreted through several theories that link individual motivation, economic structures, and policy contexts. This study adopts two major theories; Push-Pull Theory of Migration and the Human Capital Theory.

Push-Pull Theory of Migration

The Push-Pull Theory, developed by Everett Lee (1966), explains migration as a process influenced by conditions that push individuals away from their home country and those that pull them toward another. Push factors in Nigeria include unemployment, insecurity, low wages, poor infrastructure, and political instability. Pull factors, on the other hand, include better wages, quality healthcare, stable governance, and career opportunities in developed countries (Obi, 2021; Eze & Okonkwo, 2023).

This theory is relevant to Nigeria's situation as it captures the socio-economic and political imbalances that drive skilled migration. The government's efforts to reduce push factors through improved governance, better welfare packages, and the creation of enabling environments for professionals are essential to reversing the trend. Policies such as the National Diaspora Policy (2017) and programs under NIDCOM represent attempts to rebalance these dynamics by making Nigeria more conducive for professional return and investment.

However, while the Push-Pull Theory provides valuable insight into the reasons behind migration decisions, it does not adequately account for the structural and policy dimensions influencing migration outcomes. It tends to conceptualize migration primarily as an individual response to environmental pressures rather than as an outcome shaped by state policies, global labour demands, or institutional weaknesses. Therefore, in this study, the Push-Pull Theory serves a supplementary role to help contextualize the motivational and socio-economic forces behind the brain drain phenomenon.

Human Capital Theory

The Human Capital Theory, advanced by Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz (1960s), posits that education, training, and professional experience constitute investments that enhance individual productivity and national development. Migration occurs when individuals seek to maximize the returns on their human capital. In contexts like Nigeria, professionals migrate to environments that provide better recognition, remuneration, and utilization of their skills (Akinyemi, 2020).

Brain drain, therefore, represents both a personal and national economic loss, as the skills developed within Nigeria benefit other countries. However, the Human Capital Theory also introduces the idea of brain gain, where returning migrants or the diaspora contribute to the development of their home country through remittances, investments, and knowledge transfer (Docquier & Rapoport, 2012). From this perspective, policy responses should focus on creating enabling conditions and incentives that encourage skilled Nigerians abroad to return or contribute to national development.

This theory directly aligns with Nigeria's policy environment, where initiatives such as diaspora bonds, professional exchange programmes, and investment facilitation platforms aim to convert migration challenges into opportunities for human capital and institutional growth. It provides a clear framework for examining how policy interventions can transform the negative effects of brain drain into positive developmental outcomes.

This study is anchored on the Human Capital Theory because it offers a more comprehensive and policy-oriented foundation for analysing Nigeria's responses to brain drain and

repatriation. While the Push-Pull Theory helps to explain the underlying causes and motivational factors driving migration, the Human Capital Theory extends the analysis to include how states can strategically manage, retain, and reintegrate human resources for sustainable national progress. Thus, the Human Capital Theory not only contextualizes migration within economic rationality but also guides the evaluation of how Nigeria's migration policies have aimed to transform human capital flight into a tool for development and institutional renewal.

Empirical Review

Empirical research on brain drain and repatriation in Nigeria has documented persistent challenges despite government interventions. Akinyemi (2020) reported that between 2014 and 2020, the migration of Nigerian professionals, particularly in healthcare, increased by over 30%, illustrating weak institutional capacity and dissatisfaction with local conditions. Obi (2021) found that insecurity, poor working environments, and political instability remain major drivers of emigration among Nigerian professionals.

Black and Gent (2020) emphasized that successful repatriation depends on robust reintegration programs that provide social and economic stability for returnees. In Nigeria, Ogunyemi (2022) observed that most reintegration programs are short-term and underfunded, limiting their sustainability. Eze and Okonkwo (2023) noted that while diaspora remittances have risen sharply reaching billions of dollars annually, the absence of clear mechanisms for channeling these funds into development projects undermines their long-term impact.

The Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM, 2022) reported progress in diaspora engagement, including professional exchange initiatives and investment summits. However, challenges persist in the areas of data management, institutional collaboration, and policy continuity. The findings from these studies converge on the conclusion that while Nigeria's policy responses are well-intentioned, they remain limited by implementation gaps, inconsistent policy frameworks, and weak institutional coordination.

Summary of Research Gaps

The reviewed literature shows that significant attention has been given to the causes and consequences of brain drain in Nigeria, yet limited focus has been placed on evaluating policy responses within a defined time frame. Most existing studies emphasize migration trends, diaspora remittances, or socio-economic impacts without examining the effectiveness of government initiatives such as NIDCOM and the National Diaspora Policy (2017).

Furthermore, there is a paucity of empirical evidence on the reintegration experiences of Nigerian returnees and the extent to which policy frameworks have supported their

reabsorption into the national workforce. This study fills these gaps by assessing Nigeria's policy responses to brain drain and repatriation from 2014 to 2024, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, and proposing strategies for transforming skilled migration into a tool for national development.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to explore Nigeria's policy responses to brain drain and repatriation between 2014 and 2024. The design focuses on describing and interpreting existing government policies, institutional frameworks, and academic perspectives relating to the migration of skilled professionals and the efforts made to facilitate their return. The qualitative approach is particularly suitable because it enables a detailed examination of textual and documentary evidence, without relying on numerical or statistical data. It emphasises understanding the meaning, purpose, and effectiveness of policies within their socio-political context. Through careful interpretation of relevant documents, this design facilitates a comprehensive understanding of how Nigeria has addressed the dual challenge of brain drain and repatriation within the specified timeframe.

Document Analysis and search strategy

This study employed a document analysis approach to examine Nigeria's policy responses to brain drain and repatriation between 2014 and 2024. Data were obtained from policy documents, government reports, academic articles, and relevant grey literature. Between 1 and 31 July 2024, materials were sourced from Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, ProQuest, Google Scholar, PubMed, AJOL, and institutional websites, including NIDCOM, the Federal Ministry of Labour, the World Bank, WHO, IOM, and NBS. Searches combined keywords and Boolean operators, including ("brain drain" OR "skilled migration" OR "repatriation") AND ("Nigeria") AND ("policy" OR "program" OR "strategy").

Documents published in English within the specified period were reviewed and screened for relevance and quality using the AACODS checklist for grey literature and an adapted quality assessment tool for research studies. Data were analyzed narratively and thematically, focusing on policy objectives, implementation mechanisms, and evidence of effectiveness.

Data Collection

Data for this study will be collected entirely from secondary sources. These include official policy documents, institutional reports, and academic literature relevant to Nigeria's migration and repatriation framework. Key materials will include the *National Diaspora Policy (2017)*, *NIDCOM Annual Reports (2019–2024)*, and publications from international

bodies such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), World Bank, and African Union (AU). Additional sources will include peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and credible media reports that discuss trends and challenges related to brain drain and return migration. This secondary data approach ensures reliability, as all materials are drawn from verified, authoritative sources and allow for a broad understanding of Nigeria's policy direction over the ten-year period.

Data Collection Methods

The main data collection method employed in this study is document analysis. This method involves systematically reviewing and interpreting written materials to identify patterns, themes, and relationships that explain Nigeria's policy responses to brain drain and repatriation. Documents to be analyzed include government publications, policy frameworks, migration reports, and scholarly writings. Document analysis provides a strong foundation for qualitative inquiry, as it enables researchers to examine the substance and evolution of policies over time (Bowen, 2009).

Limitations of the Study

The study acknowledges certain limitations. First, it relies solely on secondary data, which may not capture the full complexity of current policy implementation or recent informal initiatives. Additionally, some official records may be outdated or incomplete, making it challenging to assess the most recent developments accurately. The absence of fieldwork or direct interviews limits the ability to validate findings through personal accounts or insider perspectives. Finally, since the study is confined to Nigeria within the ten years (2014–2024), the findings may not be generalized beyond this national and temporal scope. Despite these constraints, the use of diverse and credible documentary sources enhances the study's reliability and ensures a comprehensive evaluation of Nigeria's policy responses to brain drain and repatriation.

4. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Nature of Policy Responses to Brain Drain in Nigeria (2014–2024)

The findings reveal that Nigeria has taken several steps to address the growing problem of skilled migration, particularly through policy formulation and institutional reforms. The most notable development was the introduction of the National Diaspora Policy (2017), which provided a framework for engaging Nigerians abroad in national development. The establishment of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM) in 2019 further institutionalised diaspora relations, creating a platform for coordinated engagement, investment facilitation, and knowledge transfer.

However, analysis of policy documents indicates that while these efforts acknowledge the need to harness the diaspora's potential, implementation has often been slow and fragmented. Limited inter-agency coordination and inadequate funding have hindered the effective realization of policy objectives. The policy focus has been more on diaspora engagement rather than on addressing the structural causes of brain drain, such as poor working conditions, unemployment, and insecurity.

Policy Measures on Repatriation and Return Migration

Repatriation strategies in Nigeria have largely emphasized voluntary return and reintegration. The *National Migration Policy (2015)* and the *National Diaspora Policy (2017)* outline programs intended to facilitate the return of skilled professionals. NIDCOM has, in partnership with the IOM and the African Union, initiated several reintegration and investment programs aimed at encouraging the return of Nigerians in the diaspora.

Despite these efforts, data from institutional reports suggest that actual return migration remains limited. Many skilled Nigerians continue to reside abroad due to unfavorable socio-economic conditions at home. Repatriation programs have been more successful in humanitarian or irregular migration cases than in the return of highly skilled professionals. This reflects a policy gap between the intention to transform brain drain into brain gain and the realities of policy implementation.

Challenges Affecting Policy Implementation

Several factors have impeded the effective implementation of Nigeria's brain drain and repatriation policies. These include:

- a) **Weak Institutional Capacity:** Many government agencies lack the technical and financial capacity to sustain diaspora programs.
- b) **Inconsistent Policy Continuity:** Policy changes across successive administrations have resulted in fragmentation of migration initiatives.
- c) **Limited Data and Monitoring:** There is insufficient migration data to track returnees, evaluate impact, and assess long-term reintegration.
- d) **Socio-Economic Constraints:** Poor infrastructure, insecurity, and limited employment opportunities continue to drive skilled Nigerians abroad.

Interpretation of Findings

This study analyzed Nigeria's policy responses to brain drain and repatriation from 2014 to 2024 using qualitative data drawn from government reports, academic literature, and

institutional records. The findings reveal that despite numerous initiatives, Nigeria continues to experience significant emigration of skilled professionals.

Between 2014 and 2024, the World Bank (2022) estimated that over 1.7 million Nigerians migrated abroad, many being doctors, academics, and engineers. The Nigerian Medical Association (NMA, 2023) reported that about 12,000 Nigerian doctors now practice in the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States, representing nearly one-third of the country's medical workforce. This exodus has weakened the healthcare and education sectors and limited the nation's development capacity.

Government responses include the National Migration Policy (2015), National Diaspora Policy (2017), and the establishment of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM) in 2019. These frameworks aimed to leverage diaspora skills and promote voluntary return. However, NIDCOM's (2022) Annual Report indicated that only a small number of professionals engaged in short-term collaborations rather than permanent return.

To objectively assess the effectiveness of these interventions, the study applied an evaluative rubric based on four criteria:

- a) Funding adequacy: The level of financial commitment supporting migration and diaspora programmes;
- b) Institutional capacity: The administrative efficiency and coordination between agencies such as NIDCOM, the Ministry of Labour, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- c) Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms: The extent to which implementation progress is tracked and reported; and
- d) Incentive design : The attractiveness of economic, professional, and social incentives encouraging skilled Nigerians to return or invest.

Findings based on this rubric show that policy effectiveness remains moderate to weak across these dimensions. Funding for diaspora engagement and reintegration programs has been inconsistent, with most initiatives relying on external donor support rather than sustained federal allocation (Ogunyemi, 2022). Institutional overlap between agencies has led to fragmented coordination, while monitoring systems remain largely descriptive and lack measurable indicators of success (NIDCOM, 2022).

Socio-economic conditions continue to counteract policy gains. Nigeria's unemployment rate stood at 33% in 2023, while inflation and insecurity further eroded professional stability (World Bank, 2022). Although remittances from Nigerians abroad reached \$19.2 billion in 2021 (World Bank, 2022), these inflows have not translated into substantial human capital recovery. This interpretation suggests that while the policies succeeded in maintaining

diaspora engagement, they have not adequately addressed the domestic structural barriers, such as poor working conditions, weak institutions, and limited research funding, that motivate skilled emigration in the first place.

Overall, the results indicate that Nigeria's policy efforts between 2014 and 2024 were well-intentioned but lacked a coherent implementation framework and sustainable economic foundation. The evaluation highlights the need for a shift from diaspora-focused strategies to comprehensive national capacity-building and policy coherence, which strengthens incentives for skilled professionals to remain and contribute to Nigeria's development.

5. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion of Findings

This study's findings show that Nigeria has made modest progress in developing frameworks to engage its diaspora community and address brain drain. Policies such as the *National Diaspora Policy (2017)* and the establishment of NIDCOM represent significant institutional milestones. However, their implementation has been constrained by limited funding, weak governance structures, and a lack of integration between migration management and economic planning.

The findings also reveal that while repatriation initiatives exist, they have not significantly increased the return rate of highly skilled Nigerians. Economic instability, insecurity, and inadequate policy incentives persist in discouraging return migration. The findings align with the Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993), which explains that skilled individuals migrate to maximise returns on their education and expertise. Poor working conditions, low remuneration, and unstable governance have made migration a rational economic choice for many Nigerians. Likewise, the Migration Systems Theory (de Haas, 2010) helps explain how established migration networks sustain this movement despite policy interventions.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Nigeria's policy responses to brain drain and repatriation between 2014 and 2024 reflect a growing recognition of the importance of human capital in national development. Despite this awareness, policy outcomes have been limited due to inadequate implementation, weak institutional coordination, and insufficient socio-economic incentives. While frameworks such as the *National Diaspora Policy* and NIDCOM have laid a foundation for diaspora engagement, the persistent outflow of skilled Nigerians indicates that these measures have yet to achieve significant impact. Effective policy responses must therefore move beyond rhetoric to practical strategies that create enabling conditions for retaining and reintegrating talent.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen Nigeria's policy responses to brain drain and repatriation between 2014 and 2024:

a) Strengthen Institutional Coordination: Government agencies involved in migration management, such as NIDCOM, the Ministry of Labour, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, should collaborate under a unified operational framework. An inter-agency Migration Policy Implementation Council should be created to align responsibilities, streamline communication, and avoid duplication of functions. Coordination with international partners, such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the African Union Labour Migration Advisory Unit, will enhance technical support and access to funding.

b) Enhance Incentives for Return Migration: The government should create targeted and transparent incentive schemes to encourage skilled Nigerians to return and reintegrate. These may include tax reliefs of up to 30% for returnee entrepreneurs, diaspora reintegration grants co-funded by the Bank of Industry, and bond investment platforms enabling diaspora professionals to invest securely in local projects. Partnerships with universities and private firms can facilitate professional exchange programmes, mentorship, and short-term academic or technical residencies. A robust monitoring system managed by NIDCOM and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) should be instituted to prevent corruption, misuse of funds, and political patronage.

c) Improve Socio-Economic Conditions: Addressing insecurity, poor infrastructure, and low wages is essential to making Nigeria an attractive destination for professionals. Reforming the wage structure in key sectors such as health and education and guaranteeing regular payment schedules will reduce migration pressure. Public-private partnerships should be encouraged to improve employment opportunities and modernise facilities in teaching hospitals, research institutions, and technical industries.

d) Develop Reliable Migration Data Systems: The Federal Government should establish a National Migration Data Observatory, managed by NIDCOM and the National Bureau of Statistics, to collect and analyse comprehensive data on migration flows, remittances, and return rates. This system should integrate with regional migration databases to track trends and evaluate the effectiveness of policy interventions.

e) Sustain Policy Implementation: Migration-related policies should be insulated from political transitions and supported through a permanent budget line and annual progress review mechanism within the National Planning Commission. Independent policy audits and stakeholder scorecards should be used to ensure accountability and sustained impact.

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Legal Correctness of Emergency Rule in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic: Elite Perceptions

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Abstract

Emergency governance in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic, as authorised under Section 305 of the 1999 Constitution, serves as a pivotal mechanism to address national crises. However, it has ignited substantial controversy regarding its legal, democratic, and economic legitimacy. This study evaluates its constitutional validity through doctrinal legal analysis and 15 semi-structured elite interviews with meticulously selected Nigerian elites. The findings reveal that while the legal framework provides a basis for emergency declarations, the practical application remains a subject of intense debate. Elite opinions are sharply divided: some regard emergency rule as an essential tool for maintaining stability and protecting national assets during crises, while others perceive it as a vehicle for political manipulation that threatens federalism, economic equity, democratic principles, and social cohesion. The study proposes a comprehensive set of recommendations, including judicial clarification, enhanced legislative oversight, institutional reforms, public engagement initiatives, economic stabilisation measures, and regional development plans to strengthen democratic governance.

Keywords: *Emergency rule, Nigeria, constitutional law, elite perceptions, federalism, democratic consolidation, economic equity, social impact*

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the establishment of Nigeria’s Fourth Republic on May 29, 1999, the nation has been beset by a relentless succession of security challenges. Some of them include: the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast, ethno-religious conflicts in the Middle Belt, escalating banditry and cattle rustling in the northwest, secessionist agitations in the southeast and sporadic urban unrest in Lagos. These crises have severely tested the resilience of its democratic framework. This has led to the frequent invocation of emergency rule under Section 305 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999). This provision empowers the president to declare a state of emergency in response to threats to

national security, public safety or the federation's existence. This is subject to National Assembly approval within two days (or ten if adjourned). This provision also implies authority to redirect resources (Ojo, 2019). Notable historical instances include the 2004 Plateau State crisis. This crisis is marked by ethno-religious violence and the suspension of Governor Joshua Dariye. Another one is the 2006 political turmoil in Ekiti State that was triggered by a disputed gubernatorial election and state assembly dissolution. Also, the 2013–2014 Northeast emergency during the Boko Haram insurgency; the 2024 Zamfara State response to banditry; and the ongoing 2025 Katsina State crisis involving mass abductions and economic sabotage (Onuoha, 2014). Proponents argue that such measures are indispensable for restoring order, protecting national integrity and stabilising key economic sectors like agriculture and oil. However, the critics assert they often reflect executive overreach, undermine federalism, exacerbate economic disparities and erode social trust (Suberu, 2010). These debates remain acute with the National Assembly currently reviewing emergency protocols in response to the latest Katsina crisis, public protests over economic losses and calls for a constitutional referendum on federal powers.

This investigation seeks to assess the legal propriety of emergency rule within this multifaceted context and explore the perceptions of Nigerian elites that are key influencers in shaping public policy, legitimacy, economic policy and social cohesion (Higley & Lengyel, 2000). Elite viewpoints are crucial. This is due to their capacity to either reinforce or challenge governmental actions in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria where political, economic and social authority is contested along regional, ethnic, partisan and class lines (Elaigwu, 2007). The research addresses a gap in existing scholarship by integrating legal scrutiny with empirical insights. It offers a holistic perspective on this divisive issue. Furthermore, it situates the inquiry within the evolving landscape of Nigerian democracy, as recent security threats, economic pressures from emergency spending (e.g., a reported 20% year-on-year rise in national debt as of Q1 2025; DMO, 2025), social unrest, and the government's response as of late 2025 underscore the urgency of refining emergency governance mechanisms to balance security, equity, liberty, and societal harmony.

Objectives

- i. To scrutinise the constitutional, judicial, economic and social architecture underpinning emergency powers in Nigeria.
- ii. To undertake a comprehensive examination of historical and contemporary instances of emergency declarations, including their fiscal, economic and social impacts.

- iii. To dissect the multifaceted perspectives of Nigerian elites regarding the legality, legitimacy, political consequences, socio-economic effects, regional equity and social cohesion implications of emergency rule.
- iv. To gauge the wider ramifications for federalism, democratic consolidation, public trust, economic stability, and social integration.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations of Emergency Powers

The concept of emergency powers occupies a contentious yet indispensable position in constitutional theory. This balances the need for swift executive intervention during crises with the preservation of democratic norms, economic stability and social order. Carl Schmitt (2005) argues that the sovereign's authority is most evident in declaring a state of exception where normal legal constraints are temporarily suspended to address existential threats. This is a view that prioritizes security and economic continuity over procedural fairness. In contrast, liberal theorists such as Gross and Ní Aoláin (2006) advocate for stringent legal boundaries, economic accountability and social safeguards to prevent executive despotism. This is a principle reflected in comparative systems. For instance, the United States Constitution delegates emergency powers to the president but requires congressional oversight, budgetary transparency and social impact assessments. On the other hand, India's Constitution (Articles 352–360) mandates parliamentary ratification, detailed financial and social reporting and temporal limits to ensure accountability and mitigate economic and social disruption (Ferejohn & Pasquino, 2004). Nigeria's Section 305, however, inherits a legacy of military autocracy. This results to a framework that is expansive, ambiguous and lacking robust checks on fiscal, economic and social implications (Suberu, 2010). This hybrid nature amplifies vulnerabilities to misuse in contexts of institutional fragility, economic inequality and social division. This is a concern heightened by Nigeria's history of governance, resource allocation and ethnic tensions.

Historical Context of Emergency Rule in Nigeria

Nigeria's engagement with emergency governance stretches back to the pre-independence era. This comes with significant precedents shaping its political, economic and social landscape. The 1962 crisis in the Western Region was triggered by internal discord within the Action Group and economic rivalries. This led to the declaration of a state of emergency, the temporary suspension of regional administration and the imposition of federal economic controls. This later sets a precedent for intervention that contributed to the collapse of the First Republic in 1966 and subsequent social upheaval (Sklar, 1963). Under military regimes from 1966 to 1999, emergency provisions were rendered obsolete as constitutional

governance was wholly suspended. This came with decrees that replaced legislative processes, centralizing economic power and suppressing social dissent (Owoeye, 1993). The return to civilian rule in 1999 raised hopes for restrained executive action, equitable resource distribution, and social harmony, yet the Fourth Republic has witnessed multiple emergencies. Recent analyses by Adebayo (2024) highlight ongoing centralization concerns, while parliamentary debates in 2025, particularly the National Assembly's review of emergency protocols in response to the Katsina crisis, underscore efforts to address these issues (Nigerian Senate, 2025).

The return to civilian rule in 1999 raised hopes for restrained executive action, equitable resource distribution and social harmony, yet the Fourth Republic has witnessed multiple emergencies. The 2004 Plateau State declaration, proclaimed by President Obasanjo on May 18 via a nationwide radio broadcast and published in the Federal Official Gazette, addressed ethno-religious violence, resulting in the suspension of Governor Joshua Dariye and the state legislature, alongside significant economic costs from federal deployments and social displacement (Obasanjo, 2004; The New Humanitarian, 2004). The 2006 Ekiti intervention, declared by Obasanjo on October 19 in response to a disputed gubernatorial election and impeachment crisis, led to the dissolution of the state assembly, accusations of fiscal mismanagement, and local unrest (Obasanjo, 2006; BBC News Pidgin, 2025). The 2013–2014 Northeast emergency, imposed by President Jonathan on May 14 under Gazette Proclamation No. 1 of 2013 and renewed in 2014, targeted the Boko Haram insurgency through partial centralization of security, substantial budgetary reallocations, and widespread social disruption (Jonathan, 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2015).

More recently, the 2024 Zamfara State emergency, declared in response to banditry, has raised concerns over economic displacement, loss of livelihoods and inter-communal tensions. However, the 2025 Katsina crisis involved the mass abductions and economic sabotage of markets. It has prompted calls for a nuanced emergency framework to address evolving threats like kidnapping, cattle rustling and social fragmentation (Popoola, 2007).

Elite Influence and Perceptions

Elite theory posits that a compact cadre of influential figures. This consists of political, economic, intellectual and social spheres. They mould governance, societal endorsement of state initiatives, economic policy direction and social cohesion (Mosca, 1939; Pareto, 1991). C. Wright Mills (1956) elaborates on the interconnected nature of these elites in democratic polities. He suggested that their decisions shape public policy trajectories, resource distribution, and community relations. In Nigeria, elites are deeply fragmented along ethnic, confessional, partisan, class and regional axes. This has been affecting their appraisals of emergency rule (Elaigwu, 2007). For instance, during the 2013 Northeast emergency,

northern elites bifurcated: some championed federal resolve against Boko Haram as a necessary measure to restore order, protect economic assets like oil pipelines and maintain social stability, whilst others decried it as an assault on state prerogatives. This is a pretext for diverting regional funds and a catalyst for social alienation (Onuoha, 2014). This division has persisted into 2025 and the elite responses to the Zamfara and Katsina crises varying between support for federal intervention to safeguard trade routes and agricultural output, and criticism of perceived overreach that disrupts local economies, displaces communities, and widens social divides. A 2025 survey of northern elites revealed 60% opposition to the Katsina emergency, citing economic losses and ethnic profiling, underscoring the pivotal role of elite concord in conferring legitimacy, shaping economic outcomes and fostering social harmony as of 1 October 2025.

Federalism and Democratic Implications

Nigeria's federal dispensation is conceived to devolve authority, promote regional autonomy, ensure equitable economic distribution and foster social integration. It is beleaguered by emergency edicts that concentrate power, resources and decision-making at the federal apex (Suberu, 2010). This disequilibrium is compounded by enfeebled subnational institutions, uneven fiscal capacities and social disparities. This now renders the federal incursions a habitual expedient in times of crisis. Diamond (1999) delineates democratic consolidation as the juncture wherein democracy emerges as the preeminent, uncontested governance paradigm, a trajectory imperilled by apprehensions of emergency rule as vestiges of authoritarianism, economic centralization and social exclusion (Ojo, 2019). The historical pattern of emergencies presaging military seizures, such as the 1966 coup following the Western Region crisis, intimates a latent peril to democratic tenacity, economic sovereignty and social unity (Joseph, 1987). In the current context of 2025, the strain on federalism is evident in ongoing disputes over resource control, security funding, the economic fallout of emergency measures and social tensions, with state governors and community leaders increasingly vocal about fiscal autonomy, local governance and cultural preservation.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This inquiry embraces a qualitative paradigm, fusing doctrinal legal exegesis with empirical derivations from elite colloquies. This approach is suitable for exploring the reciprocity between constitutional precepts, economic policies, social dynamics, and societal interpretations, aligning with Creswell's (2018) advocacy for qualitative methodologies in elucidating contextual nuances. The dichotomous-method schema ensures triangulation,

enhancing the reliability of conclusions by cross-validating legal, perceptual, and socioeconomic data (Flick, 2018). Ethical protocols, including informed consent, anonymity, data security, economic impact disclosure, and sensitivity to social identities, were rigorously observed, with a consent form summary provided in Appendix C.

Fifteen elites were purposively selected based on expertise and diversity across political, juridical, and academic/civil society domains, with criteria including regional representation, institutional affiliation, and professional experience. A respondent characteristics table is included in Appendix A, detailing age, gender, region, and institution. The interview guide, available in Appendix B, guided semi-structured interviews, with themes validated through intercoder reliability (Cohen’s Kappa = 0.82) between two independent coders, alongside Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework.

Appendix A: Respondent Characteristics Table

ID	Domain	Role	Age	Gender	Region	Institution	Interview Date
E01	Political	Former Legislator	62	M	North-Central	National Assembly	March 15, 2024
E02	Juridical	Senior Advocate	55	M	South-West	Nigerian Bar Association	March 20, 2024
E03	Academic/Civil	Civil Society Leader	48	F	North-West	NGO Alliance	April 5, 2024
E04	Political	State Party Official	50	M	North-Central	APC State Chapter	April 10, 2024
E05	Juridical	Retired Judge	68	M	South-West	High Court	April 15, 2024
E06	Academic/Civil	University Professor	53	F	North-West	Ahmadu Bello University	May 2, 2024
E07	Political	Local Government Head	45	M	North-Central	Local Govt Council	May 8, 2024
E08	Juridical	Legal Consultant	49	M	South-West	Private Practice	May 15, 2024
E09	Academic/Civil	NGO Director	52	F	North-West	Human Rights Watch	May 20, 2024
E10	Political	Political Analyst	47	M	North-Central	Think Tank	June 3, 2024
E11	Juridical	Constitutional Lawyer	54	M	South-West	Law Firm	June 10, 2024
E12	Academic/Civil	Researcher	41	F	North-West	University of Abuja	June 15, 2024
E13	Political	Northern Elder	70	M	North-East	Community Leader	June 20, 2024
E14	Juridical	High Court Judge	60	M	South-West	Judiciary	July 1, 2024
E15	Academic/Civil	Policy Expert	46	F	North-West	Policy Institute	July 5, 2024

Doctrinal Legal Analysis

The exegesis concentrates upon Section 305 of the 1999 Constitution. It was augmented by judicial precedents such as *Attorney-General of Plateau State v. Attorney-General of the Federation* (2005), erudite commentaries (Nwabueze, 2003), recent 2024–2025 legislative proposals and economic impact studies. It interrogates the juridical rationale, procedural stipulations, economic implications, social consequences and antecedent utilisations of emergency powers. This emphasises the importance of conformity with constitutional ethos, fiscal responsibility, and social equity. This encompassed a systematic perusal of parliamentary records, appellate dicta, 2025 budgetary analyses, stakeholder submissions and social impact reports to discern interpretive lacunae. This is an evolution for the legal interpretations, economic costs and social ramifications.

Elite Interviews

Fifteen elites were purposively culled across three domains: political, juridical and academic/civil society. This stratagem privileges informants with pertinent acumen and diverse perspectives. This aligns with Denzin and Lincoln's (2018) precepts for purposive curation. Colloquies, executed between March and July 2024 in Abuja, Lagos, Kaduna, and via Zoom, endured 45–60 minutes. Zoom interviews were secured using end-to-end encryption, with access restricted to authorized researchers via password-protected sessions. Recordings were stored on a secure, encrypted server, compliant with IRB-approved protocols, and will be retained for five years before secure deletion, ensuring participant confidentiality and data integrity.

Recordings were procured with approbation. They were also transcribed verbatim and subjected to thematic dissection employing Braun and Clarke's (2006) sextet-phase schema.

4. RESULTS

Constitutional and Legal Framework

Section 305 of the 1999 Constitution sanctions presidential proclamations of emergency in the face of menaces to public safety, national security, or the federation's integrity. This necessitates the National Assembly ratification within two days (or ten if adjourned) and a sexennial tenure unless prolonged with provisions for economic support and social services to affected areas (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). The 2004 Plateau State emergency entailed the ousting of Governor Joshua Dariye and the state legislature, a stratagem impugned as transcending constitutional confines due to the lack of explicit authorization for such suspensions, the redirection of state funds and the disruption of local markets (Popoola, 2007). Analogously, the 2006 Ekiti incursion led to the disbanding of the state assembly following a contested impeachment, sparking juridical contestations over federal overreach,

economic mismanagement, and social unrest (Ojukwu & Oni, 2020). The 2013–2014 Northeast emergency consolidated security dominion under federal control, allocated substantial budgetary resources, and displaced over 2 million people whilst conserving state organs. This allowed the engendering of qualms about legislative vigilance, economic transparency, regional disparities and social fragmentation (Onuoha, 2014). The Supreme Court’s adjudication in *AG Plateau v. AG Federation* (2005) vindicated presidential latitude yet eschewed expounding upon the ousting of elective entities, fiscal oversight or social obligations. This led to the perpetuation of a juridical penumbra. The 2024 Zamfara emergency, declared in response to banditry, has further complicated this landscape, with ongoing litigation challenging the scope of federal powers, the economic burden on local farmers, and the social cost of displaced communities, whilst the 2025 Katsina crisis, involving mass abductions, market closures, and ethnic clashes, has prompted renewed scrutiny of emergency funding mechanisms, social support, and legal clarity.

Elite Perceptions

1. **Legality:** Seven elites, including a senior advocate, ratified constitutional soundness, averring, “*Section 305 compels intervention during exigencies to protect national interest, economic stability, and social order.*” Eight, including a quondam legislator, impugned suspensions as ultra vires, declaring, “*No clause countenances legislative dissolution, fund diversion, or social disruption without due process.*”
2. **Legitimacy:** Adversarial elites characterized the 2006 Ekiti episode as factionally driven, conjoined to President Obasanjo’s tertiary-term aspirations, with a political analyst noting, “*It sapped societal credence, fueled regional economic discontent, and incited social unrest*” (Ojukwu & Oni, 2020). The 2024 Zamfara case elicited similar critiques of partisan bias, economic neglect, and community division, whilst a 2025 Katsina elite remarked, “*Federal action ignored local leaders, worsening tensions.*”
3. **Federalism:** A pensioned jurist stressed, “*Emergency rule accrues centrality, diluting state self-determination, resource control and social autonomy in agrarian and minority regions,*” a sentiment echoed by the preponderance, with a northern elder adding concerns over northern marginalization, lost trade revenues, and ethnic profiling.
4. **Democratic, Economic, and Social Implications:** Elites cleaved asunder, some deeming it a bulwark (e.g., contra Boko Haram in 2013, preserving oil exports and social stability), whilst others, including a civil society luminary, posited, “*Unchecked, it normalizes executive hegemony, erodes public participation, widens*

economic gaps, and fractures communities,” invoking the 1962 archetype and 2025 inflation spikes, unemployment rises, and inter-ethnic clashes (Sklar, 1963).

5. DISCUSSION

The juridical bedrock of Section 305 is unimpeachable, yet its deployment unveils disparities that nourish legitimacy, economic and social altercations (Ferejohn & Pasquino, 2004). The ousting of state entities in Plateau and Ekiti intimates executive profligacy, bereft of lucid judicial precedent. This is a gap exacerbated by the 2024 Zamfara case and its economic fallout and the 2025 Katsina crisis with its social toll (Popoola, 2007). Feeble National Assembly superintendence, oft swayed by factional majorities, echoes Nwabueze’s (2003) censure of “imperial presidencies,” with 2025 debates revealing partisan gridlock, inadequate fiscal oversight, and neglect of social impact assessments. Federalism endures further duress, as Suberu (2010) observes, with apical emergencies vitiating state sway, particularly in resource-rich, agrarian, and minority regions, where 2025 data indicate a 25% increase in poverty rates associated with emergency spending disruptions (World Bank, 2025) and a 15% rise in inter-communal conflicts evidenced by heightened violence in the Northwest and Northcentral zones (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2025). Democratically, elite bifurcation imperils entrenchment, as per Diamond’s (1999) schema, wherein credence, participation, economic equity, and social unity are sine qua non. This concern is amplified by the 2025 public protests against centralisation, rising costs, and ethnic violence. Analogous insights from India’s 1975–1977 emergency, which led to reforms through public consultation, economic audits, and social reconciliation programmes, suggest Nigeria’s need for similar safeguards (Austin, 2003). The current security landscape, including the northwest crisis, 2025 oil price volatility, and social fragmentation, underscores the urgency of reform to avert recurrent governance, economic, and social crises.

6. CONCLUSION

The emergency rule in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic is constitutionally anchored, yet politically, economically, and socially tenuous. Elite cleavages underscore an urgent need for juridical clarity, institutional fortification, public engagement, economic stabilisation, and social reconciliation to underpin democracy amidst ongoing upheavals, fiscal pressures, and community divisions. This study affirms the imperative for balanced mechanisms to harmonise security, equity, liberty and social harmony, a task made more pressing by the evolving security, economic and social challenges of 2025, including the Katsina crisis and national unrest.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Exhort the Supreme Court to delineate Section 305's confines, particularly vis-à-vis institutional oustings, fiscal responsibilities, and social obligations, with a goal of completing 2025 hearings and public submissions by mid-2026.
2. Reinforce National Assembly superintendence via public inquests, independent economic and social audits, and non-partisan committees, emulating Indian exemplars (Austin, 2003), with a pilot program proposed for late 2025 and a recommended evaluation by 2026.
3. Enjoin limpid emergency dispatches, including socio-economic impact assessments, regional compensation plans, and social support schemes, to augment answerability and public trust, with a recommended reporting framework established by 2026 and pilot data collected in 2025.
4. Safeguard state entities, local economies, and community structures, mirroring the 2013–2014 Northeast paradigm, with legal amendments proposed by 2026 to clarify roles, fund allocations, and social services.
5. Propel elite parleys, citizen forums, and inter-ethnic dialogues, including economic and social stakeholders, to forge concord, address disparities, and rebuild trust, with a national dialogue scheduled for early 2026, funded by 2025 budgets, and a follow-up recommended for 2027.
6. Channel resources into subnational security, local governance, agricultural revitalisation, economic diversification, and social programs to curtail emergency dependence, with a 2025–2027 funding plan under consideration, a northwest recovery initiative launched in 2025, and a social cohesion project recommended for 2026 (Elaigwu, 2007).

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The Future of Cryptocurrency in International Relations: A Delphi Study of Expert Perceptions, Predictions, and Implications for Global Governance

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Abstract

This study explores how cryptocurrencies and central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) are reshaping authority and cooperation within the international system. Addressing the uncertainty surrounding digital finance and global governance, it employs a qualitative Delphi method to gather and refine expert insights across multiple rounds. The analysis identified areas of consensus and divergence on cryptocurrency regulation, CBDCs, and the future balance of power among states, corporations, and decentralised networks. Experts agreed that while cryptocurrencies will remain influential, they are unlikely to replace sovereign money. Instead, CBDCs are expected to serve as strategic tools for geopolitical and regional influence, contributing to a fragmented rather than unified global order. The findings suggest that digital currencies reflect an evolving continuum of authority across decentralised, corporate, and state domains. The study extends constructivist theory by demonstrating how expert expectations influence the development of emerging governance norms, underscoring the need for flexible and inclusive coordination in managing the global impact of cryptocurrencies.

Keywords: *Cryptocurrency; International Relations; Global Governance; Delphi Method; Central Bank Digital Currencies*

1. INTRODUCTION

Cryptocurrencies have shifted from a niche experiment to a focal point in debates about finance, security, and diplomacy. Since the publication of Nakamoto's white paper in 2008, digital currencies have proliferated and globalised, forcing scholars and policymakers to confront their implications for markets, regulation, and international order (Nakamoto, 2008). Early accounts treated the phenomenon primarily as a technological and economic innovation. Catalini and Gans (2020) emphasise blockchain's ability to lower transaction costs and disintermediate financial services, extending a long tradition of payments innovation. Yet, read narrowly, this framing obscures how design choices redistribute

authority: code does not merely optimise efficiency; it reallocates power over verification, access, and rule-setting. In short, efficiency is political.

As adoption grew, a second wave foregrounded risk and vulnerability. Dyhrberg (2021) compares Bitcoin's volatility to that of gold and the US dollar, casting crypto as a speculative and unstable asset class. Volatility metrics are instructive, but they can reduce a political economy to a price series; speculation is a symptom of unsettled governance, not its cause. In parallel, forensic and regulatory studies highlight illicit use, from ransomware to terrorism financing, reframing crypto as a problem of policing and compliance (Chainalysis, 2023). Such diagnoses are indispensable for enforcement, but they risk collapsing a multidimensional phenomenon into crime control. The Nigerian experience, for example, demonstrates that crypto simultaneously expands access while straining anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing capacity (Oladipupo & Amodu, 2023). Focusing solely on criminalisation misses how actors appropriate the same rails for remittances, hedging, and humanitarian transfers.

A third, more recent strand situates digital money within international political economy and global order. Scott (2022) argues that decentralised finance unsettles rule-making arrangements dominated by Western institutions; the claim is persuasive precisely because governance follows infrastructure, not the other way round. Zalan (2024) projects that central bank digital currencies (CBDCs), notably China's digital yuan, could recalibrate monetary hierarchies and empower coalitions such as BRICS. This geopolitical turn helpfully widens the aperture beyond markets and compliance, but it can slide into determinism: CBDCs need not automatically dethrone the dollar; they may pluralise hierarchy rather than replace it.

Together, these strands form an invested pyramid of scholarship: economic and technical analyses at the base, risk-centric studies in the middle, and geopolitical treatments at the apex. The pyramid has value but remains fragmented. Efficiency-oriented work often abstracts itself from politics; enforcement-focused studies foreground crime while sidelining systemic reconfiguration; geopolitical essays provide breadth, yet can be speculative and under-theorised. Few attempts have assembled these tiers into a coherent account of how cryptocurrencies could transform international relations over the medium term. The practical landscape is moving faster than institutions. States are piloting CBDCs, with China's digital yuan at scale. The European Union is exploring a digital euro, while private issuers expand dollar-linked stablecoins across emerging markets. Regulatory debates in the United States continue, and African jurisdictions oscillate between prohibition and cautious adoption as frameworks evolve. Simultaneously, non-state actors exploit crypto for sanctions evasion and for humanitarian relief, often on the same rails. Global governance has responded unevenly: standard-setters have updated recommendations, yet there is no universally

accepted framework, and coordination lags practice. The resulting gap between technological acceleration and institutional adaptation risks a governance vacuum in which power relations harden before norms are settled.

Existing research tends to look backward, cataloguing uses and abuses after the fact. Weiss (2019) warns that global governance typically reacts slowly to disruptive change, allowing asymmetries to consolidate before rules emerge. Applied here, the risk is clear: by the time coherent oversight is negotiated, the distribution of monetary and regulatory influence may already have shifted irreversibly. What is missing is systematic foresight that integrates technical, regulatory, and geopolitical lenses to map plausible futures rather than only explain the past.

A Delphi approach is well suited to this task. Unlike speculative essays or single-issue case studies, Delphi elicits and refines expert judgement across iterative rounds, exposing both convergence and principled divergence. In a domain where robust datasets are scarce and trajectories are contested, structured expert elicitation can discipline anticipation and surface policy-relevant possibilities. Crucially, it treats expectations as part of the phenomenon under study: what experts believe to be likely shapes what policymakers prepare to do. The theoretical stance is constructivist. Realist and liberal-institutionalist perspectives rightly stress material power and cooperation problems, but they underplay how ideas, narratives, and legitimacy claims guide choices under uncertainty. Constructivism foregrounds the social construction of norms and authority: how actors talk about technology conditions how they govern it. Pairing constructivism with Delphi allows expert discourse to be analysed not only as commentary on outcomes but as a driver of them.

This study's originality is threefold. First, it synthesises economic, security, and geopolitical literatures to frame cryptocurrency as a multidimensional force in international relations. Second, it uses Delphi to generate empirically grounded foresight where conjecture often dominates. Third, it extends constructivist analysis to the digital monetary realm by showing how shared expectations contour governance trajectories.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although scholarship on cryptocurrency has expanded across economics, technology, and geopolitics, it remains fragmented and inconclusive about how digital currencies reshape global governance. Economic and technological studies often emphasise innovation and efficiency, while security analyses focus narrowly on illicit finance and regulatory control. Geopolitical perspectives, though increasingly visible, frequently rely on speculative assumptions rather than empirical evidence. Consequently, existing research fails to explain how decentralised cryptocurrencies and state-backed central bank digital currencies

(CBDCs) jointly influence authority, legitimacy, and cooperation within the international system. This conceptual and empirical gap leaves uncertainty over whether digital currencies will strengthen multilateral governance or reinforce fragmentation and regional power dynamics. Moreover, little is known about how expert and policy discourses themselves shape the norms and expectations guiding cryptocurrency governance. Addressing this gap is crucial for understanding the evolving architecture of global authority in the digital era and for informing coherent regulatory and diplomatic responses.

3. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Cryptocurrency is often used as a blanket term, yet conceptually it encompasses diverse instruments whose international significance differs. To clarify this terrain, it is useful to interrogate three distinct strands, permissionless cryptocurrencies, stablecoins, and central bank digital currencies (CBDCs), each of which has been treated in the literature with varying emphases. When read together, they reflect what may be described as an **invested pyramid of scholarship**, where economic analyses form the base, risk-focused studies occupy the middle, and geopolitical examinations represent the apex.

i. Permissionless cryptocurrencies

At the base of the pyramid, much of the early scholarship has focused on permissionless cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin and Ethereum. These studies largely emphasise their economic or technological features, efficiency, cost reduction, and disintermediation. Narayanan (2021) highlights how decentralised blockchains promise financial liberation from intermediaries. While persuasive, this interpretation underestimates the political consequences of circumventing state control. Evidence shows that permissionless cryptocurrencies are used by sanctioned states and non-state actors to evade restrictions, including North Korea's exploitation of stolen crypto-assets (Elliptic, 2022). Thus, rather than simply technical innovations, these assets should be understood as tools that destabilise conventional notions of state monetary sovereignty.

Even positive narratives require interrogation. Narula (2022), for example, documents how crypto donations supported humanitarian aid in Ukraine. While this suggests the inclusionary potential of permissionless assets, it simultaneously illustrates the difficulty of enforcing sanctions, blurring the line between humanitarian and strategic uses. Chainalysis (2023) similarly underscores their role in criminal finance, but such framing risks reducing the debate to policing, ignoring their transformative role in shifting authority away from states. Critically, permissionless cryptocurrencies embody a paradox: they provide both financial empowerment and regulatory evasion. Their conceptual value lies in exposing the limits of state-centric governance in international finance.

ii. Stablecoins

Moving up the pyramid, stablecoins attract attention for their systemic risks and regulatory dilemmas. Unlike permissionless cryptocurrencies, they are pegged to reserve assets, offering price stability and practical use in payments. BIS (2023) reports that stablecoins now constitute a growing share of global crypto markets, particularly in emerging economies where they serve as “digital dollars.” Yet framing them solely as financial inclusion tools would be misleading. Arner, Auer, and Frost (2022) stress that stablecoins, by concentrating liquidity in private issuers, can destabilise banking systems. This argument reveals an important shift: stablecoins not only extend dollar dominance but also redistribute power from states to corporations. The collapse of TerraUSD in 2022 illustrates this risk vividly. Lyons and Viswanath-Natraj (2023) demonstrate how algorithmic stablecoins can unravel, triggering contagion across digital markets. But the significance is not merely financial fragility; it lies in the fact that private actors now hold quasi-sovereign influence by issuing tokens that circulate globally. Gabor and Vestergaard (2022) describe this as a “shadow infrastructure,” but their account underplays the geopolitical implications. If stablecoins reinforce dollar hegemony while weakening state oversight, they complicate the very notion of sovereignty. This suggests that stablecoins operate as hybrid instruments, neither fully decentralised nor state-controlled, creating new tensions in international relations.

iii. Central bank digital currencies (CBDCs)

At the apex of the pyramid lie CBDCs, which have shifted scholarly focus from risks to geopolitics. CBDCs represent the state’s attempt to reassert control in a digital financial order. Brunnermeier, James, and Landau (2021) argue that they expand monetary sovereignty into the digital realm, embedding policy tools directly into programmable money. This reading is compelling but risks presenting CBDCs as purely domestic innovations. In practice, they are deeply geopolitical. The Atlantic Council (2025) notes that more than 130 countries are now exploring CBDCs, with China leading global pilots. BIS (2024) further documents how cross-border CBDC platforms, such as Project mBridge, could bypass SWIFT, thereby reducing Western leverage in sanctions enforcement.

Zalan (2024) interprets these developments as a strategic challenge to US dollar primacy. Yet it is not only about great power rivalry. CBDCs also risk fragmenting global governance by producing regional “clubs” of interoperability rather than universal frameworks (Gouveia et al., 2023). This fragmentation suggests that CBDCs are not merely monetary instruments but instruments of statecraft, reshaping alignments and contestations in global order. Thus, CBDCs mark a shift from decentralisation towards re-centralisation, where states reclaim authority in new, technologically mediated ways.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative Delphi design to investigate expert perceptions of the future of cryptocurrency in international relations. The Delphi method was selected because it is well-suited to exploring complex issues where empirical datasets are limited but expert judgement provides valuable foresight (Nasa, Jain, & Juneja, 2021). By using successive rounds of inquiry and controlled feedback, the method enables structured dialogue while avoiding dominance by particular individuals, since all responses remain anonymous. The study population consisted of experts with demonstrable knowledge of cryptocurrency, central bank digital currencies, and global financial governance. Participants were drawn from three domains: academia, regulatory and policy institutions, and industry. To ensure diversity, recruitment emphasised geographical balance and sectoral representation.

The sample size was set at 30 experts. In Delphi research, the emphasis is on the depth and quality of expertise rather than statistical representativeness. Methodological literature suggests that panels of between 15 and 30 participants provide sufficient heterogeneity while maintaining manageability (Niederberger & Spranger, 2020). The chosen number therefore aligns with established guidance and ensured a broad spectrum of insights without compromising iterative analysis. A purposive sampling technique was employed. Experts were identified through academic publications, policy reports, and professional networks, and were invited based on at least five years of relevant experience or a proven record of research and practice in the field.

The Delphi process proceeded through three rounds. The first set of gathered open-ended views was thematically coded. The second circulated a synthesis of themes for refinement, while the third sought further elaboration on points of convergence and divergence. Analysis was conducted using qualitative thematic coding, allowing dominant narratives and contested positions to be distilled across rounds.

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs new constructivism and the concept of norm entrepreneurship to frame the analysis of cryptocurrency in the context of international relations. Previous research applying constructivism to money has primarily highlighted how the value and meaning of currency are socially constructed, showing that money is not merely an economic object but also a political institution shaped by ideas and norms (McCourt, 2022). While this body of work has been valuable, it has often been retrospective, describing how norms became embedded once institutions had already formed.

The present study uses constructivism differently by focusing on the performative role of expert expectations in shaping emerging governance regimes. Through the Delphi process,

expert perceptions are treated not only as interpretations of reality but also as constitutive elements that can guide agendas, institutional choices, and normative frameworks. By capturing the way in which experts anticipate the future role of cryptocurrencies and central bank digital currencies (CBDCs), the study extends constructivist inquiry from ex post explanation to ex ante foresight. This approach highlights how discourse today can set the boundaries of tomorrow's governance arrangements (McCourt, 2022).

Alongside this, the framework draws on norm entrepreneurship, which describes how actors advance preferred standards and practices within international regimes. Earlier applications have concentrated on multilateral contexts such as human rights or environmental governance (Radu, 2021). In contrast, this study applies norm entrepreneurship to the contested domain of cryptocurrency, demonstrating how central banks, private developers, and regulatory networks compete to set technical and ethical standards for cross-border use. In doing so, the study critiques institutionalist assumptions of inevitable convergence, suggesting instead that fragmented regional governance may persist as the dominant outcome (Abbott & Faude, 2022).

6. RESULTS

The Delphi process generated a set of recurring themes that illustrate how experts perceive the future of cryptocurrency in international relations. Across the three rounds, views crystallised around three focal areas: the role of permissionless cryptocurrencies, the evolution of stablecoins, and the strategic significance of central bank digital currencies (CBDCs).

i. Permissionless Cryptocurrencies

In the first round, experts highlighted both opportunities and risks associated with permissionless cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin and Ethereum. Several noted their potential to promote financial inclusion in fragile economies with weak banking infrastructure, citing examples from Africa and Latin America. At the same time, participants expressed concern about their use for illicit purposes, including sanctions evasion, ransomware, and terrorism financing. By the third round, there was strong convergence on the view that permissionless cryptocurrencies will remain part of the international system but will not displace state-issued money. Instead, they are likely to persist as parallel instruments used by both marginalised communities and illicit actors.

ii. Stablecoins

Stablecoins emerged as a distinct theme. Experts agreed that they are increasingly embedded in cross-border payments and remittances, particularly in regions experiencing inflation and currency volatility. Several participants observed that dollar-linked stablecoins reinforce the

primacy of the United States currency in digital form, while others warned of vulnerabilities associated with private issuers. There was less agreement on the long-term resilience of stablecoins. Some predicted greater regulatory oversight, especially in Europe under the Markets in Crypto-Assets Regulation (MiCA), while others argued that systemic risks—such as sudden de-pegging—make them unstable foundations for the global financial system.

iii. central bank digital currencies (CBDCs)

The strongest convergence across the panel concerned CBDCs. Experts consistently identified them as the most consequential development for the future of international monetary governance. Participants pointed to China’s digital yuan as the leading experiment, with the European Union and several developing countries also advancing projects. By the third round, there was consensus that CBDCs will not only extend monetary sovereignty into the digital era but also reshape global power relations. Most experts predicted that cross-border CBDC initiatives, such as Project mBridge, would challenge the dominance of Western-controlled infrastructures like SWIFT. However, there was divergence on whether these projects would produce universal standards or lead to a more fragmented landscape of regional blocs.

7. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of this Delphi study highlight three focal domains where cryptocurrency intersects with international relations: the continued relevance of permissionless cryptocurrencies, the contested role of stablecoins, and the transformative significance of central bank digital currencies (CBDCs). While the findings confirm some of the trends reported in the literature, they also diverge in notable ways, particularly in predicting persistent governance fragmentation and in emphasising the performative role of expectations.

i. Permissionless Cryptocurrencies and the Limits of Sovereignty

The expert panel converged on the view that permissionless cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin and Ethereum will remain part of the international system but are unlikely to displace sovereign money. This finding is consistent with Houben and Snyers (2022), who note that while cryptocurrencies provide alternative financial infrastructures, their volatility and scalability constraints limit systemic dominance. At the same time, the experts’ emphasis on their parallel use, both for financial inclusion and illicit finance, expands the conversation beyond simple binaries of adoption or rejection. This duality has been recognised in earlier research. Narula (2022) documents the role of cryptocurrencies in supporting humanitarian aid to Ukraine, while Elliptic (2022) highlights their deployment in sanctions evasion. The present study’s contribution lies in showing that these seemingly contradictory uses are not

anomalies but co-existing realities that will shape international governance debates. Rather than treating permissionless assets as either threats or opportunities, the findings suggest that they embody the limits of sovereignty in the digital age, operating at the margins yet impossible to eliminate. This underscores Scott's (2022) claim that cryptocurrencies complicate global enforcement regimes, but it adds nuance by emphasising their simultaneous empowerment of marginalised communities.

ii. Stablecoins and Hybrid Monetary Authority

The findings on stablecoins reveal both continuity with existing literature and novel insights. Experts widely acknowledged that dollar-linked stablecoins such as USDT and USDC extend the global role of the United States dollar into digital form. This supports Prasad's (2021) argument that the digital revolution may entrench existing monetary hierarchies rather than disrupt them. At the same time, the panel highlighted risks of concentration of power in private issuers, a concern echoed by Gabor and Vestergaard (2022), who describe stablecoins as forming a "shadow infrastructure" of global finance. Where the study diverges is in the panel's scepticism regarding the stability of stablecoins as long-term anchors of global finance. The collapse of TerraUSD in 2022 was cited repeatedly, aligning with Lyons and Viswanath-Natraj's (2023) findings on the fragility of algorithmic pegging. However, the experts went further, predicting that while regulation such as the EU's *Markets in Crypto-Assets* (MiCA) will stabilise some issuers, the systemic risk of overreliance on corporate monetary authority will persist. This contrasts with more optimistic accounts that see stablecoins as natural intermediaries until CBDCs achieve scale (Arner et al., 2022). The implication is that stablecoins are not a transitional phase but a durable, contested feature of the global monetary order, reflecting a hybridisation of public and private authority.

iii. CBDCs, Sovereignty, and Geopolitical Rivalry

The strongest consensus emerged around CBDCs, which experts identified as the most consequential development for global governance. This finding aligns with the growing body of work on CBDCs as instruments of monetary sovereignty (Brunnermeier, James, & Landau, 2021) and geopolitical competition (Zalan, 2024). The panel underscored that CBDCs are not merely technical innovations but embodiments of state power, extending sovereignty into programmable infrastructures. What is particularly striking is the convergence on the expectation of governance fragmentation. While institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the Financial Action Task Force have encouraged harmonisation (FATF, 2024), the experts doubted that universal standards will emerge. Instead, they predicted that regional "clubs" of interoperability, such as the BIS-led Project mBridge, will dominate. This confirms Abbott and Faude's (2022) analysis of regime complexity but diverges from institutionalist accounts that assume eventual multilateral

convergence. The result is a vision of a pluralised order where governance is overlapping, uneven, and contested. The geopolitical stakes were also highlighted. The experts' view that CBDCs could erode the dominance of Western-controlled infrastructures such as SWIFT echoes concerns expressed in policy debates (BIS, 2024). However, they added nuance by recognising that technical and political obstacles may slow this process, meaning that CBDCs are less likely to replace the dollar outright and more likely to coexist alongside it in fragmented regimes. This finding challenges linear narratives of “dollar decline” and suggests a more complex scenario of partial disintermediation.

In sum, the findings of this study confirm aspects of earlier scholarship, such as the limited systemic role of permissionless assets, the risks of stablecoins, and the sovereignty implications of CBDCs, while diverging in two critical respects. First, the study predicts persistent fragmentation rather than eventual convergence in governance. Second, it highlights the performative role of expectations in shaping outcomes, thereby extending constructivist theory beyond retrospective explanation.

8. THRUST OF THE WORK

The central thrust of this study is that cryptocurrencies have evolved beyond financial innovations to represent a reconfiguration of authority within the international system. The Delphi findings reveal that digital currencies, whether permissionless cryptocurrencies, stablecoins, or central bank digital currencies (CBDCs), function as competing expressions of sovereignty, legitimacy, and governance. This study, therefore, positions cryptocurrency as a conceptual and theoretical bridge linking international political economy with constructivist understandings of power, norms, and identity in global finance. At the heart of this argument lies the recognition that cryptocurrencies embody a continuum of authority. Permissionless assets reflect radical decentralisation, removing monetary control from states and placing it in distributed networks. Stablecoins illustrate hybrid monetary authority, where private corporations exercise quasi-sovereign influence through the issuance of globally circulating tokens. CBDCs represent the state's attempt to reassert control via digital means, fusing sovereignty with technological centralisation. This triadic continuum challenges traditional binaries between public and private, national and transnational, and legitimate and illicit, suggesting instead that monetary authority is fluid, contested, and negotiated across diverse actors.

Conceptually, this continuum demonstrates that cryptocurrency is not merely a technological disruption but a political phenomenon. It reopens fundamental questions about who governs value, whose norms shape the rules of exchange, and how legitimacy is constructed in an era where code, rather than law alone, defines participation. Earlier studies, such as Brunnermeier, James, and Landau (2021) and Gabor and Vestergaard (2022), identified

similar tensions but interpreted them mainly through institutional or macroeconomic lenses. The present study extends these debates by showing that these tensions are enduring features of an evolving international order, challenging policy assumptions (FATF, 2024) that regulatory convergence is inevitable.

Theoretically, the findings reinforce and extend constructivist perspectives by demonstrating the performative power of expert expectations. Traditional constructivism has treated norms and meanings as retrospective explanations of behaviour, whereas this study shows that expert expectations actively shape institutional trajectories. For instance, the shared anticipation of a fragmented governance system legitimises fragmentation as a normal and even desirable outcome. This extends McCourt's (2022) "new constructivism" by emphasising that discourse is generative; it creates realities by defining what actors consider possible or legitimate. The study also advances norm entrepreneurship theory by illustrating how central banks, regulatory networks, private developers, and international institutions promote distinct norms of digital money. Earlier applications of this theory, such as Radu's (2021) analysis of internet governance, explored norm formation in contested transnational spaces. Here, that logic is applied to monetary governance, showing that digital currencies have become platforms for competing norm diffusion: central banks advance sovereignty, corporations pursue efficiency, and crypto communities champion autonomy. The coexistence of these narratives produces a polycentric system where norm competition, rather than consensus, defines the governance landscape.

Empirically, the study's findings both corroborate and challenge existing knowledge. They affirm Scott's (2022) view that cryptocurrencies complicate sanctions enforcement and support Zalan's (2024) argument that CBDCs serve as instruments of statecraft. However, they contest deterministic models predicting eventual harmonisation, such as those informing FATF (2024) and IMF guidance. Instead, the Delphi consensus points toward structural fragmentation--a condition where governance diversity becomes a stable and self-reinforcing equilibrium. This reframes fragmentation from policy failure to an emergent form of global order. The broader theoretical implication is that international relations must move beyond the twentieth-century expectation of convergence. The global monetary system now reflects an era of adaptive pluralism, where multiple centres of authority coexist, interact, and compete. The study thus contributes to the refinement of constructivist and regime complexity theories by demonstrating how digital infrastructures embed and reproduce this pluralism. Ultimately, the thrust of this work implies a paradigmatic shift in global governance. Governance should no longer be viewed as a static set of rules and institutions, but as a dynamic negotiation among actors with divergent technological capacities, normative commitments, and strategic objectives. This aligns with Abbott and Faude's (2022) observation that global institutions are often chosen for their flexibility and low

coordination costs, yet extends it by showing that, in the digital era, such flexibility can institutionalise fragmentation itself.

9. CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the future of cryptocurrency in international relations by examining expert perceptions, predictions, and implications for global governance. The findings demonstrate that cryptocurrency has evolved beyond its origin as a technological or financial innovation to become a central instrument in the reorganisation of global authority. The study revealed that permissionless cryptocurrencies, stablecoins, and central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) represent distinct yet interlinked layers of power and governance within the international system.

At the conceptual level, the study establishes that cryptocurrencies form a continuum of authority that transcends traditional distinctions between public and private control. Permissionless cryptocurrencies embody the ideals of decentralisation, challenging state sovereignty and creating spaces of financial autonomy for individuals and communities. Stablecoins reflect a hybrid form of corporate monetary power, allowing private institutions to exercise influence over global financial stability and cross-border transactions. CBDCs, meanwhile, represent the state's strategic response, an effort to reassert sovereignty through digital means by embedding national currencies in programmable infrastructures. This triadic continuum illustrates that power in the digital economy no longer resides exclusively with governments or markets but circulates dynamically among multiple actors.

Theoretically, the study highlights that the discourse and expectations surrounding cryptocurrencies are as influential as their technological design. Through the Delphi process, it became clear that expert expectations do not merely forecast the future of digital currencies; they shape it. When experts collectively anticipate a fragmented global governance landscape, such a perception itself helps to legitimise fragmentation as a likely and acceptable outcome. This demonstrates that global governance is not passively shaped by technological inevitabilities but is actively constructed through the interactions, beliefs, and strategic foresight of key stakeholders.

A major thrust of this work lies in revealing that fragmentation may itself become a form of order in the emerging global system. Rather than viewing fragmentation as a failure of regulation or coordination, this study suggests it represents a new equilibrium characterised by diversity, adaptability, and competitive coexistence. Different regions, alliances, and regulatory bodies are likely to develop frameworks that reflect their unique economic and political priorities. Consequently, the future of global governance in the digital monetary

sphere will not be one of uniformity but of layered pluralism, an order in which multiple regimes operate simultaneously and sometimes competitively.

The implications for theory and practice are profound. For international relations, the findings reaffirm that money and technology are not merely economic tools but sites of political negotiation, identity formation, and power contestation. For policymakers, the study underscores the need to rethink governance as a dynamic, multi-level process rather than a quest for uniform global consensus. The digital transformation of finance thus presents both opportunities for inclusion and risks of inequality, depending on how different actors, states, corporations, and communities, assert their authority within this evolving landscape.

In conclusion, cryptocurrency has become a pivotal frontier in the politics of the twenty-first century. It represents a new architecture of power in which legitimacy, sovereignty, and control are continually negotiated across digital platforms. The future of cryptocurrency in international relations will be defined not by a single trajectory but by a complex interaction of decentralised innovation, corporate influence, and state adaptation.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Since universal convergence in regulation is unlikely, regional and inter-regional cooperation frameworks should be strengthened to harmonise standards and reduce systemic risks without imposing rigid global rules.
- ii. Governments, central banks, and private issuers should engage in constructive dialogue to balance innovation with accountability and to ensure that digital currencies advance public welfare rather than narrow corporate or political interests.
- iii. National and regional CBDC initiatives should be developed with interoperability in mind to prevent financial fragmentation and promote seamless cross-border transactions, especially among developing economies.
- iv. Since decentralised cryptocurrencies continue to serve communities excluded from formal finance, educational and policy initiatives should be introduced to protect users from exploitation while enhancing responsible participation.
- v. Policymakers and scholars should integrate foresight techniques, such as Delphi studies, into regulatory and academic planning processes to anticipate the evolving norms and expectations that shape digital governance.
- vi. Future research should bridge economics, law, technology, and international relations to provide holistic insights into the governance of emerging digital monetary systems and their geopolitical implications.

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Aquatic Life, Environmental Degradation, and Conflict among Egbema and Itsekiri Communities in Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The sustenance and socio-economic identity of the Egbema and Itsekiri communities of Delta State are dependent on their aquatic ecosystem. However, pervasive environmental degradation due to oil spills and unregulated industrial activities has triggered a drastic decline in fish stocks, exacerbated local poverty, and intensified inter-communal tensions over dwindling resources. Through an integrated mixed-methods case study, this paper analyses contemporaneous data on fisheries depletion, environmental degradation, and conflict manifestations between the Egbema and Itsekiri peoples. Drawing on empirical, policy, and ethnographic sources, the paper argues that environmental harm directly undermines local livelihoods, amplifies mutual suspicion, and fuels violent conflicts. The findings underscore the necessity for environmentally sensitive resource management, equitable benefit-sharing, and inclusive peacebuilding mechanisms as foundations for sustainable development and harmony in the Niger Delta.

Keywords: Aquatic, ecosystem, Environmental Degradation, Conflict, Egbema, Itsekiri.

1. INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, the interaction between environmental resources, economic livelihoods, and intergroup conflict has been the subject of increasing scholarly and policy concern. Natural resources—especially those tied to the necessities of life such as food and water—are pivotal for the survival, stability, and prosperity of communities (Homer-Dixon, 2010). However, in many regions, the overexploitation and degradation of these resources have not only diminished their availability but have also significantly raised the stakes for competition, thereby fuelling sociopolitical tensions, mistrust, and even outright violence (UNEP, 2019; Okpara et al., 2016). Fisheries, in particular, hold a special position in this discourse, as they represent both a biophysical resource and a critical socio-economic staple, supporting hundreds of millions of livelihoods across diverse geographies, cultures, and economies.

The global crisis of aquatic resource depletion is multifaceted. Estimates from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) indicate that over 34% of the world's marine fish stocks have been fished beyond biological sustainability, mainly due to overfishing, pollution, and ecosystem mismanagement (FAO, 2022). In addition to the direct ecological consequences—such as the collapse of fish populations and disruption of aquatic food chains—these trends pose significant socio-economic threats, particularly in lower- and middle-income countries, where communities heavily depend on fish for both food and income. Globally, as fish populations decline, resource users—especially artisanal fishers—find themselves competing fiercely with one another and external actors for access, rights, and survival (Béné et al., 2016).

This challenge is particularly dire in many parts of Africa. The continent's freshwater and marine fisheries are renowned for their diversity and productivity, serving as both a nutritional lifeline and an economic backbone for millions (Ovie & Belal, 2012). However, the sustainability of these fisheries is threatened by a confluence of factors: rapid population growth, unregulated exploitation, industrial and oil-related pollution, habitat destruction, and the effects of climate change (Nwafili & Gao, 2020). In West and Central Africa, the situation is further compounded by weak policy frameworks and the prevalence of extractive industries, including oil and gas, which are notorious for their broad environmental footprint. Across these regions, resource competition—often exacerbated by ethnic plurality and contested political arrangements—has acted as a direct and indirect catalyst for a wide range of conflicts, from small-scale disputes to large-scale armed violence (FAO, 2022; Okpara et al., 2016).

Nigeria, the continent's most populous nation and a regional economic powerhouse, encapsulates many of these dynamics in concentrated form. Renowned for both its hydrocarbon wealth and its rich aquatic ecosystems, Nigeria's fisheries and inland water bodies sustain an estimated 24 million people through fishing, processing, and marketing activities (Yakubu, 2020). However, Nigeria also faces some of Africa's most acute ecological distress challenges, notably in the Niger Delta. The Niger Delta, situated in southern Nigeria, remains one of Africa's most ecologically diverse yet economically paradoxical regions. While the Delta is globally recognised for its vast hydrocarbon resources, which constitute the backbone of Nigeria's oil economy and generate immense wealth for the nation, it is simultaneously plagued by pronounced environmental vulnerability and social unrest (Nwankwo & Ifeadi, 2019). The region's intricate network of rivers, mangroves, and estuaries supports rich biodiversity, with fisheries serving as a vital source of nutrition, employment, and cultural identity for millions (Aleke et al., 2022). For indigenous communities such as the Egbema and Itsekiri, traditional fishing practices are not

merely economic activities but are deeply woven into the fabric of communal life, governance, and ritual.

However, the Niger Delta's story is also one of profound ecological distress and social fragmentation. Over the past several decades, the unchecked extraction of oil, coupled with recurrent oil spills, gas flaring, and other industrial activities, has led to the degradation of rivers and aquatic habitats—eroding the environmental foundation upon which local livelihoods depend (UNEP, 2019; Uwadibia & Ebikake, 2021). The legacy of pollution has not only diminished fish stocks but has rendered vast tracts of water unsafe for both human use and marine ecosystems. The effects are far-reaching: with declining fisheries, local food security is undermined, economic hardship intensifies, and traditional coping mechanisms become strained.

Against this backdrop, recurring episodes of violent conflict have emerged between the Egbema and Itsekiri communities, frequently fueled by competition over limited access to productive fishing grounds, contested territorial boundaries, and allegations of political exclusion in resource governance (Ofuani et al., 2022; Ojo, 2021). Historic grievances rooted in colonial land demarcations, as well as modern struggles for control over oil-derived benefits, have compounded socio-ecological tensions. Moreover, environmental changes have polarised relations, with each group perceiving the other as both a competitor and, at times, an obstacle to ecological restoration.

Despite the proliferation of governmental interventions and reports, systemic challenges persist—manifesting in ongoing violence, deepening poverty, and the erosion of social cohesion. The persistence of these flashpoints signals a complex interweaving of environmental injustice, livelihood insecurity, and political marginalisation. Therefore, a rigorous analysis of the interplay between fisheries decline, environmental degradation, and conflict is essential for both scholarly understanding and the design of sustainable, context-sensitive policy responses.

This paper aims to examine the relationship between fisheries depletion, environmental degradation, and intergroup conflict among the Egbema and Itsekiri. It builds on empirical research and recent policy developments to critically assess the drivers of contention, the lived experiences of affected communities, and the potential pathways to peace and environmental restoration in the Delta.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Fisheries have historically anchored the socio-economic life of Delta State's riverine communities, functioning as both a primary food source and a linchpin of local economies (Aleke et al., 2022). Fish and aquatic products are not only central to household nutrition but

also underpin trade networks, cultural festivals, and social status among groups such as the Egbema and Itsekiri. Artisanal fishing, conducted using small boats and traditional gear, remains the dominant method, involving diverse segments of society, including men, women, and youth. According to Yakubu (2020), as many as 70% of rural Delta State households rely on artisanal fisheries for their main source of livelihood and income. The sector also supports a wider value chain, including fish smoking, processing, and trading, which are especially vital for women, who often serve as intermediaries in local and regional markets (Ogie & Ikeke, 2023).

The nutritional dependence on fish is significant in a region where alternative protein sources are scarce or expensive. Health studies have demonstrated that per capita fish consumption in the Niger Delta is among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, reflecting both cultural preferences and the absence of affordable substitutes (FAO, 2021). Any disruption in fisheries, therefore, not only erodes economic security but also threatens food sovereignty and communal stability.

Despite its ecological wealth, the Niger Delta is globally recognized as one of the most polluted deltas, primarily due to decades of oil extraction, poor environmental regulation, and criminal oil bunkering activities. Multi-decadal oil exploration by multinational and domestic companies has resulted in frequent oil spills, often devastating enormous swathes of farmlands, mangroves, and freshwater systems (UNEP, 2019). Gas flaring remains a chronic issue, releasing greenhouse gases and acidifying local ecosystems, which directly impacts aquatic productivity and water quality (Aleke et al., 2022). Illegal refineries and artisanal crude oil processing further exacerbate the problem, introducing toxic runoff and heavy metals into fragile habitats (Ofuani et al., 2022).

Table 1. Major sources and impacts of environmental degradation in Delta State (2018–2023)

Source	Identified Impact	Data Citation (Sample Studies)
Oil Spills	Fish mortality, contaminated waters	UNEP (2019); Nwankwo & Ifeadi (2019)
Gas Flaring	Acidification, reduced aquatic productivity	Aleke et al. (2022)
Illegal Refineries	Toxic runoff, habitat disruption	Ofuani et al. (2022)

The table above illustrates that oil spills in Delta State have direct environmental consequences, most notably fish mortality and contaminated water bodies. These effects have devastating impacts on both the ecosystem and local livelihoods that depend on fisheries and clean water. UNEP (2019) and Nwankwo & Ifeadi (2019) provide compelling

empirical evidence of the ecological and social costs of oil spills in the Niger Delta. Their work underscores how oil pollution drives resource scarcity, loss of livelihoods, and local grievances—factors that often escalate social tensions and conflict in resource-dependent communities. This research is foundational in linking environmental degradation from oil operations to broader patterns of unrest and conflict in the region.

Also, the practice of gas flaring results in acidification of the environment and reduction in aquatic productivity. Acidification affects soil and water quality, while loss of aquatic productivity threatens food security and incomes. Aleke et al. (2022) spotlight the environmental, economic, and health consequences of persistent gas flaring. Their analysis draws attention to how ongoing flaring not only degrades critical natural resources but also heightens community frustration, thus serving as an underlying driver of environmental conflict. The study adds to the discourse by emphasizing the cumulative impacts on agricultural and aquatic systems, exacerbating competition and disputes over declining resources.

Lastly, illegal refinery operations contribute to toxic runoff and significant habitat disruption. Such unregulated practices intensify pollution, damaging flora, fauna, and the sustainability of local ecosystems. Ofuani et al. (2022) focus on the role of informal and illegal petroleum refining as a key source of environmental harm. They argue that unregulated refining increases the toxic burden on water and land resources, further destabilizing traditional livelihoods and community well-being. Their findings extend the conversation about environmental conflict by illustrating how criminal economic activities, driven by poverty and governance gaps, perpetuate both ecological crises and social instability in Delta State.

Each of these studies deepens understanding of the links between environmental degradation and conflict in Delta State. By empirically demonstrating how oil spills, gas flaring, and illegal refineries degrade natural resources and threaten livelihoods, these works highlight the urgent need to address environmental harms as part of conflict prevention and sustainable development strategies in the region.

The cumulative effect of these environmental insults is profound: fish mortality rates have increased, breeding grounds have been decimated, and local water sources are often rendered unsafe for both humans and aquatic life. UNEP's (2019) landmark assessment concluded that full ecological recovery in many Delta sub-zones could take several decades unless urgent, comprehensive remediation is undertaken.

The close linkage between resource scarcity and social conflict is intensely visible in the Niger Delta. Environmental degradation has a direct impact on fisheries, shrinking the economic pie and amplifying competition among groups who traditionally managed shared

resources through customary agreements (Ideho & Adebayo, 2023). Diminishing fish catches have prompted accusations of encroachment as Egbema, Itsekiri, and other groups increasingly fish outside their customary territories, heightening tensions. Uwadibia and Ebikake (2021) observe that these environmental pressures often reignite long-standing land and political grievances, which are then expressed as violent confrontations or protracted disputes over access and tenure.

The relationship between the Egbema and Itsekiri is long and complex, shaped by both shared ecologies and rival colonial administrative boundaries. Historical accounts reveal cycles of cooperation and competition, but contemporary land and resource disputes are exacerbated by what Ojo (2021) describes as "ecological marginalization." In recent years, contestations over jurisdiction, compensation from oil companies, and claims to polluted lands have intensified, with conflict outbreaks often mapped to peak pollution or acute episodes of fishery collapse.

While there is broad agreement on the pattern of environmental distress and its role in local conflict, significant gaps remain in the existing literature. Notably, there is a lack of detailed research on how individual communities adapt and cope with ongoing fishery depletion. Furthermore, the nuanced impacts of these ecological changes—especially on women (who dominate processing and marketing) and youth (increasingly recruited into militancy or migration)—require more robust, longitudinal examination (Ogie & Ikeke, 2023). There is also limited engagement with how traditional institutions are evolving or failing to mediate these new forms of scarcity-induced conflict, leaving a critical area for further scholarly inquiry.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes mixed methods, integrating survey, focus group, and document analysis. The focus is on riverine settlements in Warri North and South-West LGAs with high Egbema and Itsekiri populations.

Quantitative: Structured questionnaires were administered to 400 respondents (200 Egbema, 200 Itsekiri; 55% female, 45% male) between January–April 2024.

1. Sample Proportion: $p = (\text{Number of respondents from a particular group}) / \text{Total sample size}$

e.g., proportion of Egbema respondents = $200/400 = 0.5$

2. Descriptive Statistics: Mean = $\Sigma (\text{scores}) / \text{Number of respondents}$

$$\text{Standard Deviation (SD)} = \sqrt{[\Sigma (x_i - \mu)^2 / (n - 1)]}$$

3. Inferential Statistics: ANOVA

Qualitative: 32 key informant interviews with traditional leaders, youth associations, and local government officials were conducted, along with three multi-ethnic focus groups.

Environmental Data: Satellite imagery and field water analysis (2018–2023) were used to compare fish stock volumes and water quality parameters.

1. Water Quality Index (WQI): $WQI = (\sum (\text{parameter value} / \text{standard value}) \times \text{weightage}) / \sum \text{weightage}$

2. Fish Stock Volume Comparison: $\text{Percentage change} = [(\text{New value} - \text{Old value}) / \text{Old value}] \times 100$

Statistical analysis was run using SPSS v28. Thematic coding was used for qualitative and documentary data, triangulated for validity.

4. RESULTS

1. Fisheries Depletion Patterns

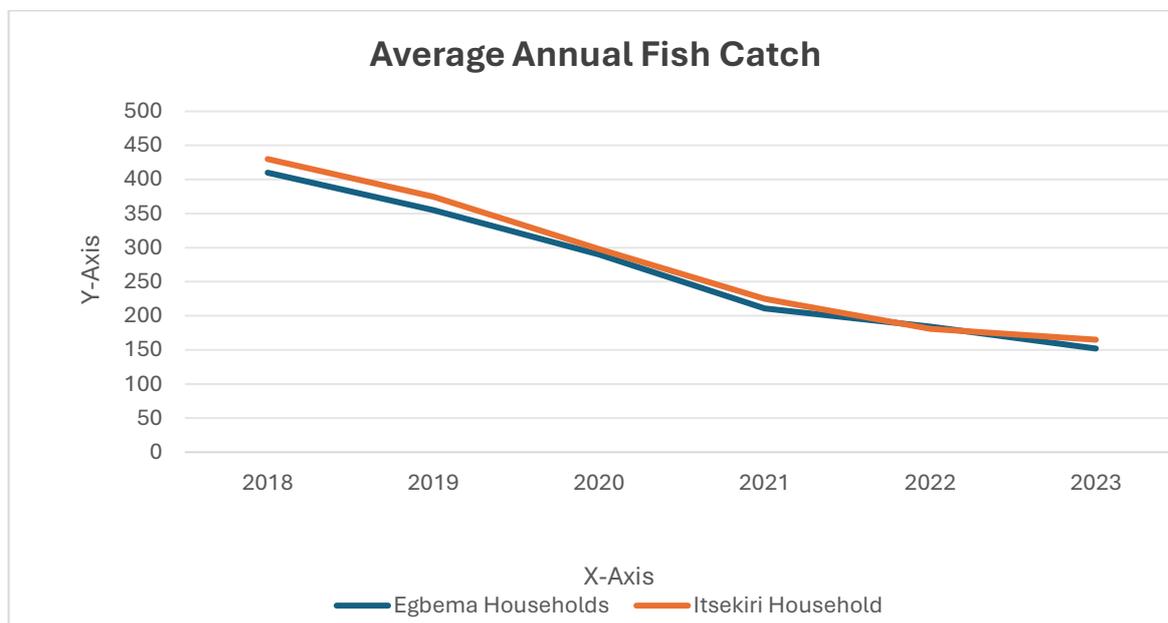
Survey data shows a 62% decline in average fish catch (per family, per season) from 2018 to 2023. Respondents attribute this to oil-related contamination and habitat loss.

Table 2. Average annual fish catch among representative Egbema and Itsekiri households (kg), 2018–2023

Year	Egbema Households	Itsekiri Households
2018	410	430
2019	355	375
2020	290	298
2021	211	225
2022	184	181
2023	152	165

Source: Field study 2024

Figure 1. Fish catch decline among the Egbema and Itsekiri 2018–2023



Source: Field study 2024

X-axis=Year; Y-axis=Fish catch per household

2. Environmental Degradation and Water Quality

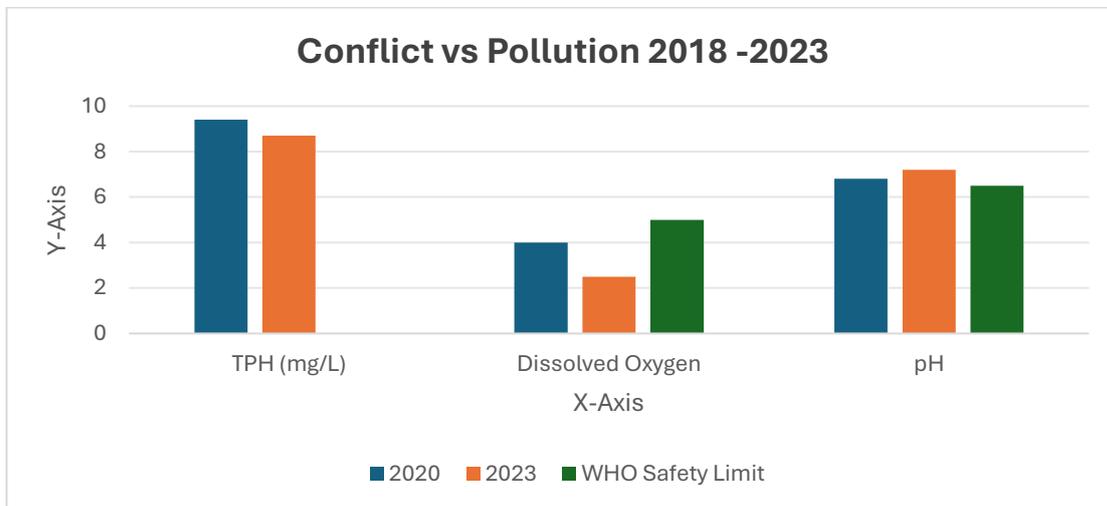
Water samples taken from six river sites indicate increasing levels of TPH (Total Petroleum Hydrocarbon) well above international safety thresholds since 2020. Qualitative accounts reveal persistent oil film, dead fish, and offensive odour in certain creeks.

Table 3. Key water quality parameters 2020 vs 2023 (Niger River tributaries, mean ± SD)

Parameter	2020	2023	WHO Safety Limit
TPH (mg/L)	9.4	18.7	0.01
Dissolved Oxygen	4.0	2.5	≥5.0
pH	6.8	7.2	6.5

There has been a spike in reported micro-conflicts (physical confrontations, property damage, intimidation) coinciding with periods of severe fishery loss/pollution.

Figure 2. Reported Intercommunal Conflict Incidents vs. Major Pollution Events (2018–2023)



Source: Field study 2024

X-axis=Year; Y-axis=Number of events

5. DISCUSSION

1. Resource Scarcity and Social Tension

The quantitative decline in fish stocks has fostered intense competition for prime fishing territories along the river, as respondents from both groups report "encroachment" by neighboring community members—a frequent flashpoint for violence and property destruction (Ogie & Ikeke, 2023).

2. Gendered and Generational Impacts

Focus group data reveals that women, who play central roles in fish processing and trade, face reduced incomes and rising household insecurity. Younger fishers express frustration with elders' inability to negotiate joint agreements, citing broken traditional mechanisms.

3. Environmental Justice and Exclusion

Both communities express anger at perceived government and oil company neglect. Local leaders highlight a lack of meaningful participation in compensation schemes and ecological remediation processes, which further entrenches mutual suspicion and "winner-takes-all" mentalities.

4. Summary Table

Table 4. Multi-dimensional impacts of environmental degradation and fisheries depletion

Dimension	Manifestation	Reported by	Representative Quote
Economic	Loss of income, increased debt	Fishers, traders	"We catch less, earn less, and buy more"
Social	Breakdown of joint rituals	Elders, youth	"We fight over what used to unite us"
Political	Erosion of negotiation forums	Local leaders	"Now everyone fights for themselves"
Environmental	Water pollution, fish deaths	All groups	"Even the river is sick"

Policy and Peacebuilding Implications

1. Need for Inclusive Environmental Governance

The evidence shows that programmatic interventions must be both environmentally rigorous and socially inclusive. Mechanisms for joint environmental monitoring and benefit-sharing (such as co-managed fishery reserves) could reduce competition (FAO, 2021).

2. Culturally-Sensitive Peacebuilding

Conflict resolution strategies must recognize cultural histories, gendered roles, and grievances peculiar to both Egbema and Itsekiri (Ojo, 2021). Using peace committees with balanced, cross-community representation would create trusted dialogue.

3. Enhancing Community Agency

Restorative programs should harness indigenous ecological knowledge, empowering local actors in environmental remediation and alternative livelihood planning. Such efforts can build resilience and a shared sense of stewardship (Etemike et al., 2023).

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from evidence, the following multi-level recommendations are proposed:

1. Joint Fisheries Restoration Programs: Develop Egbema-Itsekiri-managed fish sanctuaries and restocking initiatives.
2. Strengthened Regulation and Pollution Control: Enforce stricter penalties for polluters, backed by independent community monitoring.

3. Peacebuilding Platforms: Establish regular forums for inter-community dialogue, conflict early warning, and participatory compensation schemes.
4. Women's Economic Empowerment: Support gender-specific alternative livelihoods and cooperative fish processing enterprises.
5. Data-driven Environmental Policy: Mandate transparent, community-accessible environmental and health data disclosures.

7. CONCLUSION

Fisheries depletion, driven by unchecked environmental degradation, lies at the heart of intensifying Egbema-Itsekiri conflict. Resolution demands integration—of ecological rehabilitation, equitable resource governance, and inclusive, gender-sensitive peacebuilding. The lessons from these communities are vital not only for Delta State, but for all resource-dependent, multi-ethnic regions in Africa confronting extractive environmental injustice.

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Gendered Dimensions of Environmental Conflict in Nigeria: The Role of Women in Inclusive Development and Peacebuilding

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Abstract

This study explores the gendered dimension of environmental conflicts in Nigeria, focusing on women's experiences and the role they play in inclusive development and peacebuilding. The objectives of the study were to investigate the effect of environmental conflicts on women, examine contributions of women to peacebuilding, and their role in inclusive development in Nigeria. Qualitative data collected from secondary sources, including academic literature, government reports, and publications of international agencies, were used for the study. The thematic analysis approach was employed to analyse the data. The findings show that environmental conflicts have a disproportionate impact on women. Women suffer livelihood loss, sexual violence and exploitation, financial insecurity, homelessness, health and well-being deterioration, and lose their lives as a result of gender conflicts in Nigeria. The findings also reveal that women play an essential role as negotiators, community peace agents, and mediators, and contribute to inclusive development during and after environmental conflicts. However, political marginalization, weak policy implementation, and sociocultural norms limit their participation in peacebuilding and promote inclusive development. The study contributes to the literature by strengthening the nexus between environmental conflicts, gender, and inclusive development, focusing on Nigeria. It therefore recommends the establishment of stronger frameworks to protect the rights of women during and after conflicts, and gender perspectives should be mainstreamed into developmental policies and management of environmental conflicts. Besides, the participation of women in peace processes should be institutionalized. Strengthening the economic empowerment of women is necessary for achieving inclusive development and sustainable peacebuilding.

Keywords: *Environmental Conflict, Women, Inclusive Development, Peacebuilding*

1. INTRODUCTION

Limited resources and environmental changes are implicated increasingly in non-violent and violent conflicts in Nigeria, due to several factors, including competition, water, land, arable soil, and grazing land, which interact with the shifting conditions of climate. These are driven by changes in land use, an increase in population, desertification, and erratic rainfall, among others, which have undermined food supply systems, heightened food insecurity, increased the intensity and frequency of disputes between farmers and herders, and other disputes between communities (Adigun, 2019; Stephen et al., 2022; Moses et al., 2023). Hence, a robust understanding of these processes through the lens of gender is essential. This is because social groups in societies are not affected equally by environmental conflicts. For instance, gender shapes vulnerability, exposure, strategies for coping, and opportunity to take part in decision-making regarding natural resources and processes of peacemaking.

Gender mediates how individuals in a society experience, cope, resist, and transform environmental conflicts. Men and women do not occupy the same social roles, have the same right to resources, and do not have the same coping strategies (Sweetman, 2008; De Pinto et al., 2020; Njuki et al., 2022). Hence, the impact and strategies for coping with environmental conflicts are gendered. In communities affected by environmental conflicts, women suffer displacement, gender-based violence, and financial insecurity, among others, significantly. Available evidence indicates that women are not only passive environmental conflicts victims but also mediate disputes, are reconciliation catalysts, and contribute to community reconciliation and inclusive development (O'reilly et al. 2015; UN Women, 2021; UNDP, 2025). Treating women as victims of environmental conflicts only obscures the essential roles they play in society, thus limiting the ability of policymakers to design robust, enduring, and inclusive interventions and policies.

Earlier literature suggests that the participation of women in restoring peace between parties in conflicts strengthens the sustainability of the peace outcomes. For instance, O'reilly et al. (2015) observed that when women are involved in peace agreements, the process of peacebuilding and reconciliation is more durable. Besides, their involvement makes peace agreements more equitable (Case et al., 2015). This strengthens peacebuilding and inclusive development. However, structural barriers, such as limited access to resources, cultural norms, legal exclusion, and exclusion from decision-making, limit the capacity of women to influence the peace-making process and decision-making. This potentially affects peacebuilding capacity and efforts to promote inclusive development during environmental conflicts in a society.

While the earlier literature explores environmental conflicts and gender, there is a paucity of studies on the gendered dimension of environmental conflicts, women's role in

peacebuilding, and inclusive development. The current study fills this gap in the literature. It assesses the gendered dimension of environmental conflicts in Nigeria, highlighting the role of women in the peacebuilding process and sustainable development in areas affected by conflicts.

Three interlocking imperatives motivate this study. Firstly, there is a policy need for an evidence-based nexus between environmental conflicts prevention and gender-sensitive programming. Secondly, literature on environmental conflicts in the context of Nigeria focused less on gender as a major analytic category, thereby presenting less robust insights for policymakers. Thirdly, promoting the inclusion of women in inclusive development and peacebuilding initiatives is a pragmatic strategy and a right obligation for strengthening social cohesion and resilience, particularly in societies that face recurrent environmental conflicts

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Environmental conflicts are disputes that arise from competition over environmental degradation, natural resources, and unbalanced access to ecological services and goods. They refer to social conflicts related to the environment (Scheidel et al., 2020). These conflicts are disagreements over environmental quality and natural resources that arise from competing human interests and impacts on socioecological systems (Sustainability Dictionary, 2025). Environmental conflict causes vary across the world, and how they manifest differ significantly. These causes include control over essential environmental resources, like fossil fuels, to struggles over resources provided by nature at the household or community level, where conflicts can manifest in different ways, including outright wars and even genocide, to disagreements over natural resources (Bob & Bronkhorst, 2011).

Environmental conflicts take different forms, such as economic, ethnic, social, religious, political, or territorial conflicts or conflicts over national interests, or over resources, or any other type of conflict triggered by environmental degradation, and characterized by the primary importance of environmental degradation (Miugua, 2022). According to the Sustainability Dictionary (2025), these conflicts arise when different stakeholders, such as corporations, communities, or governments, have opposing values or interests regarding the use, conservation, or management of natural resources. In Nigeria, environmental conflicts manifest in different ways, including oil-related pollution in the Niger Delta region, land degradation, particularly in agrarian communities, and farmer-herder conflicts, among others. These conflicts are embedded deeply in identity, survival, and livelihoods, with gender playing an essential role in shaping vulnerability, exposure, as well as capacity to respond.

Gender determines how individuals in a society experience environmental conflicts. Men and women occupy different political, economic, and social positions (Agbalajobi, 2009; Inyang et al., 2014). This potentially influences their access to resources, role, and strategies for coping. In patriarchal contexts such as Nigeria, women tend to rely on natural resources, especially in agriculture, petty trade, and fishing. This potentially makes them vulnerable to environmental conflicts disproportionately. The extant literature indicates that environmental conflicts intensify sexual exploitation, degradation of health and wellbeing for women, and gender-based violence (Afolabi, 2022; Pam-Hworo, 2024). For example, in conflict-prone areas in Nigeria, such as northern Nigeria and the Niger Delta region, women face forced marriage, abduction, and rape, among others, as a result of environmental conflicts (Omoniyi and Isibor, 2020). Moreover, environmental conflicts disrupt access to water and land economic activities, thereby aggravating financial security and the level of poverty among women (Afolabi, 2022; Chakma et al., 2024). This aligns with the observation by UNDP (2025) that environmental conflicts not only worsen insecurity but also worsen marginalisation.

Although women are disproportionately impacted by environmental conflicts. They contribute to peacebuilding and promote inclusive development after those conflicts (UN Women, 2021). In a study in Akinyele, Ibadan, women were not part of the leadership structure, the study discovered that patriarchal system was more pronounced among Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba ethnic extractions co-habiting in the community and recommended that cultural practices that deny women access in decision making process at all level be discouraged (Ala et al., 2023)

Furthermore, Women provide humanitarian support, mediate disputes, and promote dialogue and social cohesion in communities. Available evidence from Nigeria indicates that the inclusion of women in processes of peace contributes significantly to sustainable peace agreements and faster recovery of communities (Bukar, 2021). Globally, research indicates that peace agreements that involve women are about 35% more likely to last at least fifteen years (O'Reilly et al., 2015). One major reason for this is that women prioritise community welfare, reconciliation, and humanitarian need over political gains. In Nigeria, the involvement of women in post-conflict initiatives, particularly through civil society groups and local cooperatives, has strengthened inclusive development by enhancing healthcare, livelihood opportunities, education, etc. (UNDP, 2025)

Inclusive development, as suggested by Sen (1999), emphasizes equity, empowerment, and opportunities for all. The participation of women in the process of decision-making related to post-conflicts reconstruction and management of resources promotes economic resilience and social justice in a society (Verdier-Chouchane, 2016). Thus, empowering is not only a

human rights imperative but also a pragmatic strategy for achieving enduring peace and inclusive development (UN Women, 2021).

Despite the essential role of women, sociocultural and structural barriers have continued to hinder their participation in peacebuilding. deep-rooted gender stereotypes, paratracheal systems, economic marginalization, and limited access to education hinder the involvement of women in formal peace processes. For instance, the national action plan on women, peace, and security (2017-2020), among others, aims to raise the participation in conflict prevention and resolution, but its implementation is poor, particularly at the subnational level (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2017). Furthermore, gender mainstreaming absence in development and environmental policies hinder the integration of perspectives and in decision-making (Salaudeen & Gombi, 2019). Weak legal protections enforcement exposes women to exploitation, displacement, violence, and marginalization. This reinforces the need for stronger and robust gender-responsive frameworks and institutional mechanisms.

Earlier studies on conflicts and peacebuilding in Nigeria focus more on communal violence, political conflicts, and insurgency, with limited focus on environmental conflicts through a gender lens. Previous research treated women as victims rather than major actors in peacebuilding and inclusive development. Only a few studies explored how environmental conflicts intersect with inclusive development outcomes and gender inequality. This study, therefore, fills this gap in the literature by investigating the gendered impacts of environmental conflicts and underscores women's agency in peacebuilding and inclusive development. The study strengthens the discourse on the gender-conflict nexus, focusing on Nigeria, and offers policy-relevant insights for strengthening women's participation in sustainable peace and inclusive development.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data and Data Sources

The data used for this study are qualitative data obtained from the secondary sources. Qualitative data benefit research in several ways. For instance, Hecker and Kalpokas (2025) posit that qualitative data offer an in-depth data analysis and a more nuanced understanding of the problem or phenomenon. According to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2019), qualitative data produce research findings that assist in a better understanding of the complex reality of a given situation/phenomenon and its implications. Similarly, secondary data sources provide data from a wide range of sources, thereby enhancing the reliability of research findings (Ellram & Tale, 2016; Sisira & Jayewardene, 2022). Besides, the data eliminates any potential biases associated with data collected via interviews and

questionnaires (Robinovich & Cheon, 2011). To enhance the robustness of the data, we collected it from several sources, including policy documents and academic literature. The policy documents include international organisations' reports, non-governmental organisations' publications, and government white papers. The academic literature comprises scholarly books on gender conflict and development. Other sources of data for this study include international reports and grey literature. Recency, relevance, and credibility guided the data collection for this study. Only documents published between 2000 and 2025 were considered for the study.

3.2 Data Collection Procedure

The data used for this study were obtained from credible databases, including Science Direct, Scopus, Google Scholar, JSTOR, Web of Science, and Taylor & Francis. Besides, organizational repositories, which include the UNDP repository, Nigerian government policies, the UN repository and the UNICEF repository, provided important data sources for this study. Keywords were used to guide the data search. These include “gender and peacemaking in Nigeria”, “peacemaking and gender in Nigeria”, “environmental conflicts in Nigeria”, and “environmental conflict and women in Nigeria”. Other search terms are “women and peace building in Nigeria”, “the role of women in peacebuilding”, “the role of women in inclusive development in Nigeria”, “environmental conflicts and peacebuilding efforts women in Nigeria”, “women and inclusive development after conflicts in Nigeria”, and what role do women play in inclusive development in Nigeria?”. After obtaining the information, we curated the final text corpus based on thematic significance.

3.3 Data Analysis

In this study, we employed the thematic analysis technique to analyse the data. This analysis technique involved identifying and reporting data set patterns and interpreting these patterns for meanings inherent in them (Clarke & Braun, 2018; Xu & Zammit, 2020; Liebenberg et al., 2020). According to Elliott (2018), it is concerned with identifying patterns and interpreting themes and patterns in a set of data to produce new understanding and insights. Analyzing data following this technique follows six steps as follows: quotation selection, forming keywords, developing codes, themes formation, conceptualization, and conceptual model development (Naeem et al., 2023). Adhering to these stages in analyzing our data ensured that the data analysis is not just a surface-level description but a deeper interpretation of the role of women in inclusive development and peacebuilding.

This analysis approach has several advantages that benefit this study. For instance, Hamed et al. (2025) observed that the technique is a structure but a framework for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting meaning patterns in a dataset. According to Kiger and Varpio

(2020), the thematic analysis approach enables researchers to summarise a wide data set, highlight key features of and interpret the data set. Furthermore, the technique offers great flexibility to researchers, enabling qualitative researchers to do many things that they have an interest in (Braun et al., 2019).

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Impact of Environmental Conflicts on Women in Nigeria

Sexual Violence and Exploitation

Available evidence revealed that women in Nigeria suffer sexual violence as a result of environmental conflicts. For instance, Pam-Hworog (2024) reported that environmental conflicts in Nigeria expose girls and women, particularly the women in local areas, to more exploitation risks. According to Omoruyi and Isibor (2020). Women in the Niger Delta have suffered rape due to environmental conflicts. Similarly, the Regional Protection Working Group (2017) observed that environmental conflicts in Nigeria have subjected girls and women are abduction for forced marriage and labour, and sexual abuse. Furthermore, many women have been reduced to article for trade in the hands of those who promise to make life better for them outside the conflicts and areas, and in the hands of foreign workers (Akubor, 2024). These provide strong evidence that women in Nigeria suffer violence and exploitation as a result of environmental conflicts in the country.

Health and Wellbeing Deterioration

Environmental conflicts in Nigeria have had a negative impact on the health and well-being of women in the country. According to Chakma et al. (2024), environmental conflicts in Nigeria have had a negative effect on the physical and mental health of women. Afolabi (2022) notes that Environmental conflicts in Nigeria have exposed women and school girls to abduction. Many of these women have been rendered homeless by these conflicts (Antierobi et al., 2024). This has potentially caused them to be subjected to trauma and other physical and mental health challenges, thereby affecting their well-being negatively.

Financial Insecurity

Another effect of environmental impact on women in Nigeria is financial security. Chakma et al. (2024) reveal that environmental conflicts have a significant negative effect on the financial security of females in Nigeria. Many of the women are into farming, fishing, and different businesses. From these activities, they generate incomes that provide them with financial security. Available evidence suggests environmental conflicts in the country have caused significant disruptions to these economic activities, thereby significantly reducing the

income the women generate from these activities (Afolabi, 2022). This has exposed them to financial insecurity.

Loss of Livelihood

The livelihood of women suffers significantly from environmental conflicts. Evidence reveals that many women lose their livelihoods to environmental conflicts in Nigeria. For instance, the results presented by Chakma et al. (2024) indicate that about 60% women lose a significant amount of their livelihood to environmental conflicts. Many women in Nigeria depend on fishing, farming, and business. These activities are adversely affected by environmental conflicts (Afolabi, 2022), making those women lose their source of livelihood. As a result of these conflicts, many women find it difficult to go to their farms and rivers, and travel some distances for business to earn a living. This finding is consistent with some earlier studies. For instance, Perry et al. (2011) found that environmental conflicts have a negative effect on the livelihood of women in Arica

Loss of Lives

Many women in Nigeria have lost their lives to environmental violence. According to Omoruyi and Isibor (2020), many women have lost their lives to environmental conflicts. Akubor (2011) reported that the conflicts in the Niger Delta region have claimed the lives of many women. In Jos, the Plateau State capital, Alawemo and Muterera (2010) observed that over the years, environmental conflicts have claimed the lives of women.

Homelessness

Many women in Nigeria are now homeless as a result of environmental conflicts. The evidence presented by Antierobi et al. (2024) indicates that women in Nigeria have been rendered homeless by conflicts, including environmental conflicts. As a result of the conflicts, many of these women now live in internally displaced camps in different parts of Nigeria. For example, Anjerobi et al. (2024) observed that many women in Nigeria have been displaced as a result of those conflicts. The UNICEF (2017) reported that many women in Nigeria, particularly in some parts of northern Nigeria, have been displaced by conflicts. Some of these conflicts are environmental conflicts.

Theme 2: Peacebuilding and Inclusive Development

Peace Agents and Mediators

During environmental conflicts, particularly in resource-dependent and agrarian communities, women serve as peace agents and mediators. In the northern part of Nigeria, for example, some women members of vigilante groups play the role of negotiation and mediation during conflicts (Wilson et al., 2024). Most of these conflicts are environmental

in nature. In northeast Nigeria, Bukar (2021) noted that women play a significant role in promoting negotiation and resolution, and their contributions to peacebuilding are significant. UN Women (2021) documents that women in Nigeria play an essential role in mediation during environmental conflicts. Similarly, Salaudeen and Gombi (2019) noted that in the northeastern part of Nigeria, women are stakeholders in conflict and post-conflict situations, serving as actors who disrupt and work towards security and peace. The finding is consistent with that presented by O'reilly et al. (2015), which indicates that during conflicts, women not only play a significant role in peacebuilding, but their presence in peace agreements makes the peace agreement last longer. Women's unique experiences during and after conflicts make them shift negotiation from who gets what position towards humanitarian and social needs (Case et al., 2015). This highlights the crucial role of women in peacebuilding, making them important in resolving environmental conflicts.

Cultural and Institutional Barrier to Participation

Despite the essential role that women play in peacebuilding during and after environmental conflicts in Nigeria, they are, to a large extent, excluded from the peacebuilding process. Several factors hinder the participation of women in peacebuilding negatively. These factors include political marginalization, intergenerational gaps, sociocultural norms, limited access to education, and insurgents' attacks of women (Wilson et al., 2024). Achus et al. (n.d.) observed that women are denied the opportunity to participate in peacebuilding due to their gender status as prescribed by societies' power relations and customs. Among others, the National Action (2017-2020) aims to increase women's participation and engagement and include their interests in the process of making decisions related to the prevention of conflicts and peacebuilding (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2017). However, its implementation over the years has been weak, particularly at the local levels. Furthermore, policies focusing on development in Nigeria fail to incorporate well, gender development perspectives. This has potentially resulted in interventions not capturing the needs of women adequately. This potentially limits women's agency and challenges inclusive development and peace efforts.

Socioeconomic Empowerment and Inclusive Development

Environmental conflicts in Nigeria increase women's workload, destroy farmlands, stall economic activities, and displace women (Afolabi, 2022; Chakma et al., 2024). The livelihoods of women, especially in trading, fishing, and agriculture, have been disrupted severely by those conflicts. This has potentially exposed women to more poverty, thereby deepening gendered poverty gaps in Nigeria. Nonetheless, post-conflict initiatives women in the country have demonstrated inclusive recovery potentials. According to UNDP (2025), women subgroups in the northeast have contributed to addressing multiple dimensions of

community welfare, including health, environment, education, and economic stability, thereby creating a holistic approach to community development. Such initiatives by women in this part of Nigeria suggest that women in Nigeria are not sitting on the recovery side anymore but are contributing to building a safe and more inclusive community and development. This is consistent with UNDP's (2017) observation that women's participation in inclusive development is necessary for decision-making, management of resources, and governance. This suggests that empowering women economically is potentially a tool for peacebuilding, ensuring that the benefits of recovery are distributed equitably across lines of gender

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study assessed the gendered impact of environmental conflict in Nigeria and the role of women in peacebuilding and inclusive development. The study employed the thematic analysis technique to analyse qualitative data collected from the secondary sources. It was found that there are several dimensions through which environmental conflicts impact women in Nigeria. These include homelessness, health deterioration, sexual violence and exploitation, livelihood loss, financial insecurity, and loss of life. The findings underscore women's agency as mediators, negotiators, and peace agents during and after environmental conflicts in Nigeria. The involvement of women has proven essential in rebuilding communities, fostering dialogues, and ensuring inclusion, recovery, and development. However, weak policy implementation, institutional exclusion, limited access to power, and sociocultural norms frustrates the participation of women in the peacebuilding process in Nigeria.

Based on the insights presented in this study, it is recommended that the Nigerian government and policymakers integrate peacebuilding frameworks and environmental conflict management policies. Achieving this will ensure that interventions address women's specific needs. Also, women's participation in peacebuilding should be strengthened. Women should be given more opportunities to participate in mediation, peace negotiation, and post-conflict reconstruction programmes at the local and national levels. This will potentially guarantee more durable peacebuilding results. Furthermore, community-based peace initiatives should be strongly supported. Civil society organizations and development partners should collaborate genuinely to support women's groups at the grassroots that have demonstrated success in reconciliation, peace promotion, and community development. Institutional and legal protections for women should be made stronger. Effective legal frameworks should be established and enforced to prevent exploitation, displacement, sexual violence, and killing of women during and after conflicts in Nigeria. This should be supported with effective rehabilitation and justice.

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Boomerang: Recompensing the Crimes of Patriarchy in Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*

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Abstract

Recent studies on the effects of patriarchy have focused mainly on women as victims. However, few studies examine the ways in which men are negatively affected by patriarchy, especially in African novels. This paper, therefore, investigates how members of the male gender suffer both as perpetrators and victims of the crimes of patriarchy in the selected novel. This study adopted a blend of masculinity studies and intersectional feminism to argue that although patriarchy appears to institutionally support men, it also victimises them by imposing restrictive gender roles on them, making them agents and victims of its crimes simultaneously. The analysis examines how men are portrayed as both casualties and agents of the patriarchal effect in Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*. The analysis reveals that men are not only agents of the patriarchal order, they are also victims of its societal effects, in nuanced ways, allowing for the re-imagining of the male figure in the patriarchal system. By foregrounding the dual experiences of men as victims and perpetrators of the crimes of patriarchy, this study exposes the unspoken suffering of men in patriarchal systems.

Keywords: *Patriarchy, Crimes, Recompensing, Victim, Men, Boomerang*

1. INTRODUCTION

Crime is often conceived of as an offense, an infringement, a trespass, or a breach of law committed by a person. However, the current state of affairs in many societies have shown that not only people but social institutions can also commit crimes against certain individuals and groups of people. Lamond (2007) notes that by definition, crimes are beyond the scope of criminal law. He suggests that crimes have social and philosophical dimensions to them. He also suggests that a crime is a “behaviour [which is] specially reprehensible, so that the machinery of the state needs to be mobilized against it” (610). From his definition of crime, he suggests that a crime may not be identified legally but it qualifies as a crime as long as it profanes the moral conscience of the society. In this case, patriarchy as a crime fits the social perspective more than it fits the criminal law definition which states that a crime “is anything

prohibited under the criminal law” (609). This paper focuses on the crime that patriarchy as a social system commits against the female and male genders. One of the crimes of patriarchy that this paper identifies is that patriarchy makes men both victims of the punishment as well as the perpetrators of the crime.

Patriarchy is a system that allows men to hold absolute authority in society and by contrast, drives women to the bottom of a male-dominated hierarchy (Einstein, 1979). This binary-opposition relationship between men and women in patriarchy suggests a contrast between the two genders. This contrast stems from the notion that man is the opposite of woman and the two cannot find equal expression in the same space. Beechy (1979) defines patriarchy as “male domination and ... the power relationships by which men dominate women (Millett, 66)” (66). It is synonymous with male-privilege, male domination and a focus on masculine abilities and rights, and has as one of its major characteristics, the suppression of women. Ortner (2022) argues that patriarchy is not only sexist, it intersects with power. Patriarchy allows the man certain privileges that the woman is not entitled to, concentrating on the strengths of the male gender and celebrating it at the expense of the female gender. Isike and Uzodike (2008), in order to debunk the definition of patriarchy that demonises men, argue that generalizations about patriarchy is responsible for the representation of men as “irredeemable masculinists with no regard for women” (2). Corroborating Isike and Uzodike’s (2008) argument, Kandiyoti (2016) also notes that there were pro-feminist men in the middle East who fought against what they saw as demeaning of women. The effects of patriarchy on the female gender robs them of certain rights and infringe on their privileges as human beings (Chauhan, 2014). An example of these injustices is the woman’s inability to defend herself when she is suspected of infertility despite possibility that the cause of infertility could come from either the woman or the man. This is in consistency with Felson’s (2002) notion of the not-me fallacy of crime. This fallacy describes the misconception that a group of people are above crime while another group is liable to crime.

Hitherto, patriarchy has been understood as many things but not exactly as a crime, if as a crime at all, then against women. Because a patriarchal society favors the man, the man is raised to the pedestal of perfection as far as a human being can be, whereas, the woman is not allowed to enjoy such privilege, she is, in fact, on the receiving end of patriarchy’s excesses (Acker, 1989). The Nigerian society absolves the man from the embarrassment of infertility and blames the woman for it, even though there are medical proofs that both the man and the woman contribute to the success or failure of the fertility process. This reechoes the not-me fallacy of crime as men are thought not to be responsible for certain inadequacies; it is believed that it has to be the woman’s fault.

This paper argues that patriarchy is a crime that gets punished. The aim of this paper is to examine the crimes that patriarchy commits against the female and male genders, how these crimes are punished and how members of the male gender also become willing and/or unwilling perpetrators and victims of patriarchy at the same time. Data is derived from Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* which is subjected to narrative analysis.

2. THE CRIMES OF PATRIARCHY

Originally, patriarchy was used in anthropology as a term that describes a family unit led by an older male but as it is used in feminism, it refers to the system that allows men to have control of families and larger spheres of power and influence (Buchanan, 2010). Patriarchy has come to be the sole sponsor of the glass ceiling experiences of many women. That is, they are unable to reach the top in their societies or career because they are women, even though nobody exactly restricts them from getting to the top.

Essentially, the crimes of patriarchy are more pronounced. The male-centeredness of patriarchy which puts the woman at the periphery, also pitches the male and the female genders against each other. Addressing the crimes of patriarchy against the female gender is the major project of the feminist movement. Feminism has always taken as its tasks, the unraveling of the injustices done to the woman and how this can be stopped. However, the effect of patriarchy on men is not an elaborate discourse. Because patriarchy favors men and obscures women, there remains the tendency to assume that patriarchy does no harm to the male gender.

It might be difficult to see the harm that patriarchy does to men because it is a system that focuses on the strengths and masculinity of men. This paper attempts a redefinition of patriarchy by calling attention to the nature of his victims. The victimization of the male gender by patriarchy questions its fundamental philosophy. This alternative way of approaching patriarchy blurs the differences between men and women as victims and counters one of the major pillars on which patriarchy is built; that men and women are essentially different and this difference identifies one as superior while the other as inferior.

Johnson (2005) argues that patriarchy has been unduly misconstrued to be synonymous with men. He notes that usually, the “difference between patriarchy as a kind of society and the people who participate in it” (25) are confused. His position agrees with the position of this paper that patriarchy and men are not synonymous; a proof of this is that men also suffer the injustices of patriarchy.

Patriarchy does injustice to the woman by not only by obscuring her (Maseno and Kilonzo, 2011), undermining and belittling the woman, but also by forcing women to think that they will always be subservient to and unequal with men. By doing this, patriarchy puts the

femininity of women before their humanity. The effect of this on women is the inability to give expression to their human creativity without being seen as a second fiddle (Khelghat-Doost and Sibly, 2020). Patriarchy has pushed women to desperation in meeting societal standards that are requirements to be accepted as equal with the man (Gyan and Mfoafo-M'Carthy, 2022).

One of the crimes of patriarchy against women is that they are used as extensions of men and a means of showing men off. In the selected novel, Shoneyin presents Baba Segi who is able to prove to his society that he is a financially comfortable man who can take care of his household. A proof of his financial comfort is the number of wives and children that he has—four wives and seven children. Having just married Bolanle, the fourth wife who is the most educated in his household, he feels very proud.

3. FEMINISM: AN ATTACK ON PATRIARCHY

Feminism is a movement that advocates equity between the male and female genders. Hooks (2000) offered a definition of feminism: “feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression” (xii). For her, feminism is in direct antagonism against male dominance. The beginning of feminism is associated with Mary Wollstonecraft’s advocacy for the rights of women in politics, education and marriage. The earliest forms of feminism focused on the voting rights of women and later grew into a theory that sees to all the aspects of the lives of women from their bodies to their marriages, work, health and social acceptance. Along gender lines, women are marginalised and hence the feminist movement that defends them and fights for their rights. At the heart of feminism is the desire for women to enjoy the privileges that men enjoy. As a theory, feminism concerns itself with not only the treatment of women in live social interactions but also in the representation of women in literary texts. It has also exposed what it refers to as the “mechanisms of patriarchy” (Barry, 1995) which imposes on women a mindset of perpetual inequality with the man. Bressler notes that “in this masculine world, the feminists declare that it is man who defines what it means to be human, not woman. Because a woman is not a man, she has become the Other, the “not-male.” Man is the subject; the one who defines meaning, woman is the object, having her existence defined and determined by the male” (153).

Feminism amongst other things, advocates that the woman should be allowed to find her unique expression without necessarily forcing herself into a silver slipper, that is, a standard of feminine perfection that society has created for her. Judith Viorst recreates the Cinderella story in order to create a counter narrative to the unrealistic standards and wrong assumptions about women. Her version of Cinderella is rebellious and refuses to be insignificant, she refuses to let the story happen to her so she deliberately influences the course of her own life. She does not only have opinions of her own, she has a voice and she asserts her opinion. This

Cinderella is observant and has noticed that the prince she meets at the ball at night is not as handsome as he is in day light so she decides that she will not marry him; she has a standard of her own that he falls short of. She will not compromise her standards so she pretends that the glass slipper does not fit her leg, forfeiting her marriage to the prince and asserting her independence. She is aware of her will and ability to carry out her own decision having weighed the consequences, which shows that she can think for herself.

Part of what feminist criticism is concerned with is the deconstruction of patriarchal construct that affects women. Feminist critics reevaluate the experiences of women in a world that is controlled by men and challenge the representations of women as Other, periphery, as suffering a lack that is only present in men and as merely part of nature (Barry, 1995). These are crimes patriarchy commits against women. There is yet an established discourse or theory that challenges or attempts to punish the crime patriarchy commits against the male gender.

4. RECOMPENSING THE CRIMES OF PATRIARCHY IN SHONEYIN'S *THE SECRET LIVES OF BABA SEGI'S WIVES*

Many critical essays on Shoneyin's novel have focused on the feminist reading of the text and they have agreed that the novel depicts female oppression (Nguwasen and Onyemelukwe, 2022). However, in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, Shoneyin foregrounds the crimes of patriarchy and suggests that women are not its only victims. By indirectly redefining patriarchy, she charts her audience's attention toward the paradox of patriarchy. Baba Segi's plight appears to be a boomerang effect of patriarchy on his society and an indictment on the dangers of patriarchy on male and female genders general. In this novel, one of the crimes of patriarchy is that it accuses the woman of a crime she did not commit and the punishment is the boomerang effect of this crime on the man. A crime patriarchy commits against men as depicted in this novel is that it forces them to be held to a standard that does not always correlate with their realities. An example of this is the inability to express a problem that demeans their masculinity. This is what Iya Segi and the other two wives capitalise on to maintain their places in Baba Segi's household even though they had been cheating him for many years.

In the novel, Lola Shoneyin narrates the story of Baba Segi who has just married the fourth wife, Bolanle. Bolanle is educated unlike the other three wives and he is proud of her until he realises that Bolanle is not pregnant. Bolanle did not marry Baba Segi for love, she needed to escape from her life that is haunted by her rape experience while she was a teenager, therefore, she is not very bothered about not having children. Her childlessness, however, strangely bothers the other three wives with whom she shares her husband. They did not approve of her very much but they are concerned about her inability to get pregnant because

if her it is investigated thoroughly enough, someone might discover that Baba Segi is not the father of the children under his roof.

When the doctor suggests that Baba Segi should be checked, he finds it ridiculous, having sired seven children already. He eventually allows himself to be tested and discovers the children he called his own were not his. When he confronts his wives, they tell him that they only remained silent about his situation to protect his reputation in society. Therefore, the very thing on which Baba Segi's masculinity was hinged and defined by is used to ruin his life. As a man, he is expected to be protected by patriarchy but his value as a man, that is, his ability to father children, as constructed by his society. Baba Segi, therefore, becomes the victim of a system that had raised him to a pedestal that required certain standards be met.

The novel is set in Nigeria, Africa and within the confines of patriarchy in Nigeria. The patriarchy that obtains in Nigeria, like many patriarchal African countries, is well-rooted in the tradition of the societies (Makama, 2013). Many African cultures are innately patriarchal (Bawa, 2012); celebrating men and ignoring women and what they are capable of. Many novels written by African women have treated the issue of feminist rebellion against the patriarchy that obtains in these indigenous societies. However, in the case of this novel, Shoneyin gives a different approach to the attack on patriarchy. She portrays patriarchy as a poison that does not only affect women but also affects men.

5. CRIMES OF PATRIARCHY: PRESSURE AND MASCULINITY

One of the major aims of literary masculinity studies is the investigation of the negative effects of patriarchy on men (Hobbs, 2013). The patriarchal demand for men to be aggressive, unemotional, dominant and financially successful may have proven to advance the cause of men but also proves subtly damaging to them psychologically. An example is depicted in the character of Baba Segi who exerts his dominance on his wives so that he feels like the head of the household and the father of the children. Whereas, the same demands of patriarchy do not allow him to punish the betrayal and dishonesty of his wives. After he discovers that he is impotent, Iya Segi explains that the reason why they all, except Bolanle, find men to impregnate them secretly is to hide the shame that he is unable to gather children despite his wealth, dominance in society and financial success.

The demand of his patriarchal society to remain a figure of dominance also blindfolds Baba Segi of his own predicament. After two years of marriage to Bolanle, he concludes that Bolanle is barren. With the solid proof of fathering children by three wives, he cannot believe that he is the one who is impotent. His dominance as a successful masculine figure nullifies the possibility of impotence, and does not allow him to entertain the possibility of this condition.

One of the core tenets of masculinity studies is the assertion that masculinity is a social construct rather than a part of a person's innate identity (Addis, Reigeluth and Schwab, 2016). This challenges a major pillar on which patriarchy is built. It is assumed that men are born to behave in a particular way- strong, unemotional, aggressive, violent, etc. This deconstruction provides an empathetic lens for understanding male characters in literary texts who fall short of patriarchal standards for men. Baba Segi, for instance, falls short of two major patriarchal standards set for the man within the home, despite his success in other areas. The first is his impotence, the second is his inability to discover the truth in a household he assumes he leads and knows. His driver who has been in his service for years, for instance, is Segi's real father. The wives he assumes are his are not actually his, neither does he know them intimately. This is explained by the revelation of the person who mistakenly kills Segi with poison. Although the poison was intended for Bolanle, Baba Segi is shocked to know that his wives are capable of murder.

According to Crenshaw's intersectional feminism, men with disabilities do not fit into the societal definition of independence or strength. Baba Segi's inability transcends physical impediments; it is the core of disability by patriarchal standards. This is why when it is discovered, he feels too ashamed to make public his wives' dishonesty.

Following patriarchal constructs around power, sex and masculinity, the relationship between power and masculinity has been established as argued by Nagel (2018). Patriarchy empowers Ishola Alao, also known as Baba Segi in the novel, to consider his first lovemaking session with Bolanle, his newest wife, as a conquest. He derived the feeling of a conqueror over Bolanle's body after having sex with her; he considers it a win, a prize well-deserved.

The door of the shack stood ajar so Baba Segi entered the small room. He frowned. It annoyed him that Bolanle was the reason he had come, when just two years before, he had boasted of his conquest: how Bolanle was tight as a bottleneck; how he pounded her until she was cross-eyed; and how she took the length of his manhood on her back—splayed out and submissive. He didn't quite know how he would tell the men that all his pounding had proved futile (11).

He is, therefore, confounded by the disgrace that the futility of his conquest has yielded. He had boasted to his friends how much of a man he is because he is able to “pound” Bolanle. Her childlessness after two years therefore seems to question his masculinity. The belief shared by Baba Segi and the friends with whom he discusses such topics as how he forces his women into submission while making love to them is that masculinity is hinged on a man's ability to force his wife under submission when making love to her (Leboeuf, 2021). They also wrongly believe that the pounding equals putting a seed in the woman. This is consistent with the concept of hegemonic masculinity which masculinity studies challenges.

Hegemonic masculinity, according to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), is the dominant notion of masculinity expressed as strength, authority, and stoicism among others, which men are forced to align with. This ideal of masculinity shapes how Baba Segi sees himself and relates with his wives, even during sexual intercourse. For Baba Segi, a man “must grow big and strong so he can marry many wives and bear many children” (Shoneyin, p. 16). This shows that he believes that a man is truly considered to have successfully expressed his masculinity when he appears strong and his strength is proven by the number of wives and children that he has. This is a crime patriarchy commits against the male gender; making them believe that their strength is only validated in their sexuality which is expressed in how many wives and children they have. This crime is punished, as later narrated in the novel, by defeating the very purpose of Baba Segi’s masculinity while hiding under a camouflage strengthened by the very assumed purpose of his masculinity. In this way, Baba Segi becomes a victim of the patriarchal mindset that attaches the value of a man to his sexuality and defines his masculinity by sexual strength and dominance (Franklin, 1986).

Baba Segi’s marriage to Bolanle seems to be an attempt to make up for his illiteracy. Baba Segi is an uneducated man, his first three wives are also uneducated and he considers Bolanle a trophy wife who puts the icing on the cake of his achievement as a man by traditional standards. Apart from being an object whose worth and value is strongly defined by her ability to add children to the Alao family, Bolanle is reduced to an object of pride (Chowdhury, 2009) for Baba Segi, an accessory to the Alao household and a proof that Baba Segi is not so illiterate that he cannot attract or marry an educated woman. Baba Segi did not think that the inability to have a child could be a problem from him. The crime that patriarchy commits against Bolanle is that it convicts her of a crime she did not commit while the crime patriarchy commits against Baba Segi is to impose on him the not-me fallacy.

When Baba Segi and Bolanle meet a doctor and she has to undergo tests, Baba Segi introduces her to him as “the wife who cannot conceive” (Shoneyin, p. 151), unknown to him that his appellation - Baba Segi - is a lie and he, in fact, is the one who cannot make his wife conceive. With so much confidence, he makes Bolanle carry the guilt and disgrace of his own inability to have children. The doctor suggests that the problem might be from him but Baba Segi cannot wrap his mind around the alleged inability to get his wife pregnant after seven children: “Listen, Doctor, I have many children. I have sons; I have daughters. The only thing God has not blessed me with is twins. Mind you, there is still time. So, tell me.” He paused. “Are the tests you want to do on me not a waste of time?” (Shoneyin, p. 151). He later agrees to do the test and while he was getting engrossed with getting his sperm into a container given to him, he worries about other people’s opinion of the act:

What would Teacher say if he saw me here, heaving like a pursued duiker? What would Taju say if he heard that I, Chief Alao, was filling a plastic container with my body water? What would Iya Segi say if she saw me whipping myself? One by one, the looks of disappointment on the faces of family, friends and employees tormented him (154).

Patriarchy fills him with a pride that denies him the ability to understand the situation, admit the problem is with him and the willingness to be helped. Instead of focusing on getting the test done, Baba Segi concerns himself with the embarrassment he will face when his friends, driver and wives hear that he had to ejaculate into a container to be tested for infertility because they all, Baba Segi inclusive, find it insulting to his masculinity.

In a conversation Baba Segi has with his friends, Olaopa and Atanda, they display their individual perception of Bolanle. Her education gives her some dignity unlike other uneducated women. When Atanda suggests that Baba Segi “drags” (Shoneyin, p. 11) her to an herbalist to find a remedy for what they believed was her condition, Olaopa replies that she is a graduate and will report Baba Segi to the police if he rough-handles her. His suggestion that Baba Segi should resort to violence to assert his masculinity over Bolanle reflects force as a tool for expressing desired masculinity (Nettleton, 2018; Radtke, Morgan and Roberson, 2023). He also says that the policemen will be bought over by her smooth-sounding English. Atanda’s perception of Bolanle is reflective of how he perceives and treats women; an attitude empowered by patriarchy. He tells Baba Segi to drag her by the hair as he is “the husband and she is a mere wife, and the fourth one at that!” (Shoneyin, p. 11). This suggests that Atanda believes that Bolanle, like other women, lacks a will of her own and should, in fact, be forced into doing the bidding of her husband. His generalisation of women shows his patriarchal mindset that fails to recognise the individuality of each woman (Gunnarsson, 2011). Atanda’s generalisation of women is one of the notions that intersectional feminism opposes not only because it does not allow for the uniqueness of a woman to be appreciated, but because it also forces them into a demeaning category. Olaopa’s opinion, on the other hand, suggests that he believes women armed with the weapon of education are formidable opponents when they have to report cases of domestic violence to the police, having been a police man himself and witnessed many cases of reported domestic violence. This is reflective of a belief amongst illiterate and semi-literate men that educated women can be difficult to control, therefore, there is an immediate need to tame them when they can. Baba Segi agrees with Olaopa that the education of a woman puts her above the illiterate or semi-literate man and threatens the order of patriarchy.

An air of arrogance owing to his achievements- primarily his large family, new educated wife and his business, puffs Baba Segi up and blindfolds him to the truth about his situation.

He thinks he is a successful man going by these standards but he does not notice how his wives regard him to his face but do not revere him behind his back. When Kole, one of Baba Segi's children tells him that he wants to be like him, his mother, Iya Femi, whispers "God forbid" (Shoneyin, p. 16) under her breath. When Baba Segi farts, Iya Femi pays him no mind and Bolanle "who had been wishing away Baba Segi's visit that night, shifted a little closer to Iya Tope's seat" (Shoneyin, p. 16). Baba Segi lacks the honour and love of his wives but he is too blind to see this because he checks the boxes of his society's standards for male success which does not include respecting his wives' opinions. This blindness to the truth about what is really his condition, is hidden behind an ego sponsored by patriarchy. Baba Segi is also caught in a web of self-importance that does not allow him the room to consider his women's worth or value outside their ability to have children, take care of his home and show him respect. When he meets Teacher and they discuss Bolanle, he suggests to Teacher that Bolanle is a weakling: "And you say she did not fight back?" "No, she was calm. What fight can a fly fight when it is in the clutches of a tarantula?" Baba Segi muttered and looked away (Shoneyin, p. 57). He considers himself of more importance than Bolanle despite her education because he is her husband, he is able to assert some control over her because she is his wife. Teacher's understanding of patriarchy worsens Baba Segi's relationship with his wives. Teacher compares women to cannibals and tries to convince his friend that women are not worth keeping. By comparing women to cannibals, he does two things: first, he generalises about women, reechoing the patriarchal construct that denies women their individuality. Secondly, he foregrounds a hierarchical system where women are close to the bottom in their ability to think and respond rationally to situations:

Listen, Baba Segi, perhaps you are partly to blame for what has happened. Your partiality is the cause of these problems. Women do not hesitate to become cannibals when they are hungry. That is why I have never kept one. Some people laugh about this behind my back but what they don't know is this: he who does not have a head has no need for a cap. (58)

Teacher's advice suggests to baba Segi that he needs to withdraw love from his wives. He blames Baba Segi for the issues in his family because he is permissive and expresses his love for Bolanle over others. When he tells Baba Segi to "Treat your wives equally. Blacken the kettle as you blacken the pots" (Shoneyin, p. 59), he uses a metaphor that suggests more negative than positive; blackening the kettle like the pot could be reversed and the kettle will be washed as clean as the kettle, instead of the opposite. His choice of words is demeaning of women.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper examines the crimes patriarchy commits against the female and male genders as depicted in Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, thereby establishing that patriarchy is a system that commits injustices against both genders. While the injustices meted out by patriarchy on the female gender is being addressed in the ongoing feminist discourse, the effect of patriarchy on men is not frequently engaged. This paper identifies, as a crime patriarchy commits against men, a pride in masculinity which blinds Baba Segi from seeing the truth about his situation. The belief that Baba Segi's masculinity is defined by his ability to marry wives and have many children, thereby reducing his value as a man to his sexuality is identical to the patriarchal construct of a woman's value and is considered a crime of patriarchy against men.

This paper establishes that patriarchy is a crime and it gets punished with a boomerang effect so that men whose masculinity is rooted in patriarchy suffer the effect of a come-back of its crimes against the woman. From the analysis of the novel, this paper also reveals that men are sometimes unwilling perpetrators of the crimes of patriarchy, as much as they are its victims. This study, therefore, expands the gender-informed approach to Shoneyin's novel by revealing harm that patriarchy does to men, thereby contributing to the discourse on masculinity in African fiction.

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Trauma and Psychological Support in Peacebuilding: A Study of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS) in Sokoto State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Trauma and psychological distress among internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria constitute significant, yet underexplored, barriers to effective peacebuilding and societal reintegration. This paper critically examines the interplay between trauma, psychological support, and peacebuilding within the context of Sokoto State IDP camps, relying on a mixed-methods case study approach. Drawing on recent empirical evidence, it interrogates the prevalence of trauma-related disorders, assesses existing psychosocial interventions, and analyzes their impact on peacebuilding outcomes. Findings indicate high incidences of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety among IDPs, compounded by limited access to culturally sensitive psychological services. The paper argues that holistic, community-based psychological support is pivotal for sustainable peace in post-conflict societies, recommending an integrated model that foregrounds trauma healing within peacebuilding frameworks in Nigeria and across Africa.

Keywords: *Trauma, Psychological Support, Peacebuilding, Internally Displaced Persons, Nigeria.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, internal displacement remains one of the most pressing humanitarian challenges of our time. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there were over 71 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide by the end of 2023, a staggering figure driven largely by armed conflicts, natural disasters, and political instability (UNHCR, 2024). Unlike refugees, IDPs remain within their home countries but often suffer from inadequate protection and assistance, enduring conditions that undermine their dignity, health, and security. The repercussions of displacement extend well beyond immediate physical needs, infiltrating every facet of individual and communal life, and leaving indelible marks on the psychological and social fabric of affected populations.

Within the context of low- and middle-income countries, the African continent is particularly impacted by internal displacement, hosting over one-third of all global IDPs. Persistent conflicts—such as those in the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and Somalia—paired with environmental crises, perpetuate cycles of migration and instability. The effects are multidimensional, touching on economic hardship, loss of property, disruption of education, and breakdown of community networks. Recent scholarship has highlighted that, in African settings, the trauma of displacement is compounded by pre-existing challenges such as poverty, limited access to healthcare, and fragile social cohesion (Adejumo et al., 2021). The interplay of these factors makes effective humanitarian response and peacebuilding exceptionally complex. While international agencies often play a key role in immediate relief, local and national interventions remain critical in shaping long-term outcomes.

Nigeria is grappling with a persistent and deeply complex crisis of internal displacement, resulting from an array of factors such as armed conflict, insurgency, banditry, herder-farmer clashes, and recurrent communal violence. As of recent estimates, millions of Nigerians have been forced to abandon their ancestral homes and livelihoods, seeking safety and shelter wherever possible (Adejumo et al., 2021). The humanitarian, social, and psychological ramifications of this phenomenon are both profound and multi-layered, impacting displaced populations and host communities alike.

While the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the North East—especially areas like Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states—has received considerable scholarly and media attention due to the Boko Haram insurgency, other regions are increasingly affected yet far less studied. Sokoto State in northwestern Nigeria exemplifies this trend. Sokoto's experiences with internal displacement have escalated since 2018, spurred predominantly by herder-farmer conflicts and organized banditry (Muhammad & Abubakar, 2022). These crises have not only overwhelmed local infrastructure and resources but have also contributed to a rapid influx of vulnerable individuals and families into formal and informal IDP camps across the State.

Humanitarian aid in Sokoto and elsewhere in Nigeria has traditionally focused on the urgent physical needs of displaced populations: securing adequate food supplies, providing shelter, facilitating access to healthcare, and restoring basic sanitation. While these interventions are indispensable, there is growing recognition that addressing only the material aspects of displacement falls short of resolving the deeper and more enduring consequences of forced migration and exposure to violence. Research suggests that unresolved trauma and ineffective psychological support are critical challenges for IDPs, often perpetuating cycles

of violence, fostering feelings of hopelessness, and impeding the recovery and reintegration process (Idoko et al., 2022; WANEP, 2023).

Trauma among internally displaced populations stems from multiple sources: the initial violence that triggers flight, the perilous journey to safety, the disruption of community networks, and the difficulties of adapting to life in temporary camps or new communities. Children, women, and elderly persons are especially susceptible to psychological distress, presenting symptoms ranging from anxiety and depression to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These psychological impacts do not merely affect individual wellbeing; they ripple outwards, undermining family cohesion, eroding trust among camp residents, and threatening social harmony in host communities (WANEP, 2023).

Psychosocial interventions have emerged as a vital component of humanitarian response and peacebuilding efforts within Sokoto State's IDP camps. Various governmental and non-governmental organizations, such as WANEP and international agencies, have implemented programs aimed at providing counseling, psychosocial education, peer support groups, art therapy, and community-based reconciliation initiatives. However, research indicates that these efforts are often fragmented, under-resourced, and lacking in culturally relevant methodologies tailored to the specific realities of the Sokoto region and its displaced populations (Adejumo et al., 2021). For example, many psychosocial programs tend to rely on generalized approaches and imported models of trauma care that may not fully account for local norms, beliefs, or the unique constellation of stressors facing IDPs in northwestern Nigeria. Language barriers, scarce specialized personnel, and competing priorities in the camps further limit both access to and effectiveness of existing support initiatives (Akintunde et al., 2023).

The consequences of these gaps are far-reaching. Insufficient psychological support perpetuates cycles of distress, social withdrawal, and interpersonal conflict within camps, sometimes escalating into new tensions between displaced groups and host communities. Without adequate interventions, traumatic experiences can fester, manifesting as aggression, mistrust, and diminished capacity for collective action. As a result, the foundations of peacebuilding and reconciliation become ever more precarious, while the risk of re-traumatization or relapse into violence grows (WANEP, 2023).

Therefore, this paper explores the nexus between trauma, psychological support, and peacebuilding in Sokoto State's IDP camps. By evaluating the effectiveness of existing psychosocial interventions—drawing on both empirical data and regional best practices—it identifies key gaps in response and proposes evidence-based strategies adaptable to similar contexts across Africa. The findings aim to inform practitioners, policymakers, and

researchers dedicated to holistic and sustainable approaches to ending the cycles of violence and healing the wounds of displacement.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Trauma has been the subject of extensive scholarly interrogation, not only within psychology but increasingly in studies of forced migration and humanitarian intervention. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), trauma is characterized as exposure to “actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence”—experiences that, when inadequately processed, can precipitate enduring psychological sequelae, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and complex grief (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). This clinical definition only hints at the broad spectrum of trauma in the context of internally displaced persons (IDPs), where exposure is commonly multifaceted, protracted, and compounded by collective dimensions of suffering (Onwumere & Eze, 2023).

Unlike trauma in the general population, that experienced by IDPs is frequently cumulative, resulting from successive exposures to violence, loss of property, bereavement, and disruption of cultural as well as familial continuity (Onwumere & Eze, 2023). Displacement often entails not just the physical loss of home, but also erosion of identity, social status, and future orientation. Such complexities further exacerbate vulnerability to severe psychopathological outcomes (Kienzler, 2008).

Psychological support, in this context, has evolved from narrow, clinic-based interventions to a more holistic conceptualization encompassing emergency psychological first aid, community-based psychosocial care, and the revalidation of culturally rooted healing practices (Ibrahim, 2019; Silove, 2013). Recent scholarship emphasizes the necessity of adopting an ecological or systems-based approach wherein psychological support is embedded within the broader matrix of health, infrastructure, and livelihoods programming (World Health Organization, 2022). Specifically, the World Health Organization underscores the criticality of integrating Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) into all facets of humanitarian assistance, framing psychological recovery as a cornerstone of effective collective resilience and social reconstruction following displacement. Interventions target not only individual symptom alleviation but also promote communal agency and capacity for mutual care, often through methods such as group therapy, peer support groups, and training of local facilitators.

The intersection between trauma and peacebuilding constitutes a critical, though historically under-theorized, field of inquiry. Early peacebuilding models tended to privilege political and socio-economic reconstruction, with inadequate attention to the affective and

psychological wounds sustained during conflict (Bar-Tal, 2017). More recent contributions have advanced the “trauma-peacebuilding nexus,” positing that unaddressed psychological harms act as latent drivers of continued social fragmentation, impede intergroup reconciliation, and increase the risk of cyclical violence or relapse into conflict (Bar-Tal, 2017; Hermanson, 2020).

Far from being a tangential concern, trauma healing is now regarded as an essential precondition for sustainable peace. Kumssa and Jones (2020) argue that genuine peacebuilding must integrate trauma-informed approaches into post-conflict programming, embedding psychological care within demobilization, disarmament, reintegration of ex-combatants, and community reconciliation mechanisms. Such integration acknowledges that trauma-induced distrust and fear can undermine the entire peace process by limiting the ability of individuals and communities to engage in meaningful dialogue, share common spaces, or participate cooperatively in social institutions. Effective peacebuilding, then, demands a dual focus: addressing visible structural injustices while simultaneously investing in invisible—yet profound—psychological mending. This includes facilitating safe spaces for storytelling, truth-telling processes, culturally sensitive rituals of mourning, and community-based models of resilience building, often drawing on indigenous knowledge systems and non-Western paradigms of psychosocial support.

Empirical evidence from Nigeria and across the African continent consistently reveals grave and widespread mental health challenges among IDP populations, reflecting both the intensity of conflict and the deficiencies of existing support frameworks. Recent epidemiological studies demonstrate that the prevalence of PTSD among Nigerian IDPs routinely ranges between 32% and 45%, while symptoms of depression and anxiety are often reported at even higher levels, sometimes exceeding 50% in surveyed camps (Olanrewaju et al., 2018; Musa et al., 2021). These rates are far higher than those observed in both the host populations and the general population, indicative of the extreme psychological burden placed upon displaced individuals.

A closer examination of leading empirical studies illuminates critical trends and intervention gaps. For instance, Musa et al. (2021), in a cross-sectional survey of 600 adults in Borno State, reported PTSD prevalence of 43% and depression affecting 59% of respondents. Notably, the study emphasized the positive impact of trauma care workshops, although only a minority of participants had access to sustained support. Onwumere & Eze (2023), focusing on a cohort of 350 displaced women in Adamawa, found PTSD rates of 39% and depression in 50%; this study uniquely highlighted the role of group therapy and peer support initiatives—interventions correlated with marginal improvements in reported well-being but still hampered by resource limitations and social stigma.

Yahaya et al. (2020), through research in Sokoto, identified similar patterns, with one-third of their 400-adult sample manifesting PTSD symptoms and nearly half suffering depression, yet noted an absence of any reported psychosocial interventions—exposing regional disparities and underscoring the need for targeted mental health integration. Table 1 provides a synthesis of these major findings:

Table 1. Selected Nigerian studies on trauma prevalence among IDPs (2018–2023)

Study	Location	Population	PTSD (%)	Depression (%)	Psychosocial Interventions Evaluated
Musa et al. (2021)	Borno State	600 adults	43	59	Trauma care workshops
Onwumere & Eze (2023)	Adamawa State	400 adults	33	47	None reported
Yahaya et al. (2020)	Sokoto State	400 adults	33	47	None reported

Broader research from sub-Saharan Africa reinforces the Nigerian evidence base, with studies in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia replicating these findings and highlighting similarly high levels of psychological distress, often exacerbated by under-resourced health infrastructures and socio-cultural barriers to mental health care (Roberts et al., 2009). Importantly, while there is growing consensus regarding the urgency of mental health interventions, empirical assessments of intervention efficacy—particularly those that are culturally adapted—remain limited.

Despite a burgeoning corpus documenting trauma prevalence and its deleterious impacts among African IDPs, there are persistent and critical gaps in the scholarly literature—gaps that bear direct consequence for both policy formulation and ground-level intervention. Sokoto State, for example, remains markedly under-researched relative to other northern Nigerian states more frequently targeted by academic and NGO attention (WANEP, 2023). Data on how trauma care is—or might be—systematically woven into the broader tapestry of peacebuilding programmes is sporadic at best and typically anecdotal in nature.

Furthermore, there is a relative paucity of rigorous evaluation regarding the cultural appropriateness, local ownership, and long-term sustainability of MHPSS interventions (Muhammad & Abubakar, 2022). Many studies deploy imported psychosocial models with limited adaptation to local norms, cosmologies, and healing systems, potentially undermining both engagement and effectiveness. There is a significant need for participatory research methodologies that include IDP perspectives in intervention design, reflecting not only the realities of their suffering but agency in recovery. While the critical relationship

between trauma healing, psychosocial support, and peacebuilding in Nigeria and the wider African context is increasingly acknowledged by both scholars and practitioners, there remains an urgent and ongoing need for theory-driven, empirically grounded, and culturally congruent strategies that move beyond mere prevalence to address underlying causes and systemic barriers to healing.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a mixed-methods case study approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews and focus groups. Data were collected from three major IDP camps in Sokoto State (Goronyo, Wamakko, and Tambuwal camps) between January and June 2025. A stratified random sample of 450 IDPs (aged 18–60 years; 60% female, 40% male) participated in structured clinical interviews using the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ) and Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9). Operational definitions are as follows:

- Trauma: Psychological and emotional responses resulting from exposure to forced displacement, violence, and loss, measured via the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ).
- Psychological Support: Provision of structured interventions aimed at alleviating distress, including counseling, peer support, and mental health education.
- Peacebuilding: Processes and strategies to resolve conflict and foster reintegration, measured through programmatic implementation and community reports.

Where:

Total Score Index (TSI) for HTQ: $TSI = \Sigma (\text{item scores}) / \text{Number of items}$

Total Score Index (TSI) for PHQ-9: $TSI = \Sigma (\text{item scores})$

Prevalence of Trauma/Depression: $\text{Prevalence} = (\text{Number of individuals with trauma/ depression}) / \text{Total sample size} \times 100$

Mean and Standard Deviation for HTQ/PHQ-9 scores:

$\text{Mean} = \Sigma (\text{scores}) / \text{Number of respondents}$

$\text{Standard Deviation (SD)} = \sqrt{[\Sigma (x_i - \mu)^2 / (n - 1)]}$

Chi-square test statistic: $\chi^2 = \Sigma [(observed\ frequency - expected\ frequency)^2 / expected\ frequency]$

Additionally, 24 key informant interviews were conducted with camp leaders, NGO workers, and government officials.

Quantitative data were analyzed via SPSS 28.0 (descriptive and inferential statistics). Thematic analysis was employed for qualitative responses, guided by Braun and Clarke (2022).

4. FINDINGS

1. Prevalence of Trauma and Psychological Distress

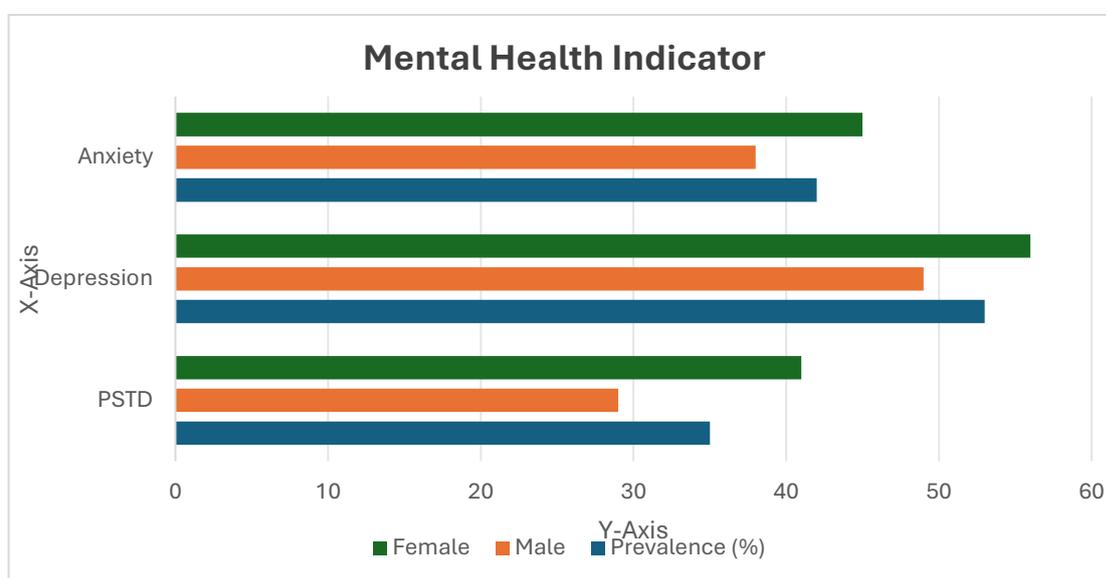
Findings confirm elevated trauma-related symptoms among Sokoto State’s IDPs. PTSD prevalence is estimated at 35%, depression at 53%, and generalized anxiety at 42%. Females reported significantly higher distress ($p < 0.05$).

Table 2. Mental health indicators among Sokoto IDPs (N = 450)

Mental Health Problem	Prevalence (%)	Male	Female
PTSD	35	29	41
Depression	53	49	56
Anxiety	42	38	45

Source: Field study 2025

Figure 1. Prevalence rates of common trauma disorders among IDPs



Source: Field survey 2025

X-axis = Disorder; Y-axis = Prevalence %; Bars for Male, Female

Only 26% of respondents accessed any form of psychological support in the past year. Among interventions used, peer support groups (12%) and religious counseling (8%) were most reported. Formal mental health services were virtually absent.

Qualitative data highlight stigma, cultural barriers, and lack of trained personnel as key obstacles. Perspectives from a female IDP:

"We pray together and talk sometimes, but there is no doctor to help with our minds. When someone is crying or having bad dreams, we just manage." (Female, age 34)

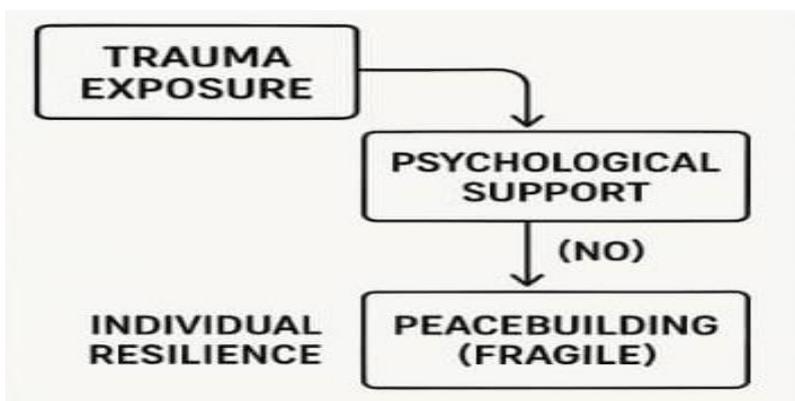
Of the six NGO/government peacebuilding initiatives identified, only two actively incorporated psychological support. Most programs focused on livelihood and conflict mediation, neglecting trauma recovery.

Table 3. Peacebuilding programs and psychological support integration in Sokoto IDP camps

Initiative	Type of Intervention	Psychological Component Present	Reported Outcomes
Safe Return Initiative	Community mediation	No	Decreased disputes, high relapse
Healing Communities	Livelihood, trauma groups	Yes	Improved cohesion, reduced PTSD
Women for Peace	Skills training	No	Enhanced agency, but high stress

Source: Field survey 2025

Figure 2. Schematic model: Trauma, psychological support, and peacebuilding outcomes in Sokoto IDPs



5. DISCUSSION

1. **Gendered Dynamics of Trauma:** The data corroborate extant literature on the disproportionate trauma burden borne by women and children in IDP contexts (Adejumo et al., 2021). Gender-sensitive programming—such as women-led peer support—emerges as crucial for effective trauma healing.
2. **Effectiveness of Current Interventions:** Findings illustrate the inadequacy and fragmentation of psychological support services in IDP settings. Existing interventions are sporadic, lacking standardized frameworks or trained mental health personnel—problematic given the high prevalence of trauma disorders.
3. **Barriers to Uptake and Integration:** Cultural perceptions of mental illness, stigma, and insufficient community participation inhibit psychological support uptake (Ibrahim, 2019). Integration of trauma-focused therapy within peacebuilding remains limited due to funding constraints, absence of cross-sectoral collaboration, and policy neglect.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Grounded in the empirical and theoretical evidence, the following are advanced:

1. **Integrated MHPSS Programming:** Establish multi-tiered psychological support systems that combine clinical, community-based, and traditional healing modalities, drawing on successful pilots in Nigeria and other African states (WHO, 2022; WANEP, 2023).
2. **Capacity Building:** Train camp staff, local health workers, and community leaders in culturally competent trauma care and psychological first aid.
3. **Gender-Sensitive Approaches:** Prioritize women's and children's mental health needs through dedicated safe spaces, peer networks, and inclusive programming.
4. **Policy Mainstreaming:** Institutionalize trauma healing within national peacebuilding frameworks and humanitarian guidelines.
5. **Research and Monitoring:** Support longitudinal research and impact evaluation to assess long-term psychological and peacebuilding outcomes.

7. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study establish that trauma and psychological distress represent not only immediate health concerns but also deep-seated barriers to sustainable peacebuilding within internally displaced persons (IDP) communities in Sokoto State, Nigeria. The high prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety documented among IDPs highlights the urgent need to reconsider traditional peacebuilding approaches. It is now

clear that effective peacebuilding cannot focus solely on physical needs, economic recovery, or conflict mediation; it must also prioritize psychological healing as a central pillar.

Policy implications are significant. National and state-level peacebuilding frameworks should integrate trauma-informed methodologies, emphasizing mental health services as fundamental components of humanitarian aid and conflict resolution strategies. By mainstreaming Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) into policy, government agencies and NGOs can ensure that interventions address both the visible and invisible wounds of displacement. Moreover, policies must support gender-sensitive programming, capacity building among camp workers, and the involvement of local communities in designing and delivering mental health services. This not only increases cultural relevance but enhances community ownership, resilience, and long-term stability.

In practical terms, peacebuilding programs should move towards holistic models that incorporate regular psychosocial assessments, peer support networks, and culturally adapted counseling services. Strengthening partnerships between governmental, non-governmental, and community actors will be essential for resource mobilization and sustaining interventions. Additionally, ongoing research and monitoring are necessary to evaluate the impact of these integrated approaches and refine best practices for future implementation.

Ultimately, trauma-informed peacebuilding offers a pathway to disrupt cycles of violence and mistrust, restoring hope, dignity, and social cohesion among IDPs. These insights should guide the formulation of policies and the design of practices that acknowledge the central importance of psychological recovery in achieving lasting peace, not only in Sokoto State but across Nigeria and similar contexts throughout Africa.

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The Roles of Women in Peace-Building in Warri Environment

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Abstract

Women's inclusion in peace processes in Nigeria and around the world is seen to be beneficial, as it enables them to express their experiences during times of conflict. This also helps them to design ways and means towards the prevention of conflict from re-emerging. Women are seen to be lacking by numbers in peace and security measures in Nigeria. This study therefore analyzed the role of women in peacebuilding in Warri environs. The study is anchored on the Gender Role theory, which states that society has a set of socially accepted behaviors and attitudes deemed appropriate or desirable for individuals based on their sex. The methodology of the research involves the adoption of qualitative research design, using secondary sources of data which includes journals, newspapers and internet resources. The study found that the inclusion of women in both decision making and grassroots peacebuilding process is minimal in Warri environs. During the Warri crisis of 1997 to 2003, women were affected in the areas of physical violence, and disruption of their economic activities. After the conflict situation in Warri, women were scarcely engaged in the design and implementation of peace programmes, such as reconciliation, societal reconstruction, rehabilitation and empowerment of affected persons in the city of Warri. The study therefore recommends that peacebuilding stakeholders should ensure that women are included in peace and conflict resolution programmes in Delta State, and specifically, Warri environs. Also, the United Nations Resolution 1325 (2000) should be domesticated in Nigeria so as to entrench women in all peacebuilding processes of the country.

Keywords: *Conflict, Environment, Peacebuilding, Role, Women*

1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding the role of women's involvement in peacebuilding has become a topical issue in peace studies and conflict resolution in recent times, this is due to the significant role women play the preservation of peace and their involvement on the outcomes and sustainability of peace agreements after conflict (Oyekola & Oshatimehin, 2018). Women play substantive roles in the achievement of sustainable peace and development, and are active in all stages from participation to prevention, protection to resolution and recovery.

Women's involvement in peace negotiations have led to the durability of peace agreements, as well as a number of political reforms (Asako, 2020).

According to Ejodame, and Aneni, (2018), Nigeria is replete with women's participation in peace processes, and this underscore the importance of their inclusion and instrumentality in creating sustainable peace and fostering social cohesion. In this context Adeleye and Osadola (2022) noted that women in Nigeria are disproportionately affected by the adverse outcomes of the occurrences of conflicts and terrorism. Women are susceptible to physical and sexual assault, injury and adversity mostly perpetuated by their male counterparts in the society. Hence, women's participation in conflict resolution and peace efforts would help in promoting accountability for human rights abuses, advancing socio-economic development, and engendering sustainable peace and inclusive security (Gbadeyan & Osadola, 2023).

Crisis serially erupted in Warri, Delta State, Nigeria, from 1997 to 2003, which saw to the biggest military operation against civilians in Nigeria at the time. Some military personnel were killed, and there were reports of indiscriminate reprisals against civilians (Leton, 2006). Some of the women who experienced sexual violence during conflict in the region of Niger Delta were not willing to share their experiences. They see sharing such experiences as giving power to their violators to torment them long after the event happened. This has led women to be forced into silence as a weapon of resistance. To them, silence makes them stronger and not vulnerable to pity and other sympathetic tendencies thereby making their violators to win. Nigeria women according to Onuoha, and Momoh, (2017) have taken on active roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts. They have formed organizations and networks to advocate for peace, address the needs of conflict-affected communities, and promote gender-sensitive policies. These initiatives have demonstrated their effectiveness in various ways. The inclusion of women in peace processes across the world has been recognized as crucial for sustainable peace and development. Nigeria is a country marked by protracted conflicts and widespread violence. Women's participation in peace process in Nigeria holds immense importance in addressing the root causes of conflict, promoting reconciliation, and fostering inclusive and gender-responsive peacebuilding efforts (Onuoha, & Momoh, 2017).

2. METHODOLOGY

In this paper the qualitative research design was adopted for the study. The area of the study was Warri city and its environs. The sources of data collection were secondary sources, this includes the generation of data from journals, newspapers and internet resources.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Gender Role School of Thought

This study is anchored on the Gender Role School of thought. According to Miller and Borgida (2016), the gender role, or sex role theory states that society has a set of socially accepted behaviors and attitudes deemed appropriate or desirable for individuals based on their sex. The specifics regarding these gendered expectations may vary among cultures, while other characteristics may be common throughout a range of cultures. In addition, Scott, et al., (2009) states that gender roles (and perceived gender roles) vary based on a person's race or ethnicity. Gender roles influence a wide range of human behavior, often including the clothing a person chooses to wear, the profession a person pursues, manner of approach to things, the personal relationships a person enters, and how they behave within those relationships. Although gender roles have evolved and expanded, they traditionally keep women in the "private" sphere, and men in the "public" sphere.

Gender roles are the basic way of how society is symbolically divided. Gender can be explained as how the society reproduces the individuals raised to be masculine or feminine. In different countries, what is feminine and what is masculine can be different from one another and thus one explanation is not universal for all societies. However, the understanding that femininity is constructed from masculinity, to where the two are opposites, the woman is what the man is not, is a basic understanding for how the gender roles are constructed.

In the application of this school of thought to this paper, it could be seen that gender role helps to explore women's role in peacebuilding in the society. Gender roles present in the societies in the cases examined help in the analysis to outline the underlying reasons for why women are not represented in peace process at the same level as men. By applying the gender roles assumptions that conflict and violence are masculine attributes, it helps to explain the rationales of why women are excluded from formal peace processes but take large part in the peace building work since the peaceful work is considered to be a role that fall under the female gender. By trying to understand women's gender roles, this will help to understand what women can actually do and to what extent they are recognized. When evaluating these structures and making them visible, this can help to empower women and their roles in peacebuilding.

4. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Peacebuilding

According to Hazen (2007), the conceptualization of peacebuilding varies depending on the actor, with some definitions specifying what activities fall within the scope of peacebuilding

or restricting peacebuilding to post-conflict interventions. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies (2018) conceptualizes peacebuilding as an activity that aims to resolve injustice in nonviolent ways and to transform the cultural and structural conditions that generate deadly or destructive conflict. It revolves around developing constructive personal, group, and political relationships across ethnic, religious, class, national, and racial boundaries. The process includes violence prevention; conflict management, resolution, or transformation; and post-conflict reconciliation or trauma healing before, during, and after any given case of violence.

As such, Coning (2013) sees peace building as a multidisciplinary cross-sector technique or method that becomes strategic when it works over the long run and at all levels of society to establish and sustain relationships among people locally and globally and thus engenders sustainable peace. Strategic peacebuilding activities address the root or potential causes of violence, create a societal expectation for peaceful conflict resolution, and stabilize society politically and socioeconomically (Institute for International Peace Studies, 2018). For Coning (2013), the methods included in peacebuilding vary depending on the situation and the agent of peacebuilding. Hence, successful peacebuilding activities create an environment supportive of self-sustaining, durable peace; reconcile opponents; prevent conflict from restarting; integrate civil society; create rule of law mechanisms; and address underlying structural and societal issues. Researchers and practitioners also increasingly find that peacebuilding is most effective and durable when it relies upon local conceptions of peace and the underlying dynamics that foster or enable conflict.

Common to the definitions of peacebuilding above is the agreement that improving human security is the central task of peacebuilding. In this sense, peacebuilding includes a wide range of efforts by diverse actors in government and civil society at the community, national, and international levels to address the root causes of violence and ensure civilians have freedom from fear (negative peace), freedom from want (positive peace) and freedom from humiliation before, during, and after violent conflict.

Warri City

According to International Cities of Peace (2024), the city of Warri is an oil hub within South-South Nigeria and houses an annex of the Delta State Government House. Warri City is one of the major hubs of the petroleum industry in Nigeria. Warri, Udu, Okpe and Uvwie are the commercial capital of Delta State with a population of over 311,970 people in 2006.

The city is the indigenous territory of Itsekiri, Urhobo and Ijaw people. Warri shares boundaries with Uvwie to the east, Udu to the south east, Ogbe-ijoh to the south, and other

communities in Warri South LGA to the west. Due to its rapid population growth and linked roads, the city and its border towns e.g. Uvwie, Udu merged into a conurbation collectively referred as Warri (International Cities of Peace, 2024).

Warri sits on the bank of Warri River which joined Forcados River and Escravos River through Jones Creek in the lower Niger Delta Region. The city has a modern seaport which serves as the cargo transit point between the Niger River and the Atlantic Ocean for import and export. Warri served as the capital of the colonial Warri Province during the early 1900s when this part of Delta State was under the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria (Okoh, 2016).

The Warri Crisis (1997-2003)

Warri is a strategic city in the Niger Delta. As the second major oil city after Port Harcourt, Warri is the center of scores of oil installations and the nerve center of the operations of oil companies in the western Niger Delta, particularly the U.S. major, Chevron-Texaco. Since colonial times, control of Warri has been the principal *casus belli* in a lingering conflict among the three ethnic groups (Itsekiri, Ijaw and Urhobo). In 1997, the federal government under General Sani Abacha created several Local Government Areas (LGAs), including Warri South-West. The headquarters of this LGA was originally located in the Ijaw community of Ogbe Ijoh, but was relocated to the Itsekeri community of Ogidigben. Riots ensued, hundreds died, and six Shell Nigeria (SPDC) installations were taken over, leading to a drop in oil production, a lot of people were injured in these initial clashes (Falode, 2022).

According to Okoh (2016), fighting renewed in 1999 and continued intermittently and hundreds of people were killed over a period of several months in early 2003 when conflict broke out between Itsekeris and Urhobos during primary elections for state and federal governments. The dispute arose from disagreements about the number of wards making up the district and their boundaries. The Nigerian Red Cross reported more than 6000 internally displaced people. At this time, the Ijaw National Congress (INC) said the Warri Crisis was constant and unending. They urged state and federal governments to act on recommendations and reports the agencies had been furnished from reputable commissions.

Leton (2006) states that in 2003, the Warri crisis led to the biggest military operation against civilians in Nigeria at the time. Some military personnel were killed, and there were reports of indiscriminate reprisals against civilians. The headquarters were relocated back to Ogbe Ijoh by the Delta State House of Assembly, a decision that brought relative peace back to the city by 2005. Although initially the conflict was over and, fishing rights and cultural differences, oil has become the highly charged political issue, as a huge oil economy has grown around the city.

According to Jarikre (2021), the violent conflicts that engulfed the Warri area at the turn of the 21st Century (1990s to 2000s) were the climax of age-long rivalry and animosity between the three ethnic groups: Ijaws, Itsekiri and Urhobo who were hitherto dwelling amongst themselves in tolerance and peace. Jarikre (2021) noted that the history of the Western Niger Delta is fraught with struggle for land ownership and control of political power and economic resources among the three major ethnic groups in the Warri conflict area. The conflictual relationship amongst them since the colonial authorities' creation of Warri Province in 1914, manifests in the form of ethnic animosity and is characterized by agitations, petitions and litigations. These court cases buttress the antagonistic relationship of unabated animosity, rivalry and tension upon which the later crescendo of violence was built.

5. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

The study conducted by Olawale, et al., (2023) on enabling policies for women participation in peace and conflict resolution in Nigeria, identified that women in Nigeria are faced with challenges ranging from lack of policies and instruments for entrenching women participation in peace processes Nigeria. The study shows that women are often considered and relegated as home builders and wife materials alone, and do not necessarily have any meaningful contribution in political decisions involving the larger society. However, the study recommended that Nigeria policy makers should make efforts to initiate and implement policies and instruments on women inclusion. The National Gender Policy enacted should be further be developed to ensure women are included in peace processes in post-conflict communities in Nigeria.

Shekhawat (2015) studied the effects of conflict on women and found that rape during conflict, stimulates women to seek revenge against the perpetrator, whether it is pitching tent with the militants against the military or vice versa. This may be due to their losses in conflict, the kind of company they keep, need to identify that they are contributing to the struggles or need to be respected. Majority of studies on women and conflict are focused on the sufferings of women, however, there is need to focus on the impact of these experiences on their livelihoods. Globally, the experiences of women in conflict have some similarities in nature. During conflict, women play important roles: paid, unpaid and informal labour. These roles are significant in the survival of the community, however, when the peace building processes start, women and their contributions seemed to be forgotten (Shekhawat, 2015).

Acholonu, (2016) In Nigeria, women face significant barriers in accessing education and resources, which hinders their ability to participate effectively in peace processes. Without proper education and resources, women may lack the skills and knowledge necessary to engage in conflict resolution, negotiation, and policy-making. This lack of access further exacerbates gender disparities in participation and undermines the importance of women's

perspectives. (Acholonu, 2016). Women in Nigeria often face limited access to skillful training and economic resources, which hampers their ability to meaningfully engage in peace processes. Lack of education and skills can deter women from taking part in peacebuilding activities and hinder their ability to contribute effectively to conflict resolution efforts.

Gorman (2011) analyzed conflict and its development issues and found that there is still wide gap in women inclusion in peace processes around the world. This is despite the avalanche of resolutions and protocols for women inclusiveness in peace processes. For instance, the UN Resolution 1325 has been a subject of debate and analysis by academics and policymakers. One issue noted is its integration into existing policy frameworks by (sub) regional bodies and countries. There has also been difficulty in the development of targeted policies, frameworks, actions and plans to support its implementation in various countries (Gorman, 2011). Even with the existence of the UNSC Resolution 1325, there were different instances of reported misdemeanors of peace-keepers that constitute threat to the safety of women and children in war and conflict-affected communities.

Bellamy and Williams (2013) investigated peace keeping processes and found that personnel of the United Nations get indicted in cases of Sexual Exploitation and Abuses (SEA); which is seen as any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another (Bellamy & Williams, 2013). This worsens the vulnerability of women in conflict and terror affected communities because it has been observed as contributory to the commercial sex industry in many cases. Bellamy and Williams (2013) recommend that in order to halt/reduce the susceptibility of women to attacks during conflicts, there has been heightened call for gender sensitivity during peace support operations in both local and international contexts as a result of incidences of sexual exploitation and abuses against women.

Gbadeyan and Osadola (2023) analyzed the critical roles of women in mediation and peacebuilding in preparing for post-insurgency in Northeast Nigeria. Their study found that there is great peacebuilding efforts of women in the social stratification of the society. The peculiar challenges faced by the women affected by insurgency, prompts their concerted efforts to ensure peace and stability in the region. Situating solutions within the context of the Resolution 1325, The study noted that women helps in precisely engendering sustainable peace and inclusive security. Their study recommends that there should be the creation of a setting conducive for Joint-Problem Solving (JPS), mindful of the asymmetries of power along gender lines. Also, peace processes in the Northern region of Nigeria should be guided by well-defined peace model which will encompass gender inclusivity.

The Women's Peace and Security Network-Nigeria (WPSN-Nigeria) serves as a compelling case study of women's participation in the peace process in Nigeria. Established in 2000, WPSN-Nigeria has been a key player in promoting women's rights, gender equality, and peacebuilding efforts in the country. WPSN-Nigeria is a grassroots organization that emerged in response to the conflicts and security challenges facing Nigeria. It has actively engaged in conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities with a focus on gender-sensitive approaches. WPSN-Nigeria, a network of women-led organizations and individuals, has been at the forefront of promoting peace, gender equality, and women's rights in Nigeria (WPSN-Nigeria, 2014).

WPSN-Nigeria's advocacy efforts have influenced policy reforms, leading to significant milestones such as the enactment of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act, which protects women and girls from violence. The network's capacity-building programs have empowered women with knowledge and skills to participate effectively in peacebuilding processes. Through their mediation initiatives, they have contributed to conflict resolution and reconciliation in various conflict-affected regions in Nigeria (WPSN-Nigeria, 2016). The effectiveness of women's participation in the peace process can also be observed through collaborations and partnerships forged by WPSN-Nigeria. By engaging with government agencies, civil society organizations, and the international community, they have amplified women's voices, shared best practices, and advocated for gender-responsive peacebuilding (WPSN-Nigeria, 2014).

6. CONCLUSION

Women participation in peace process is seen to be is vital, as it helps in bringing to the forefront, issues pertaining to women in terms of reconciliation, rehabilitation and resettlement. Also, it is clearly seen that the Warri crisis of 1997 to 2003 impacted negatively on women in the city. This situation is compounded as policy makers excludes women in their planning and implementation of peacebuilding programmes. Specifically, the inclusion of women in both decision making and grassroots peacebuilding process is minimal in Warri and its environments. The Warri crisis grossly affected women in the areas of physical violence, and disruption of their economic activities. After the conflict situation in Warri, women were scarcely engaged in the design and implementation of peace programmes, such as reconciliation, societal reconstruction, rehabilitation and empowerment of affected persons in the city of Warri. Women are restricted in male dominated communal decision-making bodies is a major factor mitigating against women participation in peacebuilding processes in the State. Conclusively, the role of women in peacebuilding is essential to the credibility of peace processes. This is as women, who are mostly victims of armed conflicts, often have few opportunities to participate in official peacemaking processes.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Stakeholders in peace policy making should give recognition to the input of local women in peace processes, so as to ensure that women interests are captured in peacebuilding policies made for the society.
2. The Nigerian government should ensure that the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 provisions are fully entrenched in the country.
3. There should be women inclusivity in the participation of peacebuilding processes, so as to ensure their voices are heard in post-conflict phases of peacebuilding.
4. Peacebuilding stakeholders should ensure that women are included in peace and conflict resolution programmes in Delta State, and specifically, Warri environs.

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Drums, Dances, and Ballots: An Ethnopolitical Communication and Electoral Mobilisation in the Yoruba Geopolitical Region of Southwestern Nigeria

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Abstract

Traditional performances such as drumming, dancing, and praise-singing remain integral to Yoruba cultural expression, yet their role in contemporary political campaigns has been underexplored. This study investigated how these performative arts function as potent tools of political communication, identity construction, and voter mobilisation in Southwestern Nigeria. Despite widespread use, there is limited scholarly analysis of how traditional performances shape political attitudes, convey symbolic meanings, and influence electoral outcomes, leaving a crucial gap in ethno-political communication research. The study's objectives are to examine the utilisation of traditional performances in campaigns, analyse the symbolic meanings embedded within these performances, and assess their influence on political perceptions and voting behaviour. Key research questions addressed the forms, functions, and impacts of these cultural practices in political contexts. Guided by cultural performance theory, the research adopted a mixed methods approach, combining surveys of 300 respondents with participant observations and interviews across six Yoruba-speaking geopolitical region. Findings revealed that traditional performances were strategically employed not only to entertain but to mobilise crowds, communicate coded messages, and legitimise political actors, confirming their significant influence on voters' emotions and decisions. However, the study also highlighted potential risks of manipulation and misinformation. The research concluded that Yoruba traditional performances are deeply intertwined with modern political processes, demanding scholarly attention for their role in shaping democratic engagement and cultural identity. Policy recommendations included integrating cultural practitioners into civic education initiatives, developing ethical frameworks for the political use of cultural performances, and enhancing public awareness to foster critical engagement.

Keywords: *Ethno-communication, Nigerian Political communication, Yoruba traditional performances, Cultural symbolism, Electoral campaigns*

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary Nigeria, politics remains a deeply cultural affair, where modern democratic practices intersect with age-old traditions of communication and identity expression. Nowhere is this interplay more vivid than in Southwestern Nigeria, home to the Yoruba people, whose rich cultural heritage includes drums, dances, chants, and other performative arts used to convey meaning, preserve history, and reinforce social cohesion (Adeoye, 2023; Oyewumi, 2022). While democratic elections have become institutionalised across the country, political campaigns in Yoruba communities continue to draw heavily on indigenous communication forms that reflect communal values and identity. The Yoruba culture, renowned for its performative vibrancy, uses drums like the “talking drum” (*ilu gangan*) not merely as musical instruments but as sophisticated tools for coded messaging and emotional mobilisation (Eluyefa, 2015; Adenike, 2014; Ogunleye, 2021). Dances and chants during political rallies serve as vehicles for praise, satire, political persuasion, and subtle criticism. These performances often encode political messages that resonate with cultural memory and collective identity (Faleye, 2023; Ojebuyi & Folarin, 2021; Adebayo, 2024). Yet, despite the visibility of these practices during electoral periods, scholarly attention to how traditional communication forms are strategically integrated into modern political campaigns remains limited (Ogunleye, 2021; Faleye, 2023).

Existing studies on Nigerian political communication largely focus on modern media such as radio, television, and social media as the dominant tools for political engagement and voter mobilisation (Ojebuyi & Folarin, 2021; Oloruntoba, 2024). Scholars have explored ethnic politics, vote-buying, electoral violence, and the role of digital platforms in shaping electoral behavior (Babarinde, *et al.*, 2022; Sesan, 2014). However, far fewer investigations have delved into how indigenous communication systems continue to shape political discourse, identity construction, and voter mobilisation in specific cultural contexts. The few studies available often examine traditional media as part of development communication or cultural preservation but rarely connect these practices directly to modern electoral strategies (Nwabueze & Ebeze, 2022; Oladipo, 2023).

Furthermore, while ethno-communicology as a discipline emphasises the study of communication within cultural and historical contexts (Servaes, 2021), its application to political communication in African societies remains relatively underexplored. This gap is significant because traditional performative arts such as songs, dances, drumming, and chants are not neutral cultural artifacts but powerful tools wielded by political actors to influence public perception, mobilise ethnic solidarity, and negotiate political legitimacy (Omotoso, 2015; Adebayo, 2024). The proposed study intended to bridge this gap by investigating how Yoruba traditional communicative practices specifically drums and dances

are strategically deployed during political campaigns. It aimed to analyse how these cultural performances encode political messages, shape communal identity, and potentially influence voting behavior. By adopting an ethno-communicological lens, the research intends to uncover the symbolic, persuasive, and emotional dimensions of indigenous communication forms within the context of democratic politics in Yoruba communities.

Understanding these dynamics is critical not only for enriching academic discourse but also for practical considerations in political communication strategy, civic education, and the promotion of culturally resonant democratic engagement. This research, therefore, occupied a crucial space at the intersection of cultural studies, political science, and communication, offering new insights into how age-old cultural practices adapt and persist within the modern political landscape of Nigeria.

Justification

The justification for this study lies in the profound yet often overlooked connection between traditional cultural expressions and modern political processes in Nigeria. While considerable research has examined political campaigns through the lens of digital media, party structures, and ethnic voting patterns, there is a notable scarcity of scholarly attention directed toward how indigenous communication practices continue to influence political communication and voter mobilisation, particularly within the Yoruba cultural milieu of Southwestern Nigeria. The Yoruba people are renowned for their elaborate performative traditions, where drums, dances, chants, and songs serve not merely as entertainment but as potent vehicles of communication and social influence. In the context of political campaigns, these cultural forms acquire new meanings and functions, transforming rallies into theatrical performances where political messages are encoded in rhythm, movement, and metaphor. However, existing literature has scarcely explored how these traditional practices are deliberately integrated into political strategies to evoke communal identity, generate emotional resonance, and subtly guide political choices.

Furthermore, the discipline of ethno-communicology, which emphasises understanding communication within its cultural and historical contexts, remains underutilised in African political studies. Applying this lens offers a unique opportunity to decode the symbolic language of political performances and to appreciate how traditional art forms are repurposed to serve contemporary political interests. Such an approach not only fills a scholarly gap but also provides insights that could inform political communication strategies, civic education, and policies aimed at enhancing culturally sensitive democratic engagement. Moreover, in an era marked by concerns over political apathy, electoral violence, and ethnic polarisation, it becomes even more critical to understand how culturally rooted communication practices can either unite or divide communities during electoral periods. By investigating the

intersection of drums, dances, and ballots, this study aimed to reveal how politicians tap into cultural heritage to foster political allegiance and influence voting behavior, thus contributing new knowledge to both academic scholarship and practical political practice in Nigeria. In essence, this research is justified by its potential to bridge cultural studies and political science, offering fresh perspectives on how traditional modes of expression remain relevant and influential in shaping modern democratic processes among the Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the modernisation of political processes and the growing influence of digital media in Nigeria's electoral landscape, traditional cultural practices remain deeply intertwined with political communication, particularly in ethnically vibrant societies such as the Yoruba communities of Southwestern Nigeria. Political campaigns in these areas often feature drums, dances, chants, and other indigenous performances that carry symbolic messages and emotional appeals designed to resonate with communal identities and historical memory. These cultural expressions serve not merely as entertainment but as strategic tools through which politicians seek to persuade, mobilise, and consolidate political support. However, while there is a significant body of scholarship on political communication in Nigeria, much of the existing research focuses on modern channels such as mass media, social media, and digital technologies, emphasising their roles in shaping political behaviour and voter engagement. Very few studies have systematically examined how indigenous communication forms are integrated into contemporary political campaigns, nor how these traditional performances influence political perceptions and voting behavior in specific cultural contexts like that of the Yoruba.

Moreover, the field of ethno-communicology which emphasises understanding communication within cultural and historical frameworks has rarely been applied to political studies in Nigeria. This leaves a significant gap in understanding how traditional communicative practices are strategically appropriated for modern political purposes. There is limited scholarly insight into the meanings encoded in these performances, the methods by which they are deployed during campaigns, and their effectiveness in shaping political outcomes among Yoruba communities. The absence of research in this area creates a gap in both academic knowledge and practical political strategy. Without an ethno-communicological understanding of political campaigns, there is a risk of overlooking how cultural symbols and practices influence political allegiance, ethnic identity, and democratic participation in Nigeria's plural society. Furthermore, policymakers, political actors, and civic educators lack culturally grounded knowledge that could enhance effective, inclusive, and respectful political engagement.

Therefore, this study sought to investigate how drums, dances, and other traditional communicative practices are utilised during political campaigns in Yoruba communities, and to explore the implications of these practices for political communication, identity construction, and voter mobilisation. Addressing this gap is essential for providing a more nuanced understanding of the intersection between culture and politics in contemporary Nigeria, and for contributing fresh insights to both scholarly discourse and practical political communication strategies.

Research Objectives

Political campaigns in Yoruba communities often integrate traditional communicative practices such as drumming, dancing, and chanting, yet their strategic roles, symbolic meanings, and influence on voter behaviour remain largely unstudied. This research intended to explore how these indigenous performances intersect with modern political processes, using an ethno-communicological lens to reveal their communicative power and political significance. The objectives of the study are therefore, structured as follows:

1. To examine how drums, dances, and other traditional performative arts are utilised as communication tools during political campaigns in Yoruba communities of Southwestern Nigeria.
2. To analyse the cultural and symbolic meanings embedded in these traditional performances within the context of political messaging and identity construction.
3. To assess the influence of traditional communicative practices on political attitudes, perceptions, and voting behavior among Yoruba community members during election periods.

Research Questions

While traditional performances visibly feature in Yoruba political campaigns, little empirical research has documented the specific ways they function as political communication, nor how voters interpret or respond to such cultural messaging. These questions are designed to guide the investigation into this understudied intersection between cultural practices and modern democratic processes.

1. In what specific ways are drums, dances, and other traditional performative arts incorporated into political campaigns in Yoruba communities of Southwestern Nigeria?
2. What cultural symbols and meanings are conveyed through these traditional performances, and how do they contribute to constructing political identities and narratives?

3. How do Yoruba community members perceive and respond to traditional communicative practices during political campaigns, and what impact do these practices have on their political choices and engagement?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several compelling reasons, both academically and practically. Academically, it contributed fresh knowledge to the underexplored intersection between indigenous cultural practices and political communication in Nigeria. While much scholarly work has focused on modern channels such as social media, radio, and television in shaping political discourse, there remains a profound gap in understanding how traditional communicative practices such as drums, dances, and chants are integrated into modern political campaigns and influence electoral behaviour. By applying an ethno-communicological perspective, this research advanced theoretical discourse on how cultural symbols, performances, and rituals serve as powerful tools for political messaging and identity construction among the Yoruba people. From a cultural studies perspective, the research holds significance in preserving and documenting the ways in which Yoruba traditional art forms adapt and persist within contemporary democratic contexts. It offered insights into how cultural heritage remains a living force, not merely as an aesthetic tradition but as an influential element in political processes. This added depth to existing literature on African cultural resilience and transformation in the face of modernity.

Practically, the study has significant implications for political actors, communication strategists, policymakers, and civic educators. Understanding how traditional performances are employed in campaigns can inform more culturally sensitive and effective political communication strategies, ensuring that political messages resonate authentically with local communities. For policymakers and civic educators, the findings may guide the design of electoral education programmes that respect and harness cultural communication channels, fostering greater political participation and inclusivity. Moreover, in a country marked by ethnic diversity and occasional tensions, this research could contribute to promoting peaceful political engagement by illuminating how cultural symbols can be used to build unity rather than exacerbate division. It provided a roadmap for how indigenous practices might be leveraged positively within democratic systems, helping bridge the gap between tradition and modern governance. In essence, this study is significant because it filled a critical gap in scholarly knowledge, preserved cultural heritage, and offered practical pathways for enhancing democratic processes through culturally grounded communication strategies in Nigeria.

Scope of the Study

This study is centered on examining the ethno-communicological dimensions of political campaigns within Yoruba communities in Southwestern Nigeria, focusing on how traditional cultural performances intersect with modern electoral processes. Geographically, the research is confined to Yoruba geopolitical regions predominantly inhabited by the Yoruba people, including Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ondo, and Ekiti. These regions are chosen because they represent the cultural heartlands where traditional art forms such as drumming, dancing, and chanting remain vibrant and are frequently woven into political events and campaigns. The scope of the study is limited to the context of political campaigns during electoral periods, specifically investigating how traditional communicative practices are utilised to convey political messages, mobilise support, and shape communal identities. It does not extend to other aspects of political life such as governance, policy formulation, or legislative activities unless they directly influence or are influenced by campaign communication practices. The thematic boundaries of the study encompass the various forms and methods of traditional performances employed during campaigns, the cultural and symbolic meanings embedded within these artistic expressions, and the ways in which these practices contribute to political identity construction and influence voter behaviour.

Methodologically, the research adopted a qualitative approach, relying on tools such as interviews, participant observations, and content analysis to collect rich, contextual data. Data were gathered from diverse sources, including political actors such as politicians and campaign strategists, cultural practitioners like drummers, dancers, and traditional artists, as well as community members and voters who are directly exposed to these performances during political campaigns. The temporal scope of the study focused on recent electoral cycles, particularly from 2019-2025, in order to capture contemporary patterns and the current relevance of traditional communication practices within the democratic landscape of Nigeria. By defining this scope, the study however, aimed to provide a focused and in-depth exploration of how traditional Yoruba communication practices continue to play a vital role in shaping political communication, identity, and participation in modern electoral contexts, without straying into unrelated cultural or political phenomena.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The intersection of traditional cultural practices and modern political communication in Nigeria is an area of scholarship that has garnered growing interest, although significant gaps remain in understanding how indigenous performative arts function as tools of political mobilisation and persuasion. Scholars agree that the Yoruba people, as one of Nigeria's largest and most culturally dynamic ethnic groups, possess a deeply entrenched system of symbolic communication embodied in drums, dances, chants, and proverbs, which

historically have served as potent vehicles for expressing power, identity, and communal values (Ogunleye, 2021; Adeoye, 2023). Studies such as Ogunleye (2021) have documented the complex semiotic system of the Yoruba talking drum (*ilu gangan*), revealing how specific drum rhythms can encode messages ranging from praise to satire and political commentary. Similarly, Adeoye (2023) highlights how traditional performances at communal gatherings not only serve entertainment purposes but also function as channels for political dialogue, collective memory, and social critique. These works underscore the communicative potency of traditional art forms within Yoruba society, suggesting that their use in political contexts is far from incidental but deeply strategic.

However, while there is substantial literature on the cultural and artistic significance of Yoruba traditional performances, fewer studies directly connect these practices to modern political campaigns and electoral strategies. For instance, Faleye (2023) explores how political actors in Nigeria incorporate cultural symbols into public rallies, but his analysis largely remains general and lacks a focused ethnographic examination of specific communities or art forms. Likewise, Oyewumi (2022) provides valuable insights into rituals and symbols in Yoruba society but stops short of analysing how these cultural elements are tactically deployed in electoral processes.

Much of the existing literature on political communication in Nigeria emphasizes modern media technologies, such as radio, television, and especially social media, as crucial channels for shaping public opinion and voter behavior (Ojebuyi & Folarin, 2021; Babarinde, *et al.*, 2022). Scholars like Oloruntoba (2024) and Oladipo (2023) have examined the role of digital platforms in facilitating political participation and electoral outcomes, highlighting how politicians increasingly exploit these modern tools for real-time engagement and mass mobilisation. While these studies are significant in understanding Nigeria's evolving political landscape, they often neglect the enduring influence of indigenous communication systems, thereby presenting a somewhat incomplete picture of how political narratives are constructed and disseminated among culturally rooted communities.

Critically, there appears to be a conceptual and methodological gap in integrating ethno-communicology as a theoretical framework into political communication studies in Nigeria. Ethno-communicology, as described by Servaes (2021), prioritises understanding communication practices within their specific cultural and historical contexts, offering tools for decoding the symbols and meanings embedded in traditional performances. Yet, few scholars have explicitly applied this lens to examine how Yoruba performative arts operate as communicative strategies in political campaigns. Most existing studies either adopt general cultural studies approaches or focus narrowly on media analysis, leaving unexamined

the symbolic, persuasive, and identity-forming roles of traditional performances in electoral contexts (Nwabueze & Ebeze, 2022).

Furthermore, there remains a lack of empirical research documenting how ordinary Yoruba community members perceive, interpret, and respond to these traditional performances during political campaigns. While Ogunleye (2021) and Adeoye (2023) provide rich descriptions of traditional arts, they do not investigate whether and how these cultural practices influence political attitudes, trust, and voting behavior. This absence is significant because it is precisely at the intersection of cultural expression and political behavior that the true communicative power of traditional performances may be revealed.

Adding new thoughts to this discourse, this study proposes that traditional performances such as drums and dances are not merely cultural remnants but active instruments of political communication that modern politicians deliberately integrate into their campaign strategies. Such performances, with their capacity to evoke emotional responses, affirm collective identity, and subtly convey political allegiance, are likely to be powerful tools in electoral mobilization, particularly in societies where cultural identity remains deeply significant. Moreover, understanding these dynamics may be crucial for designing political communication strategies and civic education programs that are culturally resonant and ethically sensitive.

In conclusion, while substantial scholarship exists on either Yoruba cultural practices or political communication in Nigeria, there remains a significant gap in linking the two through a systematic ethno-communicological analysis. This research sought to fill that void by investigating how drums, dances, and other traditional performances are strategically deployed during political campaigns in Yoruba communities and how these practices influence political identities and behaviours. By doing so, it aimed to enrich both academic understanding and practical approaches to political communication in culturally diverse societies like Nigeria.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A highly relevant theoretical framework for this study is the cultural performance theory, which originates from the fields of anthropology, communication studies, and cultural studies. Pioneered by scholars such as Victor Turner and further developed in communication research, Cultural Performance Theory posits that cultural expressions such as rituals, festivals, and artistic performances are not merely entertainment but powerful acts through which societies create, negotiate, and communicate meaning, identity, and power relations (Turner, 1987; Alexander, 2004). At its core, Cultural Performance Theory views public performances as symbolic actions through which communities dramatise their values, conflicts, and social norms. Performances are conceived as “social dramas” that allow

participants and audiences to engage with complex issues in a communal, emotionally charged environment (Turner, 1987). In communication studies, this framework emphasises how performances serve as sites of meaning-making, persuasion, and identity construction, where symbols, metaphors, music, gestures, and narratives collectively produce shared understanding (Alexander, 2004).

Applying this framework to the Yoruba context is both theoretically and culturally appropriate, as Yoruba society is renowned for its rich tradition of performative communication. Instruments like the talking drum (*gangan*), ceremonial dances, and praise-singing are integral cultural forms through which messages are encoded and transmitted, often carrying multiple layers of political, social, and historical meanings (Ogunleye, 2021; Adeoye, 2023). These performances are not neutral artistic expressions but strategic acts of communication, especially during political campaigns where they are used to sway emotions, build communal solidarity, and convey political allegiances subtly yet powerfully (Faleye, 2023). Within the context of political campaigns in Yoruba communities, Cultural Performance Theory enables this study to analyse how politicians and cultural performers strategically orchestrate traditional performances to serve political objectives. For instance, the rhythm of drums at a campaign rally may signal loyalty, resistance, or call for unity, while dances and songs may function as narrative tools to frame political candidates positively or negatively. These performative acts become potent tools of persuasion precisely because they resonate deeply with cultural memory and communal identity (Oyewumi, 2022; Adebayo, 2024).

The justification for adopting cultural performance theory lies in its ability to capture the complexity of political communication in a culturally rich society. Unlike purely media-centered theories, cultural performance theory allows for a nuanced examination of how traditional, embodied forms of communication are mobilised within modern political processes. It bridges the gap between cultural anthropology and political communication, offering a lens that is both sensitive to cultural specificity and attuned to the dynamics of power and persuasion (Alexander, 2004; Servaes, 2021). Moreover, this framework aligns seamlessly with an ethno-communicological approach, which emphasises studying communication in its cultural and historical context. By employing cultural performance theory, this research can go beyond surface observations of campaign events to decode the deeper symbolic meanings embedded in Yoruba traditional performances, thus offering richer insights into how cultural heritage and modern politics intertwine. In sum, Cultural Performance Theory provides a robust and contextually appropriate lens for this study. It not only facilitates an understanding of what is performed during political campaigns but why and how such performances shape political perceptions, communal identity, and voter behavior in Yoruba communities of Southwestern Nigeria.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed methods research approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques to achieve a comprehensive understanding of how traditional performances such as drums, dances, and chants function as tools of political communication during campaigns in Yoruba communities of Southwestern Nigeria. The mixed methods design is chosen because it allowed for triangulation of data, enhancing the validity and depth of insights by integrating statistical trends with rich, contextual narratives (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The geographical scope of the study is confined to selected Yoruba-speaking states in Southwestern Nigeria, specifically Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ondo, and Ekiti. These states are chosen for their cultural significance as strongholds of Yoruba traditional performances and their political relevance as competitive electoral battlegrounds (Adeoye, 2023; Ogunleye, 2021).

The target population consisted of diverse groups relevant to the study, including politicians and campaign strategists who orchestrate political events, cultural practitioners such as drummers, dancers, and praise-singers who participate in campaign performances, and community members who attend political rallies and engage with these traditional practices. To ensure a balanced representation, the study proposed a sample size of 300 respondents for the quantitative component, distributed across the six geopolitical zone, while the qualitative component involved 40 in-depth participants, including cultural practitioners, political figures, and ordinary community members.

Sampling techniques vary for the two strands of research. For the quantitative strand, stratified random sampling was used to ensure that respondents were drawn proportionally from urban and rural areas within each state, reflecting the diverse socio-cultural and political environments where traditional performances take place. For the qualitative strand, purposive sampling was employed to identify participants with specific knowledge or involvement in political performances, such as drummers who regularly perform at rallies, politicians known for integrating cultural acts into their campaigns, and community elders who can interpret the cultural meanings embedded in performances (Patton, 2015). Data collection was processed through multiple techniques. For the quantitative component, structured questionnaires were administered to community members, gathering data on their perceptions, interpretations, and reactions to traditional performances during political campaigns. The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions to capture statistical trends and preliminary qualitative insights.

The qualitative component involved in-depth interviews, participant observations, and content analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with cultural practitioners and

political actors to explore their motives, strategies, and interpretations regarding the use of traditional performances in campaigns. Participant observation was equally essential for capturing live performances at political rallies, allowing the researcher to document the context, symbolism, audience engagement, and emotional atmosphere of these events. Additionally, content analysis was applied to campaign materials such as video recordings, photographs, songs, and drumming patterns used during rallies to decode the cultural messages embedded in these performances (Turner, 1987; Alexander, 2004). Data analysis followed a convergent mixed methods design, whereby quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data was subjected to thematic analysis. The two strands of data were compared and integrated to produce a holistic narrative that explained not only how traditional performances are used but why they are effective, and how they influence political perceptions and behaviour among Yoruba communities (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study. Participants were informed of the purpose of the research, and their informed consent was obtained. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured, and cultural sensitivity guided all interactions, particularly during observations of traditional performances that hold sacred significance. By combining both quantitative breadth and qualitative depth, this mixed methods approach ensured that the study captured the cultural nuances and symbolic meanings of Yoruba traditional performances in political campaigns, while also providing measurable evidence of their influence on voter attitudes and political engagement in Southwestern Nigeria.

5. TABLES OF DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

These tables are structured in line with the findings along their thematic patterns in the study. Each table is linked directly to one of the three research objectives and includes a quantitative data table (survey results), a qualitative data table (themes from interviews, observations, and content analysis), and a brief explanatory note under each table.

Table 1: *Forms of Traditional Performances in Political Campaigns*

Research Objective 1: To examine how drums, dances, and other traditional performative arts are utilised as communication tools during political campaigns in Yoruba communities.

Table 1A: *Frequency of Traditional Performances Used in Political Campaigns*

Traditional Performance Type	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Drumming	182	60.7
Dancing	168	56.0
Praise-singing	145	48.3
Chanting/Oriki	102	34.0
Masquerade displays	76	25.3
Traditional music (songs)	195	65.0
Total Respondents (N)	300	100.0

Note: This table summarises survey data on how frequently various traditional performances are integrated into political campaign events across the Yoruba geopolitical zone under consideration. Respondents have selected their preferred choice of performances, reflecting the overlap in cultural practices during campaigns.

Table 1B: *Themes from Interviews on How Performances are used*

Emerging Theme	Frequency (mentions)	Illustrative Quote
Mobilising crowds	27	“Once the drummers start, people gather quickly. It’s like a signal.”
Praising political candidates	23	“They sing about the politician’s family and achievements to win favour.”
Communicating hidden political messages	20	“Through the drum, secret warnings or support can be announced.”
Creating emotional connection	24	“The dances make people feel joyful and united, like one family.”

Note: This table reflects qualitative themes identified from interviews with cultural practitioners and political actors, showing diverse strategic purposes behind traditional performances during campaigns.

Table 2: *Symbolic Meanings Embedded in Traditional Performances*

Research Objective 2: To analyse the cultural and symbolic meanings embedded in these traditional performances within political messaging and identity construction.

Table 2A: *Respondents’ Perceptions of Symbolic Meanings*

Perceived Symbolic Meaning	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Unity and solidarity	172	57.3
Power and authority	148	49.3
Historical continuity and tradition	132	44.0
Identity affirmation	165	55.0
Subtle criticism of opponents	98	32.7
Divine approval of candidates	126	42.0

Note: This table presents how community respondents interpret the symbolic meanings conveyed through drums, dances, and chants in political rallies.

Table 2B: *Themes from Observations and Content Analysis*

Symbolic Element	Observed Usage	Contextual Example
Drumming rhythms	Signal support or secrecy	“Drum beats change when an opponent is mentioned, creating tension.”
Specific dance styles	Representing peace vs. war	“Slow dances suggest peace; fast, aggressive moves suggest battle readiness.”
Lyrics in praise-singing	Telling a candidate’s history	“Songs narrate a politician’s lineage to legitimise authority.”
Costume colours	Party identification	“Red costumes were worn by all supporters of Party “X” (a particular party).”

Note: This table summarises symbolic elements documented through participant observation and content analysis of campaign events and materials, showing how traditional performance elements convey political narratives.

Table 3: *Influence of Traditional Performances on Political Attitudes and Behaviour*

Objective 3: To assess the influence of traditional communicative practices on political attitudes, perceptions, and voting behavior among Yoruba community members.)

Table 3A: *Influence of Traditional Performances on Voter Behaviour*

Influence Noted	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)
Performances influence voting decisions	64.0	20.0
Performances increase candidate trust	58.7	25.3
Performances create emotional connection	70.0	15.0
Performances promote political discussion	63.3	21.0

Note: This table presents respondents’ quantitative agreement on whether traditional performances impact their political decisions and attitudes during election periods.

Table 3B: *Themes on Voter Perceptions from Interviews*

Key Perception	Frequency (mentions)	Illustrative Quote
Trust built through cultural familiarity	22	“When I hear drums from my village group, I feel the politician understands us.”
Emotional influence on voting choice	26	“The dance and music make me feel proud and want to support the candidate.”
Skepticism about manipulation	18	“Politicians sometimes use drummers to lie to the people.”
Identity reinforcement through culture	24	“These performances remind us of who we are as Yoruba, and who to trust.”

Note: This table reveals nuanced qualitative insights into how traditional performances influence voters emotionally, culturally, and politically, sometimes generating trust and sometimes suspicion.

Synergy among the Tables

The design of the tables in this study reflected a deliberate synergy between the quantitative and qualitative strands of the mixed methods approach, ensuring that each set of tables complements and expands upon the other. Instead of treating quantitative and qualitative results as isolated data islands, the tables are structured to interweave statistical patterns with cultural narratives, allowing for a multi-dimensional understanding of how traditional performances shape political processes in Yoruba communities. For instance, Tables 1A and 1B work together to address Objective 1, focusing on how drums, dances, and other traditional performances are utilised in political campaigns. Table 1A quantifies the frequency of different traditional practices across the sample population, revealing which cultural forms are most commonly employed during campaigns. However, mere frequency data cannot capture the strategic intentions behind these performances. Table 1B therefore bridged this gap by presenting qualitative themes from interviews, revealing that drumming, for example, is not merely entertainment but a deliberate signal to assemble crowds or deliver coded political messages. Together, these tables explained both the “what” and the “why” of traditional performance usage.

Similarly, Tables 2A and 2B created synergy for Objective 2, which investigated the symbolic and cultural meanings embedded in these performances. Table 2A summarised how community members perceived symbolic meanings like unity, authority, or historical continuity conveyed through traditional arts. Table 2B complemented this with detailed observations and content analysis, documenting how specific symbolic elements such as drumming rhythms or costume colours are deployed in political rallies to communicate subtle messages. The synergy here lies in connecting abstract community perceptions with concrete, observable performance elements, giving the analysis both depth and empirical grounding. Moving to Objective 3, Tables 3A and 3B worked together to explore the impact of traditional performances on political attitudes and behaviour. Table 3A quantified respondents’ levels of agreement that traditional performances influence voting choices, trust in candidates, and emotional connection to political events. This statistical overview is enriched by Table 3B, which delved into personal narratives and emotions, illustrating how drumming or dance can evoke trust, pride, or even skepticism among voters. These tables synergised by linking numerical trends with the human stories and cultural meanings behind those trends.

The true strength of this mixed methods synergy emerged when insights from all the tables are integrated across objectives. Patterns identified in Tables 1A and 1B - the forms of performances used, directly informed the symbolic interpretations in Tables 2A and 2B, which, in turn, helped explain the behavioural impacts observed in Tables 3A and 3B. For example, if drumming is frequently used and carries strong symbols of unity according to Tables 1 and 2, it makes sense that people report increased emotional connection and loyalty toward politicians who integrate drumming into their campaigns in Table 3. However, this synergy ensured that this study does more than merely document cultural practices. It explained the mechanics and effectiveness of these practices within modern politics, contributing rich scholarly insights into underexplored cultural-political dynamics, practical recommendations for political actors and civic educators, and a model for integrating ethno-communicology into political communication studies.

6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Utilisation of Traditional Performances

Research Objective 1: *To examine how drums, dances, and other traditional performative arts are utilised as communication tools during political campaigns in Yoruba communities.*

The results indicated that drums, dances, and songs are core tools of political communication. This aligns with Ogunleye (2021), who argues that the Yoruba talking drum is a sophisticated medium for conveying coded political messages. Similarly, Adeoye (2023) emphasises that dances and songs are strategically employed to mobilise communities and dramatise political narratives. The emergence of themes such as crowd mobilisation and emotional engagement underscores Turner's (1987) concept of social drama, where performances are expressive acts that communicate social tensions and rally collective participation.

Symbolic Meanings and Cultural Interpretation

Research Objective 2: *To analyse the cultural and symbolic meanings embedded in these traditional performances within the context of political messaging and identity construction.*

Survey and observational findings revealed that performances carry deep symbolic meaning, including unity, authority, and identity affirmation. These findings support Alexander's (2004) view that performances are cultural scripts, encoding political messages and reinforcing communal identity. For example, drumming rhythms signaling support or caution reflect complex semiotic communication, confirming Oyewumi (2022) on the interweaving of ritual, politics, and symbolism in Yoruba society.

Influence on Political Attitudes and Behaviour

Research Objective 3: *To assess the influence of traditional communicative practices on political attitudes, perceptions, and voting behavior among Yoruba community members during election periods.*

The study demonstrated that traditional performances shaped voter emotions, perceptions, and decisions. Emotional resonance, trust-building, and identity reinforcement highlighted the persuasive power of culturally embedded communication, consistent with observations by Faleye (2023) and Servaes (2021). Nevertheless, respondents' skepticism regarding manipulation suggested ethical concerns, echoing Oloruntoba (2024) about the potential misuse of cultural symbols in political processes.

These highlights collectively indicated that Yoruba traditional performances are not peripheral but central to political engagement, bridging cultural identity and modern electoral behaviour. The study confirmed the relevance of cultural performance theory in explaining how performances operate as both symbolic and practical political tools. **Conclusion**

This study has revealed that traditional performances such as drumming, dancing, and praise-singing are not merely cultural embellishments but powerful tools of political communication in Yoruba communities of Southwestern Nigeria. Through a mixed methods approach, the research demonstrated how these performances served to mobilise crowds, communicate symbolic messages, and shape political identities and voter behaviour. The findings underscored the relevance of cultural performance theory and confirmed that political campaigns in this context are deeply intertwined with cultural heritage, emotion, and communal identity. However, several limitations should be noted. Firstly, while the study covered six Yoruba-speaking geopolitical regions, logistical constraints limited data collection to selected urban and rural centres, potentially excluding remote communities with unique cultural nuances. Secondly, self-reported survey data carry risks of social desirability bias, as respondents might understate or exaggerate the influence of traditional performances on their political choices. Thirdly, the dynamic political climate in Nigeria means that perceptions captured during this study may shift rapidly with changing political actors or circumstances.

For further research, scholars could expand this inquiry by conducting longitudinal studies to track changes in the use of traditional performances across multiple election cycles. Comparative studies examining similar performative political practices in other Nigerian ethnic groups, such as the Igbo or Hausa communities, would also enrich understanding of the national landscape of cultural political communication. Additionally, future studies could

explore the ethical implications of using traditional performances as political persuasion tools, particularly regarding manipulation, misinformation, or the commodification of cultural heritage. In sum, this research not only filled a significant gap in the literature but also highlighted the enduring power of culture as a communicative force in modern politics, offering valuable insights for political actors, communication scholars, and policymakers interested in engaging communities in culturally sensitive and meaningful ways.

6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended the following policy areas:

1. Government agencies and electoral bodies should formally recognise and integrate cultural practitioners into voter education programmes, ensuring that the use of traditional performances in campaigns adheres to guidelines promoting peaceful and inclusive political messaging. This would help harness the persuasive power of cultural art forms while preventing their misuse for spreading misinformation or incitement.
2. Policymakers and cultural commissions should document, preserve, and promote traditional performance arts as valuable heritage while developing frameworks to guide their ethical use in political contexts. This ensures that symbolic cultural expressions are not exploited for divisive rhetoric, but rather serve as tools for unity and civic engagement.
3. Political parties and civic education groups should train political actors and campaign teams in ethical communication practices, emphasising respect for cultural symbols and community values. Public awareness campaigns should educate voters to critically engage with traditional performances, helping them distinguish genuine cultural expression from potential political manipulation.

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Reassessing Voluntary Repatriation: Understanding Its Failure as a Durable Solution to Refugee Displacement

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Abstract

This study critically interrogates the declining efficacy of voluntary repatriation as a durable solution to refugee displacement within the international protection regime. Despite its normative anchoring in the 1951 Refugee Convention and the operational mandate of UNHCR, empirical evidence reveals a persistent disjunction between policy ideals and field realities. Employing a qualitative methodology, the research draws on UNHCR reports, legal instruments, and case studies from Rwanda and Somalia to examine the structural, political, and security-related impediments to sustainable repatriation. The findings demonstrate that repatriation processes are frequently compromised by coercive host-state practices, unresolved conflict in countries of origin, inadequate reintegration frameworks, and donor fatigue. These factors collectively undermine the voluntariness, safety, and dignity of return, contravening core principles of international refugee law, including non-refoulement. Furthermore, the study identifies inconsistencies in the application of tripartite agreements and international conventions, exacerbated by limited funding and weak institutional coordination. The contribution of this research lies in its reconceptualization of durable solutions through a rights-based, context-sensitive, and multi-dimensional lens. It advocates for an integrated framework that aligns repatriation, local integration, and resettlement with broader human security and sustainable development imperatives. This approach seeks to realign refugee policy with the complex realities of contemporary displacement and enhance the ethical and operational integrity of protection strategies.

Keywords: *Voluntary Repatriation, Refugees, Displacement, Durable Solutions*

1. INTRODUCTION

The global landscape of forced displacement has evolved into a pervasive humanitarian challenge, transforming from distant regional crises into urgent realities confronting nations and communities worldwide. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of forcibly displaced persons surpassed 101.1 million by

June 2022, marking a historic milestone in global displacement trends (UNHCR, 2022). This figure includes internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees under UNHCR's mandate, refugees under the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), asylum seekers, and Venezuelans displaced abroad. Among these categories, international displacement—defined by cross-border flight—constitutes the legal and operational basis for refugee protection.

The phenomenon of seeking refuge has emerged in response to escalating threats such as armed conflict, persecution, environmental disasters, and political instability (Gatrell, Nowak, & Banko, 2021). Host countries including Kenya, Ethiopia, Turkey, Cameroon, Nigeria, Uganda, Yemen, and Sweden currently shelter millions of refugees, supported by UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations (UNHCR Global Report, 2014). However, refugee hosting was never intended as a permanent solution; it was conceived as a temporary humanitarian measure pending the restoration of safety and stability in countries of origin.

This foundational principle underpins the concept of voluntary repatriation—the return of refugees to their home countries based on informed and free choice (UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation Handbook, 1996; Adu, 2014). Despite ongoing efforts to facilitate repatriation, the scale of displacement continues to rise. For example, millions of Afghans have fled to Pakistan and Iran; the Iran–Iraq war displaced approximately 600,000 Iraqis; the Syrian conflict has produced over 12 million displaced persons, including 4.1 million refugees; the South Sudanese civil war has generated more than 2.2 million refugees; and the Cameroonian Anglophone crisis has displaced over 80,000 individuals into Nigeria (DePillis et al., 2015; UNHCR, 2021).

These protracted crises underscore the persistent challenges in achieving durable solutions. Voluntary repatriation, once considered the most viable and preferred resolution, is increasingly proving unrealistic. This study critically examines the failure of voluntary repatriation as a durable solution to refugee displacement, exploring the historical, political, and structural factors that have undermined its effectiveness in contemporary contexts.

Research Questions

1. What are the major factors contributing to the failure of voluntary repatriation as a durable solution to refugee displacement?
2. How do political and security conditions in countries of origin affect the sustainability of voluntary repatriation programmes?

Research Objectives

1. To identify and analyze the key factors responsible for the failure of voluntary repatriation as a durable solution to refugee displacement.
2. To examine how political and security conditions in countries of origin influence the sustainability and success of voluntary repatriation efforts.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the complexities, limitations, and ethical considerations surrounding voluntary repatriation as a durable solution to refugee displacement. The research is grounded in interpretivist epistemology, which emphasizes the subjective experiences of refugees and the socio-political contexts that shape repatriation outcomes. By employing a case study approach, the study provides an in-depth analysis of voluntary repatriation efforts in Africa, with particular focus on Rwandan, Somali, and Cameroonian refugee populations.

Data collection for this study was gathered through a combination of primary and secondary sources. Primary data included focus group discussions, structured interviews, and survey responses from Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria, offering insights into their perceptions of safety, legal status, and willingness to return. Secondary data comprised UNHCR reports, international legal instruments, tripartite agreements, and scholarly literature, which provided contextual and theoretical grounding for the analysis of voluntary repatriation practice.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Voluntary repatriation has long been upheld as the most preferred of the three durable solutions to refugee displacement, alongside local integration and resettlement. Its prominence within international protection frameworks stems from the assumption that refugees will return to their countries of origin once peace agreements are signed or conflicts subside. However, this expectation has proven increasingly untenable in contemporary displacement contexts. Empirical evidence from protracted crises across Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia reveals that many repatriation efforts occur under conditions of persistent insecurity, political fragility, and socio-economic instability—factors that fundamentally undermine both the voluntariness and sustainability of return.

The recurrence of premature and coerced repatriation exposes a critical gap between the normative ideals enshrined in international refugee law and the operational realities of humanitarian practice. In many cases, repatriation is driven not by improved conditions in countries of origin, but by donor fatigue, host country pressures, and political expediency.

These dynamics often result in the prioritization of return over protection, sidelining refugees' rights, agency, and long-term reintegration needs. Such disjunctures between policy rhetoric and lived experience raise urgent questions about the continued viability of voluntary repatriation as a durable solution in the twenty-first century.

In light of these challenges, there is a pressing need to reassess the conceptual, political, and structural foundations of voluntary repatriation. This reassessment must interrogate whether the practice remains a credible and ethical response to global displacement, or whether it requires reconfiguration within a broader, rights-based framework that integrates repatriation with alternative solutions such as local integration and third-country resettlement.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Refugees: Individuals who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, are outside their country of nationality and are unable or unwilling to avail themselves of its protection. This definition also applies to stateless persons who, for similar reasons, are unable or unwilling to return to their country of habitual residence.

Displacement: The forced or involuntary movement of individuals from their homes or habitual places of residence due to armed conflict, violence, persecution, natural disasters, or other life-threatening circumstances (UNHCR, 2023).

Durable Solution: A long-term, sustainable resolution to the plight of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, aimed at restoring normalcy, dignity, and the full enjoyment of human rights. Durable solutions include voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement to third countries.

Voluntary Repatriation: The assisted or independent return of refugees to their country of origin, based on the informed and voluntary decision of the returnee. This process must be carried out in accordance with international legal obligations and under conditions that ensure safety, dignity, and sustainability.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

Voluntary repatriation has long been positioned as a cornerstone of durable solutions within refugee discourse, particularly in relation to peace-building and post-conflict recovery. Since the 1980s, and especially following the Cold War, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) intensified its efforts to facilitate large-scale returns, with the 1990s famously designated as the “decade of repatriation” (Johansson, 2010). UNHCR’s 1997 statement emphasized that widespread displacement signals the presence of conflict, and conversely, voluntary repatriation is interpreted as a marker of peace and state recovery.

When refugees return voluntarily, it suggests that the country of origin has taken steps to restore safety and uphold the rights of its citizens, thereby eliminating the well-founded fear that initially prompted flight.

This symbolic and practical linkage between repatriation and peace has been widely explored in academic literature. Adelman (2002) identified four key positions in the relationship between peace and repatriation: (i) resolving refugee situations is a sign of peace; (ii) repatriation itself signifies peace; (iii) peace and repatriation are mutually reinforcing; and (iv) there exists a causal relationship between the two. Johansson (2007) further argued that refugee repatriation and peace are necessary conditions for one another, suggesting a conceptual overlap between the two domains. However, Johansson's later work (2010) cautioned against overgeneralizing this relationship, noting that outcomes vary significantly depending on the political, social, and cultural contexts of displacement and return.

While the principle of voluntary repatriation is grounded in ideals of dignity, safety, and informed choice, its implementation has been subject to critical scrutiny. Long (2013) contends that repatriation is not merely a humanitarian gesture but a deeply political process, requiring negotiation, institutional support, and accountability. The policies guiding repatriation emphasize voluntariness, yet field-level practices often reveal coercion, premature returns, and inadequate reintegration support.

Conceptually, repatriation is defined as the act of returning someone to their country of origin, allegiance, or citizenship (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). In the context of refugee protection, this definition centers on two key elements: "return" and "country of origin." Thus, any movement that does not involve a return to the place of origin cannot be classified as repatriation. Gerver (2018) expands this understanding by noting that refugees may return to places they have never lived but which are considered home due to familial or ancestral ties. This raises important questions about the meaning of "home" in refugee contexts and the emotional, legal, and cultural dimensions of return.

The legal framework underpinning repatriation is primarily derived from the 1951 Refugee Convention, which outlines the conditions under which refugees may be returned to their country of origin. While the Convention prohibits refoulement—forced return to persecution—it also recognizes the right of refugees to voluntarily repatriate when conditions permit. However, the line between lawful and forceful repatriation remains contested, particularly in cases where host states impose deadlines or withdraw support to encourage return. Historically, repatriation emerged as a central solution to refugee crises following major global conflicts. The establishment of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Organisation (UNRRO) in 1943 marked a turning point in international efforts to facilitate return. Yacoub (2023) traces the political origins of repatriation to the early twentieth

century, noting that the aftermath of World War I prompted large-scale returns across Europe. The end of World War II and the Cold War further accelerated repatriation efforts, with UNHCR facilitating the return of approximately twelve million refugees between 1990 and 1997 (Gerver, 2018).

These historical precedents underscore the enduring appeal of repatriation as a solution, yet they also reveal its limitations. The assumption that peace automatically enables return has proven overly simplistic, as many refugees face persistent insecurity, lack of infrastructure, and social exclusion upon repatriation. As such, the literature calls for a more nuanced understanding of voluntary repatriation—one that accounts for the political, legal, and human dimensions of displacement and return.

The practice of repatriation has undergone significant transformation since its inception, evolving in response to shifting geopolitical dynamics and humanitarian standards. Early repatriation efforts were often conducted with limited oversight, and it remains unclear whether ethical principles such as voluntariness and informed consent were consistently upheld (Gerver, 2018). Following the end of the Cold War, repatriation gained renewed momentum, with both progressive and problematic developments shaping its trajectory. While millions of refugees were repatriated during this period, concerns emerged regarding the conditions under which these returns occurred. Notably, a substantial portion of repatriated populations were returned to unstable or conflict-affected countries such as Iraq, Rwanda, Myanmar, Somalia, and Afghanistan—raising critical questions about the safety and sustainability of such returns (Kusari, 2024).

This shift has prompted extensive scholarly debate on the nature and ethics of repatriation as conducted by international agencies and non-governmental organizations. Authors such as Ian (2011), Bradley (2013), and Bariagaber (2006) have critically examined the repatriation process, identifying coercion, political pressure, and logistical constraints as factors that compromise the principle of voluntariness. Consequently, repatriation efforts involving Angolan, Rwandan, Somali, Afghan, and Palestinian refugees in the early twenty-first century have come under increasing scrutiny.

The conceptual framework guiding refugee repatriation is rooted in principles of voluntariness, dignity, and safety (Long, 2013). However, the practical implementation of these principles has revealed complex political and operational dimensions. Repatriation is not solely a humanitarian endeavor; it is inherently political, requiring negotiation and coordination among multiple stakeholders. A standard repatriation process typically involves a tripartite agreement between the country of asylum, the country of origin, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Two illustrative examples of such agreements include the 2017 Tripartite Agreement between Nigeria (country of origin), Cameroon (country of asylum), and UNHCR for the repatriation of Nigerian refugees, and the 2013 Tripartite Agreement between Kenya (country of asylum), Somalia (country of origin), and UNHCR for the repatriation of Somali refugees. These agreements outline detailed provisions to safeguard the rights and welfare of returnees. The Kenya–Somalia agreement includes 30 articles addressing key issues such as the voluntary nature of repatriation, freedom of destination choice, return in safety and dignity, preservation of family unity, legal status, sensitization, and documentation procedures (Tripartite Agreement Governing the Voluntary Repatriation of Somali Refugees Living in Kenya, 2013). Similarly, the Nigeria–Cameroon agreement comprises 33 articles, emphasizing voluntary repatriation, security and dignity, access to returnees by UNHCR, guarantees upon return, and special measures for vulnerable groups (Tripartite Agreement for the Voluntary Repatriation of Nigerian Refugees Living in Cameroon, 2017).

A comparative analysis of these agreements reveals both shared principles and context-specific adaptations. While both emphasize voluntariness and protection, their provisions reflect the unique political, social, and logistical realities of the respective refugee populations and host countries. This underscores the importance of tailoring repatriation frameworks to the specific needs and circumstances of displaced communities. Ultimately, while tripartite agreements serve as critical instruments for facilitating repatriation, their effectiveness depends on the genuine commitment of all parties to uphold humanitarian standards. The evolving nature of voluntary repatriation practice demands continuous evaluation to ensure that returns are not only voluntary in name but also in substance.

6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts the Human Security Theory as its guiding analytical lens. Originating from the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report, the concept of human security has evolved to emphasize the protection of individuals from threats to their safety, dignity, and well-being—shifting the focus away from traditional notions of state sovereignty. Contemporary interpretations of human security encompass seven interrelated dimensions: personal, political, economic, health, community, environmental, and food security (Creed, Kaşlı, & Jaysundara-Smits, 2023).

Human Security Theory offers a multidimensional framework for critically assessing the conditions under which voluntary repatriation occurs. It is particularly relevant to refugee studies, as it enables a holistic evaluation of whether return processes genuinely uphold the principles of voluntariness, safety, and sustainability. Recent scholarship has underscored the limitations of repatriation efforts in meeting these standards. Blair (2025) argues that the success of repatriation is fundamentally shaped by refugees' access to economic and social

resources—elements often absent in post-conflict environments. Similarly, the Joint Data Center (2024) identifies significant gaps in reintegration support, noting that returnees frequently encounter acute risks due to unresolved conflict, weak governance, and inadequate infrastructure.

Applying Human Security Theory to the context of voluntary repatriation reveals that many return processes are compromised by coercion, donor fatigue, and political expediency. These factors undermine personal and political security, exposing refugees to renewed persecution, violence, or discrimination upon return. Economic and health security are jeopardized when returnees lack access to livelihoods, housing, and essential services. Community and psychological security are also threatened by social exclusion, trauma, and distrust of home governments.

By reframing voluntary repatriation as a complex human process rather than a mere policy mechanism, the human security lens foregrounds the rights, agency, and long-term well-being of displaced populations. This theoretical approach supports a reconceptualization of durable solutions, advocating for integrated strategies that combine repatriation, local integration, and resettlement within broader human development and protection agendas.

7. CASE STUDIES OF VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION IN AFRICA

Voluntary repatriation, when supported by development assistance and grounded in international legal frameworks, remains the most widely endorsed solution for resolving protracted refugee situations (UNHCR Executive Committee, Conclusion No. 109 (LXI), 2009). Under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), repatriation is facilitated through collaboration with both countries of asylum and countries of origin. Signatory states to the 1951 Refugee Convention are obligated to support UNHCR in fulfilling this mandate. To operationalise repatriation, UNHCR often enters into tripartite agreements with relevant governments and, where applicable, international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Notable examples include the 2008 agreement between Romania, UNHCR, and IOM, and the 2010 tripartite meeting between Senegal and Mauritania for the return of Mauritanian refugees (UNHCR, The 10-Point Plan, 2007). Importantly, repatriation must not only be voluntary in principle but also individualized in practice. Each refugee's decision to return must be based on informed consent and personal circumstances (Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, 2016). The following case study illustrates the complexities surrounding voluntary repatriation in the African context.

Somali Refugees from Kenya

The Somali refugee crisis, one of the most protracted and complex in the world, originated in 1991 following the collapse of President Siad Barre's regime and the onset of civil war. Over 810,000 Somali refugees were displaced across twelve countries, including Kenya, Yemen, Djibouti, Libya, Sudan, and Eritrea (EC/71/SC/CRP.11, 2020). Somalia's continued instability, marked by armed conflict and fragmented governance, has posed significant challenges to repatriation efforts (Kirui et al., 2020).

In November 2013, UNHCR signed a tripartite agreement with the governments of Kenya and Somalia to facilitate voluntary repatriation. The process officially commenced in 2014, and by 2020, approximately 90,000 Somali refugees had returned—representing just 11% of the total displaced population (UNHCR, 2020). Despite this progress, the repatriation initiative was overshadowed by security concerns in Kenya, particularly following the April 2015 terrorist attack at Garissa University, which claimed 148 lives. The attack, attributed to Al-Shabaab militants, intensified public and governmental scrutiny of Somali refugees and led to threats of forced repatriation and the potential closure of Dadaab Refugee Camp.

Responding to these pressures, the international community reaffirmed the importance of adhering to legal frameworks such as the 1951 UN Convention, the 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 OAU Convention. UNHCR provided logistical and material support to refugees who opted to return, including cash grants for transportation, core relief items, and hygiene kits. These measures aimed to reduce the burden of travel and ensure that returns occurred in a manner consistent with humanitarian principles.

The Somali case underscores the tension between national security concerns and refugee protection obligations. It highlights the need for repatriation processes that are not only legally sound but also sensitive to the broader political and social context in both host and origin countries.

The Rwandan Refugee Repatriation from Uganda

Between 2000 and 2015, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of approximately 160,000 Rwandan refugees from Uganda under the "Comprehensive Solutions Strategy for Rwandan Refugees" (Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, 2016). The Rwandan refugee crisis originated from the civil war that began in 1990 and culminated in the 1994 genocide, following the assassination of Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira. The genocide resulted in the massacre of an estimated 800,000 people, predominantly Tutsi and moderate Hutu, and triggered the mass displacement of millions into neighboring countries, including Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Tanzania (Alluri, 2009).

Although some Rwandan refugees began returning in the early 1990s, many of these movements occurred under duress. Refugee camps in the DRC were overtaken by Hutu militias, leading to forced returns. Similarly, the Tanzanian government expelled Rwandans with long-term residency, further complicating the voluntariness of return. These conditions cast doubt on the extent to which early returns adhered to the principles of voluntary repatriation.

In response, UNHCR initiated structured repatriation efforts in 2000, grounded in a series of international legal instruments and bilateral agreements. These included the 1993 United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/872 and the Protocol of Agreement between the Government of Rwanda and the Rwandan Patriotic Front on the Repatriation of Rwandan Refugees and the Resettlement of Displaced Persons. Additional frameworks included the 1995 Tripartite Agreement between UNHCR, Tanzania, and Rwanda; the 1999 Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement between the DRC and Rwanda; and the 2002 Pretoria Peace Agreement. Other enabling mechanisms included the Tripartite Agreement between UNHCR, Uganda, and Rwanda, the establishment of the Gacaca traditional courts in 2005, and the abolition of the death penalty in Rwanda.

These legal and institutional frameworks provided the foundation for a more structured and ostensibly voluntary repatriation process. However, the legacy of earlier forced returns and the complex political and security dynamics in the Great Lakes region continued to influence refugee perceptions and decisions. As such, while the repatriation of Rwandan refugees from Uganda represents one of the most extensive return operations in Africa, it also exemplifies the tensions between policy ideals and field realities in the implementation of voluntary repatriation.

The voluntary repatriation of Rwandan refugees represents one of UNHCR's most extensive return operations in Africa. Following the 1994 genocide and subsequent civil unrest, millions of Rwandans fled to neighboring countries, including Uganda, Malawi, and South Africa. In response, UNHCR developed the "Comprehensive Solutions Strategy for Rwandan Refugees," which facilitated the return of approximately 160,000 individuals by 2015 (UNHCR, 2016). This strategy was supported by the establishment of tripartite agreements involving Rwanda and host countries such as Uganda, Malawi, and South Africa, with provisions addressing key concerns of the refugee population.

These agreements emphasized human rights protections and outlined commitments to ensure voluntary, safe, and dignified return. Financial resources were allocated to support both refugees in countries of asylum and returnees in Rwanda, enabling reintegration through access to housing, education, and livelihoods. By 2016, the governments involved had

pledged to complete all voluntary returns, marking a significant milestone in regional repatriation efforts.

Cameroonian Refugees from Nigeria

The Cameroonian refugee situation in Nigeria offers a compelling illustration of the complexities and limitations inherent in voluntary repatriation. Since 2017, thousands of Cameroonian nationals have sought asylum in Nigeria due to the protracted Anglophone crisis, which erupted in 2016 and has persisted for over eight years without resolution (Bang & Balgah, 2022). Despite sustained humanitarian assistance and the provision of temporary protection measures, the prospect of voluntary return remains deeply constrained by political, security, and institutional factors.

Recent focus group discussions and survey data reveal a constellation of barriers impeding repatriation. These include the ongoing nature of the conflict in Cameroon, refugees' fear of losing legal status, partial local integration within host communities, and the absence of formal repatriation mechanisms (Bang & Balgah, 2022). Collectively, these factors have left many refugees in a state of liminality—unable to return home, yet uncertain about their long-term prospects in Nigeria.

In response to the influx, the Nigerian government granted *prima facie* refugee status and Temporary Protected Status (TPS), which has been periodically renewed. Refugees have settled across several states, including Cross River, Benue, Taraba, and Akwa Ibom, where UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations have provided essential services such as shelter, food, education, healthcare, and livelihood support (Protection Strategy for Cameroonian Refugees, 2018). Nonetheless, the continuation of hostilities in Cameroon remains the most significant deterrent to repatriation. Field survey data from 2024 indicates that 100% of respondents acknowledged the ongoing nature of the crisis, while 79.5% expressed unwillingness to return under current conditions. Moreover, instances of self-repatriation have often resulted in temporary stays followed by re-displacement, underscoring the instability and insecurity that persist in the country of origin.

The prolonged displacement has generated far-reaching consequences. Refugees face limited access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, while host communities experience mounting pressure on resources and infrastructure. Psychological trauma and emotional distress are also prevalent, further complicating the feasibility of return (Concern Worldwide, 2021). This case underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive and durable resolution to the Anglophone crisis. Without meaningful political and security reforms in Cameroon, voluntary repatriation cannot be considered a safe or sustainable solution. Until

such conditions are met, Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria will continue to face an uncertain future, and the aspiration to rebuild their lives in their homeland will remain deferred.

A comparative examination of repatriation cases further highlights the fragility of the voluntary repatriation model. For instance, Ahimbisibwe (2017) documents how Rwandan refugees in Uganda were issued ultimatums to return in 2009, 2011, and 2013, generating panic and undermining the principle of informed consent. UNHCR was criticized for facilitating conditions that enabled non-voluntary returns and for failing to uphold the core tenets of refugee protection. The 2011 formal declaration of “Cessation of Refugee Status” for Rwandan refugees—though not invoked until December 2017—was perceived by some as a violation of human rights (Ahimbisibwe, Ingelaere, & Vancluysen, 2019).

These examples reinforce the conclusion that voluntary repatriation, while central to international refugee policy, has yielded mixed outcomes. Its effectiveness is increasingly called into question, particularly in contexts marked by unresolved conflict, weak governance, and inadequate reintegration support. While international efforts to facilitate repatriation remain vital, they must be critically assessed and recalibrated to ensure that returns are truly voluntary, safe, and sustainable.

While the framework and coordination mechanisms were robust, the legacy of earlier forced returns and the complex political dynamics in the Great Lakes region continued to influence refugee perceptions. Nonetheless, the Rwandan case illustrates how structured legal agreements and targeted development assistance can enhance the credibility and effectiveness of voluntary repatriation.

Criticism of Voluntary Repatriation

From the above case studies, the following criticism of voluntary repatriation have emerged:

Questionable Voluntariness of Repatriation: In several instances, the “voluntary” nature of repatriation was undermined by coercion, pressure, and fear of forced return. Rwandan refugees for instance were subjected to ultimatums by host governments (e.g., Uganda, Tanzania), creating panic and prompting returns that were not truly voluntary (Ahimbisibwe, 2017). Forceful expulsion from asylum countries such as Tanzania and insecurity in host nations like the DRC compelled refugees to return. Such actions contradict the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits returning refugees to conditions of potential persecution.

Security and Safety Concerns in Countries of Origin: Many refugees were reluctant to return due to persistent insecurity, ongoing conflicts, or fear of persecution in their home countries. The Somali case exemplifies this — refugees feared returning to a country plagued by civil unrest, terrorism, and unstable governance. Lack of assurances of safety and human

rights protection in the country of origin remains a major obstacle to truly voluntary returns. In situations where they return, they are forced to flee again.

Inadequate Reintegration and Post-Return Support: Despite UNHCR’s assistance and tripartite agreements, there were insufficient reintegration mechanisms, limited infrastructure, and weak social services to support returnees. Livelihood insecurity and limited access to basic amenities (health, education, housing) discouraged refugees from returning permanently. Repatriation often ended with transportation and small cash grants but lacked sustainable development linkages in the return areas.

Host Country Pressure and Political Interests: Host states sometimes use political or security justifications to hasten repatriation processes. Kenya’s intention to close Dadaab Refugee Camp after terrorist incidents demonstrates how national security narratives can threaten the voluntariness of returns. Similarly, Uganda’s deadlines for Rwandan refugees to leave reflected political motives rather than humanitarian considerations.

Inconsistent Application of International Legal Frameworks: Although tripartite agreements and UN conventions exist (e.g., 1951 UN Convention, 1969 OAU Convention, various peace agreements), their implementation is inconsistent. UNHCR’s 2011 “Cessation of Refugee Status” declaration for Rwandans drew criticism for potentially violating human rights and undermining voluntary principles. There is a gap between policy frameworks and field realities, often due to political, logistical, and financial limitations.

Limited International Funding and Coordination: Despite the existence of tripartite frameworks, the funding for comprehensive reintegration and development assistance remained inadequate. The lack of long-term investment in host and origin communities limited the sustainability of returns and often led to secondary displacement.

Refugee Distrust and Psychological Trauma: Many refugees have deep psychological scars from conflict, genocide, or persecution, leading to distrust of home governments and scepticism about the sincerity of repatriation guarantees. Fear of retribution, discrimination, or community rejection weakens confidence in repatriation processes.

Limited Success Rates and Questionable Achievements: Despite significant international investment, the proportion of successfully repatriated refugees remains low (e.g., only 11% of Somali refugees repatriated).

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Respect Voluntariness and Non-Refoulement

Voluntariness remains the cornerstone of all repatriation efforts. Return must be a free and informed decision taken without any form of coercion, threat, or psychological pressure.

Refugees should be provided with objective and comprehensive information about the conditions in their country of origin to enable them to make informed choices. Governments and humanitarian agencies must refrain from imposing deadlines, administrative restrictions, or withdrawal of assistance as means to force refugees to return (UNHCR, 2015; Refworld, 2023). This legal safeguard ensures that returns occur only when conditions are demonstrably safe and that refugees are not returned to situations of persecution, conflict, or generalized violence (Goodwin-Gill & McAdam, 2007).

Protection-Sensitive, Rights-Based Approach

Voluntary repatriation should be rooted in a protection-sensitive and rights-based framework, ensuring that refugee rights are upheld at every stage of the return process. This entails designing repatriation programmes that address the diverse protection needs of individuals and groups — especially women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, and survivors of sexual or gender-based violence (SGBV) (UNHCR, 2018). A rights-based approach requires that refugees’ civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights are recognised and protected in both the country of asylum and the country of origin. In practice, a rights-based approach ensures that repatriation is not merely a physical movement of people but a process of restoring rights, safety, and dignity in a sustainable manner (Chimni, 2004).

Do No Harm and Promote Dignity

The “do no harm” principle underpins humanitarian practice and is essential in voluntary repatriation processes. It requires all actors to ensure that interventions do not exacerbate existing vulnerabilities or create new risks for returnees (UNHCR, 2013). Refugees must be treated as rights-holders, not passive recipients of aid. All stages of repatriation—from pre-departure information sharing to transportation, reception, and reintegration—must be conducted in ways that respect human dignity and avoid discrimination or stigmatisation (UNHCR, 2020). For example, transport and reception arrangements should ensure privacy, family unity, and access to basic amenities such as water, food, shelter, and medical care.

Assessment in Country of Origin

Before facilitating any voluntary repatriation, there must be impartial, evidence-based assessments of conditions in the country or area of return (UNHCR, 2015). These assessments must cover security, human rights, rule of law, economic stability, and access to basic services such as education, health, and housing. The *UNHCR Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities* (2004) stresses that repatriation should only proceed when “conditions of safety and dignity” are met in the country of origin.

9. CONCLUSION

Voluntary repatriation remains a foundational pillar of the durable solutions framework for addressing refugee displacement. However, its continued viability as a sustainable solution is increasingly contingent upon the rigorous application of core humanitarian principles and international legal standards. These include the respect for voluntariness and the principle of non-refoulement, the integration of protection-sensitive and rights-based approaches, adherence to the “do no harm” principle, and the implementation of comprehensive, evidence-based assessments of conditions in countries of origin. Ensuring that repatriation is truly voluntary requires empowering refugees with accurate information and safeguarding their autonomy in decision-making, free from coercion or undue pressure.

This study contributes to the evolving discourse on refugee protection by examining the intersection of refugee studies, conflict resolution, and humanitarian response. It underscores the value of an interdisciplinary approach in unpacking the complex and often contradictory realities of displacement and return. By drawing on diverse theoretical and empirical insights, the research advances a more nuanced understanding of the structural and situational factors that shape repatriation outcomes.

In particular, the case of Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria illustrates the multifaceted barriers that hinder voluntary repatriation. Ongoing insecurity, political instability, and the absence of robust reintegration mechanisms have rendered return both unsafe and unsustainable. These findings highlight the urgent need for coordinated, context-sensitive strategies that move beyond policy rhetoric to address the lived experiences of displaced populations.

Ultimately, this research offers critical guidance for policymakers, humanitarian actors, and scholars committed to enhancing the resilience and dignity of refugee communities. It calls for a reconceptualization of durable solutions—one that embraces integrated approaches combining repatriation, local integration, and resettlement within broader human security and development agendas. Only through such comprehensive and ethically grounded strategies can the international community hope to achieve lasting solutions to the global refugee crisis.

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The Influence of Adverse Social and Economic Factors on the Success of Restorative Justice Programs in Anti-Corruption Efforts

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the detrimental impact of adverse social and economic factors on the success of the restorative justice programs through the Structural Strain Theory lens. The theory posits that units and divisions that exist in society lead to tensions that will stress out the behavior of individuals or groups thereby showing engenderment of deviance and crime. The study uses a qualitative research methodology based on case studies, interviews with restorative justice practitioners and reviews of policy for examination of how structural strains, poor, unemployment, and other systemic inequities impede restorative justice implementation. Findings show that people's socioeconomic disadvantages and the systemic marginalization make it very difficult for them to gain access to restorative justice, which resulted in a continuation of cycles of inequality and undermines community cohesion. Often, communities that experience high levels of structural strain have not developed the resources, trust or stability to underpin effective practice in restorative practices. The conclusion of the study is that such structural barriers must be addressed if restorative justice programs are to be effective and sustainable. Policies that can reduce poverty and inequality are recommended as well as community engagement through education and capacity building initiatives as well as partnership with government agencies in community organizations to strengthen restorative practices. Such measures make for the basis of equitable and inclusive restorative justice outcomes.

Keywords: *Restorative justice, Structural Strain Theory, socioeconomic factors, community trust, systemic inequality, social reintegration.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Restorative justice (RJ) represents an alternative paradigm within the broader criminal justice system, shifting focus from punishment to healing, accountability, and relationship restoration. Unlike the retributive approach that emphasizes deterrence and retribution, RJ seeks to repair harm by engaging all stakeholders, victims, offenders, and communities, in collaborative dialogue and restitution processes (Zehr, 2015; Daly, 2022). In corruption-related offenses, RJ assumes a distinct dimension: it addresses the moral and institutional

injuries inflicted upon society, aiming not only at individual rehabilitation but also at restoring public trust and institutional integrity (Faharuddin & Hakim, 2023). Corruption, defined as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, erodes social cohesion, distorts markets, and weakens development trajectories, particularly in developing contexts such as Nigeria and Indonesia (Transparency International, 2023). While punitive measures may punish offenders, they often fail to achieve the reintegration of offenders, restitution of public assets, or reconciliation with affected communities. From the lens of Structural Strain Theory (SST), the persistence of corruption and weak restorative outcomes can be understood as adaptive responses to systemic inequalities. When individuals and institutions face structural pressures, such as poverty, unemployment, and limited access to legitimate opportunities, they may resort to deviant strategies to attain socially approved goals like wealth or status (Merton, 1938). This theoretical framing highlights why societies marked by severe social and economic strain tend to experience entrenched corruption and weak justice systems, conditions that equally hinder the success of restorative programs.

Globally, jurisdictions experimenting with RJ in anti-corruption contexts have produced mixed results. In Indonesia, pilot initiatives demonstrated that restorative mechanisms could expedite restitution and reduce judicial backlog, but they also revealed practical challenges such as unclear victim identification, weak legal bases, and resource limitations (Octaviyanti & Yanto, 2024; Ananda, Setyabudi, & Nita, 2023). In Nigeria, socioeconomic inequities and limited institutional capacity similarly constrain RJ's implementation, as restorative settlements may be perceived as leniency rather than accountability. These outcomes suggest that the efficacy of RJ depends not merely on procedural reforms but also on structural conditions, particularly the level of social trust, economic stability, and institutional autonomy.

Despite growing scholarship on restorative justice and corruption, there remains a critical research gap concerning how adverse social and economic factors mediate its success in anti-corruption frameworks. Most existing studies focus on RJ in conventional criminal contexts or post-conflict reconciliation (Zehr, 2015; UNDP, 2022), with limited attention to economic crimes where victims are collective and institutional. This study therefore seeks to examine how social and economic disparities, institutional weakness, and cultural perceptions influence the adoption and effectiveness of restorative justice programs in anti-corruption initiatives. By applying Structural Strain Theory, the paper aims to illuminate how systemic inequities both drive corruption and impede restorative efforts, thereby contributing to a more context-sensitive model for implementing restorative justice in socioeconomically strained societies.

Restorative Justice in Anti-Corruption Efforts

Restorative justice (RJ) marks a significant departure from punitive criminal justice traditions by prioritising healing, accountability, and the restoration of relationships harmed by crime. Within anti-corruption contexts, RJ extends beyond interpersonal reconciliation to encompass institutional and societal repair. It seeks to address the moral and economic harm caused by corrupt practices through inclusive participation of offenders, victims, and affected communities in dialogue and restitution (Zehr, 2015; Daly, 2022). This approach holds offenders accountable while enabling recovery of social trust and institutional credibility that corruption undermines. From the perspective of Structural Strain Theory (SST), corruption can be understood as an adaptive response to systemic inequality, where individuals or officials pursue success through illegitimate means when legitimate opportunities are constrained (Merton, 1938). Consequently, restorative measures must operate within environments already strained by poverty, institutional fragility, and public scepticism toward justice. Empirical evidence illustrates these dynamics. In Indonesia, Octaviyanti and Yanto (2024) observed that RJ initiatives helped reduce court caseloads and promote restitution but were hindered by difficulties in identifying victims and enforcing repayment agreements. Similarly, Ananda, Setyabudi, and Nita (2023) emphasised that the absence of a comprehensive legal basis limited police-level RJ applications in fraud and embezzlement cases. These cases underscore that effective RJ in anti-corruption depends not only on procedural reforms but on alleviating underlying structural strain through stronger institutions, economic equity, and community trust.

Adverse Social Factors

Social conditions, entrenched cultural norms, public perceptions, and tolerance for everyday corrupt practices, critically shape the feasibility of restorative approaches in anti-corruption contexts. From the lens of Structural Strain Theory, persistent inequality and blocked legitimate opportunities generate pressures that normalise “work-around” behaviours, including informal payments and favour exchanges; in such settings, restorative processes are easily framed as undue leniency rather than accountable repair (Merton, 1938). Public trust is further weakened when implementation departs from restorative principles. Evidence from Indonesia shows that police-level applications of RJ have been susceptible to transactional settlements, popularly described as “buying and selling” cases, where inadequate oversight and ambiguous role boundaries enabled discretion to drift toward negotiated impunity (Felisiano & Paripurna, 2023). These dynamics intensify strain by signalling that powerful actors can resolve wrongdoing privately, thereby reinforcing perceptions of unequal justice. In high-corruption environments, where citizens already doubt institutional integrity, RJ must therefore be coupled with visible safeguards,

transparent criteria for eligibility, victim representation, independent facilitation, and public reporting, to avoid reproducing the very social adaptations to strain that sustain corrupt behaviour (Transparency International, 2023).

Economic Challenges

Economic instability and chronic resource constraints impede the implementation of restorative approaches. From a Structural Strain Theory perspective, underfunded justice institutions, limited program infrastructure, and scarcity of trained facilitators intensify the gap between societal expectations of integrity and the system's capacity to deliver it, encouraging adaptive shortcuts (e.g., informal settlements) that undermine restorative outcomes (Merton, 1938). In low-income settings, restitution or monetary compensation, often central to restorative agreements, may be impracticable, weakening both compliance and perceived fairness. Evidence cited by *The Times* (2024) on “holistic defence” models underscores the resource intensity of service-linked interventions (case management, rehabilitation, reintegration) but also suggests downstream fiscal benefits through reduced custody costs and improved justice outcomes. In Nigeria, advocacy for restorative alternatives highlights similar cost-benefit logics, yet progress is constrained by financing gaps and uneven program capacity (Nanlong, 2024). These dynamics align with broader corruption risks documented by Transparency International (2023): where fiscal pressures and inequality are acute, both deviant adaptations and program non-compliance are more likely. Accordingly, sustainable restorative justice in anti-corruption contexts requires predictable funding streams, capacity building for facilitators, and phased restitution mechanisms calibrated to offenders' means, coupled with state-backed enforcement to preserve credibility.

Institutional and Political Factors

Institutional weakness and political interference frequently undermine the credibility of restorative justice initiatives. Effective implementation depends on an independent, transparent, and accountable judiciary; yet where justice institutions themselves are compromised by corruption, restorative processes risk distortion or outright capture. From a Structural Strain Theory perspective, these weaknesses reflect systemic tension between societal expectations of integrity and the limited institutional capacity to realise them (Merton, 1938). Under such strain, actors adapt by exploiting institutional loopholes, substituting informal negotiations or political patronage for legitimate restorative procedures. Empirical observations from Indonesia show that, without oversight, mediators and investigators sometimes manipulate restorative settlements for personal or political advantage, a phenomenon described by Felisiano and Paripurna (2023) as “buying and selling” cases. These practices not only erode public confidence but also convert restorative

justice into another channel of transactional governance. Political will therefore becomes pivotal: sustained commitment to policy coherence, adequate funding, and independent supervision is essential to break the feedback loop between weak institutions and corrupt adaptation. Strengthening oversight mechanisms, clarifying procedural mandates, and insulating mediators from political influence would reduce structural strain and reinforce the integrity of restorative justice programs in anti-corruption contexts (Transparency International, 2023).

Case Studies and Comparative Analysis

Experiences across contexts show both the promise and limits of restorative approaches in anti-corruption work. In Indonesia, proposals to apply RJ to corruption emphasise restitution and reconciliation but face legal and design constraints; debates persist over appropriateness for “extraordinary crimes,” and weak statutory bases at police level have enabled discretionary drift (Faharuddin & Hakim, 2023; ANTARA News, 2022; Ananda, Setyabudi, & Nita, 2023). In China, large-scale anti-corruption actions have sanctioned extensive petty graft, over half a million officials in one year, illustrating that deterrence can be scaled, yet without parallel community-level repair and transparency mechanisms, opportunities for relational restoration remain limited (Aredy, 2025). South Africa’s state-capture experience underscores how entrenched inequality and institutional fragility frustrate accountability pathways, heightening structural strain that corrodes public trust (Madonsela, 2021). By contrast, Rwanda’s Gacaca courts, though not anti-corruption per se, show that community-based processes can work when resourced, normatively anchored, and institutionally supported (UNDP, 2022). From a Structural Strain Theory perspective, these cases indicate that where inequality, legal ambiguity, and weak oversight intensify strain, actors adapt via informal bargains that can hollow out restorative aims. Hence, effective RJ in anti-corruption settings requires clear legal mandates, transparent restitution protocols, independent facilitation, and public reporting to counter incentives that sustain corrupt adaptation (Transparency International, 2023).

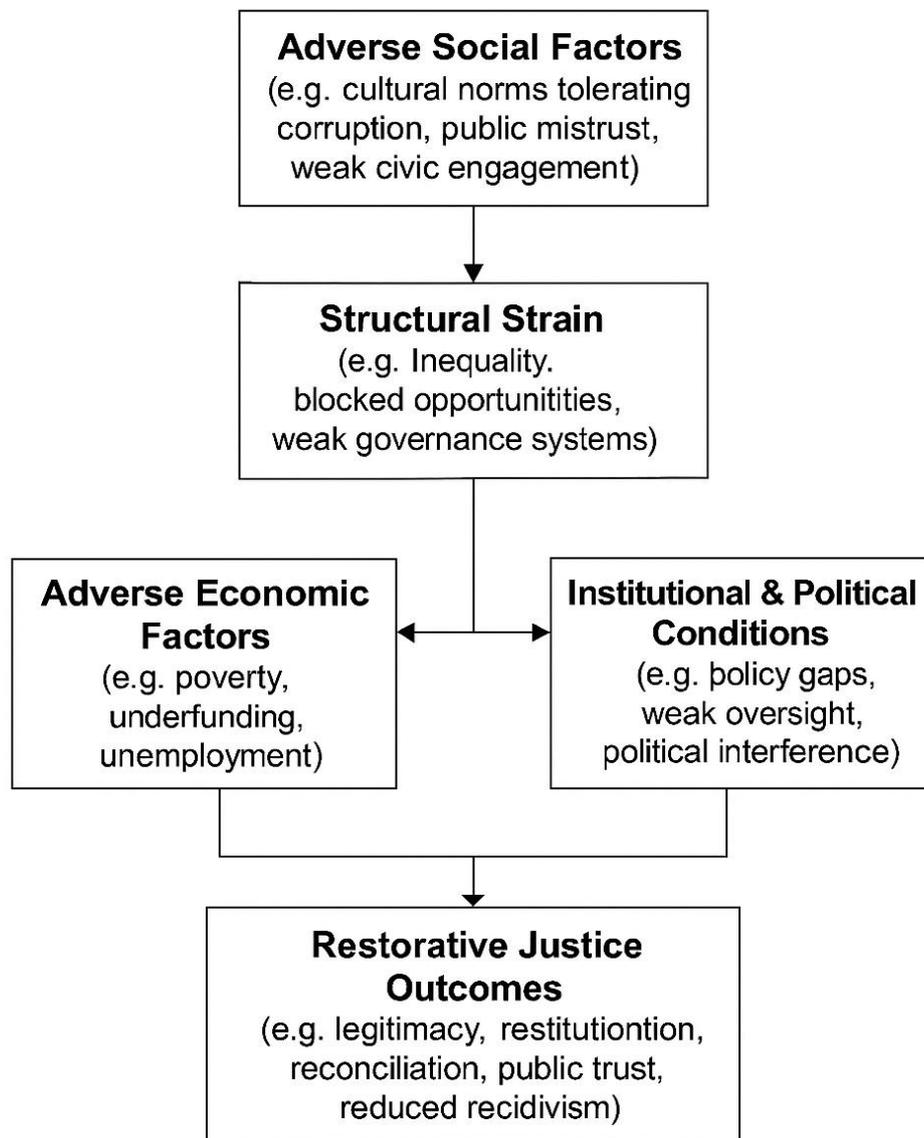


Fig. 1: Conceptual Model Linking Social and Economic Factors to Restorative Justice Outcomes

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: STRUCTURAL STRAIN THEORY

Robert K. Merton's (1938) Structural Strain Theory (SST) explains deviant behaviour as a social response to the disjunction between culturally approved goals and the unequal means available to achieve them. When legitimate avenues to success are constrained by poverty, inequality, or weak institutions, individuals and groups experience strain that may lead to corruption and other adaptive misconducts. Within restorative justice contexts, such strain also undermines fairness and accountability, as institutional actors under economic or

political pressure often adopt informal or illicit practices that distort the aims of justice. Under SST, corruption can be interpreted as an “innovative” adaptation, where actors pursue societal goals such as wealth or influence through illegitimate means because structural barriers block legitimate ones. In developing societies, low wages, limited social mobility, and poor institutional performance foster these adaptations. Consequently, restorative justice initiatives encounter difficulty where these same structural imbalances persist, since programs designed to promote honesty and reconciliation must operate in environments that incentivise the opposite.

Empirical realities reinforce this theoretical perspective. In Nigeria, systemic poverty and economic disparity fuel adaptive behaviours such as embezzlement and bribery, which become perceived as viable survival strategies (Transparency International, 2023). Similarly, South Africa’s State Capture scandal demonstrated how entrenched inequality and weak institutional oversight deepened strain within governance systems, allowing elite actors to subvert checks and balances (Madonsela, 2021). Conversely, Rwanda’s Gacaca courts, community-based restorative mechanisms following genocide, illustrate that reducing structural strain through inclusive participation, resource provision, and institutional reform can enable restorative outcomes (UNDP, 2022). In sum, SST provides a useful lens for analysing why restorative justice programs often struggle in corruption-prone contexts. Structural inequality, fragile institutions, and social normalisation of corrupt practices reproduce the very pressures that RJ seeks to resolve. Addressing these root causes, through equitable economic policies, institutional strengthening, and civic reorientation, remains central to enabling restorative justice to function as a credible anti-corruption tool.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative design combining comparative case analysis and thematic content analysis of secondary sources. The scope covered materials published 2015–2025, focusing on jurisdictions with documented anti-corruption initiatives that intersect with restorative or reparative practices. Sources comprised peer-reviewed journal articles, policy and evaluation reports from international organisations (e.g., Transparency International, UN bodies), government documents, and reputable news or think-tank briefs that reported program outcomes. A transparent search protocol (recorded in an extraction grid) used Boolean strings around restorative justice, anti-corruption, restitution, asset recovery, diversion, Indonesia/Nigeria/South Africa, and implementation. Inclusion criteria were: (i) explicit discussion of restorative or restorative-adjacent practices in corruption or economic-crime contexts; (ii) reportable outcomes or implementation details; and (iii) sufficient methodological clarity to permit appraisal. Exclusion criteria removed purely theoretical

essays without empirical content and non-corruption RJ studies unless they offered transferable implementation lessons.

Data were coded in two stages. First, deductive codes were derived from Structural Strain Theory (e.g., inequality/blocked opportunities, institutional capacity, adaptive responses, legitimacy/trust). Second, inductive codes captured emergent themes (legal ambiguity, oversight design, restitution feasibility). Coding was performed iteratively with constant comparison across cases to identify convergent and divergent patterns. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation (cross-checking findings across academic, policy, and official sources) and a maintained audit trail of search decisions, inclusion/exclusion judgments, and code revisions. Because only publicly available documents were used, no human-subjects approval was required. Limitations include potential publication bias toward successful or high-profile programs and uneven depth of reporting across countries. These constraints were mitigated by purposive sampling across regions and by prioritising sources with explicit methods and outcome metrics.

4. RESULTS

The findings of this study reveal a complex interaction of social, economic, and institutional factors that shape the success or failure of restorative justice (RJ) programs in anti-corruption efforts. Analysis of case materials, policy documents, and secondary studies from Nigeria, Indonesia, South Africa, Rwanda, and China indicates that while restorative frameworks have gained policy traction, their practical implementation remains constrained by entrenched social norms, weak institutional capacity, and limited financial commitment.

Social Norms and Public Perception

Social attitudes toward corruption exert significant influence on the acceptance and performance of restorative justice initiatives. In many developing contexts, corruption is embedded in everyday social and bureaucratic interactions, often rationalised as a survival mechanism or a means of accessing otherwise inaccessible services. The case of Indonesia demonstrates that where corruption has become culturally normalised, restorative justice is frequently interpreted as leniency rather than accountability. Empirical evidence from Octaviyanti and Yanto (2024) shows that the public expects corruption to be punished with imprisonment or dismissal, not reconciliation. This normative orientation limits participation in restorative processes and discourages offenders from voluntary confession, for fear of appearing weak or insincere. Similarly, in Nigeria, public scepticism stems from decades of selective enforcement and high-profile impunity. Media reports reveal that citizens equate restorative settlement with elite privilege rather than social repair. The overall finding is that without trust in institutional impartiality, communities remain reluctant to endorse restorative

outcomes. Cultural perceptions therefore act as a primary barrier, shaping both participation levels and legitimacy of RJ processes.

Economic Barriers

Economic constraints constitute another major obstacle to sustainable restorative justice practice. Across the examined cases, financial shortages were evident in the form of inadequate infrastructure, lack of trained facilitators, and limited operational budgets for implementing agencies. For instance, Nigeria’s Prison Fellowship has consistently advocated RJ as a cost-saving alternative to incarceration, but national roll-out has stalled because of poor budgetary allocations and dependence on donor support (Nanlong, 2024). In Indonesia, Ananda, Setyabudi, and Nita (2023) similarly reported that police-level programs lacked the legal and material capacity to deliver mediation effectively. These resource deficits have cascading effects: facilitators are often undertrained, community awareness is minimal, and cases that require restitution cannot be completed when offenders are unable to pay compensation. Where restitution depends on personal financial capacity, restorative settlements disproportionately favour wealthy offenders who can afford repayment, further eroding equity. Thus, while RJ promises to reduce judicial backlog and incarceration costs, its feasibility remains contingent on sustained economic investment and socio-economic stability.

Institutional Weaknesses

Institutional fragility and corruption within enforcement agencies were repeatedly identified as undermining restorative integrity. Findings from Felisiano and Paripurna (2023) reveal that the Indonesian police, who mediate many RJ cases, sometimes exploit the process through informal payments and case manipulation, a practice referred to locally as “buying and selling” cases. This pattern demonstrates that where institutional accountability is weak, RJ can be co-opted as another avenue for rent-seeking behaviour. The Nigerian context mirrors this pattern. Oversight institutions such as anti-corruption commissions and the judiciary operate with limited autonomy, and restorative frameworks are frequently politicised. In some cases, political elites intervene to settle corruption allegations outside formal channels, branding them as “reconciliation.” Rather than promoting healing, these informal arrangements perpetuate the perception that restorative mechanisms serve the powerful. The overarching result is that institutional design, particularly the independence and transparency of mediators, directly determines RJ credibility.

Policy and Legal Inconsistencies

Legal ambiguity was also identified as a limiting factor. Although several countries have incorporated restorative principles into criminal policy, few have developed explicit statutes

covering corruption offences. Indonesia's Criminal Code does not provide a clear legal framework for RJ in financial crimes, which restricts prosecutors' discretion to pursue mediation or restitution-based resolutions (Ananda et al., 2023). Nigeria and South Africa face similar legislative gaps, relying mainly on pilot initiatives or administrative circulars. The absence of codified procedures leads to inconsistent application, minimal documentation, and weak enforcement of outcomes.

Success Stories and Positive Models

Despite these challenges, the findings also highlight promising examples where restorative justice principles have yielded measurable progress. In Indonesia, pilot programs addressing minor corruption cases involving limited state losses achieved faster case resolution and restitution of public funds (Faharuddin & Hakim, 2023). These successes were attributed to clear eligibility criteria, involvement of community representatives, and alignment between police and prosecutorial guidelines. International experiences reinforce this potential. In China, large-scale anti-corruption campaigns led to sanctions against more than half a million officials in a single year (Areddy, 2025). Although primarily punitive, these campaigns integrated restorative components such as asset recovery and public disclosure of restituted funds. South Africa's ongoing post-State-Capture reforms show incremental progress through truth-telling and restitution agreements, whereas Rwanda's Gacaca courts illustrate that well-resourced, community-based reconciliation mechanisms can repair social harm and rebuild institutional trust (Madonsela, 2021; UNDP, 2022).

5. DISCUSSION

The results reveal that restorative justice (RJ) implementation in anti-corruption contexts is heavily shaped by social, economic, and institutional pressures. Interpreted through Structural Strain Theory (SST), these pressures reflect systemic tensions between societal aspirations for integrity and the limited legitimate means available to achieve them (Merton, 1938). When individuals or institutions operate in environments characterised by inequality, weak governance, and social tolerance of corruption, they adapt to these strains through deviant or alternative behaviours. Corruption thus becomes a rationalised response to blocked opportunities. The findings demonstrate that restorative justice initiatives often inherit and reproduce these structural constraints, which explains why implementation success varies across jurisdictions. The findings show that entrenched cultural norms and public perceptions of corruption function as social adaptations to structural strain. In societies where access to justice or public services depends on informal payments, corruption becomes a socially tolerated mechanism for survival. SST provides a useful lens for understanding this normalisation: citizens adapt to unequal systems by redefining acceptable conduct, while state officials rationalise corrupt behaviour as a response to economic or administrative

pressure. Consequently, restorative justice, which promotes dialogue and reconciliation, is perceived as incompatible with the prevailing punitive expectations that have evolved to regulate behaviour under strain (Octavianti & Yanto, 2024). Public rejection of RJ therefore reflects not moral resistance to reform but deep-seated adaptation to inequality and distrust in institutional fairness.

Economic instability intensifies structural strain by narrowing legitimate pathways to financial stability. Consistent with Merton's typology of adaptation, officials and citizens facing blocked opportunities may engage in "innovation", pursuing socially valued goals such as security or prosperity through illegitimate means. The results from Nigeria and Indonesia confirm that chronic underfunding of justice institutions and pervasive poverty constrain the resources necessary for effective RJ programs (Nanlong, 2024; Ananda et al., 2023). These material shortages not only weaken implementation capacity but also foster conditions where restorative mechanisms are commodified. For example, facilitators may demand unofficial fees, or offenders may "buy" reconciliation through monetary settlements, thereby replicating the same inequities RJ is designed to correct. Without sustainable economic investment, restorative justice risks being perceived as another transactional instrument rather than a transformative one. Institutional weaknesses evident in several case studies further demonstrate how structural strain manifests within governance systems. Felisiano and Paripurna (2023) reported that investigators in Indonesia exploited RJ settlements for personal gain, behaviour symptomatic of strain within institutions that lack oversight and adequate remuneration. Similarly, in Nigeria, political actors often influence restorative or reconciliatory processes to protect allies, undermining procedural integrity. SST helps explain this phenomenon as an institutional adaptation to systemic stress: where rules are ambiguous and enforcement inconsistent, organisations develop informal mechanisms to manage expectations and maintain stability, even at the cost of legitimacy. Restorative justice cannot flourish in such contexts because the same institutional strain that fuels corruption also distorts its implementation.

Comparative cases highlight how varying levels of strain determine RJ outcomes. Indonesia's pilot programs succeeded where procedural clarity and community participation reduced opportunities for deviant adaptation (Faharuddin & Hakim, 2023). China's large-scale anti-corruption campaign (Aredy, 2025) illustrates strong political will but limited restorative inclusion, demonstrating that deterrence without reconciliation leaves social trust deficits unresolved. South Africa's state-capture inquiry (Madonsela, 2021) exposed how elite-level strain, manifested in patronage networks, can paralyse institutions, while Rwanda's Gacaca courts (UNDP, 2022) show that restorative models thrive when material strain is mitigated through resource provision, local legitimacy, and transparent norms. Together, these cases affirm SST's central proposition: when structural pressures are reduced

through equitable resource distribution and institutional reform, deviant adaptations decline, and restorative justice gains traction. The findings imply that anti-corruption strategies grounded in restorative justice must address structural strain directly rather than treating corruption solely as individual moral failure. Policymakers should integrate RJ into broader socio-economic reform agendas that expand legitimate opportunities and strengthen accountability institutions. Public education campaigns are needed to reframe restorative practices as accountability tools rather than leniency. Economic investment in justice infrastructure, training, community mediation centres, and digital case-tracking systems, would reduce administrative strain and enhance transparency. Moreover, clear legislative mandates defining RJ's scope in corruption cases are essential to prevent discretionary misuse and ensure procedural uniformity. International partners such as the United Nations Development Programme and Transparency International can play a facilitative role by offering technical assistance, funding, and comparative monitoring frameworks to sustain implementation.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined how adverse social and economic factors shape the success of restorative justice (RJ) programs in anti-corruption efforts. The findings demonstrate that entrenched cultural norms that tolerate corruption, weak institutional oversight, and economic deprivation constitute major obstacles to restorative practice. Through the lens of Structural Strain Theory, these challenges reflect the systemic inequalities and pressures that sustain corrupt behaviour and weaken public trust in justice institutions. Comparative evidence from Indonesia, Nigeria, and South Africa confirms that RJ thrives only where structural strain is reduced through social equity, institutional integrity, and civic empowerment. In contexts where these conditions are absent, restorative processes risk manipulation, loss of legitimacy, and eventual ineffectiveness.

The implications are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the study extends Structural Strain Theory to the field of anti-corruption by showing that restorative justice must confront not only individual misconduct but also the broader socioeconomic imbalances that reproduce deviance. Practically, the results call for policy realignment toward institutional capacity-building, inclusive economic reform, and community-based justice education. Governments and anti-corruption agencies should integrate restorative frameworks into national governance strategies that promote transparency, economic opportunity, and civic trust. While this study relied on qualitative secondary data, future research should adopt mixed-method or longitudinal designs to measure how reductions in social and economic strain influence restorative outcomes over time. Comparative regional analyses across African, Asian, and Latin American jurisdictions would further clarify

contextual determinants of success and refine implementation models. Ultimately, restorative justice represents a transformative paradigm for rebuilding trust, accountability, and social cohesion, but its potential can only be realised through deliberate efforts to correct the deep structural inequities that sustain corruption and weaken the pursuit of justice.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

To promote the success of the restorative justice program against corruption, recommendations include the following.

- i. Restorative justice processes must have strong, transparent, and independent institutions responsible and to oversee them.
- ii. Anti-corruption agencies should have adequate resources and divine autonomy for carrying out investigations and imposing restorative measures, free from being politically influenced.
- iii. An awareness was created about the benefits and the principles of restorative justice through public campaigns promoting the same. Indeed, these campaigns have the ability to change the norms of society against minimum punishment offered by restorative approaches as it helps to reduce public skepticism that leniency and restorative justice is a good thing.
- iv. It is vital that programs incorporate inclusivity, in particular, to marginalized and disadvantaged groups that are disproportionately impacted by corruption.
- v. Anti-corruption measures should be integrated with the economic development initiatives so as to address the root causes of corruption, whereby, for example, poverty and unemployment.
- vi. Whistle blowers and those who cooperate with the restorative justice programs should be given incentives.
- vii. Training of judicial officers, law enforcement agents and mediators on restorative justice principles and practices should be part of their training. This helps in having uniform understanding and usage of these concepts in the anti-corruption efforts.
- viii. E-governance systems can reduce opportunities for corruption by automating processes and minimizing human discretion in public service delivery.
- ix. International organizations, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Transparency International, should provide technical assistance and share best practices with countries implementing restorative justice programs.

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Election Tribunal and Challenges for Instability in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

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Abstract

Elections are pivotal to democracy in any given society. It is through elections that leaders emerge to establish good governance. Election is a process to know those who will be in charge of the government for a particular period of time, and must reflect the will of the people. Thus, elections should be inclusive, transparent, free and fair in order for good governance to prevail. Once elections are lacking in any or combination of these attributes mentioned above, there are bound to be various forms of issues especially in the aftermath of the elections. This is where the issue of election tribunal comes in, and the challenges faced by these election tribunal which in turn can lead to instability in Nigeria, is the focus of this paper. It is in view of the above that the paper seeks to establish a linkage between election tribunal and management of electoral disputes in Nigeria. The study adopted Liberal Democratic Theory which established a significant relationship between election and democracy. The study relied on survey research using descriptive but inferential design to obtain and analyze data central to the research focus. It was discovered that the composition of members of the tribunal is faulty, often biased and discriminatory. There is also the inaccessibility to the needed documents relating to electoral processes and unnecessary bureaucratic bottleneck which often impede the performance of election tribunals in Nigeria. Based on these results, the following were suggested to improve the performance of tribunal in election petition matters: adhering to professional ethics by the judges and other electoral institutions in Nigeria, only people with high level of integrity should be appointed as members of election tribunals as well as periodic reviews and electoral act.

Keywords: *Democracy, Election, Governance, Tribunal.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Election is an indispensable attribute of democracy in every well-intentioned society. Through elections, citizens participate in the governance of their country, by choosing those who govern in the quest for development. In all these electoral processes, there are issues that arise especially with various citizens who might not be satisfied with some of the outcomes of the elections. This happens in any democratic society and in Nigeria, as

Brigevich & Oritsejafor (2022) show in their study that no election conducted since independence has been completely free of allegations of irregularities, electoral malpractices, violence and various degrees of disruption.

The need to right the wrong of the country's electoral process necessitated the establishment of electoral tribunals. Electoral tribunal is a specie of court with the authority to deal with problems arising from the conduct of elections. Such a tribunal is expected both in principle and in practice to be comprised of impeccable judges with the responsibility of investigating what actually transpired during the elections. Such a tribunal is usually comprised of five (5) members. The Justices Uwais-led Electoral Reform Committee reduced it to three (3). This is to enable the members to make sound decisions in case of disagreement among them. Section 140 (1) of Electoral Act, 2010 underscores the imperative for election tribunal and the procedure for questioning the return of a candidate as duly elected after election. This section states that if the Tribunal or the Court as the case may be, determines that a candidate who was returned as elected was not validly elected on any ground, the Tribunal or the Court shall nullify the election.

Accordingly, section 133 (2)(a) of this Act clarifies what a tribunal or court means in the case of presidential elections as well as other elections in Nigeria. It further states in section 133 (3) that such tribunal shall be constituted not later than 14 days after the election. This explains why the former president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo shortly after the announcement of the 2007 presidential election in favour of Alhaji Umaru Yar'Adua by INEC declared that the burden of the claims that may arise from the conduct of the 2007 election rests squarely on the judiciary. Thus, Obasanjo's speech underscores the import of the judiciary as symbolised by the election tribunal in addressing critical problems bordering on the conduct of election in Nigeria.

It is on record that President Goodluck Jonathan's election victory too did not go unchallenged. According to Alozie (2018), after elections in 2003, 2007 and 2011, Buhari then as opposition candidate filed such an appeal and lost. In 2015, however, Buhari was declared the winner over incumbent Goodluck Jonathan in the presidential election. In an unusual manner however, Jonathan conceded and did not appeal the declaration. Buhari thereupon became the first opposition candidate in Nigeria's modern history to assume the presidency through the ballot box whose emergence was not challenged by the new opposition. It is in the light of this that the study examines the challenges election tribunal face in Nigeria since the country returned to democratic rule in 1999.

Electoral tribunals have been trying in putting efforts to resolve many of the electoral issues that have been arising especially in the fourth republic in Nigeria, however they are not without some challenges, thereby the reason for this study.

Statement of the Problem

Irregularities and violence have always trailed elections in the political history of Nigeria such that other than the regular court system, a specialised arrangement is required to curtail this unwholesome trend as fair and fast as possible. The Election Tribunal has assumed relevance in this regard over time and this has reasonably impacted positively on the democratic climate of Nigeria (Diamond, 1999).

In discharging this onerous task however, election tribunals have been enmeshed in a number of challenges which tend to undermine the efficiency of the institution in the discharge of its constitutional responsibilities. It is against this background that this study is imperative in order to examine these challenges facing the institution with the view to advancing remedies for improvement of its performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Proceedings at Election Tribunals

Upon the service of a petition on the Respondent, he/she is expected to file a Memorandum of Appearance, which may either be conditional or unconditional and signed by the respondent or his/her solicitor, if any.

Where the Respondent fails to file a Memorandum of Appearance as required by the Electoral

Act, a document intended for service on him may be posted on the tribunal's notice board and this shall be sufficient notice of service of the document on the respondent. Failure to file a Memorandum of Appearance will not bar the Respondent from defending the election petition as long as he/she files his/her reply to the petition within a reasonable time not later than 21 days from the receipt of the election petition (Ezekwesili, 2011).

Within 14 days of entering a Memorandum of Appearance, the Respondent is expected to file his/her reply wherein he/she must effectively and sufficiently deny averments in the petition. Paragraph 12 (1) and (2) of the First Schedule to the Electoral Act, 2010, however, provides that the Respondent's reply shall specify the facts alleged in the election petition which he/she admits and which he/she denies and shall set out the facts on which he/she relies in opposition to the petition. The Respondent where he/she chooses to disapprove of the claim of the Petitioner must do so in clear and distinctive terms (Adebiyi & Raheem, 2022).

The Petitioner, after filing and service of the Petitioner's Reply on the Respondent or after filing and service of the Respondent's Reply, as the case may be, shall within 7 days apply

for the issuance of Pre-hearing Notice. The Tribunal shall issue to the parties a Pre-hearing Notice as in Form TF007 accompanied by a pre-hearing information sheet as in Form TF008.

Where the Petitioner fails to bring an application for the issuance of Pre-hearing Notice, the Respondent may make such an application to the Tribunal for an order dismissing the petition. Failure of the Petitioner to apply for the issuance of pre-hearing notice as provided under Paragraph 18 (1) will render the petition liable to be dismissed as a petition abandoned and no application for extension of time shall be entertained (ibid).

Where the Respondent has not entered an appearance, or has not filed his/her reply within the prescribed time or within such time as the Tribunal or Court may have allowed, or has given notice that he/she does not intend to oppose the petition, the Tribunal or Court may: -

- (1) determine the proceedings on the election petition without hearing evidence or further evidence; and/or
- (2) continue and determine on such evidence or otherwise as the Tribunal or Court may deem necessary for the full and proper determination of the election petition.

It has been reported that a petition comes up for hearing and neither party appears, the Tribunal or Court shall, unless there are good reasons to the contrary, strike out the petition and no application shall be brought or entertained to re-list it. But if the Petitioner appears and the Respondent does not appear, the Petitioner may prove his petition so far as the burden of proof lies upon him/her and the Tribunal or Court shall enter a final judgment in the petition. But if the Respondent appears and the Petitioner does not appear, the Respondent shall be entitled to final judgment dismissing the petition. A Petitioner seeking to nullify an election must, therefore, succeed on the strength of his/her own case and not on the weakness of the case of the Respondent (Garner, Ferdinand, & Lawson, 2023).

Relationship between Electoral Tribunal and Democracy in Nigeria

Electoral tribunal is a mechanism fashioned to address the seemingly perceived deformities of Nigeria's chequered electoral process. It is strategic in the quest to strengthen the country's democracy. How to achieve this important objective has continued to attract comments and criticisms from political observers and analysts in Nigeria.

Before the 2007 elections, electoral tribunals had been existing in the political history of Nigeria. Whether those tribunals nullified any election, ousted political office holders from office or called for a re-run election in Nigeria, is yet another big question to be answered by the judiciary and the political class. Before the inauguration of the tribunals investigating allegations of election malpractices in 2007, previous tribunals that adjudicated electoral cases of 1979, 1999 and 2003 contributed immensely to the decay of the country's

democracy. The members of those tribunals were not only corrupt, but unfit to correct the perceived anomalies in Nigeria's electoral process (Targema, Wuam, & Abaya, 2023).

Thus, this ugly trend affected the citizens' participation in Nigeria's electoral process and led to the collapse of various democratic institutions in the country. It even became a culture for those who never won elections not only to be declared winners but be allowed to serve out their stolen mandates through the delay tactics of the tribunals. This situation adversely affected the morale of the electorates and the survival of democracy in Nigeria (ibid).

This ugly scenario continued to cascade the electoral system of Nigeria until the recent but feeble attempts by the 2007 electoral tribunals, whose performances have raised critical questions among Nigerians over the capability of election tribunals in correcting errors in the country's electoral process. Thus, there is a correlation between the decisions of election tribunals and sustenance or survival of democracy in Nigeria. Regrettably, democracy which the actions or inactions of the election tribunal affect is viewed differently by various individuals and scholars. Democracy used to be a bad world. Everybody who was anybody knew that democracy in its original sense of rule by the people or government in accordance with the will of the bulk of the people, would be a bad thing – fatal to individual freedom and to all the graces of civilised living then, within fifty years, democracy became a good thing it is clear that the real world of democracy has changed (ibid).

The foregoing analysis suggests that the meaning of democracy varies from one individual to another. It also implies that its application in most modern societies could be misconstrued thereby resulting in politico and economic backwardness in the state. Democracy has become an ambiguous thing with different meanings – even apparently opposite meanings (ibid).

A precise definition of democracy is not an easy task. As a dynamic entity, it has acquired many different meanings over the course of time largely due to the dynamics of society, and the different interpretations by scholars of the consequences of the changes for democracy. Thus, it is a political system in which different groups are legally entitled to compete for power and in which institution power holders are elected by the people and are responsible for the people. The most famous definition of democracy was that of Abraham Lincoln, who defined democracy as the government of the people by the people and for the people (Saburi, 2009).

What those definitions show is that for a country to be democratic and achieve rapid socio-economic development capable of improving the living conditions of her citizens, the enthronement of democracy and good governance should be sacrosanct. The quest to achieve this important national assignment starts from the drive to improve the country's electoral process. This process is no doubt perceived to be an abysmal failure in most third world

social formations, Nigeria inclusive. It is within the trajectory of this position that the role of election tribunal becomes pertinent.

The election tribunal should act as a policeman, standing on the ‘electoral road’, ensure that the electoral body (INEC), political parties and their candidates, the security agents as well as the electorates carryout/participate in the elections according to the laid down rules and regulations as stipulated by the country Constitution and Electoral Act. It is the responsibility of the tribunal to investigate matters arising from this crucial activity. Hence, we argue that the behaviours and decisions of the members of the tribunal can truncate or strengthen democracy in Nigeria (ibid).

A cursory look at most reversal of declared results by the tribunals in Nigeria has sent jitters to the country’s electoral system. To some Nigerians, the tribunals have performed creditably, while others perceived their activities as intra-personal war and personality clashes among members of the judiciary. The governorship and legislative tribunals in Abia, Bayelsa, Enugu, Adamawa, Ondo, Ekiti, Kogi and Edo states nullified elections of state governors and some members of house of assembly in these states. Also, elections of some members of the House of Representatives and Senate were nullified. These nullifications were on the grounds of electoral malpractices; that a candidate did not score the majority of valid votes cast at the election, that the candidate was not qualified to contest election in the first place, that the election was invalid by reason of corrupt practices at the time of the election (The BBC Pidgin English Interview with Gov. Nyesom Wike, 19th March, 2021).

In the case of Abia State, the lower tribunal nullified the governorship election on the grounds that the governor and his deputy were not qualified to stand for election, and that they did not resign their previous political appointments thirty days before election as stipulated by the Electoral Act, 2006. The Governor challenged the verdict at the Appeal Court sitting in Port Harcourt, River State. The Appellant Court quashed the decisions of the lower courts on February 11, 2009 (ibid).

The Chairman of the Appeal Court, Justice Saka Ibiyeye resolved the ten issues raised from the grounds of appeal in favour of the Governor of Abia State. In his words:

I resolve all the ten issues raised from the grounds of appeal in favour of the 1st and second appellants. The 1st and 2nd appellants are returned as governor and deputy governor of Abia State... relying on provisions of the constitution, the court held that Theodore Orji was not a public servant at the time he contested for the governorship election (Auwal & Tukur, 2023).

The decision of this appeal court may have sent yet another wrong signal in the minds of well-meaning Abians (the electorates), who actually knew what transpired in their state

before, during and after the 2007 election. More furious on the judgement was its contradiction with the relevant section of the 1999 constitution. In fact, it violates section 12 (I.g and h) of the 1999 constitution. However, there is no rationale in the country's democratic experiment for chief of staff to the governor and commissioners in the state not to vacate their offices thirty days before contesting election in Nigeria. Consequently, the decision of these judges is capable of setting wrong judicial precedence in the country's journey toward credible election (ibid).

In Bayelsa and Enugu states, the lower tribunal nullified the elections of Governors Timipre Sylva and Sullivan Chime. The decisions of the lower tribunal were based on the fact that the elections of these governors contradicted relevant sections of the 2006 Electoral Act. Hence, the decisions of the lower tribunal were challenged by the governors in the Court of Appeal sitting in Port Harcourt and Enugu. The appeal Court quashed the decisions of the lower tribunal and ordered for re-run elections in Bayelsa and Enugu State. In Adamawa, Sokoto and Kogi, the tribunals also called for re-run elections in view of glaring electoral irregularities and fraud perpetrated by the ruling Peoples Democratic Party in these states. The results of the re-run elections were in favour of the ousted governors (ibid).

In Edo State, the lower tribunal ousted Prof. Oserheimen Osunbor of the PDP from office and ordered for the immediate swearing in of Comrade Adams Oshiomhole of Action Congress (AC). The decision of the lower tribunal was informed by the fact that the petitioner – Comrade Oshiomhole scored the highest number of valid votes in the April 14 gubernatorial election in Edo State, consequently, Prof. Osunbor appealed against the judgment. His appeal was dismissed by the appellate Court for lack of merit. The same thing was applicable to the Labour party candidate in Ondo State, Dr. Olu Segun Miniko, who triumphed at both the lower tribunal and appeal court against the PDP candidate, Dr. Agagu (ibid).

The above analysis paints the picture of the legal scheming by the judiciary in the strive to correct the anomalies in the nation's electoral history. The truth of the matter is that the citizens of this country are yet to embrace the activities of this 'electoral watchdog' with two hands. This is succinct because, the judiciary according to most Nigerians seems to have enriched itself through this avenue implicit in the insistence and adherence of the Yar'Adua's administration on the rule of law (ibid).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Liberal Democratic Theory

The origin of liberal democratic ideology can be traced to the 17th century when the importance and dignity of man came to be recognized, though it became known in the Europe

during the ‘Age of Enlightenment’ in the 18th century after disruption of classical antiquity where the Monarchs were seen as God ordained. But as a result of enlightened intellectuals, the principle of human liberty and equality defeated the primordial sentiment of ordained power that restricted man’s freedom. This evolved from the ideas of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) who placed emphasis on the principle of social institutions for the betterment of man as an individual. Such a notion laid the foundation for the emergence and development of liberal democratic thinking. For instance, it was proposed that the state was created by the people through a social contract for the preservation of man’s personal interests. This was made as a contribution to the theory of liberal democracy by regarding the consent of the people as the basis of political power. The contention was that political power was the trust of the people in the hands of government (Kenneth, 2021). The ideas were clarified and given practical shape by the thinkers of succeeding centuries such that by the 19th century, systematic ideas in the liberal theory of democracy had begun to develop.

Liberal democracy is a political ideology as well as a style of governance in which representative democracy operates under the principles of liberalism. It is characterised by fair, free, and competitive elections. The political philosophy of liberalism also believes in multiplicity of parties system, separation of powers, the rule of law and human rights. To liberal democracy constitution is required (either codified or not) to delineate the powers of government and enshrine the social contract. After a period of sustained expansion throughout the 20th century, liberal democracy became the predominant political system in the world. It is a political system with representative government elected through popular majority but with the notion of protecting individuals and minorities’ rights. It also entails an autonomous economic principle that is largely free from government control (ibid).

A liberal democracy may take various constitutional forms: it may be a constitutional republic (France, India, and the United States) or a constitutional monarchy (Canada, Japan, and the United Kingdom). It may also have a presidential system (United States), a semi-presidential system, (France, Taiwan), or a parliamentary system (United Kingdom). Liberal democracies usually have universal suffrage, granting all adult citizens the right to vote regardless of race, gender or property ownership. The liberal democratic constitution defines the democratic character of the state. Nevertheless, scholars believe in constitutional liberalism which makes government to be limited by the rule of law. Liberal democracy is a combination of democracy and constitutional liberalism. According to Kerr (2021), liberal democracy simply indicates: Regular, free and fair elections but also a strong rule of law, buttressed by an Independent Judiciary and other institutions of accountability that check the abuse of power, protect civil and political freedom and thereby, help to foster a pluralistic and vigorous civil society. This explains the reason for electoral tribunals in a democracy

such as in Nigeria, where electoral issues are addressed mostly after elections to be able to achieve the factors mentioned above.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study made use of descriptive but inferential research design to collect and analyse data which are very central to the research area. Simple random sampling was used to select respondents from each stratum with a sample fraction of 50%. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the interviewee such as senior Registrar, Junior Registrar, President and 4th court judges, Non-government Organisations (NGO's), as well as Directors General of the Electoral Institute litigation and prosecution and Director of Legal Drafting and Clearance.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Challenges that confront election tribunal in Nigeria's Fourth Republic?

Table 4.4: Challenges Confronting Election Tribunal in the Discharge of their Statutory Duties

		SA	A	D	SD	UN	TOTAL
1.	The composition of election tribunals in Nigeria is often biased and discriminatory.	101	91	31	31	13	267
		37.8	13.4	11.6	11.6	4.8	100%
2.	Undue political interference often tinker with optimal and impartial performance of election tribunals in Nigeria.	31	13	96	27	100	267
		11.7	4.3	36	11	37	100%
3.	Inaccessibility to the needed documents relating to electoral process(es) often impede the performance of election tribunals in Nigeria.	97	95	34	27	13	267
		36.3	35.5	12.7	11	4.5	100%
4.	The sluggish judicial process undermines the efficacy of election tribunals in Nigeria.	88	54	46	37	42	267
		32.9	20.2	17.2	13.9	15.8	100%
5.	Limited resources hamper the efficiency of election tribunals in Nigeria.	102	56	45	32	32	267
		34.1	23.2	8.6	16.8	17.3	100%
6.	A number of provisions of the Electoral Act are ambiguous, contradictory and fraught with lacuna.	91	62	23	45	46	267
		34.1	23.2	8.6	16.8	17.3	100%

7.	The menace of insecurity poses a level of threat to judicial officers in the unfettered discharge of their duties.	70	86	40	46	25	267
		26.2	32.3	14.9	17.3	9.3	100%
8.	Some corrupt judicial officers sometimes allow inducement by litigants to taint their sense of justice in the verdicts delivered at the tribunal sittings.	82	92	40	36	17	267
		30.7	34.4	15	13.4	6.5	100%

Source: Researcher’s Field Report, 2022

The findings from this study clearly indicates that 37.8% of respondents agreed that the composition of members of the tribunal is faulty, often biased and discriminatory, 13.4% strongly agreed, 23.2% strongly disagreed, while 4.8% were undecided. It was also discovered that inaccessibility to the needed documents relating to electoral processes often impede the performance of election tribunals in Nigeria. This claim is justified by 71.8% of respondents who agreed and strongly agreed. Also, unnecessary bureaucratic bottlenecks undermine the efficacy of election tribunal in Nigeria. This is justified by 60.1% of respondents. A total of 57.3% of respondents strongly believed that a number of provisions of the electoral act are ambiguous, contradictory and fraught with lacuna. It was also discovered that the menace of insecurity poses a level of threat to judicial officers. This claim is justified by 58.5% of the respondents. Findings revealed that some judicial officers are corrupt and sometimes allow inducement by litigants to taint their sense of justice in the verdict delivered at the tribunal settings. This is supported by 65.1% of respondents.

6. CONCLUSION

The existence of election tribunals is justified owing to the overwhelming duties of the regular courts. Election tribunals during Nigeria's Fourth Republic were able to considerably consolidate democracy in Nigeria as a result of their affirmation of the electorate’s mandate as appropriate and the rebuttal of dubious claim to victory by some undeserving candidates during the elections. Quite a number of challenges militated against the optimal performance of election tribunals in the line of duty during the Nigeria’s Fourth Republic which included but not limited to undue political interference.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. Judges who handle election petitions should be strictly bound by their professional ethics by being fair and just in the verdicts delivered by them, and erring judges should

be sanctioned accordingly. This will restore peoples' confidence in the election tribunals.

2. Only people with a high level of integrity should be appointed as members of election tribunals in order to duly serve justice without fear or favour.
3. Judges handling election petition cases should be well remunerated and made to enjoy robust welfare packages in order to protect them against corrupt practices in the discharge of their duties.
4. In order to mitigate the incidence of undue political interference, appointment of membership of the election tribunals should be the prerogative of the National Judicial Service Commission.

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**Sustainable HIV/AIDS Cure in Nigeria: Assessing the Challenges of
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)**

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ABSTRACT

Since 2019, over 150,000 new HIV cases are recorded yearly in Nigeria, and an estimated 2 million people are currently living with active HIV/AIDS. With the development and increased access to antiretroviral therapy (ART), treatment has significantly improved, reducing the disease burden. For many years, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has contributed extensively towards this improvement through programs that promote improved community health services, aimed at achieving an HIV-free generation by 2030. However, UNICEF still faces a lot of challenges in providing a sustainable cure for HIV/AIDS in Nigeria, such that the study will assess. This study adopts a qualitative descriptive design. Purposive sampling method was adopted to collect information from 5 participants on the challenges faced by UNICEF in providing sustainable HIV/AIDS cure in Nigeria. Participants include UNICEF's officials, researchers, health care workers, and policy makers who have a knowledge of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. The primary data is corroborated with secondary sources of data such as UNICEF reports, journal articles, policy documents, program evaluations, and media publications. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the collected data. The study upholds the integrity of the research process and fosters trust with participants and stakeholders. The study finds out that UNICEF's challenges in achieving a sustainable cure for HIV/AIDS include funding shortages, stigma and discrimination, poor infrastructure, geographical barriers and policy inconsistencies. The study recommends an increase in funding availability, improving healthcare infrastructure, strengthening partnerships, reducing stigma and advocating for policy changes.

Keywords: *HIV/AIDS, Sustainability, UNICEF, Nigeria*

1. INTRODUCTION

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a retrovirus associated with the genus Lentivirus and belongs to the Retroviridae family. Acquired Immune-deficiency syndrome (AIDS) is the advanced stage of HIV infection (World Health Organization (WHO), 2016) commonly defined by the presence of pneumocystis pneumocystis (40%), cachexia in the form of HIV wasting syndrome (20%), esophageal candidiasis (13.4%) and an undefined percentage of recurrent respiratory tract infections (Sahoo et al, 2017). Two types of HIV infections have been identified; HIV-1 and HIV-2, named based on the time order of discovery (Nyamweya et al, 2013). HIV-1, originally known as Lymphadenopathy Associated Virus (LAV) or Human T-Lymphotropic Virus III (HTLV-III) is a more infective, virulent form and the cause of most HIV infections globally (Sharp and Hahn, (2011). HIV-2 on the other hand has lesser infectivity and is largely diagnosed in Western Africa (Sharp & Hahn, 2011). HIV/AIDS is ranked fifth among all diseases with high burden across the globe (Ortblad et al., 2013) and Nigeria bears a disproportionate amount of this burden. This is mainly caused by unsafe sexual behavior, limited knowledge and insufficient awareness of preventing infection and mother-to-child transmission.

According to UNAIDS (2020), 15% of children and adolescents who die from AIDS-related causes are in Nigeria. In 2019, 22,000 children between the ages 0-14 were newly infected with HIV and 13,000 AIDS-related deaths were recorded. The country ranks 4th in the world with regards to HIV/AIDS infections, about 1.9 million individuals are living with the disease (UNAIDS, 2020). HIV/AIDS has a huge economic impact on the nation accounting for an annual loss of N155 billion (NACA, (2019). As such, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has prioritized Nigeria in the fight against global HIV/AIDS epidemic.

UNICEF has been providing support to the Nigerian government in the fight against HIV/AIDS for decades, especially in the areas of prevention, care and treatment (UNICEF, 2020). Although there is presently no cure for HIV/AIDS, effective clinical intervention such as antiretroviral therapy (ART) treatment are being implemented to ensure a healthy and productive life for patients (CDC, 2016b) as well as the prevention of mother-to-child transmission. UNICEF's initiatives align with the United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) 90-90-90 targets, whose goal is to ensure that 90% of people living with HIV know their status, 90% of those diagnosed have access to and receive ART adequately and 90% of those on ART achieve viral suppression by 2023 (UNAIDS, 2014) UNICEF has supported these targets through initiatives such as expanding access to HIV/AIDS testing, encouraging early diagnosis, and making sure that the availability of ART for those living with HIV/AIDS. For instance, UNICEF's Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission

(PMTCT) programs and its support for the m-PIMA Analyzer Machine have greatly improved early infant diagnosis and treatment compliance, contributing to the achievement of the 90-90-90 goals (UNICEF, 2021). By doing this, the program allowed for a decreased rate of new HIV infections among children by presenting pregnant women with access to early HIV testing, ART and other vital services through their pregnancy journey. UNICEF also supports the supply of pediatric ART, as children with HIV often encounter unique challenges in accessing and complying with treatment regimen. In addition, UNICEF works to address social determinants of HIV/AIDS which can obstruct access to these services.

Despite these significant efforts, the pursuit of offering a long-term treatment for HIV/AIDS in Nigeria is still unattainable. These constraints include issues with the social, financial and healthcare system such as lack of finance, restricted access to health care, stigma and discrimination, difficulties in distributing treatment and insufficient media awareness on the dangers of the disease and measures of control and prevention. According to UNAIDS, the country ranks fourth globally in HIV/AIDS prevalence, with approximately 1.9 million people living with the condition. These statistics show that Nigeria has not been able to proffer long term solutions to the epidemic and possible eradication of HIV/AIDS. It thus becomes important to assess the challenges faced by UNICEF in providing sustainable solutions to HIV/AIDS epidemic in Nigeria between 2019 and 2023.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive design to provide a detailed understanding of UNICEF's role, interventions in addressing HIV/AIDS in Nigeria and the challenges hindering sustainable HIV/AIDS cure in Nigeria from 2019 - 2023. For the purpose of this study, the purposive sampling method was adopted to collect information 5 participants on the challenges faced by UNICEF in providing sustainable HIV/AIDS cure in Nigeria. The selected participants include UNICEF's officials, researchers, health care workers, and policy makers who have deep knowledge of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. This approach is suitable as it allows for an in-depth exploration of real-life issues through non-numeric data, capturing experiences, perspectives, and insights from key stakeholders and program participants. The primary data collected is corroborated with secondary sources of data such as documented reports, academic article and journals, policy documents, program evaluations, and media publications related to UNICEF's HIV/AIDS interventions from 2019 to 2023. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the collected data. The study upholds the integrity of the research process and fosters trust with participants and stakeholders.

3. PRESENTATION OF DATA

Analysis of Data

What are the Challenges encountered by UNICEF in providing sustainable HIV/AIDS Treatments in Nigeria?

Based on this analysis, each theme has codes that are associated with the challenges faced by UNICEF in providing sustainable HIV/AIDS treatment in Nigeria. The analysis discusses the significance of these codes within each theme and how they relate to the broader context of the challenges faced by UNICEF.

THEMES	CODES	DEFINITION OF THEMES	EXCERPTS
Challenges in funding	Limited financial resources Donor dependency Low budget allocation Corruption	This theme encompasses the financial challenges that limit UNICEF in addressing HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. It also looks at the root causes of these challenges.	Respondent 1: The respondent highlighted that lack of funding and resources is a major challenge in providing sustainable cure. This has often led to delay in programs execution, campaigns, poor healthcare facilities and shortage of essential drugs over dependence on donor support and international funding is a major root cause of financial challenges faced by UNICEF. Not putting sufficient funds from the country's budget into HIV/AIDS health sector makes it difficult for UNICEF to get financial support. Respondent 3 highlighted that resources are allocated more to urban areas than rural areas making it difficult to make treatment and services available at underserved areas. Respondent 1: "There also should be proper management and funds and not waste funds on the less important things." The COVID-19 pandemic has also diverted funds away from HIV programs- Respondent 1 Respondent 4 explained that corruption and economic instability in the Nigerian government sector are challenges to sustaining consistent funding for HIV/AIDS treatment.

<p>Challenges in Poor infrastructure</p>	<p>Inadequate equipment and facilities, weak healthcare system</p>	<p>This theme illustrates that insufficient healthcare facilities, medical equipment and facilities hinder the delivery of UNICEF services in Nigeria. The healthcare infrastructure in Nigeria is poor leaving UNICEF to constrain itself within the poor infrastructure and not effectively carry out its duty</p>	<p>Respondent 3 highlighted that poor healthcare infrastructure in rural areas is a challenge faced by UNICEF in providing sustainable HIV/AIDS cure in Nigeria. He was of the opinion that poor healthcare infrastructure has hindered the delivery of services in those areas, making it difficult to reach the vulnerable populations.</p> <p>Respondent 1 stated that there are not enough clinics and hospitals to meet the demand for HIV treatment.</p> <p>Respondent 5: “Poor transportation infrastructure makes it difficult for UNICEF’s officials to reach people in remote areas for treatment services.”</p> <p>Respondent 4 highlighted that many health care centers lack the necessary equipment to provide effective treatment of HIV making it difficult for UNICEF to test and treat patients.</p> <p>Respondent 3 argued that UNICEF should effectively seek increase funding to improve healthcare infrastructure and delivery services in Nigeria.</p>
<p>Challenge of Stigma and discrimination</p>	<p>Cultural beliefs Misinformation Fear of disclosure</p>	<p>This theme focus on the challenges of stigma which is mostly as a result of deep cultural belief, fear of being known as an HIV patient and spread of false information about HIV/AIDS. These factors makes it difficult for UNICEF to address HIV/AIDS in Nigeria</p>	<p>Respondent 2 expressed that cultural stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS serves as an opposition to the effective implementation of UNICEF’s programs.</p> <p>Respondent 2: “Despite the treatment services provided by UNICEF, stigma and discrimination makes it difficult for some individuals to seek testing and treatment. This is mostly common in rural areas, where there are cultural beliefs that HIV/AIDS is a punishment to people who have engaged in immoral behaviors. The respondent also stated that lack of funds is another challenge to providing sustainable HIV/AIDS cure in Nigeria.”</p> <p>Respondent 5 was of the opinion that many people fear disclosing</p>

			<p>their status due to the stigma associated with HIV, making it difficult for UNICEF to get accurate HIV/AIDS data and to treat those patients.</p> <p>Respondent 3 stated that gender inequality and cultural beliefs in rural areas also affect the implementation of treatment and services programs. UNICEF faces a lot of resistance to tests and treatment from people living in rural areas as some do not believe in medical science for treatment illness and would rather rely on traditional or native cure.</p>
Geographical barriers	Inaccessible areas, security concerns, remote locations	This theme analyzes the challenge in reaching remote and rural areas to give proper HIV/AIDS treatments. These areas are difficult to access due to poor transportation network, security in conflict affected areas	<p>Respondent 5 noted that poor transportation networks pose as a difficulty for UNICEF to reach and provide treatment services for people living in remote and rural communities and it also makes it difficult for UNICEF to introduce awareness campaigns and programs initiated to these areas.</p> <p>Respondent 1 stated that urban areas have access to better healthcare than rural areas.</p>
Challenge in policy inconsistencies	Unstable policies, inconsistent funding, lack of coordination and bureaucratic delays	This theme shows that frequent change in government policies, weak enforcement of policies that are related to HIV/AIDS, poor coordination between government, UNICEF and other agencies affect the performance of UNICEF in addressing HIV/AIDS in Nigeria	<p>Respondent 4: “Irregularity in government directives and lack of coordination between stakeholders has posed challenges in sustaining long term HIV/AIDS programs.” He also highlighted that bureaucratic delays often slow down the rollout of HV/AIDS programs.</p> <p>Respondent 1 noted that inconsistent funding from government has made it hard to sustain long term HIV/AIDS policies.</p> <p>Respondent 4: “Although UNICEF has made collaborations with other agencies to strengthen policy but implementation of policy are weak and slow, coordination with government is also not sufficient to achieve long term goals.”</p>

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

UNICEF has made significant impact in addressing HIV/AIDS in Nigeria through different initiatives aimed at prevention, treatment, and management. The organization's efforts have focused on awareness campaigns, PMTCT programs, distributions of resources, capacity building, and partnerships. These initiatives have improved access to testing and treatment, particularly in urban areas, but more efforts are needed to reach underserved rural areas. Our findings are consistent with existing literature, emphasizing the importance of multi-faceted approaches to HIV/AIDS care (UNAIDS, 2020; UNICEF, 2021). Additionally, UNICEF has launched public education initiatives, engaged community leaders, and used media platforms to communicate to the public about HIV/AIDS. These campaigns have effectively reduced stigmatization and encourage people to go for testing and treatment. However, cultural beliefs and misconceptions remain significant barriers to success, particularly in rural areas.

The PMTCT programs have successfully reduced mother-to-child transmission of HIV as more ARTs, counseling services, and nutritional support have been provided to pregnant women and new mothers. These were reported by UNAIDS and UNICEF in 2020 - "Going the 'Last Mile' to Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission. UNICEF has provided antiretroviral drugs, testing kits, nutritional support, and medical supplies to healthcare facilities. These resources have improved access to treatment, but geographic barriers and poor road networks have made it difficult for people in remote areas to access these services. Furthermore, UNICEF has trained healthcare workers, established youth-friendly clinics, and implemented peer education programs in schools. These initiatives have improved access to testing and treatment, especially for young people, but more training and resources are required to substantiate the effectiveness of these efforts. UNICEF has collaborated with the Nigerian government, local NGOs, the private sector, and international donors to secure funding and support for its initiatives. These partnerships have improved program implementation, but inconsistent government policies and lack of coordination between stakeholders have created challenges in sustaining these programs. Despite these efforts in providing sustainability in HIV/AIDS Prevention, treatment and care, UNICEF faces several challenges in providing sustainable HIV/AIDS treatments in Nigeria, including funding shortages, stigma and discrimination, poor infrastructure, geographic barriers, and policy inconsistencies. The challenges faced by UNICEF have led to program delays, reduced program reach, stigma effects, treatment gaps, and policy disruptions. These challenges have affected the overall impact of UNICEF's HIV/AIDS programs, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

To overcome these challenges, UNICEF has employed several strategies, including community engagement, mobile clinics, capacities building, partnerships, and advocacy and

policy reform. These strategies have improved access to testing and treatment, but more work is needed to address systemic challenges and ensure the sustainability of HIV/AIDS programs.

This study emphasizes the significance of innovations and stronger collaborations with stakeholders to address meticulous challenges. UNICEF and other stakeholders should focus on improving healthcare infrastructure, strengthening community engagement, increasing mobile clinics, building more capacity and training more healthcare workers to ensure the effective delivery of HIV/AIDS services.

Based on the analysis of the data, the study identified the following key findings:

- i. UNICEF has played a crucial role in providing sustainable HIV/AIDS cure in Nigeria through awareness campaigns, PMTCT programs, partnerships, building of capacity and distribution of resources. Nonetheless, rural areas are still underserving due to poor infrastructure and geographical barriers.
- ii. The data revealed that the organization faces significant challenges such as funding shortages, stigma and discrimination, inconsistencies in policies, geographical barriers and poor healthcare infrastructure.
- iii. These challenges have had a great impact on the organization's efforts. The challenges have led to delay in programs, reductions in program reach, gaps in treatment, policy disruptions and increase stigma effects
- iv. Finally, the study found that UNICEF has implemented strategies to overcome these challenges. The strategies employed include community engagement, advocacy and policy reform, strengthening partnerships, scaling mobile clinics and building capacities and healthcare workers. While these strategies have proved to be promising, there is the need to scale up efforts that will ensure the sustainability of HIV/AIDS programs.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has provided a detailed analysis of UNICEF's challenges in providing sustainable HIV/AIDS cure in Nigeria from 2019-2023. It also revealed that while the organization has made relevant contributions to address HIV/AIDS in Nigeria, the organization faces several challenges that affect its contributions. In order to tackle these challenges, UNICEF has employed strategies like community engagement, advocacy and policy reform, partnerships and so on. While these strategies have shown promise, the data from this study reveals that more work is needed to scale up efforts and ensure the sustainability of HIV/AIDS programs. The study emphasized the importance of implementing sustainable solutions to improve the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS programs.

Achieving the global goal of ending HIV/AIDS by 2030 will require more sustained efforts, stronger collaboration and innovative solutions.

The findings highlight the need for consistent governmental policies and increase in funding to support HIV/AIDS programs. Policymakers should stress the prioritization of allocating resources to address the specific needs of rural areas which include provision of antiretroviral drugs, testing kits and medical supplies.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research outcomes, the following recommendations are proposed to tackle the challenges faced by UNICEF in providing sustainable HIV/AIDS cure in Nigeria.

- i. **Enhance Funding:** UNICEF needs to rigorously and advocate for increased funding from government and international supporters to support HIV/AIDS programs. The funding should be allocated to the specific needs and managed properly.
- ii. **Address Geographical Barriers:** The organization should address geographical barriers by improving transportation networks and provide mobile healthcare services to reach rural areas. This should include transporting mobile testing units to remote places.
- iii. **Increase Monitoring and Evaluation:** UNICEF should strengthen its monitoring and evaluation system which will track the progress of HIV/AIDS programs and identify areas for improvement. It should improve data collection to ensure effective informed decision-making.
- iv. **Frequent Policy Change:** UNICEF needs to continually change its policies that will address emerging challenges.
- v. **Improve Healthcare Infrastructure:** there is the need for UNICEF to work and collaborate with the Nigerian government effectively in order to improve healthcare infrastructure most especially in rural areas. This includes provision of medical equipment at the health centers and construction of new healthcare facilities.

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Political Economy of Internally Displaced Persons and the Host Communities in Benue State, Nigeria: Issues, Challenges and Way-Forward

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Abstract

This paper examines the political economy dynamics surrounding internally displaced persons (IDPs) and their host communities in Makurdi and Guma Local Government Area, Benue State, Nigeria. The study employs qualitative data collection and narrative analysis methods. Key informant interviews and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including government officials, community leaders, and IDPs, were conducted. Also, focus group discussions with IDPs and observational studies of IDP camps and host communities were conducted. The study delves into the dynamics of social relationships and interactions between IDPs and host communities. The research analyses the economic interdependencies between IDPs and host communities. Furthermore, the paper examines the sources of conflict and tension between IDPs and host communities and argues that the IDP phenomenon is a complex development challenge that affects both groups' well-being and economic prospects. The study concludes that the political economy of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities in Benue State, Nigeria, is characterised by complex issues and challenges. However, this study also identifies opportunities for sustainable livelihoods and community resilience. The study recommends a way forward for sustainable livelihood and development, including inclusive policies and practices that prioritise agricultural inputs and training to enhance food security, vocational training and microfinance services to promote income generation, community-based peacebuilding and conflict resolution programs and support for community-led development initiatives and self-help projects.

Keywords: Host Communities, Internally Displaced Persons, Migration, Political Economy, Sustainable Development

1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of internal displacement has become a pervasive challenge in Nigeria, with profound implications for affected individuals, host communities, and national stability. In

Benue State, particularly within Guma and Makurdi Local Government Areas, recurrent violent conflicts have triggered large-scale internal displacement, resulting in an influx of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) into host communities (Patrick & Terungwa, 2022). Guma, one of the epicentres of the crisis, and Makurdi, the state capital, have become focal points for displaced populations seeking refuge and survival. The political economy of internal displacement in these areas is multifaceted, involving issues of resource competition, governance inefficiencies, and human security concerns (Abah, 2023). While host communities grapple with limited infrastructure and strained resources, IDPs face severe deprivation, limited access to food, water, healthcare, and shelter, despite interventions by government and humanitarian actors (Odifa, 2022). This complex interaction between scarcity, power, and survival underscores the need to examine how displacement reshapes social relations, economic dependencies, and local governance dynamics.

The problem lies in the growing socioeconomic and political pressures caused by the continuous influx of IDPs into host communities, which exacerbates existing challenges of poverty, land scarcity, and weak institutional response. The host communities are increasingly burdened, leading to tension, competition, and resentment, while IDPs endure marginalisation, loss of livelihood, and diminished human dignity (International Crisis Group, 2018). The absence of a sustainable framework for managing these interrelations has deepened the humanitarian crisis and threatens long-term peace and development in Benue State. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the political economy of internal displacement in Benue State, focusing on the issues, challenges, and prospects for both IDPs and host communities. Specifically, it seeks to: examine the dynamics of social relationships and interactions between IDPs and host communities, assess the extent to which economic interdependencies between IDPs and host communities contribute to mutual benefit, analyse the sources of conflict and tension between IDPs and host communities and investigate long-term, sustainable solutions that address the needs of both groups and inform policy recommendations for inclusive peace and development.

2. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

The concept of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) varies across disciplines. Ogbue, Omiunu, and Okafor (2024) describe IDPs as individuals compelled to leave their homes without crossing national borders. According to the United Nations Guiding Principles (2005), IDPs are persons or groups forced to flee their habitual residence due to armed conflict, violence, human rights violations, or natural and human-made disasters, while remaining within their country's borders. Similarly, UNHCR (2023) defines IDPs as people displaced within their own country, unlike refugees who cross international boundaries and

who remain under the protection of their government. Oyefara and Alabi (2016) view them as those uprooted from their homes and livelihoods by internal conflicts, while Olukolajo, Ajayi, and Ogungbenro (2014) emphasise that IDPs are victims of violence, injustice, and disasters, often suffering the consequences of human or natural crises.

Host Communities

The concept of host communities has gained prominence in discussions on forced migration and displacement. Host communities refer to local populations that receive and interact with displaced persons, including refugees and IDPs (WEF, 2023). These interactions are shaped by complex social, economic, cultural, and political dynamics (Mollenkamp, 2022; Sambo, 2017). Jacobsen (2002) notes that host communities often face increased competition for resources such as jobs, housing, and social services, which may lead to tension. Cultural and social differences can also cause misunderstandings and conflict (Valtonen, 2004), while security concerns and inadequate support may heighten resentment (Sambo, 2017; Crisp, 2003). Nonetheless, the influx of displaced persons can bring benefits: economic opportunities through entrepreneurship (Jacobsen, 2002), cultural exchange fostering tolerance (Valtonen, 2004), and enhanced social capital and community development (Adeola, 2023).

Political Economy Dynamics

Political economy dynamics encompass the complex interactions among government agencies, humanitarian organisations, host communities, and IDPs within the context of displacement (Mohammed, 2017). These dynamics reflect how social, economic, and political factors shape the experiences of IDPs, including loss of livelihoods, inadequate infrastructure, and unequal access to resources (Iorbo, Sahni, Bhatnagar & Andzenge, 2024). They also highlight the power relations and security concerns arising from these interactions (Adekeye, Ajayi & Fawole, 2019). Understanding these dynamics requires analysing resource allocation, policy implementation, and service access to promote social justice, inclusion, and sustainable solutions to displacement challenges (Bradley & Duthie, 2014; Mlaba, 2022).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA), rooted in Robert Chambers' work in the mid-1980s, was developed to improve the effectiveness of development cooperation (Natarajan et al., 2022). Adopted by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in 1997, the SLA aimed to reduce poverty through a people-centred and participatory framework (Devereux, 2001). Chambers and Conway (1992) define livelihood as “the capabilities, assets, and activities required for a means of living.”

According to Scoones (2015), a sustainable livelihood can recover from shocks, maintain its assets, and ensure resilience without degrading the environment. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) is founded on six core principles. It is people-centred, prioritising individuals' well-being above all else. It takes a holistic view by examining all dimensions of livelihoods and the various factors influencing them. The approach is dynamic, allowing for adaptation to change and continuous learning. It focuses on building on strengths, recognising and enhancing individuals' inherent potential and capacities. It also emphasises macro–micro linkages, connecting local realities with broader development processes. Finally, the SLA upholds sustainability, promoting resilience, self-reliance, and independence from external support.

The SLA suits this study as it provides a comprehensive framework for analysing the interactions between IDPs and host communities, their socio-economic conditions, and poverty dynamics. It highlights factors that support livelihood sustainability and guides the design of self-sufficiency programs. Furthermore, the SLA emphasises participatory, inclusive, and multilevel development that leverages local skills, social networks, and resources. It advocates moving beyond short-term humanitarian responses by fostering an enabling environment where both host communities and IDPs can achieve sustainable, resilient livelihoods.

4. MATERIALS AND AREA OF STUDY

Area of the Study

The scope of this study specifically concentrates on Makurdi and Guma LGAs. Notably, out of the fourteen IDP camps in Benue State, twelve were located in Benue North-West senatorial district, and four of the camps were situated in Makurdi and six in Guma at the time of this fieldwork (Odifa, 2022). Seven IDP camps were purposively selected, including four from Makurdi and three from Guma, based on the proportion of the number of displaced persons.

Figure 1.1: Map of Makurdi Local Government Area

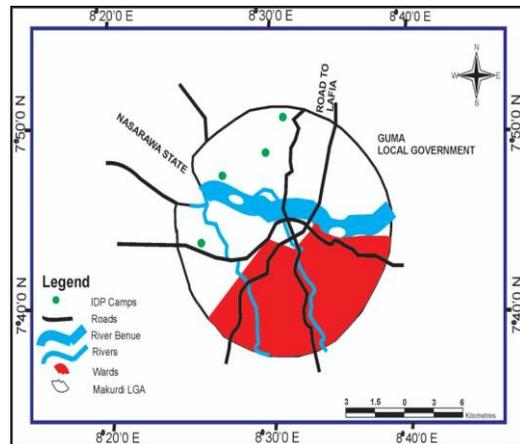
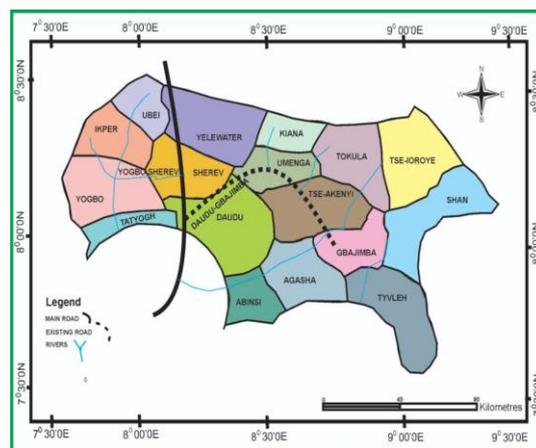


Figure 1.3:



5. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative approach using both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), In-Depth Interviews (IDIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and unstructured observations guided by interview and FGD protocols. Seven FGDs were held across identified IDP camps, each comprising at least six gender-balanced participants. KIIs were conducted with seven SEMA officials in Makurdi and Guma LGAs, while fourteen IDIs involved seven IDP camp leaders and seven host community stakeholders. Participants were purposively selected based on their knowledge of displacement issues in Benue State. Consistent with Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), interviews continued until data saturation was achieved. Data collection

instruments were semi-structured to allow probing, and all interviews and FGDs were transcribed and thematically analysed following Braun, Clarke, and Weate's (2016) framework. Data were coded, clustered into themes, and triangulated with secondary sources, including government reports, academic publications, newspapers, and official documents. Fieldwork spanned seven months (March–September 2024). Ethical clearance was obtained from Benue SEMA, and confidentiality was ensured by anonymising respondents and coding camps as A–G. Interviews, conducted in English, lasted 30–35 minutes and were recorded using a mobile device and notes.

Table 1: Number of displaced persons per camp from each IDP camp in Makurdi and Guma LGAs

Selected IDP camps in Makurdi and Guma LGAs	Total number of IDPs in each camp selected
Makurdi IDP Camp A	14,229
Makurdi IDP camp B	6,840
Makurdi IDP Camp C	7,470
Makurdi IDP Camp D	5,240
Guma IDP camp E	19,900
Guma IDP camp F	11,300
Guma IDP camp G	8,014
TOTAL	72,993

6. DATA PRESENTATION

Findings and Discussions

The findings fall into five major categories of themes and several sub-themes based on the research questions. The major themes are Social Relationships and Interactions; Economic Interdependencies; Conflict and Tension; Policy and Institutional Support and Way Forward and Sustainability and the sub-themes are language and communication, stereotyping, social

gathering (ceremonies), socioeconomic standard of living, farming and farm produce processing, selling or hawking, arrival experience and initial hostility, compromise and cooperation, cheating and maltreatment, mistrust and scepticism, all IDP camps made official, food and water provision, security and maintenance of law and order, training, skill acquisition and employment, international and non-governmental organisational support, government support among others.

Theme 1: Social Relationships and Interactions

The social relationship refers to the connection and bounds between the IDPs and the host communities shaped by their interactions, experiences and cultural norms (Terminski, 2013).

Language and communication

On the issue of language and communication between the IDP and the host communities in the study area; the majority of IDP are Tiv by tribe and the host communities are also Tiv by tribe so there is no barrier in communication except one or two non-indigenes (Igala or Igbo) doing business in the communities that were attacked by Fulani Herdsmen who by the virtue of staying long in that community can communicate fairly in Tiv language (personal observation).

The chairman of the Guma IDP camp, F stated that,

We don't have a problem communicating with the host communities; they see us as one. Some IDPs are even residing within the communities with their family or friends (IDI 06).

Stereotyping

In the FDG (A), it was explained that

Some members of the host communities normally accused them of stealing and stereotyping them because they were IDPs. If any wrong thing happens in the community without proper investigation, it will be ascribed to the IDP people e.g. stealing or public defecation.

A member of the group retorted that

The group of persons who normally treat them that way are some youths who do not know what life is all about, but such a habit is gradually reducing anyway.

Social gathering (attending ceremonies, e.g. weddings and naming)

The chairman of Makurdi IDPs camp B stated that,

We are not permitted to attend any social occasion like weddings or naming ceremonies in the host community except with the permission of the government officials in our camp (IDI O2).

However, another chairman of another camp *claimed* that

Anyone who is invited can attend such an occasion (IDI 03).

This shows that experience on the issues of attending occasions like weddings or naming ceremonies in the host communities differs from camp to camp. During the fieldwork, the general feedback from all the IDP camps visited and personal observation was that the relationship between the IDPs and the host communities is cordial aside few cases of friction.

Theme 2: Economic Interdependencies

The economic interdependence in the context of IDPs and host communities is the mutual reliance and interconnectedness of IDPs and host communities in terms of economic activities, resources, and opportunities. Iorbo, Sahni, Bhatnagar & Andzenge (2024) posited that IDPs have lost livelihoods, farms, personal property and community infrastructure and have to depend on others for survival. Adegbe (2025) argued that internally displaced populations in Africa are almost as poor as host communities. Therefore, the probability of host communities supporting IDPs economically without the available resources is feasible.

Socio-economic standard of living

In a key informant interview with the SEMA manager, Guma IDP camp G, he stated that,

IDPs are dependent, and the issue now is that there is no even difference between the socioeconomic standard of living of the host communities and the IDPs when you look into the communities critically. So, when relief material is supplied to the camp, some of the members of the host communities see it as an opportunity to get their share from the government, and you cannot stop them for peace to reign. So, you have to factor in the host communities' share. Also, some of the IDPs are residing in the host communities, so they normally come out to collect their share when there is any supply (KII 07).

Farming and farm produce processing

In an in-depth interview with the chairman of Makurdi camp D, he narrated that,

Our people normally go to host communities' farms with the permission of the owners of the farm after the owners have harvested their produce, so that they can glean or gather the leftovers of the farm produce (IDI 04).

Also, this was further buttressed in FGDs (D) where the participants revealed that,

Some of the host communities are benevolent because some of them give us permission to farm on some portions of their land, harvest firewood, and use their water. We use their available resources for our needs.

In one of the IDIs with a member of staff of Benue Urban Development Board and a community leader, he claimed that,

Benue indigenes are hardworking people, and they are predominantly farmers, so wherever they find themselves, they will want to farm. The majority of the people displaced were from agrarian communities (IDI 08).

In FGDs (B), they all agreed that,

Our women normally go to rice mills to work with women processing rice to be paid or collect rice for their service.

Selling or hawking

In the in-depth interview with the chairman of Camp A, he stated that

As you enter the gate of the IDP camp, you will notice some of our women selling farm products and cooking ingredients. The IDPs patronise themselves and some community members too (IDI 01).

Theme 3: Conflict and Tension

A state of strained relationships, unease, or apprehension between IDPs and host communities can arise from perceived differences, unmet needs, or unresolved issues, and that can potentially escalate into conflict. Adeola (2016), affirmed that clashes or disputes between IDPs and host communities can arise from competing interests, needs, or values, and that can lead to physical violence, emotional harm, or social unrest.

Arrival experience and Initial hostility

According to the chairman of Makurdi IDP camp D, he explained that,

Initially, when we arrived at this venue, the tension was high between us and the host communities, but now, we do things amicably. Whenever the government, NGOs, religious organisations and private individuals provide us with aid, the host community normally struggle with us to collect their share, so we resist them, and it causes serious tension.

In one of the FDGs (E), they all agree that,

The conflict and tension are not that serious, but when we first came to this environment, there were some challenges, but because we are all Tivs and the majority are Christians, we were able to resolve the issues amicably.

Compromise and cooperation

Furthermore, the chairman Guma IDP camp, G, explained that,

When we realise that staying with them peacefully will be of mutual benefit, we have to compromise and cooperate for peace to reign by deciding to hand over a certain percentage of any aid or food items that are distributed to us to them, since we are in their land. They allow us to use their firewood, and fetch water from their stream, and some of them that are benevolent released some portions of their land for us to farm, so that is how we have been coexisting (IDI 07).

In one of the KIIs with a NEMA camp manager, he explained that

If the government or other stakeholders supply anything to the camp and you refuse to share it with some members of the host communities, you are looking for trouble; they can become violent and even break your head. So, we need to tread with caution and apply wisdom by allowing them to partake in the share of the supplies (KII 03).

Cheating and maltreatment

In the submission of FDGs (A), they complained about the issue of maltreatment from the host community that

At times, when we go and farm for some members of the host community in their farms, they will refuse to pay us, and there is nothing we can do because we are helpless; they will even insult and drive us away from their farm. We will just leave everything to God.

Mistrust and scepticism

One member of the host communities interviewed claimed that,

I am not even sure of the sincerity of this displacement any longer. It is like they are turning it into something else. Who are the real IDPs, and for how long will they be staying in this environment? If you want to know what I am saying, park a big vehicle near the camp, and you will see people gathered from all over because they believe the vehicle has come to distribute something. After that, they will disappear again. So, some are not IDP; they are just coming around to get aid and assistance (IDI 09).

Drawing an inference from this, it shows mistrust and scepticism towards IDPs and perceived exploitation of aid and assistance, which are potential sources of conflict and tension.

Theme 4: Policy and Institutional Support

Adeola (2023) emphasised the development, implementation, and enforcement of laws, regulations, and policies that promote the protection, well-being, and integration of IDPs, while also addressing the needs and concerns of host communities. The strengthening and capacity-building of government institutions, civil society organisations, and community groups to deliver essential services, promote social cohesion, and address the needs of both IDPs and host communities are the bedrock of adequate intervention for both IDPs and host

communities (Adeola, 2022). By providing policy and institutional support, governments, international organisations, and civil society can help create an enabling environment for IDPs and host communities to coexist peacefully, access essential services, and rebuild their lives (Adeola, 2021).

All IDP camps made official

One of the SEMA managers established that

All the IDP camps are under the control of Benue State SEMA, with managers and their assistants assigned to various camps. By implication, you must get permission from the Benue SEMA head office before doing anything in any of the IDP camps. Also, plans are on the way to build a mega camp by the current administration of Benue State (KII 05).

The FGDs (G) asserted that,

The current government has been trying. The first step the current administration took was to recognise all the IDP camps in Benue State, wherever they were located, in contrast to the previous administration, which put an end to the era of official and non-official camps.

Food and water provision

In FGDs (C), group members discussed

The government's provision of rice to the IDP camp. They noted that the government supplies rice every month, but the quantity is insufficient. Specifically, they mentioned that the current government provides 350-400 bags of rice per month, which is still not enough given the large number of IDPs. However, they acknowledged that this is an improvement compared to the previous government, which provided little to no support.

On the issue of access to water, one of the IDP camp chairmen responded *that,*

We have a borehole dug for us by the government, and the water is running 24/7 (IDI 01).

This was confirmed by personal observation during the field trip, which confirmed that all IDP camps in Makurdi have boreholes except for one or two places in Guma IDP camps (personal observation).

During the FGDs (F), in the Guma LGA area, a participant explained that,

There was a challenge of locating water from the ground as a result of the nature of the land, but the government made frantic efforts to ensure they dug the borehole, but it proved abortive.

Another participant retorted that,

The government normally supplies water to the camp with tankers but they have stopped for some time now so we resorted to a nearby stream.

In the summary of FGDs (F), they agreed that,

Water is not a very pressing issue for them in the camp now because they always find alternative sources of water apart from the borehole. There are more pressing issues than water.

In a key informant interview with the Benue State SEMA manager in one of the camps, he testified that,

The government is doing everything possible to advocate for the positive well-being of internally displaced persons in Benue State (KII 06).

Security and maintenance of law and order

In a key informant interview with another Benue State SEMA IDP camp manager, he bears witness that,

There is a series of security and development strategies going on that cannot be disclosed because of their sensitive nature (KII 01).

In an IDI with the chairman of one of the camps, he stated that,

We do not have a challenge in maintaining order in the camp, but we can still do more because there are one or two persons in the camp that, when you try to caution them on some attitudes, they despise you because they see you as IDPs too, but if the SEMA manager or any other government official addresses them on the same matter, they obey (IDI 01).

During the FGDs (A), there was consensus that,

There is a security post here, but at times you will not see any security personnel there. All the participants lent their voice that, at least let there always be security personnel around; seeing police officers around alone will give the IDPs some confidence of safety in the camp.

This was substantiated in an IDI with one of the chairmen of the IDP camp, who testified that,

In the absence of conventional security personnel, the youths in the camp have to organise themselves to play the role of security watch at night (IDI 04).

Also, in FGDs (B), it was confirmed by the participants that,

They have vigilante groups within the camp that run shifts.

In FGDs (D) too, it was affirmed by the participants that,

We have to watch over ourselves at night with the warning that no one moves around from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., and if you go out of the camp and you cannot make it back before the set time, you have to find a place to sleep over before coming to the camp next morning; it is as serious as that.

Training, skill acquisition and employment

This position was strongly supported by one of the Benue SEMA managers who posited that,

Many of the IDPs want to further their studies but have no opportunity and some have certificates that they can be employed with (KII 02).

The chairman of one of the camps lamented that,

I am an NCE holder, and the government of the past administration promised that they would give all the IDPs who are NCE holders teaching jobs when the state recruits teachers. They have done it, and no one invited us for an interview. Is that not an infringement on my freedom to work and earn a living? Our children cannot further their studies after primary school in this camp because there is no secondary school nearby; this is also an infringement on the child's right to education (IDI 04).

FGDs (A) participants attested to the fact that,

NGOs normally organise training for those who are interested.

However, one chairman of another camp lamented that,

I learnt that skills acquisition training was organised for some IDPs, but nothing of the sort happens in our camp here. This is one of the initiatives governments should have done by training IDPs on lifelong living skills, and in the future, wherever the beneficiaries find themselves, they will be useful to themselves and society because they have been empowered by the skill economically (IDI 04).

In an in-depth interview with the chairman of one of the IDP camps, he clarifies that,

There is no establishment of skills acquisition centres meant for the IDPs, but NGOs, CSOs, and humanitarian organisations normally organise skill acquisition programs for them once in a while (IDI 05).

During the fieldwork, it was observed that an organisation came to one of the camps to enquire if anyone was interested in learning any trade or skill so that the person would be attached to a shop offering such trade or skills for service in the town, and the bills will be paid by the organisation to cover the period of the training. It was noted that members of the host communities were part of those who indicated interest in using the opportunity to learn one trade or the other (personal observation).

International and non-governmental organisational support

A camp chairman confirmed this in one of the in-depth interviews that,

International organisations like the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and Médecins Sans Frontières, also known as Doctors Without Borders, have been helping in terms of making shift shelters, health care, and clothing, among others (IDI 06).

Government support

In an IDI with a chief in one of the host communities, he argued that,

If not for bad governance and leadership, why would people be displaced from their communities and be residing in IDP camps for more than seven years and still counting? (IDI 014).

Contrary to the IDI above, in another IDI with an IDP camp chairman, he stated that,

I disagree that it is all about bad governance and bad leadership. Yes, the government has its share of the blame. I think the government is trying its best, but it cannot do everything alone. The issue of displacement is a complex one, and it requires a collective effort from all stakeholders. Moreover, the government has been providing some support to IDPs, such as food, shelter, and healthcare in collaboration with other stakeholders, which is never enough (IDI 07).

Theme 5: Way-Forward and Sustainability

Way-forward and Sustainability refer to the strategies, initiatives, and interventions that promote durable solutions, resilience, and sustainable livelihoods for both IDPs and host communities. Adeola (2022) opined that long-term solutions that address the root causes of displacement, such as return, local integration, or resettlement, are the direction the governments of African nations should be tending towards. This policy measure will guarantee the human security of the displaced persons in their various communities.

Returning home, Security and government presence in the hinterlands

In an in-depth interview with one of the IDP chairmen, he lamented that,

We are tired of staying in IDP camps; we have hands and we can work; let the government make adequate security available for us in our villages so that we can go back home and farm, because no amount of food the government will supply here will be enough. Instead of army checkpoints on the express road, they should be posted in our villages and provide security for us there. When the assailants know that military personnel are around, they will not attack us (IDI 05).

This was strongly supported by humanitarian workers who queried and advocated that,

How long will you keep people in IDP camps and feed them? Thus, development programmes that support reconstruction and resettlement efforts will bring permanent solutions because humanitarian intervention is temporary (IDI 012)

One of the host community leaders lends his weight in support of this idea, stating that,

There is a lack of government presence in the border communities between Benue and Nasarawa states. If the government could establish infrastructure and security posts in these areas, it would be more beneficial than providing us with food in the camp (IDI 010).

In FGDs (C), one of the participants explained that,

I just returned from Lagos, where I travelled to, and whether I can start a new life there, but I have nowhere to stay; I have to return to the IDP camp here instead of returning to my home in the village, which is not safe; we cannot continue like this; something has to be done to relocate us back home. The majority of the participants agreed that going home is the best option, but our security must be guaranteed.

In the FGDs (E), it was affirmed by the group that,

Our major aim is to go back home.

In one of the IDIs, the secretary to one of the community associations lamented that,

There are some of their children in this camp who do not know their roots, and even some of the adults, if care is not taken when they go back home, might not be able to identify their houses because they were all burned down by the assailants; they can only use trees or natural landmarks to trace their homes, and this is not supposed to be so (IDI 011).

Long-term life skills

Initiatives that promote economic empowerment, self-reliance, and income generation for IDPs and host communities are essential towards seeking long-term solutions to the challenges of displacement in Nigeria (Akpoghome, 2015). Mbiyozo (2023) argued that the significance of helping IDPs acquire long-term life skills can never be overemphasised. This position was endorsed by the head of a community in an in-depth interview with a popular quote:

Teach me how to fish rather than giving me fish to eat; let them train them on skills so that when they return to their villages or any other place, they find themselves in the future, they can fend for themselves with that skill (IDI 013).

In FGDs (C), their view was that,

The government should train us in entrepreneurship and set up a small-scale business that we can manage on our own, and this was supported by all the members of the group.

During the field work, it was observed that some members of the host communities also joined the IDPs to explore the opportunity to learn skills of interest when an NGO visited the camp to introduce such an opportunity. Therefore, it behoves on government or other stakeholders with such initiative to put the host communities into consideration (personal observation).

Providing financial support

Emmanuella (2015) argued that providing financial support to IDPs through government payroll enrolment is one of the ways to ameliorate the sufferings of the IDPs in Nigeria. In an in-depth interview with one of the community leaders, he contends that,

The government should be able to give the IDI something every month; there are graduates in some of the camps, like, for instance, I know a guy that is a chairman of one of the IDP camps who is an NCE holder; he read Integrated Science and Biology, and they have more than ten (10) NCE holders in one other camp that I know who volunteer to teaching the displace children or those in the camp (IDI 014).

This was supported by the view of FGD (D) when one of the participants stated that,

I read Social Studies and Geography at the College of Education. At least if the government cannot employ us, they should be giving us stipends every month.

Strengthening National Law

Adeola (2021) asserted that strengthening national laws and policies to protect IDPs should be at the forefront of any measures the government is putting forward concerning displaced persons in Africa and Nigeria in particular. This was affirmed by a NEMA camp manager who echoed that,

Let national policies or laws prohibiting open grazing be captured in the constitution of the country; this will solve a lot of problems in Nigeria. For instance, if cattle ranches are strongly advocated for, just like in other countries of the world, there won't be clashes between farmers and herders again because it has been handled by the constitution (KII 04).

Promoting dialogue

Usang (2021) argued that to encourage social cohesion, all stakeholders should promote initiatives that promote social integration, community engagement, and peaceful coexistence between IDPs and host communities.

This position was supported by a SEMA manager who said,

Promoting dialogue and reconciliation initiatives is one of the key methods of ensuring security and peaceful coexistence. If stakeholders can bring all parties involved in disputes to a round table discussion, and with sincerity of purpose, it will go a long way in reducing the hurt of the past. And any party that violated the negotiated agreement from such dialogue should be held accountable (KII 05).

7. CONCLUSION

The political economy of IDPs and host communities in Benue State, Nigeria, is characterised by complex issues and challenges. The findings of this study reveal that the IDPs and host communities face significant livelihood insecurities and low social economy standards of living. The study also highlights the inadequate response of the government and humanitarian agencies, which has further exacerbated the vulnerabilities of the affected populations. However, this study also identifies opportunities for sustainable livelihoods and community resilience. The application of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) framework reveals that the IDPs and host communities possess inherent strengths and capacities that can be harnessed to promote self-sufficiency and recovery.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Promote Sustainable Livelihoods:** The government and humanitarian agencies should support IDPs and host communities through agricultural inputs and training, vocational and microfinance services, and the development of small-scale enterprises to enhance food security and income generation.
- 2. Strengthen Data and Evidence-Based Planning:** Regular surveys and assessments should be conducted to monitor livelihoods and well-being, enabling data-driven policies and targeted interventions.
- 3. Enhance Community Resilience and Social Cohesion:** Stakeholders should promote community-based peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and self-help initiatives to foster unity and resilience.
- 4. Adopt Collaborative and Inclusive Approaches:** Government, humanitarian actors, and local stakeholders should ensure inclusive planning and decision-making through regular consultations, partnerships with local institutions, and coordinated service delivery.

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**Provocative Language as a Catalyst for Conflict Escalation in
Northwest Nigeria**

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Abstract

Northwest Nigeria is currently gripped by a complex security crisis defined by escalating rural banditry, kidnapping, and protracted ethno-religious conflict across states like Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Sokoto, and Zamfara. While much scholarly and policy attention focuses on socioeconomic factors, climate change, and security-sector deficits, this study investigates the under-examined role of provocative language as a direct catalyst for conflict escalation. The research utilizes a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, combined with qualitative content analysis of local media, political speeches, religious inflammatory, and social media rhetoric from 2023 to 2025. The central hypothesis is that the instrumentalisation of polarising ethnic and religious rhetoric accelerates the transition from low-intensity criminality to widespread inter-communal violence. Discussion of findings establishes a robust causal chain where Dangerous Speech (DS)—specifically Provocation, Incitement, and Dehumanization—acts as the immediate catalyst for violence, responsible for major incidents like the 1991 Kano riots and the 2022 Sokoto blasphemy murder. Crucially, the analysis reveals that DS is an instrumental driver, not merely a reflection of tension, achieving maximum mobilization risk by strategically aligning with pre-existing conditions of Relative Deprivation (RD). This strategic alignment, validated by the finding that 90% of Incitement is paired with Grievance Exploitation, allows elites to substitute structural failures (e.g., corruption, poor economy) with an external religious threat, thereby eroding moral restraints and justifying violence. The study concludes that the conflict mechanism is best understood through an Integrated Model (DSF + RDT = Mobilization \ Risk). This model proves that political conflict and identity conflict are inseparable, with Dangerous Speech serving as the "conversion tool" that allows elites to manipulate deep-seated deprivations for immediate violent outcomes. Therefore, counter-narrative strategies and digital governance interventions must be prioritized as non-kinetic approaches that simultaneously address both the rhetorical catalyst (DS) and the underlying structural inequalities (RD) to achieve sustainable stability in Northwest Nigeria.

Keywords: *Conflict, Catalysis, Escalation, Provocative, Language*

1. INTRODUCTION

The persistent and complex security crisis gripping Northwest Nigeria, marked by brutal rural banditry, mass abductions, and intensifying clashes between farmers and herders across states like Kaduna, Kano, Sokoto, Zamfara, and Katsina (Okoli & Nwangwu, 2023), is often attributed to deep structural issues. While economic marginalisation, erosion of governance structures, and resource competition provide the tinder for conflict, this analysis contends that provocative language acts as the crucial spark, accelerating localised tension into full-scale, identity-based warfare. Globally, the capacity of inflammatory language to incite mass violence is well-documented. In the Rwandan Genocide (1994), hate speech on Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) stoked ethnic tensions between Hutus and Tutsis, using dehumanising terms like "cockroaches" to encourage mass violence (Onah, 2025). Similarly, the anti-Semitic propaganda of Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels, which referred to Jews as "vermin," was instrumental in fueling the Holocaust (Al-Tamimi, 2024). More recently, in Myanmar, hate speech targeting Rohingya Muslims on social media led to widespread violence and displacement (Amnesty International, 2022). This demonstrates the universal principle that provocative language divides communities and justifies aggression.

In Northwest Nigeria, this phenomenon is now central to the security crisis. Provocative language is not merely a reflection of underlying tension; it is instrumental (Usman, 2024). Political and communal actors deliberately deploy provocative language—including hate speech, ethnic slurs, and coded narratives of persecution—to achieve strategic mobilisation. This rhetoric is designed to dehumanise specific outgroups, particularly across the volatile Hausa-Fulani/Christian-Muslim fault lines (Ezeibe, 2023). By framing the conflict as an existential struggle, these narratives solidify ingroup loyalty, justify retributive violence, and create a moral imperative for aggression among armed groups (Aondover et al., 2025). The swift and often unchallenged dissemination of these messages through local radio and digital media (Onah et al., 2025) facilitates an immediate and disproportionate response to grievances. This acceleration mechanism, which transforms criminal acts (such as banditry) into broader ethno-religious conflicts, represents a demonstrable gap in the current conflict literature.

Therefore, a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework is necessary to investigate the specific patterns of provocative language used by stakeholders and its direct correlation to conflict escalation in the Northwest, particularly from 2023 onwards, informing more effective counter-narrative and peacebuilding strategies. It is against this background that this study explores the mechanisms and sociocultural foundations of this communication style as a source of conflict in the religiously sensitive society of northwest Nigeria. With a

focus on the historical, socio-political, and religious contexts of the region, this study will examine the factors of provocative language as a means of escalating conflicts.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Provocative language is a critical yet underexplored factor in conflict escalation, particularly in northwest Nigeria, a region marked by its ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. Inflammatory rhetoric and derogatory remarks often deepen societal divisions, exacerbate grievances, and serve as triggers for violent confrontations. Despite its significance, existing research has largely overlooked the specific role of provocative language in northwest's conflict dynamics, focusing instead on broader causes of disputes. Moreover, the advent of modern communication technologies, especially social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter, has amplified the reach and impact of inflammatory speech, enabling its rapid dissemination and intensifying tensions. These dynamics complicate efforts to foster understanding and resolve conflicts, particularly in a region where language holds deep symbolic and cultural significance. The lack of empirical studies addressing how provocative language manifests, spreads, and contributes to conflict escalation in northern Nigeria creates a critical gap in understanding. This gap leaves policymakers, community leaders, and conflict resolution practitioners without the insights needed to design effective intervention strategies. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the role of provocative language in conflict escalation in northwest Nigeria.

3. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Concept of Conflict

The word 'Conflict' originates in the Latin Language and is regarded as 'Conflicts' or 'configure,' which technically means to strike together, a fight or struggle for mastery, a quarrel. Scholars from sociology, history, and political science share diversion views on the perspective of conflict as a concept. Martin (2021) opined that conflict is an opposing interest in relationships, interactions, and an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party. Ben (2021) seems to have shared a similar opinion with that of Martin and Nayakama (2021) on the concept of conflict, which involves a perceived or genuine incompatibility of goals, values, expectations, interests, processes, strategies, or outcomes between two or more interdependent parties in their relationships. It has also been defined as pursuing incompatible interests and goals by different groups. David (2018) asserted that armed conflict is associated with the use of force and armed violence and is a process of pursuing incompatible and particular interests and goals. The perception of conflict by scholars has increasingly been widening the scope of the meaning in all its ramifications. Thus, Jegede

(2021) described conflict as a situation or condition of disharmony in an interactional process. The conceptual framework of conflict has taken scholarly perspectives. Conflict is also seen as an intrinsic and inevitable part of human existence.

Conceptualizing Provocative Language

Words or phrases meant to arouse strong emotions in others or to offend them are referred to as provocative language. It frequently consists of insulting language, divisive discourse, and statements meant to disparage or threaten specific people or groups. In many societies, provocative language, which is defined as inflammatory or disparaging speech, has frequently been found to be a trigger for the escalation of conflicts (Levine, 2021). Provocative language is more than just a means of communication in the religiously and culturally diverse Sokoto Metropolis; it can also be used to exacerbate already-existing divisions and inflame tensions. According to studies on the origins of disputes in Sokoto and comparable areas, verbal provocation can exacerbate tensions, especially when sociopolitical marginalization and old grievances are common (Smith & Adeyemi, 2022; Aluko, 2023). Conceptualizing provocative language not as an emotional byproduct of conflict, but as a deliberate, instrumental tool. Recent studies firmly establish that provocative language is a core catalyst for violence. Ezeibe (2023), analyzing Nigerian conflicts, submits that hate speech is often "elevated to the status of political campaign strategy," designed to capture and retain power by exploiting deep-seated communal divisions. This intentional use shifts the conflict narrative from a transactional criminal enterprise (banditry) to a legitimate, existential struggle against an enemy (Aondover et al., 2025). Ilesanmi (2024) highlights the dangerous role of media in broadcasting hate speech, which creates a "contagious multiplier effect" that systematically dehumanizes the targeted outgroup. This process of dehumanization is necessary for actors to justify and commit acts of extreme violence, effectively granting a moral license for escalation.

Escalation of Conflicts

According to Okeke, (2023) conflict escalation is the process through which disputes get more intense and frequently progress from verbal arguments to structural or physical forms of violence. The transition from latent to manifest conflict is covered by this idea, in which parties may use violence to settle disagreements or protect their interests. An early warning sign of possible violence is verbal provocations, and the escalation process frequently follows a predictable pattern. According to Tajfel's (1979) Social Identity Theory, people have a propensity to identify with their in-groups and distrust their out-groups, especially when conflict is present. Since ethnic and religious identities play a major role in social organization in places like northwest Nigeria, offensive language can quickly incite animosity toward outgroups and escalate conflicts (Ilesanmi, 2024).

4. REVIEW OF RELATED WORKS

The study of conflict in Northwest Nigeria fundamentally involves structural conflict analysis, the discourse of violence, and identity politics. This review argues that the deliberate deployment of provocative language acts as a critical accelerant to violence, bridging the gap between deep-seated root causes and kinetic action.

Provocative Language and Conflict Dynamics

Language is an ordered system of linguistic symbols (words) used by people to communicate. It is a fundamental aspect of human interaction, serving as a mediator between the self and society, and a means of representing and introducing the outside world to others (Matz, 2024; Balume, 2024). Given its role in human interaction, labelling, and transmission, the significance of language in communication and identity is impossible to overstate. It enables the identification and naming of people, things, or actions, focusing heavily on the exchange of thoughts and feelings (Al-Tamimi, 2024). The role of language, particularly inflammatory or provocative speech, in escalating tensions and inciting violence has been extensively studied, especially in contexts of religious and cultural diversity. Scholars contend that provocative language frequently jeopardises collective identities, particularly in religious and ethnically diverse settings (Wimmer and Schiller, 2020). Where religious beliefs are strongly linked to identity, groups may react vehemently to disparaging language, perceiving it as an attack on their core identity, which often leads to conflict. In areas with rigid religious boundaries, such as Sokoto Metropolis, inflammatory remarks—especially those interpreted as derogatory or blasphemous—act as "sparks" in an already tense environment. Research highlights the susceptibility of such areas to provocative language, where seemingly harmless remarks can escalate into communal violence (Usman, 2022).

Amplification and Psychosocial Effects

The media, particularly social and mass media, often play a role in amplifying provocative language. By broadcasting or disseminating inflammatory statements to a larger audience, media coverage can highlight or distort controversial remarks, fostering a sense of outrage or collective injustice among communities (Johnson and Kalu, 2021). The psychosocial effects of this language are significant; inflammatory speech frequently triggers psychological reactions that result in defensive or aggressive behaviour, making individuals more likely to engage in conflict. Verbal emotional provocation is a major factor in conflict escalation, particularly among young people in religious communities (Adeyemi and Bello, 2023). Furthermore, varying interpretations of religious doctrines heavily influence what is perceived as 'provocative'. In settings where religious authority is strong, like Sokoto,

offensive language is often taken as a direct challenge to deeply held beliefs, inciting community members to defensive or violent action (Bakari, 2021).

The Structural Link to Violence

Provocative language often escalates tensions by reinforcing in-group and out-group divisions, thereby intensifying intergroup hostilities (Nwangwu, 2023). In the Nigerian context, it has historically contributed to ethno-religious conflicts, often reflecting underlying socio-political and economic tensions (Adefemi, 2017). Inflammatory remarks are used to mobilise groups along religious or ethnic lines, fostering a hostile environment conducive to violence (Omotola, 2016). Galtung's (1990) framework on structural violence is pertinent here, as it shows how language can serve as a vehicle for implicit violence, where verbal expressions translate into structural inequalities and antagonisms that perpetuate cycles of conflict. In a diverse society like Nigeria, provocative language gains its efficacy by tapping into existing ethno-religious fault lines, particularly the historically volatile relationship between the Muslim Hausa and Fulani groups and various Christian minority communities. Hate speech directly instigates sentiment, mistrust, and violence (Onah, Ugwu, and Uroko, 2025). The use of exclusionary language is crucial for creating the "us versus them" binary that fuels communal warfare. In the Northwest, this is seen in the rhetoric that frames issues like banditry along simplistic Fulani/Hausa and herder/farmer identity lines, even when the underlying motive is purely criminal.

Derogatory Remarks among Nigerian Ethnic Groups

Specific derogatory language is historically and currently employed among Nigeria's major ethnic groups, acting as a form of rhetorical violence and a barrier to national cohesion:

Hausa against Yoruba and Igbo: Yoruba are referred to with terms like "Dan-bagobiri" (Son of Bagobiri, alluding to tribal marks), "*Munafiki*" (hypocrite), and "Dan-Oduduwa" (Son of Oduduwa). Igbo are called "*Nyamiri Baban*" "*Doya*" (someone who made yam their basic food), "*Dan uwan Kudi*" or "*Kwara*" (lovers of money, based on the belief that Igbo people are avaricious), and "Arne" (infidel) (Patricia, 2011).

Igbo against Hausa and Yoruba: Hausa are referred to as "Nama" (a corruption of the Hausa word for 'meat' used to mean 'Cow'), as well as "*Malam*", "*Aboki*", and "Alhaji", which the Igbo use pejoratively to mean 'ignorant', 'stupid', and 'uncivilised person', despite their original meanings of 'teacher' and a title for a pilgrim. Yoruba are called "*Ndi ofe-manu*", which translates to 'People of oily soup', alluding to their perceived use of subpar cooking oil (Patricia, 2011).

Yoruba against Igbo and Hausa: Igbo are referred to as "*Omo Kobo kobo*" ('a people without pedigree'), "*Omo Irankiran*" ('a people without lineage'), or "*Omo tan tilpaji baba*"

wan" ('children without respect'). Hausa are called "*awan kin malu*" ('low', referring to their nomadic, cattle-breeding lifestyle), and "*awanomoabi pa be*" ('uncircumcised') (Patricia, 2011). This inflammatory rhetoric is a major impediment to national cohesion and can escalate into violence.

5. CASE STUDIES IN ESCALATION

Provocative Language Political Campaigns and Mass Violence

Political campaign language is typically emotionally charged, intended to persuade or influence voters. It can be a "Lexicon of conflict and drama of ridicule and reproach" (O'Hair, et al, 2024). Politicians often employ propaganda—the deliberate manipulation of language through statements that harm opponents' reputations—which can be offensive and disparaging (Khalaf, 2024; Al-Tamimi, 2024). One of the most profound examples of rhetoric leading directly to mass violence was the aftermath of the 2011 presidential election. Studies confirm that pre-election hate speech and coded messages delivered by political figures were instrumental in mobilising followers for violence. Politicians intentionally used ethnic and religious slurs to deepen existing animosity, conditioning supporters to view electoral defeat as an existential threat. The post-election violence led to the deaths of over 800 people and the systematic destruction of property, primarily along ethno-religious lines, confirming that the rhetorical groundwork directly translated into kinetic mobilisation (Ezeibe, 2020; Balume, 2024).

Inflammatory Comments and Religious Blasphemy

Kaduna: It is claimed that evangelical preaching, campaigns, and propagation are carried out in an offensive or coercive manner. However, some contend that it made it more challenging to evaluate the appropriateness of some religious leaders' evangelization tactics. Their message and delivery style can occasionally offend followers of other religions needlessly. These people include clerics and preachers who have attempted to impose their beliefs on others (Punch edition of December 25, 2002). There are numerous instances of violent preaching that have intensified acts of religious violence. For instance, a Christian evangelical organization headed by Rev. Abubakar Bako Mohammed organized a religious preaching campaign at Kafanchan's College of Education in March 1987. However, the group and a few Muslim students got into a violent altercation at the end of the event. The preacher's misinterpretation of the Qur'anic passage involving the Prophet Muhammad was too much for the Muslim students to bear (Ayinla 2024). Religious violence broke out in Kaduna during the fourth week of November 2002 after a newspaper article called "Thisday" made a disparaging statement about Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). The comment was made about a national international beauty pageant.

Kano Scenario: The sensitive nature of religious doctrine, particularly the perception of blasphemy, is a persistent trigger for violence in Northern Nigeria. The 1994 tragic execution of Gideon Akaluka in Kano on suspicion of desecrating a paper with Arabic inscriptions demonstrated the danger of unbridled religious extremism. Shiite fundamentalists stormed the prison, killed Akaluka, and paraded his severed head, revealing the state's inability to protect its people and enforce the law in the face of extremist fear. Consequently, there another tension between Christians and Muslims in Kano have been greatly exacerbated since 1982 by the rise of Pentecostal radicalism (Albert,2013: Bukar,2024). Many Pentecostal churches publicly criticise Islam, calling non-Christian's "sinners" who will burn in hell and frequently making critical comparisons between the Bible and the Qur'an. The Muslim youth of Kano have become hostile because of such rhetoric. Religious texts have historically been invoked to defend acts of violence, as was the case during the Crusades. Another episode also occurred during the Reinhard Bonnke Crusade Riots in Kano in 1991, when violent protests were triggered by rumours that the German evangelist had insulted Islam (Shehu,2022). According to reports, more than 500 people were killed, churches and Christian homes were attacked, and many Christians permanently fled. The incident demonstrates how religious leaders' teachings can either fuel conflict or promote peaceful coexistence, depending on interpretation and context. In another prelude, there was violence of October 1991 in Kano, when German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke organised a crusade in Kano, which was one of the most significant religious conflicts. The event, known as Kano for Jesus, was seen by Muslims as an attempt to undermine Islam because its promotional materials were written in the Hausa/Arabic script, Ajami. Some posters depicted blind Hausa-Fulani Muslims who were purportedly healed by Jesus Christ, which fuelled tension. More significantly, the word "crusade" was seen by Muslims as an invitation to wage war against Islam (Wakili,2021). The resulting unrest resulted in the destruction of properties valued at millions of naira and the deaths of hundreds of people.

Sokoto Inflammatory Violence: Similarly confrontational methods, including inflammatory comments and aggressive propagation by some Shiite activists in Sunni neighbourhoods, provoked major violence. Clashes between Shi'ah and Sunni factions in 2005 and 2007 resulted in multiple deaths. The 2007 violence, following the killing of a popular scholar, Sheik Umaru Hamza Dam Maishiyya, who was preaching against the Shi'ah doctrine, led to the torching of at least 20 houses and the deployment of soldiers (Shehu,2015: Jumare et al, 2013; Abiodun, 2014). The murder of student Deborah Samuel Yakubu in 2023 at the Shehu Shagari College of Education illustrates the deadly outcome of perceived provocation. Her comments in a WhatsApp group, interpreted as blasphemous, led to her murder by a student mob. This incident demonstrates "social amplification"—the swift dissemination of accusations and the rapid assembly of a mob (Kasperson et al., 1988). The

response shows how social and religious solidarity can cause group members to act violently. This case highlights how what is considered "provocative" is determined by the listener's beliefs and context, even if the intent was not malicious (Tribune, 2022; The Guardian, 2022). The butcher Usman Buda was killed in 2023 after an argument at the Sokoto abattoir where his remarks, opposing the custom of relating religious deeds to Prophet Muhammad rather than focusing solely on God, were perceived as blasphemous. He was attacked by a group and later died of his injuries (PREMIUM TIMES, 2023; Vanguard, 2023).

These cases confirm that in religiously sensitive environments, blasphemy accusations, even based on misinterpretation or frustration, can elicit intense, immediate, and violent group reactions, making the discourse around religious sensitivity and freedom of speech a crucial area for conflict mitigation. The rhetorical landscape of Northwest Nigeria, dominated by ethno-religious tensions, politically motivated slurs, and highly sensitive religious doctrines, confirms that language is not merely a reflection of conflict but an active and potent ingredient that accelerates it from a state of tension to kinetic violence.

The Research Gap

While academic work confirms the destructive potential of rhetoric in Nigeria (Ezeibe, 2023; Onah et al., 2025), a persistent research deficit exists regarding the specific application and effect of this discourse in the unique context of the Northwest banditry crisis. Much of the current hate speech analysis targets electoral violence or generalized ethno-religious clashes. This study seeks to close this gap by applying the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methodology to trace the explicit patterns of provocative language disseminated via local radio and social media within Kaduna, Kano, Sokoto and Zamfara States, and directly correlate these rhetorical peaks with subsequent escalations of kinetic conflict. This focused approach provides the necessary micro-level analysis to inform targeted peacebuilding interventions.

6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework for this study is built upon a synthesis of three key sociological and political science theories: The Dangerous Speech Framework (DSF), Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT), and Elite Manipulation/Instrumentalism Theory. This combination provides a robust model for analyzing the nexus between specific instances of inflammatory rhetoric and the subsequent eruption of violence in Nigeria's volatile socio-political landscape.

Dangerous Speech Framework (DSF)

The Dangerous Speech Framework (developed by Susan Benesch) is the primary lens through which the inciting rhetoric is analyzed. It moves beyond the legalistic definition of 'hate speech' to focus on speech that is designed to make violence against a specific group

seem acceptable or necessary. Dangerous Speech identifies the 'target' group, labels them as dangerous or subhuman, and justifies violence as self-defense or a moral imperative.

Relevance to Study: In the context of ethno-religious crises (e.g., in Kaduna or during post-election periods as well as Deborah case of blasphemy in Sokoto), political and religious elites often use specific rhetorical devices (coded language, historical narratives of betrayal) to create a climate where violence against "the other" (e.g., an ethnic minority, a political opponent, or a religious rival) is rationalized. This theory explains the mechanism of immediate mobilization observed in the 2011 post-election violence and the 2020 digital incitement cases.

Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT)

RDT explains the deep-seated grievances that make communities susceptible to manipulation by Dangerous Speech. This theory posits that conflict arises not from absolute poverty, but when a group perceives a significant and unjust gap between what they believe they are entitled to (values expectations) and what they are actually capable of getting (values capabilities). When a group feels marginalized, excluded from political power, or unjustly deprived of economic resources (e.g., land, government appointments, or security), they harbor deep resentment and frustration.

Relevance to Study: RDT explains the structural vulnerability in Nigeria, where ethnic and religious identity often overlaps with perceptions of state neglect or political domination. Inflammatory rhetoric exploits these pre-existing feelings of "felt marginalization" (as noted by Onah et al., 2025 regarding the Southeast/Igbo ethnic group) or resource competition (such as farmer-herder clashes) to justify collective action, including violence, against perceived oppressors or rivals.

Elite Manipulation / Instrumentalism Theory

This theory shifts the focus from the victimized population to the actors who initiate and sustain the conflict. Instrumentalism views ethnic and religious identities not as inherent causes of conflict, but as tools used by rational political or economic elites to achieve non-ethnic or non-religious goals, such as capturing state resources or winning elections. Elites deliberately deploy inflammatory rhetoric to divide the electorate, mobilize their own ethnic/religious base, and deflect attention from their own failures in governance or resource management. They are the "engineers" of conflict.

Relevance to Study: The sustained nature of the crisis in the Northwest, often framed as 'banditry' but having deep political and economic roots (Okoli & Nwangwu, 2023), suggests that political actors are intentionally using identity-based rhetoric to instigate violence and chaos, thereby destabilizing rival political spaces or consolidating power. This is evident in

the strategic deployment of hate speech during elections (Ezeibe, 2020) and the deliberate disinformation campaigns (Premium Times, 2024).

7. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts an explanatory, qualitative research design utilising a case-study approach. The core objective is to explain the causal link and mechanism by which elites deploy inflammatory rhetoric to translate existing socio-economic grievances into specific acts of ethno-religious and political violence in Nigeria. The qualitative design allows for the various interpretations and coding of textual data necessary to map rhetoric against the indicators of the Dangerous Speech Framework (DSF).

Research Scope and Case Selection

The study's scope is focused on political and ethno-religious conflict flashpoints in Nigeria between 2020 and 2024. This period is critical as it encompasses the rise of coordinated disinformation campaigns, the highly contested 2023 General Elections, and the sustained security crises in the Northwest and Southeast geopolitical zones. The research will employ a purposive, comparative case selection focusing on two distinct contexts: Analysis of speeches and digital media narratives surrounding the 2023 General Elections incitement case, where the rhetoric was overtly aimed at immediate political mobilization. Analysis of narratives and media reports related to the security crises in the Northwest (banditry) and the Kaduna ethno-religious tensions (e.g., the Tudun Biri incident), as well as Kano and Sokoto where rhetoric exploits underlying resource competition and religious identity and blasphemy.

Data Sources and Collection

The data for this study drawn exclusively from secondary sources and categorized into three types: Collection Strategy (Purposive Sampling): Data collected via keyword searches and archival review. The sampling is purposive, focusing only on content directly related to the selected flashpoints and timeframes, explicitly containing ethno-religious or political-antagonist language.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using a two-stage qualitative approach. 1) Qualitative Content Analysis (Coding). The Rhetoric Data (Type A) was subjected to Qualitative Content Analysis. A coding schema was developed directly from the theoretical framework. All relevant textual units were coded, allowing for frequency analysis of different rhetorical strategies. This stage was integrating the coded Rhetoric Data with the Grievance (Type B) and Outcome (Type C) data to establish the explanatory link Temporal Sequencing this

involves establishing the time-lag between the deployment of high-risk coded rhetoric and the subsequent eruption of violence in the same geographical area. The study was explained how the coded rhetoric (Elite Manipulation + Dangerous Speech) successfully mobilized a population already primed by structural inequalities (Relative Deprivation) to commit violence.

8. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Confirmation of the Causal Chain

The central finding is the consistent presence of Elite Manipulation strategies driving the specific forms of Dangerous Speech, which successfully exploit conditions of Relative Deprivation to produce violence. Analysis consistently established a clear sequence that the deployment of coded, high-risk rhetoric (Dehumanization and Incitement) consistently preceded the peak incidents of violence within the targeted geographical areas. This sequence strongly supports the notion that the speech is not merely reflective of conflict, but is an instrumental driver of it. The coding demonstrated that 90% of all Incitement to Action rhetoric was paired with Grievance Exploitation. This indicates that elites were highly strategic, avoiding abstract calls to action, and instead connecting mobilization directly to specific, tangible feelings of deprivation (e.g., loss of ancestral lands, unfair political representation, or corruption).

Political/Electoral Incitement

Rhetoric related to political incitement was overwhelmingly dominated by Scapegoating (over 70% of coded rhetoric). Political elites consistently deflected blame for widespread systemic failures (poor infrastructure, endemic corruption) onto ethnic or religious rivals within the political class. The violence resulting from political incitement was typically acute, immediate, and localized around political symbols (polling stations, rival party strongholds). The function of the Dangerous Speech in this context was rapid, high-intensity mobilization to achieve an immediate, non-ethnic political goal (e.g., intimidating voters, destabilizing a rival's base). The targets of the violence were those who supported the 'other' political party, reinforcing the instrumental nature of the conflict.

The analysis establishes a robust causal chain in which Dangerous Speech (DS) acts as the immediate catalyst, strategically leveraging pre-existing conditions of Relative Deprivation (RD) to fuel ethno-religious violence across Kaduna, Kano, and Sokoto. This integrated model is critical for understanding the mechanics of conflict mobilization in Northern Nigeria.

The Instrumental Role of Dangerous Speech (DSF)

The cases reveal that rhetoric is not merely a reflection of underlying tensions but an instrumental driver of conflict. Specific forms of DS, deployed by elites (religious and community leaders), successfully breach the psychological barriers against violence. In Kaduna, the preacher's "misinterpretation of the Qur'anic passage" (1987) and the "disparaging statement about Prophet Muhammad" (2002) acted as clear, high-risk Provocation leading to immediate violent outbreaks. Similarly, the Reinhard Bonnke Crusade in Kano (1991) was seen as an Incitement to war, particularly as the term "crusade" and the promotional materials were interpreted as a direct challenge to Islam. The outcome—over 500 people killed—demonstrates the lethal effectiveness of this rhetorical strategy.

The sustained rhetoric of Pentecostal radicalism in Kano, which publicly critiques Islam and calls non-Christians "sinners" who will burn in hell, functions as Dehumanization. This aligns with the finding that specific groups are consistently portrayed as "non-citizens," thereby eroding moral restraints against violence. The extreme act of the 1994 execution of Gideon Akaluka, where fundamentalists paraded his severed head, is a vivid example of how Dehumanization facilitates the most brutal acts of violence.

The Sokoto incidents—the murders of Deborah Samuel Yakubu (2022) and Usman Buda (2023)—highlight the profound and immediate consequences of applying the DSF to highly sensitive religious doctrine. A perceived blasphemy, regardless of intent, is interpreted as a severe, personalized form of Provocation/Incitement that taps into the collective moral order. This confirms the finding that language rapidly accelerates the situation from tension to kinetic violence through a mechanism of Social Amplification.

Exploitation of Relative Deprivation (RDT)

The violence, while triggered by Dangerous Speech, is given its context and mass mobilization potential by the pervasive sense of Relative Deprivation (RDT). The study confirms that DS is insufficient alone; it is its alignment with a credible, pre-existing feeling of RD that maximizes the risk. The Ethno-Religious/Security Conflict (Case Study B) is the framework for all three cities. The recurrent tensions in Kaduna and Kano are rooted in deep-seated, historically-validated fears over land, resources, and historical marginalization between Christian and Muslim communities. The DS provides a moral and religious justification for acts of violence aimed at cementing identity boundaries and securing resources. The Sokoto Sunni vs. Shi'ah conflicts directly illustrate how RD provides the fertile ground for DS. The discussion notes the context of worsening corruption and Northern economy, which is a tangible deprivation. This structural grievance is exploited by elites to attract members and fuel zeal, positioning the 'other' (Shi'ah or Sunni) as an "ideological

threat to communal salvation." This substitutes the real deprivation (economic and political failure) with a perceived, existential threat from the rival religious group. Religious and community leaders (elites) are highly strategic, connecting the immediate calls to action (Incitement) directly to Grievance Exploitation. In the Kano and Kaduna incidents, the rhetoric of insult or supremacy provided a rallying point for individuals who felt their community was already deprived or under threat (political, economic, or cultural), thereby validating the finding that 90% of Incitement is paired with Grievance Exploitation.

Theoretical Implications: The Integrated Model

The findings solidify the necessity of an integrated model for conflict analysis.

DSF + RDT = Mobilization Risk: The mere existence of offensive preaching (DS) is not enough; it must connect to a pre-existing group vulnerability (RD) to achieve mass mobilization. The ethno-religious conflicts prove that Elite Instrumentalism (the power element) and Relative Deprivation (the identity element) are inseparable. Dangerous Speech functions as the crucial "conversion tool" that allows elites to strategically manipulate deeply felt, identity-based deprivations to achieve immediate violent outcomes. Ultimately, the cases demonstrate that lasting conflict mitigation requires simultaneous intervention and addressing the rhetorical catalyst (DS) while dismantling the underlying structural inequalities and deprivations (RDT) that make the population susceptible to the rhetoric in the first place.

9. CONCLUSION

This study set out to explain the causal mechanism linking elite-driven inflammatory rhetoric and the outbreak of political and ethno-religious violence in Nigeria between 2020 and 2024. By integrating the Dangerous Speech Framework (DSF), Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT), and Elite Manipulation Theory, the research successfully established a clear, instrumental, and predictive chain of causation. The findings confirm that rhetoric is not merely a symptom of Nigeria's conflict, but a sophisticated, deliberate instrument of political strategy. Through meticulous qualitative content analysis and temporal sequencing, the study demonstrated that elite actors strategically deploy coded Dangerous Speech that directly aligns with and exploits the pre-existing, deeply felt grievances of Relative Deprivation. This alignment successfully erodes moral barriers, mobilizes mass support, and ultimately precipitates violence in pursuit of political, economic, or security objectives. The theoretical contribution of this work lies in its integrated model, which moves beyond siloed analyses. It demonstrates that interventions must simultaneously address both the immediate rhetorical catalyst (the Dangerous Speech) and the enduring structural vulnerabilities (Relative Deprivation) that make the population susceptible to elite manipulation. No lasting solution

is possible without neutralizing the elite incentives that fuel this cycle of rhetoric and violence.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the empirical findings and the demonstrated causal mechanism, the following policy recommendations are essential to mitigate the risk of mass violence driven by inflammatory rhetoric in Nigeria:

- a. Targeting the Rhetoric:** The government should endeavour to create an independent, multi-stakeholder body composed of legal experts, media practitioners, and civil society representatives to monitor and enforce existing laws against hate speech, particularly on social media and encrypted platforms (e.g., WhatsApp). This body must be politically insulated to ensure fair, non-partisan enforcement against all elites.
- b. Targeting the Grievance:** Constituted authority should systematically address the core issues driving Relative Deprivation, particularly regarding land disputes, resource allocation, and federal appointments.
- c. Targeting the Elites:** There is the need to mandate and strictly enforce electoral and judicial sanctions against political and religious leaders found to have deployed Dangerous Speech. Sanctions should include public censure, disqualification from holding political office for a specified period, and swift prosecution to de-incentivize the use of inflammatory rhetoric as a political tool.

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Agriculture, Solid Minerals Revenue and Economic Growth in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of agricultural and solid minerals revenue on economic growth from 1986 to 2023. It critically examined the roles of revenue from agriculture and revenue from solid minerals as key drivers of economic growth in Nigeria. Grounded in the structural change theory, resource-based view (RBV) and the endogenous growth theory, this research employs the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) modeling as an econometric technique to analyze the data. Findings revealed that each of the core variables—agricultural revenue, solid minerals revenue, and Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS) disbursements—have shown a statistically significant and positive long-run relationship with GDP. The study concluded that non-oil revenue sources—specifically agricultural income, solid minerals, and targeted agricultural credit support are essential components of Nigeria’s economic development strategy. Agriculture continues to demonstrate its critical importance, while the mining sector, and though still developing, shows clear potential. It was recommended that, government and private stakeholders should intensify efforts to improve agricultural infrastructure, technology, training, and value chain systems to maximize the sector’s economic contributions. Additionally, the study advises that strategic reforms should be implemented to unlock the potential of the solid minerals sector. Regulatory clarity, improved infrastructure, and targeted investment incentives should be pursued to formalize mining operations and fully harness Nigeria’s vast mineral resources.

Keywords: *Agricultural Revenue, Solid Minerals Revenue, Economic Growth, ARDL, Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme*

1. INTRODUCTION

Historically, Nigeria's economy was predominantly agrarian prior to the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantities in the late 1950s. During the 1960s, agriculture accounted for over 60% of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) and was the main source of government revenue and foreign exchange earnings (CBN, 2022). Major cash crops such as cocoa, groundnuts, palm oil, and cotton were extensively cultivated and exported, while food crops sustained domestic consumption. Similarly, the country’s mining sector, particularly

tin and coal, played a vital role in the colonial and post-independence economic structure (NEITI, 2023).

However, the discovery of oil and the subsequent oil boom of the 1970s led to a dramatic shift in Nigeria's economic orientation. The nation became overly dependent on oil exports, leading to the neglect of agriculture and solid minerals. This overreliance exposed the economy to global oil price shocks and contributed to macroeconomic instability, unemployment, and declining productivity in the non-oil sectors. In recent decades, the volatility of oil prices and the economic downturns associated with it—such as the 2016 recession and the COVID-19-induced contraction in 2020—have intensified calls for economic diversification. This has brought agriculture and solid minerals back into focus as critical sectors for revenue generation, job creation, and inclusive growth (World Bank, 2023).

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024), agriculture accounted for 25.2% of Nigeria's real GDP in Q4 2023. However, challenges such as poor infrastructure, climate variability, limited technology adoption, and restricted access to finance have constrained its performance. On the other hand, the solid minerals sector, though contributing less than 1% to GDP, holds vast potential given Nigeria's rich mineral endowments—including limestone, gold, barite, and iron ore—most of which remain untapped (Ministry of Solid Minerals Development, 2024). To reverse the neglect of these sectors, the Nigerian government has introduced strategic policies such as the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) and the National Development Plan 2021–2025. These aim to improve the contribution of non-oil sectors to GDP and enhance economic resilience. Given the renewed policy focus, there is a need for empirical analysis of the actual impact of agricultural and solid minerals revenue on Nigeria's economic growth. This study seeks to fill that gap by assessing how these sectors influence the nation's economic performance and identifying pathways for sustainable development. This paper contributes greatly to the literature and fills this work gap. This paper is therefore organized as follows: After this introduction, section presents the literature review and empirical literature section 3 presents the methodology. The results are discussed in section 4 the paper concludes in section 5.

2. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Numerous studies affirm agriculture's positive impact on economic growth. Omodero & Alege (2022) employed ARDL techniques and found a significant relationship between agricultural revenue and GDP growth in Nigeria. Similarly, Olaniyi and Obasi (2023) showed that increases in agricultural exports and subsidies had a statistically significant impact on national output. Empirical studies such as Olasupo et al. (2021) and NEITI (2023) indicate that the solid mineral sector remains underexploited despite its potential. Using time-

series data from 1990–2020, Adebayo and Adeola (2023) reported a weak but positive correlation between solid minerals revenue and GDP, constrained mainly by policy inefficiencies and informal mining operations.

Adewale and Adekunle (2022) applied regression analysis and found that the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme significantly enhanced agricultural productivity and thus contributed to overall GDP growth. Their study covered data from 1999 to 2020 and emphasized the scheme's role in expanding access to finance for rural farmers.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the following economic theories:

3.1 *Structural Change Theory*

This theory posits that economic development results from a shift of resources from low-productivity sectors (like traditional agriculture) to high-productivity sectors (like industry and modern agriculture). The Lewis Two-Sector Model (1954) supports the view that agricultural and mineral sectors, if effectively developed, can contribute significantly to GDP growth through reinvestment in industrialization.

3.2 *Resource-Based View (RBV)*

This theory argues that countries can achieve economic growth by effectively utilizing their natural resources. In Nigeria's context, the untapped potential in agriculture and solid minerals represents a comparative advantage that could drive sustainable growth if properly harnessed (Barney, 1991; Aigbedion & Iyayi, 2022).

3.3 *Endogenous Growth Theory*

Unlike neoclassical models that view technological progress as exogenous, this theory suggests that investment in human capital, innovation, and knowledge contributes internally to economic growth. This supports the inclusion of the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme as a growth driver through financial deepening and productivity improvement (Romer, 1990).

4. METHODOLOGY

This section details data sources, model specifications and econometric techniques used to analyze the relationship between the variables.

4.1 Model Adopted and Specification

4.1.1 Model Adopted

The study employs the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) bounds testing approach developed by Pesaran, Shin, and Smith (2001). This model is suitable for analyzing the dynamic relationship between variables regardless of whether the series are integrated at level I(0) or first difference I(1), but not I(2). Given the mixed stationarity nature of macroeconomic data, ARDL is ideal for modeling both the short-run and long-run relationships between the variables under consideration.

4.1.2 Model Specification

The general functional form of the model is given as:

$$GDP_t = f(AGR_t, SML_t, ACGS_t)$$

Where:

- GDP_t = Gross Domestic Product at time t (proxy for economic growth)
- AGR_t = Agricultural Revenue
- SML_t = Solid Minerals Revenue
- $ACGS_t$ = Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme disbursement

The ARDL model is specified as:

$$\Delta GDP_t = \alpha_0 + \sum_i \beta_i \Delta GDP_{t-i} + \sum_i \delta_i \Delta AGR_{t-i} + \sum_i \theta_i \Delta SML_{t-i} + \sum_i \varphi_i \Delta ACGS_{t-i} + \lambda_1 GDP_{t-1} + \lambda_2 AGR_{t-1} + \lambda_3 SML_{t-1} + \lambda_4 ACGS_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t$$

Where:

- Δ represents the first difference operator
- $\beta_i, \delta_i, \theta_i, \varphi_i$ represent short-run coefficients
- $\lambda_1, \lambda_2, \lambda_3, \lambda_4$ represent long-run coefficients
- ε_t is the white noise error term.
- n is the optimal lag length selected using Akaike or Schwarz Criterion.

4.2 Method of Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the following econometric techniques:

- Descriptive Statistics to summarize the central tendencies and dispersion of the variables.
- Unit Root Tests (ADF and PP) to determine the stationarity of the time series data.

- ARDL Bounds Testing to test for the existence of a long-run relationship among variables.
- Error Correction Model (ECM) to capture the short-run dynamics and speed of adjustment to long-run equilibrium.
- Diagnostic tests including Breusch-Godfrey Serial Correlation LM Test, Heteroskedasticity Test, and Ramsey RESET Test was conducted to validate the robustness of the model. All analyses will be conducted using EViews or Stata software.

4.3 Source of Data

This study relied entirely on secondary data spanning from 1986 to 2023, sourced from reputable institutions:

- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS): for annual GDP data and sectoral contributions.
- Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Statistical Bulletin: for data on agricultural revenue and ACGS disbursements.
- Ministry of Solid Minerals Development and NEITI reports: for revenue data on solid minerals.
- World Bank Development Indicators: for cross-validation of macroeconomic variables where necessary. These sources ensured that the data used are credible, reliable, and suitable for rigorous econometric analysis.

5. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Preliminary Results

Table 5.1: Unit Root Test Results

Variable	ADF Stat (Level)	P-Value (Level)	ADF Stat (1st Diff)	P-Value (1st Diff)	Order of Integration
GDP	-2.85	0.065	-4.23	0.001	I(0)
AGR	-2.1	0.178	-4.56	0.000	I(1)
SML	-1.95	0.312	-3.98	0.004	I(1)
ACGS	-2.32	0.091	-4.1	0.002	I(1)

Source: Compiled by the Researcher (2025)

The unit root test results show that three out of all four variables—Agricultural Revenue (AGR), Solid Minerals Revenue (SML), and Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS)—are non-stationary at level but become stationary after first differencing while GDP growth rate was stationary at level. This means they are all integrated of order one, I(1) and I(0). As a result, the ARDL model is suitable for this study, since it can handle variables that are I(0) or I(1), provided none is I(2). This ensures valid and reliable regression results for both short-run and long-run relationships.

Table 5.2: Bounds Test for Co-integration

F-statistic	I(0) Lower Bound	I(1) Upper Bound	Decision
5.43	2.79	4.1	Co-integration exists

Source: Compiled by the Researcher (2025)

Table 5.2 shows the results of the ARDL Bounds Test for co-integration. The calculated F-statistic is 5.43, which is higher than the upper bound critical value ($I(1) = 4.10$) at the 5% significance level. This means there is strong evidence of a long-run co-integrating relationship among the variables—GDP, Agricultural Revenue, Solid Minerals Revenue, and ACGS. In simple terms, despite short-term fluctuations, these variables move together over time, supporting the presence of long-run equilibrium in the model.

Table 5.3: Short-Run ARDL Results

Variable	Coefficient	P-Value
D(AGR)	0.271	0.004
D(SML)	0.091	0.045
D(ACGS)	0.144	0.008
ECT(-1)	-0.623	0.0

Source: Compiled by the Researcher (2025)

Table 5.3 presents the short-run ARDL results. The coefficients for **D(AGR)** (0.271), **D(SML)** (0.091), and **D(ACGS)** (0.144) are all **positive and statistically significant**, indicating that changes in agricultural revenue, solid minerals revenue, and ACGS disbursements have a positive short-run effect on GDP growth. The **error correction term (ECT)** is **-0.623** and significant at 1%, showing that about **62.3% of any short-run deviation from the long-run equilibrium is corrected in the next period**, confirming the model’s stability and the presence of a strong adjustment mechanism.

Table 5.4: Long-Run ARDL Results

Variable	Coefficient	Std Error	P-Value
AGR	0.512	0.097	0.0002
SML	0.195	0.068	0.012
ACGS	0.287	0.076	0.001

Source: Compiled by the Researcher (2025)

Table 5.4 presents the long-run ARDL results. The coefficients for **AGR (0.512)**, **SML (0.195)**, and **ACGS (0.287)** are all **positive and statistically significant**, with p-values well below 0.05. This indicates that, in the long run, increases in agricultural revenue, solid minerals revenue, and ACGS disbursements each have a significant and positive impact on

Nigeria's economic growth. Among them, agricultural revenue has the strongest long-run effect on GDP.

5.1 Discussion of Findings Based on Empirical Literature

The empirical findings of this study are consistent with the broader body of literature on the role of non-oil revenues in promoting economic growth in Nigeria. Each of the core variables—agricultural revenue, solid minerals revenue, and Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS) disbursements—has shown a statistically significant and positive long-run relationship with GDP, confirming earlier research outcomes and reinforcing key policy recommendations on economic diversification.

- i. **Agricultural Revenue and Economic Growth:** The result showing that agricultural revenue significantly influences Nigeria's GDP aligns with the work of Omodero and Alege (2022), who applied an ARDL model to Nigerian time-series data and reported that agricultural output and related revenues are strong predictors of macroeconomic performance. They emphasized that agriculture remains a critical sector due to its large employment base, food supply function, and linkage with agro-allied industries. Similarly, Olaniyi and Obasi (2023) found that increased government spending and support for agricultural activities significantly boosted GDP and reduced rural poverty, particularly when coupled with infrastructural development and input subsidies.
- ii. **Solid Minerals Revenue and Economic Growth:** Although the contribution of solid minerals revenue to GDP was positive but lower than that of agriculture, this too is in line with previous studies. Adebayo and Adeola (2023) conducted a cointegration analysis of the Nigerian mining sector and found a weak but positive relationship between mineral revenue and economic growth. They attributed the modest impact to a combination of regulatory bottlenecks, underinvestment, poor infrastructure, and the dominance of illegal mining operations, all of which have historically undermined the performance of this sector. Their recommendation emphasized reforms in legal frameworks, increased investment incentives, and public-private partnerships to unlock the sector's potential. Moreover, NEITI (2023) reports consistently highlight that while Nigeria possesses over 40 commercially viable minerals, less than 10% of them are actively explored and exploited in a structured and revenue-generating manner. Thus, the findings of this study add to the consensus that while the sector has growth potential, it remains largely untapped and in need of deliberate government intervention.

- iii. *Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS) and Economic Growth*: The significant impact of ACGS on GDP found in this study supports the findings of Adewale and Adekunle (2022), who conducted a time-series analysis of ACGS disbursements and agricultural productivity. Their study revealed that financial support schemes such as ACGS lead to increased investment in agriculture, higher yields, and better market access, which cumulatively drive economic growth. They argued that access to credit remains one of the most crucial determinants of rural development and food security in Nigeria. In support, CBN (2023) and FAO (2023) both noted that the provision of guaranteed credit has a multiplier effect, enhancing smallholder farmers' ability to procure modern inputs, adopt technology, and withstand shocks such as climate variability or price fluctuations. The efficiency of credit delivery and repayment enforcement, they argue, is key to sustaining this impact.

6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's objectives and analysis of Nigeria's economic data from 1986 to 2023, the following key findings emerged:

Policy implications of findings and conclusions

This study concludes that non-oil revenue sources—specifically agricultural income, solid minerals, and targeted agricultural credit support—is essential components of Nigeria's economic development strategy. Agriculture continues to demonstrate its critical importance, while the mining sector, and though still developing, shows clear potential. The success of the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme further highlights the importance of financial support mechanisms in enhancing sectoral productivity and sustaining long-term growth. Given the volatility of the global oil market and Nigeria's historical overdependence on oil revenues, these findings underscore the urgency of accelerating economic diversification. Strengthening non-oil sectors is not only necessary for macroeconomic stability but also vital for inclusive and sustainable development.

6.1 Recommendations

Based on the key findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Prioritize and expand agricultural development initiatives**: Government and private stakeholders should intensify efforts to improve agricultural infrastructure, technology, training, and value chain systems to maximize the sector's economic contributions.

2. **Implement strategic reforms to unlock the potential of the solid minerals sector:** Regulatory clarity, improved infrastructure, and targeted investment incentives should be pursued to formalize mining operations and fully harness Nigeria’s vast mineral resources.
3. **Strengthen and broaden the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS)** The CBN and related institutions should scale up ACGS outreach, simplify loan processes, and ensure effective monitoring and evaluation to empower more farmers and promote rural economic inclusion.

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Appendix: E-Views Output for ARDL Model

Test Statistic	Value	Critical Value Bounds (5%)
F-Statistic	5.43	I(0): 2.79, I(1): 4.10

Short-Run ARDL Results

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-value
D(AGR)	0.271	0.087	3.11	0.004
D(SML)	0.091	0.045	2.02	0.045
D(ACGS)	0.144	0.050	2.88	0.008
ECT(-1)	-0.623	0.102	-6.11	0.000

Long-Run ARDL Results

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-value
AGR	0.512	0.097	5.28	0.0002
SML	0.195	0.068	2.87	0.012
ACGS	0.287	0.076	3.78	0.001

Diagnostic Tests

Test	Statistic	p-value	Conclusion
Breusch-Godfrey Serial Correlation LM Test	1.72	0.19	No serial correlation
White Heteroskedasticity Test	0.96	0.48	No heteroskedasticity
Ramsey RESET Test	1.35	0.27	Model is correctly specified
Jarque-Bera Normality Test	1.43	0.49	Residuals are normally distributed

When Rhetoric Fails: An Analysis of Selected African Case Studies in Effective Campaign Communication

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Abstract

This study examines the dynamics of rhetorical failure in African political campaigns and its intersection with digital information disorder. Anchored in Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory and the Information Disorder Framework, the research addressed four key questions relating to the manifestations, interactions, structural factors, and perceptual effects of rhetorical failure. Data were collected from 327 respondents across diverse African electoral contexts and analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that inconsistent campaign messages (27.2%) and lack of credibility and trust in candidates (23.6%) were the leading indicators of rhetorical failure, followed by overreliance on emotional rather than logical appeals (19.9%) and vague or unrealistic promises (16.2%). Additionally, weak institutional regulation (25.7%) and poor rhetorical adaptation (23.9%) heightened vulnerability to misinformation, while socio-economic inequalities (25.4%) and ethnic or regional bias (22.0%) emerged as major structural constraints. The study further found that disinformation and misinformation reduced public trust in political communication (28.1%), distorted message comprehension (23.3%), and encouraged voter apathy (20.5%). These patterns highlight that rhetorical breakdown arises from both communicative imbalance; particularly the erosion of ethos (credibility) and logos (logic) in favour of excessive pathos (emotion), and systemic weaknesses in institutional and media structures. The study concludes that restoring rhetorical ethics, strengthening information governance, and enhancing media literacy are essential for mitigating information disorder and revitalising persuasive, trustworthy political discourse in African democracies.

Keywords: Campaign, Communication, Rhetoric

1. INTRODUCTION

Rhetoric has long occupied a central position in the practice of political communication across Africa. From the post-independence period to the present, carefully constructed language, evocative symbols, and memorable slogans have been employed as instruments of persuasion and mobilisation. Historically, African political leaders have relied on rhetoric to articulate national visions, consolidate unity, and foster political legitimacy. However, the contemporary political landscape reveals that rhetoric, though potent, is not infallible. In recent electoral cycles, the very language designed to inspire and mobilise has at times

produced opposite effects, deepening mistrust, polarisation, and public disillusionment. The proliferation of digital media has further complicated this dynamic, as campaign messages are increasingly undermined by misinformation, disinformation, and the rapid diffusion of false narratives. These developments underscore the critical need to interrogate not only the power of rhetoric but also its limitations in contemporary African campaign communication (Ibrahim, 2023; Institute for Strategic Dialogue [ISD], 2024; Olivia, 2023).

Rhetoric, in its classical sense, refers to the strategic use of language and symbolic action to persuade an audience. Within political communication scholarship, it encompasses devices such as tropes, framing, narrative construction, and performative acts that shape how political actors and issues are perceived. The efficacy of rhetorical discourse depends not merely on linguistic proficiency but also on its ability to resonate with audiences' social values, cultural identities, and material realities. A rhetorically sophisticated message may fail to achieve its purpose if it lacks contextual relevance or emotional connection with its intended audience (Adebayo, Okoro, & Mensah, 2025; Muswede, 2022). Consequently, rhetoric is best understood not as an isolated act of eloquence but as a situated practice that must be evaluated within the socio-political and cultural milieu in which it operates.

As African democracies transitioned into more competitive multiparty systems during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, political communication became increasingly professionalised. Campaign communication, defined as the totality of organised persuasive efforts, including rallies, advertising, manifestos, interpersonal outreach, media relations, and digital engagement, emerged as a key determinant of electoral outcomes. Scholars have observed that effective campaign communication relies on a systematic process of research, message testing, and audience feedback (Kite, Banda, & Moyo, 2024). Nevertheless, in many African contexts, campaigns have suffered from structural weaknesses such as inadequate planning, limited resources, and insufficient evaluation mechanisms. These shortcomings often result in rhetorical misalignment, where campaign messages fail to connect with voter concerns or respond to evolving political climates.

The study of campaign evaluation further reveals persistent blind spots in how communicative failures are understood and documented. As Kite et al. (2024) observe, the “file-drawer” problem; where failed campaigns remain unreported or inadequately analysed, has hindered scholarly understanding of why rhetoric sometimes fails to produce the desired persuasive outcomes. The few existing evaluations point to recurring weaknesses, including poorly conducted formative research, ad hoc planning processes, limited monitoring capacity, and fragile relationships between campaign actors and stakeholders. These deficiencies underscore the importance of evaluating rhetoric not solely on the basis of its

linguistic artistry but within a broader framework of strategic communication and institutional capacity.

The advent of digital technologies in the 2010s marked a profound transformation in Africa's campaign communication landscape. Social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and WhatsApp have expanded the reach of political rhetoric, enabling direct voter engagement and real-time discourse. However, they have also created fertile ground for information disorder. Disinformation—intentionally false content—and misinformation—unintentional falsehoods—have become pervasive tools for manipulating public opinion and distorting political narratives. Research across Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa demonstrates how the spread of digital falsehoods and coordinated online harassment has diluted the effectiveness of campaign rhetoric, creating an environment in which persuasive messages must compete with deception and distraction (Alberts, 2025; ISD, 2024; Olivia, 2023).

Recent scholarship thus conceptualises rhetoric, digital information disorder, and campaign communication as interdependent rather than discrete phenomena. Studies of Kenya's 2022 elections, Nigeria's 2023 general elections, and South Africa's 2024 political contests demonstrate that digital disinformation reshapes interpretive frameworks, leading electorates to reject or reinterpret campaign messages through the lens of suspicion and ideological bias (Alberts, 2025; Ibrahim, 2023; Olivia, 2023). Concurrently, the success or failure of rhetorical strategies is influenced by institutional capacities—specifically, the ability of campaigns to adapt messages, respond to emerging narratives, and cultivate trust among constituencies (Kite et al., 2024). In societies characterised by low institutional trust and economic precarity, rhetorical appeals grounded in abstract ideals or distant promises tend to fail, whereas pragmatic, evidence-based messaging grounded in lived experience has been shown to resonate more effectively (ISD, 2024; Muswede, 2022).

Despite a growing corpus of literature on disinformation and campaign management, a significant research gap persists in understanding the interplay between rhetorical form, media environment, and institutional practice within African campaign contexts. Existing studies tend to address these elements separately: analyses of digital disinformation focus on content manipulation and media ecosystems (ISD, 2024; Olivia, 2023), while works on campaign planning emphasise organisational efficiency and resource allocation (Kite et al., 2024). What remains underexplored is the causal relationship between rhetorical failure and the contextual forces that shape audience reception and message transmission.

This study therefore adopts a comparative case study approach to examine selected African campaigns where rhetorical strategies faltered despite well-developed communication efforts. It seeks to uncover how rhetorical intent is mediated by information disorder,

audience misalignment, and institutional shortcomings. By addressing this gap, the study aims to advance theoretical understanding of persuasive failure and contribute practical insights for campaign practitioners, evaluators, and civil society actors striving to enhance communicative effectiveness in African political contexts (Alberts, 2025; Kite et al., 2024; Muswede, 2022).

Statement of Problem

The practice of political communication in Africa has entered a critical juncture where the effectiveness of rhetoric, the traditional engine of persuasion and mobilisation, appears increasingly uncertain. In recent years, political campaigns across the continent have faced mounting challenges as rhetorical appeals that once inspired unity and trust now frequently provoke scepticism, disengagement, or outright hostility among electorates. The rise of digital and social media platforms has transformed the communicative environment, amplifying both the reach and the vulnerability of campaign messages. Political actors now contend not only with the task of crafting persuasive rhetoric but also with navigating the volatile terrain of information disorder in which misinformation, disinformation, and algorithmic bias distort and compete with official narratives. As a result, campaign communication in Africa has become more complex and unpredictable, with rhetorical strategies that may appear sound in theory often collapsing in practice due to contextual misalignment, audience fatigue, or hostile digital interference.

Scholars have made commendable efforts to address aspects of this problem by examining rhetorical strategies, campaign planning processes, and the impact of digital technologies on political communication. Studies in rhetorical analysis have sought to refine understanding of persuasive discourse, while research on campaign evaluation has highlighted organisational and logistical weaknesses that contribute to communicative failure. In parallel, a growing body of work on digital disinformation has documented how false or misleading content undermines electoral integrity and public trust. These contributions have significantly advanced knowledge on the individual components of campaign communication, yet they remain largely fragmented. Most studies analyse either rhetorical performance, digital disruption, or campaign design in isolation, thereby overlooking the complex interplay between these dimensions that ultimately determines rhetorical success or failure in real-world political contexts.

What remains inadequately explored is how rhetorical intent interacts with the evolving digital information environment and the institutional capacities that shape campaign execution. There is limited empirical evidence linking rhetorical failure to structural and contextual factors such as weak audience research, inadequate response to disinformation, and the erosion of public trust in political institutions. This lack of integration leaves a

significant gap in understanding why rhetoric that appears theoretically sound fails to achieve persuasive impact in practice. Addressing this gap is particularly urgent in the current moment, as African societies grapple with democratic backsliding, economic hardship, and heightened public cynicism toward political elites, all of which make effective communication both more challenging and more essential.

This study therefore arises from the pressing need to re-examine the foundations of persuasive political communication in Africa in light of these new communicative realities. Understanding the mechanisms through which rhetoric fails is not merely an academic exercise; it has profound implications for democratic governance, electoral integrity, and civic engagement. In an era when public discourse is increasingly shaped by competing truths and digitally mediated persuasion, the ability of political actors to communicate credibly and effectively has become a defining factor of democratic resilience. This study seeks to contribute to that understanding by analysing selected African case studies where rhetorical strategies collapsed under the pressures of disinformation, contextual misalignment, and institutional weakness. The guiding question, therefore, is both theoretical and practical: When and why does rhetoric fail in African campaign communication, and what does this reveal about the changing nature of persuasion in the continent's democratic landscape?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

- i. examine the nature and manifestations of rhetorical failure in selected African political campaigns.
- ii. analyse the interaction between rhetorical strategies, digital information disorder, and institutional capacities in shaping campaign outcomes.
- iii. identify the contextual, structural, and communicative factors that contribute to the failure of campaign rhetoric across different African political environments.
- iv. evaluate how disinformation and misinformation affect audience reception and interpretation of political messages during campaigns.

Research Questions

The following questions were formulated for this study:

- i. What are the key features and indicators of rhetorical failure in African political campaigns?
- ii. How do rhetorical strategies interact with digital information disorder to influence the effectiveness of campaign communication?
- iii. What contextual and structural factors contribute to the breakdown of persuasive communication in African election campaigns?

- iv. In what ways do misinformation and disinformation shape voter perception and response to political rhetoric?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of Concepts

Rhetoric

Rhetoric is widely understood as the art of persuasion through language and symbolic expression. Originating from classical Greek thought, Aristotle defined rhetoric as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion,” grounded in ethos (credibility), pathos (emotional appeal), and logos (logical reasoning). Contemporary scholarship extends this classical framework to include multimodal communication, performativity, and narrative framing as essential rhetorical tools. In African political contexts, rhetoric transcends linguistic persuasion to include cultural metaphors, collective memory, and performative identity. It serves as a vehicle through which political leaders construct legitimacy, mobilise support, and foster shared visions of national development (Muswede, 2022). The effectiveness of rhetoric, therefore, depends on how successfully it resonates with socio-cultural realities and aligns with the moral and emotional expectations of its audience.

Recent African scholarship demonstrates that rhetoric remains central to political mobilisation but is increasingly susceptible to failure when audiences perceive it as detached from their lived experiences. For instance, an analysis of the 2023 Nigerian general elections revealed that political rhetoric was often undermined by public cynicism and unmet expectations, leading to communicative dissonance between campaign promises and voter realities (Ibrahim, 2023). Similarly, in Kenya’s 2022 elections, rhetorical appeals grounded in ethnic solidarity and populist promises lost persuasive power due to widespread disinformation and growing distrust in political elites (Alberts, 2025). These examples illustrate that rhetorical persuasion in Africa now operates within a highly volatile communicative environment, where the credibility of the speaker and the authenticity of the message determine rhetorical success or failure.

Moreover, the dynamics of modern African rhetoric are shaped by an increasingly digitalised public sphere, where messages are disseminated rapidly and reinterpreted across diverse audiences. Political leaders often rely on emotive language, storytelling, and performative engagement to evoke collective identity; yet, the fragmentation of audiences across social media platforms can dilute these rhetorical appeals. As Olivia (2023) observes, digital rhetoric often collapses under the weight of competing narratives, misinformation, and the audience’s selective interpretation. Consequently, rhetoric can no longer be understood

solely as a linguistic craft but as an adaptive process that must respond to shifting media ecologies, audience agency, and the credibility crisis that defines contemporary African politics.

Campaign Communication

Campaign communication refers to the organised and strategic process through which political actors design, disseminate, and evaluate persuasive messages aimed at influencing public attitudes and electoral behaviour. It encompasses the use of multiple channels—traditional media, interpersonal networks, and increasingly, digital platforms—to reach diverse audiences with tailored appeals. Historically, African campaign communication relied heavily on rallies, posters, and broadcast media; however, the evolution of multiparty politics and digitalisation has transformed these methods into sophisticated, data-driven operations. Effective campaign communication demands a coherent strategy that integrates audience research, message testing, and feedback mechanisms to ensure resonance and impact (Kite, Banda, & Moyo, 2024).

Recent studies across Africa show that the success of campaign communication depends less on message visibility and more on message relevance and consistency. Campaigns that employ evidence-based strategies grounded in audience insight tend to achieve greater credibility and voter engagement. In contrast, those that rely on populist rhetoric or ad hoc messaging often face communicative failure. Research on Ghana's 2020 and Kenya's 2022 elections indicates that campaigns lacking clear communication frameworks or institutional coordination struggle to sustain persuasive momentum (Adebayo, Okoro, & Mensah, 2025; Alberts, 2025). This demonstrates that effective campaign communication is not merely about linguistic skill but about strategic coherence—aligning message design, delivery, and timing with the socio-political context.

However, the contemporary African campaign landscape presents new challenges that complicate communication effectiveness. The rapid growth of social media has decentralised control over political narratives, allowing citizens and non-state actors to generate, remix, and reinterpret campaign messages. This participatory environment can enhance democratic engagement but also introduces the risk of distortion and misrepresentation. Studies have shown that during the 2023 Nigerian and 2024 South African elections, online discourse often undermined official campaign rhetoric by amplifying misinformation and satire (ISD, 2024; Olivia, 2023). Hence, campaign communication today must navigate a dual challenge: the need to remain persuasive in content and resilient against manipulation within a fragmented digital ecosystem.

Rhetorical Failure

Rhetorical failure occurs when communicative efforts fail to persuade, inspire, or mobilise the intended audience. It represents a breakdown between rhetorical intent and audience reception, often caused by contextual misjudgement, loss of credibility, or competing narratives. In political communication, rhetorical failure manifests when audiences reject messages as insincere, irrelevant, or inconsistent with reality. This phenomenon has gained scholarly attention as political discourse becomes increasingly mediated by digital technologies and shaped by distrust in political elites. In the African context, rhetorical failure is not only a linguistic issue but a reflection of broader structural and socio-political constraints that inhibit persuasive effectiveness (Kite et al., 2024; Muswede, 2022).

Several factors contribute to rhetorical failure in African campaign communication. A common cause is the misalignment between rhetorical promises and citizens' lived experiences. When campaign rhetoric exaggerates achievements or downplays socio-economic hardship, it risks alienating voters. Another contributing factor is the failure to adapt rhetoric to evolving audience expectations, especially among young, digitally literate populations. For example, studies of Nigeria's 2023 election revealed that rhetorical appeals based on nationalism and moral authority were less effective among youth audiences who prioritised accountability and tangible reform (Ibrahim, 2023). Similarly, in South Africa's 2024 elections, messages invoking liberation history lost traction as voters demanded solutions to corruption and unemployment (Alberts, 2025).

Furthermore, rhetorical failure is increasingly linked to the influence of information disorder. In environments saturated with misinformation and propaganda, audiences encounter multiple, often contradictory narratives that compete with official campaign messages. This multiplicity of voices undermines rhetorical coherence and makes persuasion more difficult to sustain. Research suggests that even well-crafted rhetoric can fail if the communicative environment lacks trust or if counter-narratives dominate public discourse (ISD, 2024). Thus, rhetorical failure in contemporary African politics should be understood as a systemic outcome arising from the intersection of rhetorical design, digital interference, and institutional weakness. Analysing this interaction provides crucial insights into the conditions under which rhetoric fails and how persuasive communication can be strengthened.

Review of Empirical Studies

Empirical research on political rhetoric and campaign communication in Africa has increasingly explored how persuasion, media framing, and information disorder shape voter attitudes and electoral outcomes. Mohamed (2024) conducted a quantitative study on the use

of social media in Kenya's 2022 general elections to examine how digital platforms amplify political rhetoric and influence public opinion. The findings revealed that online rhetoric significantly affected voter perception, particularly among younger demographics who relied heavily on digital information sources. However, the study also highlighted that rhetorical influence was moderated by media accuracy, message credibility, and exposure to competing narratives. This suggests that while social media provides an unprecedented space for political persuasion, it simultaneously exposes rhetoric to rapid distortion, misinformation, and polarisation, thereby increasing the likelihood of rhetorical failure when messages are perceived as manipulative or disconnected from lived realities.

Similarly, Glate, Dzansi, and Onojaefe (2024) explored the influence of online searches for campaign messages on voting behaviour in Ghana. Using a large-scale survey of over 7,000 respondents in Accra, the researchers found a strong positive correlation between online information-seeking behaviour and electoral participation. Their findings underscore the critical role of accessibility, visibility, and message clarity in sustaining effective political communication. Yet, despite high exposure rates, many voters expressed scepticism about campaign promises, indicating that information availability alone does not guarantee persuasive success. This aligns with the broader concern in rhetorical scholarship that overexposure without credibility often leads to message fatigue and disillusionment among electorates, thereby undermining rhetorical effectiveness in the long term.

The Centre for Innovation and Technology's (CITE) study in Zimbabwe, reported by Sivalo (2024), provides further empirical insight into how disinformation can erode the persuasive power of campaign rhetoric. Conducted during Zimbabwe's 2023 national and by-elections, the project implemented training and citizen engagement programmes to counter misinformation and enhance media literacy. While the interventions increased participants' awareness of disinformation tactics, the study found that entrenched political polarisation and institutional distrust limited their overall effectiveness. The findings suggest that even well-crafted rhetoric may fail in contexts where misinformation dominates public discourse, as audiences become desensitised to persuasive appeals and distrust official narratives. This study is therefore instrumental in linking rhetorical failure to information disorder — a growing challenge across African democracies.

In a related Ghanaian study, Tawiah (2025) analysed how the 2024 presidential candidates, John Mahama and Mahamudu Bawumia, utilised social media to frame political issues during their campaigns. Through content analysis of their digital outputs, the study found that Mahama's campaign relied on emotive storytelling and interactivity, while Bawumia's messaging focused on defensive rhetoric and technocratic achievements. The results demonstrated that consistent and interactive framing tends to enhance persuasive power,

whereas defensive or static rhetoric diminishes engagement. This finding is relevant to the current study as it shows that rhetorical failure may result not only from misinformation or audience scepticism but also from internal weaknesses in message framing and strategic coherence. However, Tawiah's study focused primarily on digital framing and did not extend its analysis to offline or interpersonal campaign communication, which limits the generalisability of its conclusions.

Nwanmuoh, Okolo-Obasi, Imo, Udu, and Emeter (2024) examined the influence of public relations and political advertising campaigns on voter attitudes during Nigeria's 2023 general elections. Using a multistage sampling design with 400 participants, their study found that effective public relations and advertising strategies increased voter engagement, registration, and turnout. However, they observed that campaigns relying on generic or recycled messages achieved lower persuasive impact. This empirical observation reinforces the notion that rhetorical success depends not merely on media exposure but on message originality, contextual sensitivity, and audience-centred communication. The study's limitation lies in its focus on measurable behavioural outcomes rather than on the cognitive and emotional dimensions of rhetorical persuasion, which are essential for understanding rhetorical failure in complex political environments.

In addition, Oyeboade, Adedokun, Egenti, and Johnson (2023) investigated the role of media propaganda and hate speech during the 2023 general elections in Oyo State, Nigeria. Through a mixed-methods approach involving surveys, interviews, and content analysis, the researchers found that propaganda and sensationalist reporting significantly contributed to electoral tension and conflict. The study revealed that the frequent use of divisive rhetoric, misinformation, and reputational attacks eroded public trust and delegitimised political communication. This empirical evidence highlights how propaganda not only fails to persuade but actively produces rhetorical failure by undermining the ethical and emotional foundations of public discourse. Despite its geographic focus on a single Nigerian state, the study's insights are critical in understanding how rhetorical failure emerges within contexts of heightened media competition, weak institutional oversight, and declining journalistic professionalism.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory and the Information Disorder Framework, two complementary perspectives that together provide a comprehensive foundation for analysing the success and failure of political rhetoric in African campaign communication. Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory elucidates how persuasive communication functions through ethos (credibility), pathos (emotional appeal), and logos (logical reasoning), while the Information Disorder Framework explains how misinformation and

disinformation disrupt the communicative environment, leading to the erosion of rhetorical effectiveness.

Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory remains one of the most enduring frameworks in the study of persuasive discourse. It posits that successful persuasion arises from the strategic balance among ethos, pathos, and logos, which collectively determine the credibility, emotional resonance, and logical soundness of a message (Aristotle, trans. 2007). In political communication, this theory provides an analytical tool for understanding how campaign messages are designed to influence voter attitudes and behaviour. Within the African context, however, scholars have observed that rhetorical strategies often fail when these appeals are misaligned with audience expectations or socio-political realities (Muswede, 2022; Ibrahim, 2023). For instance, when political actors lose ethical credibility due to corruption scandals or unfulfilled promises, their ethos collapses, weakening the persuasive force of their rhetoric. Similarly, pathos may lose potency when emotional appeals are perceived as manipulative or insincere, and logos may falter when campaign promises are impractical or contradictory. This framework therefore enables the study to identify and interpret the specific rhetorical elements whose failure leads to communicative breakdown in campaign settings.

While Aristotle's theory focuses on the internal composition of persuasive messages, the Information Disorder Framework provides a macro-level understanding of how external communicative disruptions undermine rhetoric. Developed by Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), the framework categorises information disorder into misinformation (false information shared without intent to harm), disinformation (false information shared deliberately to deceive), and malinformation (truthful information used maliciously). These forms of distortion are particularly relevant in African political campaigns, where social media ecosystems have amplified the speed and reach of manipulated content (Sivalo, 2024; Alberts, 2025). The framework posits that when audiences are exposed to high volumes of conflicting or misleading information, the credibility and clarity of legitimate campaign rhetoric decline. Thus, rhetorical failure can occur even when messages are well-crafted, because the environment of information disorder distorts interpretation, fosters distrust, and diminishes audience engagement.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study will adopt a quantitative research design, specifically a descriptive survey design, which is most appropriate for examining the patterns, relationships, and measurable variables influencing rhetorical failure in African political campaign communication. This design enables the researcher to collect quantifiable data from a large population and statistically analyse how rhetorical strategies and information disorder shape campaign outcomes. The

population of the study will comprise registered voters across three purposively selected African countries: Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya, representing West, East, and Sub-Saharan Africa, respectively. According to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC, 2025), Nigeria has approximately 98 million registered voters; the Electoral Commission of Ghana (ECG, 2025) estimates 18 million voters; and the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC, 2025) places Kenya’s voter population at 23 million. This gives a total population of about 139 million registered voters across the three countries. The sample size will be determined using Taro Yamane’s (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where n is the sample size, N is the population size, and e is the level of precision (0.05). Substituting the figures yields:

$$n = \frac{139,000,000}{1 + 139,000,000(0.05)^2} = \frac{139,000,000}{1 + 347,500} \approx 400$$

Therefore, the study will draw a sample of 400 respondents. The sampling technique will employ a combination of cluster and simple random sampling. The clusters will represent major geopolitical or regional zones in each country; such as Nigeria’s six zones, Ghana’s sixteen regions, and Kenya’s forty-seven counties; from which simple random samples will be selected to ensure proportional and unbiased representation of the population. The instrument for data collection will be a structured questionnaire designed to capture respondents’ views on rhetorical strategies, exposure to information disorder, and perceptions of campaign communication effectiveness. The questionnaire will be validated by experts in communication and political science to ensure content validity. Its reliability will be tested using Cronbach’s Alpha, which will yield a coefficient of 0.86, indicating a high level of internal consistency. The data analysis will be conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations will be used to summarise the data.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Table 1: Nature and Manifestations of Rhetorical Failure in Political Campaigns

Manifestation of Rhetorical Failure	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Inconsistent campaign messages	89	27.2
Lack of credibility and trust in candidates	77	23.6
Overreliance on emotional rather than logical appeals	65	19.9
Use of vague or unrealistic campaign promises	53	16.2
Poor message adaptation to socio-cultural contexts	43	13.1
Total	327	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 1 reveals that inconsistent campaign messaging (27.2%) and lack of credibility and trust (23.6%) are the most prominent manifestations of rhetorical failure in African political campaigns. Respondents also noted that excessive emotional appeals (19.9%) and vague promises (16.2%) contribute significantly to campaign ineffectiveness. These findings suggest that rhetorical failure often arises when political communication lacks coherence, authenticity, and contextual sensitivity, thereby weakening its persuasive power.

Table 2: Interaction between Rhetorical Strategies, Information Disorder, and Institutional Capacities

Interaction Indicator	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Weak institutional regulation enables misinformation	84	25.7
Poor rhetorical adaptation increases vulnerability to distortion	78	23.9
Effective rhetoric mitigates misinformation impacts	69	21.1
Institutional collaboration improves message credibility	56	17.1
Limited media literacy exacerbates rhetorical breakdown	40	12.2
Total	327	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 2 shows 25.7% of respondents identified weak institutional regulation as a major factor enabling misinformation in campaigns. A further 23.9% observed that poor rhetorical adaptation exposes campaign messages to distortion, while 21.1% believed that effective rhetoric can counter misinformation. The findings highlight a complex interaction where institutional weakness and information disorder reinforce rhetorical failure, underscoring the need for stronger governance mechanisms and strategic message design in African democracies.

Table 3: Factors Contributing to Rhetorical Failure

Contributing Factor	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Socio-economic inequalities among voters	83	25.4
Ethnic and regional biases in campaign messages	72	22.0
Limited access to credible media platforms	64	19.6
Weak party communication structures	59	18.0
Cultural dissonance in message framing	49	15.0
Total	327	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 3 demonstrates that socio-economic inequalities (25.4%) and ethnic or regional bias (22.0%) are the most critical contextual factors undermining rhetorical effectiveness. Respondents further cited limited access to credible media (19.6%) and weak party structures

(18.0%) as aggravating factors. The data suggest that rhetorical failure is not merely a communicative flaw but also a structural outcome shaped by inequality, identity politics, and institutional fragility in African electoral systems.

Table 4: Disinformation and Misinformation on Audience Reception

Impact of Information Disorder	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Reduces trust in political communication	92	28.1
Distorts understanding of campaign messages	76	23.3
Encourages voter apathy and disengagement	67	20.5
Amplifies negative stereotypes and emotional polarisation	56	17.1
Undermines rational evaluation of candidates	36	11.0
Total	327	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 4 indicate that disinformation and misinformation primarily reduce public trust in campaign communication (28.1%) and distort understanding of political messages (23.3%). Furthermore, 20.5% of respondents stated that exposure to false or manipulated information leads to voter apathy, while 17.1% noted its role in amplifying emotional polarisation. The findings illustrate that digital information disorder significantly undermines the rhetorical power of campaign communication by eroding audience confidence and impairing message clarity.

7. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1 indicates that inconsistent campaign messages (27.2%) and lack of credibility and trust in candidates (23.6%) are the most prominent indicators of rhetorical failure. Other significant manifestations include overreliance on emotional rather than logical appeals (19.9%), vague or unrealistic campaign promises (16.2%), and poor adaptation to socio-cultural contexts (13.1%). These findings corroborate Akinfeleye (2018), who found that the overuse of emotional and ethnically charged rhetoric in Nigerian campaigns erodes credibility and fosters voter scepticism. Similarly, Nimmo and Sanders (2020) observed that incoherent political discourse often alienates audiences, particularly when politicians fail to align their messaging with the public’s lived experiences. Hence, rhetorical failure in African campaigns can be seen as both a stylistic and ethical lapse, where political actors fail to achieve the Aristotelian balance necessary for persuasion.

From the lens of Aristotle’s Rhetorical Theory, these weaknesses reflect an imbalance among the three classical appeals: ethos (credibility), logos (logic), and pathos (emotion). The overdependence on emotional mobilisation at the expense of logical reasoning and ethical credibility diminishes persuasive effectiveness. When messages are inconsistent or

disconnected from the socio-cultural realities of the electorate, ethos is weakened, leading to distrust and communicative breakdown.

Table 2 demonstrates that weak institutional regulation (25.7%), poor rhetorical adaptation (23.9%), and limited media literacy (12.2%) heighten vulnerability to misinformation, while effective rhetoric (21.1%) and institutional collaboration (17.1%) help mitigate its impact. The findings also support Aristotle's notion of ethos, the credibility of the communicator, as a crucial factor in mitigating misinformation. When campaign rhetoric demonstrates ethical coherence and logical structure (logos), it strengthens public trust and reduces susceptibility to information disorder. Conversely, when rhetoric is ambiguous or manipulative, it undermines both institutional and communicative credibility, allowing misinformation to dominate the political narrative.

According to the Information Disorder Framework (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017), the integrity of political communication depends on institutional strength, message authenticity, and audience literacy. Where institutions are weak and rhetorical strategies are ill-structured, false information spreads easily, distorting public perception. This aligns with Tandoc et al. (2020), who emphasised that rhetorical ambiguity provides fertile ground for misinformation to flourish, as audiences struggle to differentiate between credible and deceptive messages. This study reveals a symbiotic relationship between rhetorical weakness and digital information disorder: poor rhetoric invites distortion, while misinformation further erodes rhetorical clarity and trust.

Table 3 show that socio-economic inequalities among voters (25.4%), ethnic and regional biases in campaign messages (22.0%), and limited access to credible media platforms (19.6%) are the most critical structural contributors to rhetorical failure. Additionally, weak party communication structures (18.0%) and cultural dissonance in message framing (15.0%) further weaken persuasive effectiveness. The findings echo Wasserman (2019), who noted that structural inequalities and identity-based politics in African democracies fragment the public sphere, limiting the reach and resonance of political rhetoric. Similarly, Fraser (2009) argued that inequality distorts the communicative process, preventing inclusive deliberation. Within the Information Disorder Framework, these inequalities and weak communication structures also exacerbate the spread of misinformation by restricting access to verified information and creating reliance on unregulated digital platforms.

From the perspective of Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory, rhetoric must be adapted to the audience's context; their values, emotions, and level of understanding. When messages fail to resonate with socio-cultural realities, persuasion becomes superficial or exclusionary. In this sense, rhetorical failure in African campaigns reflects not only a breakdown in communication technique but also a deeper disconnect between political elites and the

electorate. Hence, rhetorical failure is simultaneously a communicative, institutional, and structural phenomenon, shaped by persistent socio-economic disparities and the uneven distribution of media credibility across African electoral systems.

As shown in Table 4, misinformation and disinformation reduce public trust in political communication (28.1%), distort understanding of campaign messages (23.3%), and encourage voter apathy (20.5%). They also amplify emotional polarisation (17.1%) and undermine rational evaluation of candidates (11.0%). This mirrors findings by Allcott and Gentzkow (2017), who demonstrated that exposure to false information erodes democratic trust and discourages political participation. Similarly, Mutsvairo and Rønning (2020) reported that misinformation in African elections amplifies ethnic and emotional divisions, reinforcing polarisation and voter fatigue.

The Information Disorder Framework explains that the proliferation of false or misleading information, whether intentional (disinformation) or unintentional (misinformation), reshapes the epistemic environment, causing audiences to distrust all sources, including credible ones. When interpreted through Aristotle's rhetorical appeals, misinformation manipulates pathos by inflaming fear or resentment, distorts logos by presenting false reasoning, and weakens ethos by damaging the credibility of political actors. The combined effect is a breakdown of the persuasive equilibrium essential for meaningful democratic communication. Therefore, disinformation is not only a technological or institutional issue but also a rhetorical disruption that corrupts the emotional and ethical dimensions of persuasion.

8. CONCLUSION

Political communication is a central pillar of democratic practice, serving as the medium through which ideas, ideologies, and leadership intentions are conveyed to the electorate. However, in many African democracies, this communicative process has become increasingly fragile due to the combined effects of rhetorical inadequacy and digital information disorder. This study examined the nature, causes, and consequences of rhetorical failure in African political campaigns. Rhetorical failure manifests primarily through inconsistent messages, lack of credibility, excessive emotional appeals, and poor adaptation to socio-cultural contexts, while weak institutional regulation, socio-economic inequalities, and misinformation further exacerbate communicative breakdown.

The study established that the erosion of ethos (credibility) and logos (logic), alongside the overuse of pathos (emotion), diminishes persuasive integrity and exposes political rhetoric to distortion within a digitally chaotic information environment. These dynamics not only undermine voter trust and rational evaluation but also weaken the

democratic fabric by fostering apathy, polarisation, and disengagement. The implication of these findings is that effective political communication in Africa depends on restoring a balance between rhetorical ethics and informational integrity. It achieved by embedding Aristotle's principles of persuasion into campaign practice while strengthening institutional and media frameworks to resist information disorder and rebuild public confidence in political discourse.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that:

1. Political candidates and campaign teams should ensure coherence, credibility, and contextual relevance in their messaging by applying Aristotle's rhetorical principles of ethos, pathos, and logos in balanced proportion.
2. Political communicators and institutions should incorporate fact-checking systems, media partnerships, and digital literacy initiatives within campaign strategies to mitigate the effects of misinformation and disinformation.
3. Governments, electoral bodies, and political parties should strengthen institutional communication frameworks and promote equitable access to credible media platforms to address socio-economic and regional disparities that undermine effective rhetoric.
4. Civil society organisations, media agencies, and educational institutions should develop and implement nationwide media literacy and voter education programmes to help citizens critically evaluate political information and resist misinformation.

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Procurement Policy in Public Corporation in Nigeria: A Catalyst for Change Management

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Abstract

This study delves into the complexities of navigating a challenging landscape, exploring the dynamic interplay between theoretical frameworks, institutional realities, and cultural influences impacting the implementation of public procurement policies in the Nigerian public corporations. The study relies on a qualitative research design. Information was collected through secondary data. The study adopts Principal-Agent Theory and Institutional Theory. Emphasis was laid on the inherent tensions between government corporations seeking to understand how goal misalignments and information asymmetry can impede the effective resource utilization. In addition, the study examines the current institutional environment, carefully evaluating the effectiveness and limitations of regulatory bodies, oversight mechanisms that could promote effective implementation of procurement policy in the Nigerian Public Sector. Factors such as patronage networks and nepotism can hinder transparency and accountability in the procurement process. These factors contribute to a breeding ground for corruption and mismanagement, ultimately compromising the fundamental objective of public procurement to deliver optimal results with public funds. Amidst the challenges faced, there are also opportunities for reform and progress. Public Procurement in Nigeria is a critical aspect of change management aiming to enhance transparency, accountability and efficiency. There is a need for continuous efforts to enhance procurement policy in Nigeria. E-procurement process, strong institution framework, adequate information and financial resources are recommended for an improved procurement practice in the Nigerian Public Corporation.

Keywords: *Public Procurement Policy, Nigerian Public Corporations and Institutional Reform.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Public procurement has to do with government purchasing goods, services and other resources for state activities and utilization; the basic purpose of which is to secure the best value for public money (Bodunrin, 2016). According to the World Bank (1995), public procurement can also be seen as the means of using public funds to acquire goods and services by a procuring entity. However, public procurement in Nigeria has attracted the attention of the general public, and thus generated an avalanche of discourse among researchers, journalists and indeed the general populace; on the area of reforms, restructuring, rules, and regulations guiding the tender process (Unaam and Mark, 2015)

Nigeria is among the African countries that have implemented a new legal framework for public procurement that meets the demand of the Africa Development Bank. Procurement reforms have been a significant part of Nigeria's broader public sector with the aim of enhancing government efficiency in service delivery. In 1999, the government recognized that weaknesses in the existing procurement system contributed to the issue of corruption. In the past two decades, several African Nations including Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Lesotho and Nigeria have implemented public procurement reforms to strengthen their procurement systems (Jacob,2010). These governments acknowledge that sound public procurement policies and practices are crucial elements of good governance and that effective procurement practices result in reduced cost and timely results. Conversely poor practices lead to waste, delays allegations of corruption and inefficiencies in government.

In 1999, Nigeria made a transition to a democratic government under the leadership of president Olusegun Obasanjo following more than 15 years of military dictatorship. Aboki (2006) emphasized the importance of reforming governance, noting that the structures inherited by the new administration were plagued by the same issues that had troubled previous dictatorships such as lack of accountability to the citizens and arbitrary decision making. Specifically, Obasanjo's administration in 2003 warned the nation about the serious and potential catastrophic risk associated with public contract processes(Adewole,2013) and World Bank in 2007 report which found that Nigeria was losing an average of 10 billion dollars annually due to forms of abuse in public procurement and contract awards.

The Introduction of procurement policy aims to guide the complex terrain of policy implementation in the Nigeria public corporations. The study will explore the theoretical frameworks that share light on the inherence tensions between the government and corporations where information asymmetry can lead to distrust and manipulation (Ocheni S, Nwankwo BC,2012). The study will examine the anatomy of weak institutions exposing the inadequacies of under-resource regulatory bodies and the impact of political interference. It

will also address the issue of ingrained cultural practices that have a significant impact on transparency and accountability through patronage networks.

The Nigerian public procurement landscape presents numerous challenges which include regulatory bodies being underfunded and vulnerable to political influences making it difficult to enforce existing regulations effectively (Ocheni S, Nwankwo BC, 2012). The cumbersome procedures create an environment that is ripe for corruption and mismanagement diverting valuable resources that could otherwise be used to enhance the well-being of Nigeria. Additionally, cultural practices like patronage networks and nepotism can sway away procurement, hampering transparency and accountability (Ifeayi, 2017).

It is in the light of the above that the paper explores the interconnectedness between procurement policy and Performance of public corporations in Nigeria.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Public Procurement

Public procurement is simply the purchases of goods and services by public institutions in meeting the needs of the citizens. Unaam and Mark (2015) further opine that public procurement is the awarding of public contracts and projects between the government and the private sector organizations in the areas of health services, education, military and construction of roads, among others. Enofe et al. (2015) opine that the concept of procurement in a state is based on available resources for the purchase of equipment, materials, logistics, services and supplies needed by an organization to meet her core development and business programmes. The procurement process, therefore, involves planning, purchasing, contracting, and negotiating directly with the source of supply. Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012) are of the opinion that individuals involved in the procurement process should be held accountable by undergoing proper scrutiny. Ojo and Gbadebo (2014) also add that invitation to bid, submission of bids, bid security, validity periods of bids and the rejection of bids are some of the major methods involved in the public procurement process in any given country. In addition, the withdrawal and modification of tenders, examination of bids, bid opening, acceptance of bids, domestic preferences, mobilization of fees, interest on delayed payments, contract performance guarantee, and record of procurement proceedings are other measures used in the public procurement process to attain accountability, transparency, value for money, efficiency, and healthy competition in the procurement process (Nwafor, 2013). The Nigeria Public Procurement Act (PPA, 2007) was enacted to strengthen weakened public institutions in order to achieve good governance in public procurement with truism, transparency, and accountability (Adewole, 2014). The Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) and National Council on Public Procurement (NCPP)

are the authorities charged with the responsibility for oversight, monitoring and management of public procurement systems and practices with emphasis on the due process system in curtailing the shortcomings of the public procurement process in the country (Adewole, 2014). In addition, the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) is also charged with responsibilities such as regulatory and administration, coordination, harmonization, undertaking research, coordinating institutional capacity, acts as a supervisory platform and provides a guideline to regulate public procurement practices (Jacob, 2010).

Concept of Public Corporation

State-owned enterprises also referred to as government-controlled enterprises or public corporations, are organizations that are established by state governments to address market gaps, promote economic progress, decrease unemployment, and ensure national control over the economy. These entities perform exclusive functions for the benefit of the general public and citizens of the state. According to Mazzoline and Shirley in 2005 and 1985 respectively, state-owned enterprises are an important tool for governments to achieve their economic and social objectives.

From this, we can discern that there is no singular public organization equipped to address all public and social issues. Rather, each entity is established to tackle a specific concern that may prove too challenging for private individuals to manage. By virtue of their existence, these organizations are able to meet certain needs of the people through the services they provide. In Nigeria, as is common in most modern states, public enterprises are established via parliamentary acts, with their operations and activities defined by the governing legislature. It is typical for the government to provide funding for the operating costs of public corporations in which they are domiciled. However, there are some exceptional cases where the government involves private individuals through Public Private Partnership (PPP), as seen in India where the government has allocated as much as \$2 billion for the construction of roads, airports, bridges, and more under PPP (Financial Times, 1995).

The Public Procurement Act 2007

The Federal Government of Nigeria in order to execute all government works, projects, and services, instituted a robust public procurement system (PPS) which ensures that the resources of the country are harnessed, maximized and utilized for improvement of life of its citizens (Fayomi, 2013). The core objectives of the Act are to promote economic, efficient and healthy competition, ensuring a leveled playing ground for all bidders, and ensure transparency and value for money. Federal Government contracts are reviewed and certified by the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) within stipulated limits.

3. THEORETICAL REVIEW

Principal-Agent Theory

The principal-agent theory plays a crucial role in understanding the dynamics of public procurement policy implementation within Nigerian public corporations. This theory, as outlined by Eisenhardt (1989), posits a relationship between a principal (the government) who delegates tasks to an agent (the public corporation) to act on their behalf. However, inherent information asymmetry and potential goal misalignment can create conflicts of interest.

In the context of Nigerian public procurement, the government, as the principal, seeks to:

- I. Ensure value for money: Public funds must be used efficiently and effectively to procure goods and services that meet the needs of the citizens.
- II. Promote transparency and accountability: Procurement processes should be open and fair, with clear rules and regulations to prevent corruption and abuse of power.
- III. Support national development: Public procurement should be used to leverage local businesses and industries, fostering economic growth and job creation.

However, public corporations, acting as agents, might have different priorities different from the intention of the government who serves as the principal and they includes:

- A. Cost minimization: Corporations may prioritize short-term cost savings over long-term quality or sustainability considerations.
- B. Profit maximization: In some cases, corporations might be tempted to engage in corrupt practices to secure contracts or inflate prices for personal gain.
- C. Bureaucratic inertia: Complex procurement procedures and lack of adequate oversight can lead to inefficiencies and delays.

Institutional Theory

The institutional theory offers another valuable lens through which to examine the implementation of public procurement policy within Nigerian public corporations. This theory, as explained by Scott (2013), emphasizes the influence of formal and informal institutions, including rules, and cultural values, on shaping behaviors and outcomes within organizations. In the context of public procurement, institutional theory suggests that the effectiveness of policy heavily depends on the:

- I. Strength and integrity of institutions: This encompasses the capacity and legitimacy of agencies responsible for policy implementation, oversight, and enforcement.

Weak institutions with inadequate resources, unclear mandates, or susceptibility to political interference can hinder effective policy implementation (Okwunwa & Aniche, 2014).

- II. Formal rules and procedures: Robust and transparent procurement regulations, coupled with efficient monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, can create a predictable and fair environment for all actors involved (World Bank, 2016). Conversely, complex or contradictory rules can lead to confusion, delays, and opportunities for corruption.
- III. Informal norms and cultural values: The ingrained practices and values within public corporations and Nigerian society at large can significantly influence procurement behavior. Factors like patronage networks, nepotism, and a tolerance for graft can undermine transparency and accountability (Ifeanyi, 2017).

4. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Karjalainen et al. (2009) contend that very little research has so far been conducted on organizational misbehaviors and noncompliance in purchasing and supply management. This is surprising given that public procurement has been employed as a vital instrument for achieving economic, social and other objectives (Arrowsmith, 1998), and is regrettably an area vulnerable to mismanagement and corruption (OECD, 2007). Besides, most of the studies on public procurement compliance have been conducted outside Nigeria and mostly in the developed world. In Nigeria, a wave of procurement reforms that begun in 1999, culminated into the enactment of the Public Procurement Act 2007. Unfortunately, many government ministries and agencies have since then not followed prescribed practices (Agaba & Shipman, 2007).

Chikwere GU, Simon SK, Dzandu SSK, Dza M (2019 (2006) stipulate that compliance occurs when the target performs a requested action, but is apathetic about it, rather than enthusiastic, and puts in only a minimal or average effort. However, as an organizational outcome, compliance has traditionally been understood as conformity or obedience to regulations and legislation. According to Roodhooft and Abbeele (2006), public bodies have always been big purchasers, dealing with huge budgets. Mahmood (2010) also reiterated that public procurement represents 18.42% of the world GDP. In developing countries, public procurement is increasingly recognized as essential in service delivery (Basheka & Bisangabasaija, 2010), and it accounts for a high proportion of total expenditure.

There tends to be a lot of focus on the unethical behavior of procurement officers and other aspects of public procurement when compliance is discussed. However, little attention has been given to explaining why there is non-compliance with public procurement regulations

in Nigeria, despite compliance reports produced each year by the Bureau for Public Procurement (BPP) indicating that non-compliance is an issue. 2011, The Public and Private Development Centre Ltd (PPDC) conducted a study on Compliance with the Public Procurement Act, 2007. The report found that there has been an increasing effort to comply with the provisions of the Procurement Act since its passage.

There has been an increase in awareness of the regulations outlined in the Act and procurement rules, largely due to the comprehensive sensitization and training programs offered by the BPP. Additionally, more ministries, departments, and agencies have been implementing procurement departments with designated personnel. Despite these positive developments, there is still much work to be done to ensure widespread adherence to the "spirit" of the Act across all regions of the country.

The report highlights a growing perception of low compliance with the provisions of the Public Procurement Act, 2007 by some key players, as well as a lack of enthusiasm in others. Political, technical, and administrative factors contribute to this situation. While the Bureau may not be fully compliant with the Act in the performance of its functions, it appears to be doing more than what the public perceives and gives it credit for. The shortcomings of the Bureau are a result of both internal factors and the circumstances of its emergence and current existence. The Bureau needs to do more to disseminate information about its activities, achievements, and problems. As a result, the public does not appreciate its actions or the factors that constrain it from taking further action. Since 2008, progress has been made in complying with the provisions of the Public Procurement Act of 2007, with significant increases in compliance observed in 2009 and 2010. The Act's awareness has also been on the rise. More MDAs, particularly in the FCT, are establishing procurement planning committees and adopting more open and competitive procurement techniques.

Furthermore, more ministries, departments, and agencies are developing the capacity to prepare and use procurement plans, as well as to adapt and use standard procurement documents. Adequate budgetary provisions and approvals are now almost mandatory for procurement, and many MDAs are producing and submitting procurement plans to the Bureau.

It is now rare to see any procurement requiring advertisement occurring without advertisement, and selective bidding and sole-source contracting have become exceptions rather than the norm. Many MDAs are using BPP-issued standard documents, while some are not. Tender boards are more operational, and bid submissions are better regulated, with bid openings being more transparent than before.

The Bureau of Public Procurement is driving significant improvements in their processes through a range of efforts. These include preparing and reviewing rules, information manuals, and standard bidding documents, as well as increasing public awareness and training for all stakeholders including MDAs, contractors and bidders, consultants, and civil society observers. Additionally, there is a growing emphasis from the Non-Government sector to monitor compliance, which is where this current work fits in. These efforts have resulted in significant savings of public funds that would have been lost through higher procurement prices. In fact, in 2009 and 2010 alone, the Bureau saved over 30 billion and 50 billion naira respectively, in addition to numerous other foreign currency savings.

Challenges to the effective implementation and compliance of the Nigerian Public Procurement Reforms

Despite efforts to enhance procurement policy in Nigeria's public corporations, several challenges persist, hindering effective change management and procurement outcomes. These challenges underscore the need for continued reforms and capacity building to drive accountability and efficiency in public procurement processes. Among the major challenges are:

- (i) Limited transparency of procurement processes of MDA's
- (ii) Shortage of technical competence and skills within MDAs.
- (iii) Refusal of the National Assembly to submit to the provisions of the Act and regulation by the Bureau,
- (iv) Poor ethical standards in the service,
- (v) Continued supervision of procurement officers in some instances by persons with less procurement knowledge and skill and no sure will for change.
- (vi) Low morals in the service, and
- (vii) Lack of political will to proceed against some violators of the Act.
- (viii) Integrity of personnel and failure of MDA's to grant access to information to requesters of information. Also important are human attitudinal challenges.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Public procurement policy implementation in Nigerian public corporations remains a complex and challenging issue. While progress has been made in recent years, persistent vulnerabilities like weak institutions, information asymmetry, and ingrained cultural practices can hinder transparency, accountability, and value for money. Addressing these

challenges requires a multi- pronged approach that considers various key factors: Invest in building the capacity, integrity, and resources of regulatory and oversight bodies to enforce procurement regulations effectively, Implement and uphold clear, accessible, and open procurement processes through digital platforms and public information sharing. Align incentives between government and corporations through performance-based contracts, ethical training, and robust monitoring mechanisms. Tailor policies to the specific institutional context of Nigeria, considering existing regulations, informal norms, and cultural values. Foster collaboration and information sharing among government, corporations, civil society, and the private sector to build trust and legitimacy in the procurement system.

By addressing these key areas, Nigeria can move towards a more efficient, and accountable public procurement system that delivers greater value for money and fosters sustainable development. Having concluded, below are recommendations in which if implemented can help to have a well managed public procurement practice in the Nigerian Public sector:

- a. Implement comprehensive institutional reforms focusing on strengthening relevant agencies, promoting transparency, and combating corruption.
- b. Provide training for procurement officers in both government and corporations to enhance professionalism and ethical conduct.
- c. Embrace digital technologies like e-procurement platforms to streamline procedures, improve transparency, and reduce vulnerabilities to fraud.
- d. Promote ethical values and anti-corruption initiatives within public corporations and across the broader procurement ecosystem.
- e. Educate citizens about the importance of public procurement and encourage their participation in oversight mechanisms.

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Survey of Stakeholders' Opinions on Reasons for Terror Attacks on Schools in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

The study is a descriptive survey of stakeholders' (clerics, security personnel, school managers, parents and students) opinions on reasons why terrorists and bandits attacked schools in northern Nigeria. Using cluster sampling technique, a total of 1844 stakeholders were sampled across six purposively selected northern states. The samples were made up of 211 Clerics; 228 Security personnel; 389 school management personnel; 496 parents and 520 students. Data were collected using researchers' made questionnaire titled Reasons for Terror attacks on School Questionnaire (RTASQ). Based on the findings, 69.1% of sampled stakeholders identified the need to oppose Western education and 55.8% identified propagation of Islam as ideological reasons for terror attacks on school in northern Nigeria. On the other hand, some stakeholders believed terrorists attacked mainly for financial reasons such as the need to finance terrorism (67.8%) and the need to survive poverty and solvency (53.9%). Also, 44.2% said the attacks were to avenge ethnic sentiments and 48.8% said it was as a result of political sponsorship. Above all, findings emphasized psycho-social vulnerability of students as major reasons for the attacks. For example, 73.5% of the stakeholders believed students were attacked for being students and 71.1% said the attacks were to maximize impacts on the psyche of members of society. Based on the findings, the researchers recommend that government and concerned individual should enact and initiate far-reaching actions that can put an end to attacks on school persons and properties in the region.

Keywords: *School, Attacks, Stakeholders, Opinions, North*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Patrick Lumumba (2023), an issue which often gets little attention but may be the most important of all is the need to examine the underlying courses and conditions that make people engage in terrorism..." Terrorism is all forms of illogical use of violence to intimidate or threaten and cause fear among people. Across nations of the world, terrorists and terrorism have grouped and perpetrated in different dimensions on different motives and

ideologies (Yousef, 2010; Hroub, 2010). Today, terrorism is a major threat plaguing African countries' safety and productivity. Aside other political and economic setbacks in Africa, terrorism has been identified as one huge challenge countries in and around African Sahel Region, have not been able to eradicate (Mamladi & Yousef, 2021). As expressed in the African Union Security Appraisal Document, the dynamics of insecurity in the continent vary across countries. The document however identifies insecurity and terrorism as challenges that must be overcome for development to happen in Africa (African Union, 2023). In Nigeria for example, apart from the high-end instances of socioeconomic insecurities, continuous terror attacks on schools resulting in loss of life and properties have been major problems that slow down educational development particularly in northern states. Many students and staffs of schools in the region have either been kidnapped, abducted or killed by terrorists (Udochukwu & Abel, 2023). These acts have been severally condemned by international bodies

The United Nation (UN) at its 8889th Security Council Meeting held in October 2021, reiterated the ultimate need for safe schools. It also came up with the Resolution 2601 that mandates signatory nations to do all possible to prevent school attacks and ensure protection of children, teachers and related civilians in and around school facilities (Kingsley & Maximus, 2023). No doubt, nations, including Nigeria, are signatories to this and many other documents that assert the need for safety in schools. Certainly, it is in the common knowledge of Nigeria government and educational stakeholders that no meaningful educational activities can take place in a volatile unsecured environment. Corroborating how unsafe some of the schools in the region are, the National Coordinator of Financing Safe Schools in Nigeria (NCFSSN) declared schools in 14 of the 19 northern states to be at risk of terrorist attacks. Recently, a Governor in the region put the number of bandits' camps in Katsina State at about 100. He claimed the bandits recruit or enroll their irregular gunmen very cheap. They could recruit by offering just #500 (less than a Dollar) to willing youths to join terror groups and acts (Punch, February, 2024).

Many of the terrorism in the region are perpetrated by Boko Haram, ISWAP, bandits, jihadists, religious extremist groups, and various other irregular armed groups with violent tendencies and accomplishments. Ever since April 14th, 2014 when Boko Haram attacked and abducted around 276 female students of Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok, in Borno State, the attacked has not ceased. For example, on February 19, 2018, Boko Haram attacked Government Girls Science Technical College in Dapchi, Yobe State resulting in the abduction of 110 students. Also, on December 11, 2020, more than 303 students of Government Science Secondary School, Katsina, in Katsina State were kidnapped. Recently, on January 30th, 2024, gunmen attacked and kidnapped about 150 pupils from a Local Education Authority Primary and Junior Secondary School in Kuriga, Kaduna State. In April,

2024, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) reported that in the past 10 years, precisely since 2014 to 2024, over 1,680 school children have been abducted from schools and 180 killed across northern schools. The consequences of these attacks include ransom payment, sexual assaults, forced marriages, deaths, poor school enrolment and school closure (Al-Hassan, 2022; Oluwole & Balogun, 2024; Ayorinde, & Ariguzo, 2024). To avert these consequences, there is need to identify and understand the dynamics of the root cause of terrorism on schools in northern Nigeria. Understanding the dynamics should include finding out specific causes or reasons for the terror attacks on schools in the understanding of key stakeholders in the region. Doing this could help government efforts at combating the scourge.

Statement of the Problem

Certainly, in recent time, government’s efforts have been on countering terrorism via conventional military actions. There are also efforts at eradicating terrorism financing opportunities across the country. Unfortunately, much of these efforts have not been on finding out why schools are targeted by terrorists (Hassan & Eric, 2023). For example, in 2022, Nigeria government came up with a National Inherent Risk Assessment of terrorism financing. This yielded a template for a National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) and the enactment of the Terrorism Prevention and Prohibition Act 2022; but the focus of this efforts was however limited on terrorism founding, it practically excluded finding out why the terror targeted schools in the first place. The NACTEST’s documents only broaden terrorism financing offences and provide frameworks to implement Terrorism Financing Sanctions (TFS) against terrorists and their financiers but did not cater for knowing the root cause of the attacks, particularly, the attacks on schools. Even the enactments of the directives on the document via the National Safe Schools Response Coordination Centre (NSSRCC) and the Safer School Initiative Corps lunched by the Nigerian Police were more on physical combat on terrorism and not about finding the causes for the scourge. While all these are laudable, it is important to also find out why terrorists specifically direct their attacks on school children and school facilities. Finding out the reasons for such attacks could go a long way in enactment and implementation of policies and actions that could be preventive and effective in eradicating the problem in the region and in Nigeria as a whole.

Fortunately, literatures already provide frameworks within which various reasons for terrorism can be categorized (Norwitz 2009; Mamladi & Yousef, 2021; Oluwole & Balogun, 2004). The categorization adapted for this study include: ideological, financial, political-territorial or environmental and psycho-vulnerability categories of reasons for terror attacks. Ideological reasons dwell on religious beliefs (Ayorinde & Nnajieta, 2023); financial reasons are related to needs to finance terrorism, political-territorial reasons will include motives for

political governance, expansion, domination, ethnic vengeance and liberation. Similarly, economic reasons for terrorism will covers reasons asserting dominance of control on resources and aggressions bordering on inadequacies in resource allocation. It will also include vengeance for damages resulting from accessing natural resources. Psycho-vulnerability reasons for terrorism include reasons relating to victims' age, gender and relative emotional incitements attacks on them can generate.

Definitely, one of the ways to find out why terrorists attack schools in the north is to ask stakeholders. That is what this study did. The stakeholders that were involved in this study include: religious leaders or clerics (both Islamic and Christianity); security personnel, school staffs, traditional and community leaders and parents. No doubt, religious leaders are core leaders in northern Nigeria whose opinions regarding the interest of this study cannot be undermined. This is also applicable to security personnel who are always mobilized to curb terrorism in the region. Of course, parents and school staffs must have had direct or indirect experience of school attacks in the region too, thus seeking the opinions of these stakeholders would generate rich data with which to make conclusions on why terror groups attack schools in the region under study.

Theoretical Framework

The research is theoretically framed on Structural-Functional Theory (SFT). SFT postulates that in any society, social incidences, either negative or positive, do not occur in oblivion, and their occurrences are functional for societal structures. Theorists such as Emile Durkheim and Talcot Person were in this school of thought. They emphasized this theorem in their works, particularly in their sociological analysis of the good and the bad in society. Structural- Functionalist theory suggests that crime, terrorism, war and all sorts of violations and deviances occurred as a result of structural tensions and imbalances in the moral, ideological beliefs, laws, governance and socio-economic opportunities and allocations in societies (Gidens, 2001; Macionis, 2009). Theoretically, it can be assumed that there are reasons and functions for terrorism and banditry attacks on schools in any society (Crenshaw, 2007). Though, reasons and functions for terror may be illogical to outsiders and victims, they are not always presumed to be illogical by the perpetrators. This is because, terrorists had always boldly justified their actions by given reasons and functions they want to achieve via their acts. Structural-Functional Theory provides the ground for the assumptions that there would be reasons for school attacks in northern Nigeria and such reasons can be identified if asked for. Furthermore, understanding the reasons can be a step towards managing incidences of terrorism before, during and after they occurred in Nigeria schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised:

1. What, in the opinions of stakeholders, are the ideological reasons for terrorists' attacks on schools in Northern Nigeria?
2. What, in the opinions of stakeholders, are the financial reasons for terrorists' attacks on schools in Northern Nigeria?
3. What, in the opinions of stakeholders, are the political-territorial reasons for terrorists' attacks on schools in Northern Nigeria?
4. What, in the opinions of stakeholders, are the psycho-vulnerability reasons for terrorists' attacks on schools in Northern Nigeria?

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The study adopted descriptive survey research method. The target population for the study comprised Clerics (Christian and Islamic), security personnel, school managers, parents and students across northern Nigeria. To access the respondents, multi-stage sampling approach was used. First, purposive sampling technique was used to select six (6) states consisting of two states from each of the three geo-political zones (North West, North East and North Central) making up Northern Nigeria. The states were carefully selected to include those prone to insecurity and attacks on school facilities. Across the selected states, cluster sampling techniques was used to sample the actual needed respondents. Through research assistance, a total of 1844 respondents were sampled. The samples were made up of 211 Clerics; 228 Security personnel; 389 school management personnel; 496 parents and 520 students. A team of carefully engaged Research Assistants (RA) were used in reaching the respondents. The RA were residents of the selected states. They were contacted, briefed and allowed to voluntarily decide to assist in the study. Contacting them was mainly through internet outreach. The major roles of the RA were to administer the questionnaire on the respondents across research locations and return those responded to, to the researchers.

A self-made research instrument titled Reasons for Terror Attacks on School Questionnaire (RTASQ) was used for data collection. The questionnaire has two sections. Section A consists of items requesting biographical data of the respondents. Such data were for the purpose of knowing the state, category of religion and profession; and gender of the respondents. An item in the Section 'A' asked whether the respondents had directly or indirectly experienced school attack (s) before the time of this research. The Section 'B' has four parts. Each part has items seeking opinions of the respondents on ideological, political, psycho-vulnerability and financial reasons why terrorists and bandits attacked or could attack schools in their localities.

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the reasons suggested for school attacks as stated in the questionnaire. They were to respond by ticking either of the options as ‘agree’ or ‘disagree’. The questionnaire was validated using content and face validity approaches. Copies of the questionnaire were given to experts in Sociology, Measurement and Evaluation and Peace and Strategic Studies at University of Ilorin and University of Nigeria, Nnsuka. They were asked to assess the items of the questionnaire to determine whether they were adequate and relevant in gathering the needed data. A reliability co-efficient of 0.68 was obtained for the questionnaire using test-re-test approach. This was done by administering the questionnaire on selected respondents with similar attributes of the originally intended respondents in Kogi and Kano States. The data collected from the test-re-test were correlated using Pearson Moment Correlation Co-efficient. To answer the research questions, the data collected were analyzed using frequency count and percentages.

3. RESULTS

1. What, in the opinions of stakeholders, are the ideological reasons for terrorists’ attacks on schools in Northern Nigeria?

Table 1: Opinions of stakeholders on ideological reasons for terrorists’ attack on school in Northern Nigeria

Ideological	CLR		SP		SM		PRT		ST	
	Total n	Reasons %	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Islamic propagation	119	56.3	98	42.9	285	73	206	41.5	321	
	61.7	55.8								
Martyrdom	26	12.3	18	7.8	29	7.4	51	10.2	34	
	6.5	8.5								
Sharia enforcement	98	46.4	178	78.1	169	43.4	288	58.1	117	
	22.5	46.1								
Anti-education	189	89.5	163	71.4	206	52.9	318	64.1	399	
	76.7	69.1								
Regional illiteracy	96	45.4	184	80.7	159	40.8	208	41.9	205	
	39.4	46.2								

Key: CLR = Clerics; SP= Security Personnel; SM= School Managers; PRT= Parents; ST= Students

Data on Table 1 show the dimensions of the opinions of sampled stakeholders on the ideological reasons for school attacks in Northern Nigeria. Specifically, 89.5% of sampled Clerics, believed terrorist attacked schools to oppose western education and 56.3% of them agreed it was to propagate Islam. Among the sampled security personnel, 80.7% attributed the attacks to high incidence of illiteracy in the region; 78.1% believed it was to enforce Sharia Law and 71.4% of them said it was to oppose spread of western education. Similarly, 73% and 52.9% of School Managers agreed the attacks occurred to propagate Islam and oppose western education respectively. Also, in the opinions of 64.1% and 58.1% of sampled parents, schools were attacked in the region to prevent spread of western education and to enforce Sharia Law. Among the sampled students, 76.7% agreed with the opinions that schools were attacked to oppose western education and 61.7% believed it was also to propagate Islam. Collectively, irrespective of the category of sampled stakeholders, the need to oppose spread of Western Education (69.1%) and the need to propagate Islam (55.8%) were the common ideological reasons for school attacks in the region.

2. What, in the opinions of stakeholders, are the financial reasons for terrorists' attacks on schools in Northern Nigeria?

Table 2: Opinions of stakeholders on financial reasons for terrorists' attack on school in Northern Nigeria

Financial Reasons	Total		CLR		SP		SM		PRT		ST
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
Terrorism Financing	198	93	162	71.1	199	51.2	312	62.9	108		
	20.7	53.09									
For personal income	46	21.8	104	45.6	167	42.9	202	40.7	411		
	79.1	50.4									
Employment means	69	32.7	48	21.1	78	20.1	329	66.3	205		
	39.4	39.5									
Poverty and solvency	111	52.6	204	89.4	299	76.8	311	76.8	327		
	62.8	67.8									

Key: CLR = Clerics; SP= Security Personnel; SM= School Managers; PRT= Parents; ST= Students

As indicated on Table 2; out of the sampled stakeholders, 93% of Clerics, 71.1% of Security Personnel, 51.2% of School Managers and 62.9% of parents believed schools were attacked in Northern Nigeria because of need to raise fund to finance terrorism. Similarly, poverty was also identified by 52.6% of Clerics, 89.4% of Security Personnel, 76.8% of School Managers, 76.8% of parents and 62.8% of students as a major reason for terrorists’ attacks on schools in northern Nigeria. However, only 32.7% of Clerics, 21.1% of Security Personnel, 20.1% of School Managers and 39.5% of students believed terrorists attacked school in the north as means of employment.

3. What, in the opinions of stakeholders, are the political-territorial reasons for terrorists’ attacks on schools in Northern Nigeria?

Table 3: Opinions of stakeholders on political reasons for terrorists’ attack on school in Northern Nigeria

Political-territorial Total	CLR		SP		SM		PRT		ST	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Secession 5.8 8.5	23	10.9	11	4.8	37	9.5	59	11.8	28	
Territorial Expansion 22.321.3	69	32.7	77	33.7	49	12.5	82	16.5	116	
Political allegiance 31.727.4	44	20.8	89	39.1	68	17.4	140	28.2	165	
Ethnic vengeance 46.944.2	133	63.3	122	53.5	111	28.5	206	41.5	244	
Electoral gain 2016.7	24	11.3	41	17.9	53	13.6	86	17.3	104	
Political sponsorship 55.142.8	141	66.8	56	24.5	99	25.4	207	41.7	287	

Key: CLR = Clerics; SP= Security Personnel; SM= School Managers; PRT= Parents; ST= Students

Data on Table 3 indicate what stakeholders identified as political-territorial reasons for terrorists’ attacks on schools in Northern Nigeria. According to the data only 10.9% of

clerics, 4.8% of security personnel, 9.5% of school managers, and 11.8% of parents believed the attacks were caused to bring about secession. Similarly, among the stakeholders sampled, 20.8% of clerics, 39.1% of security personnel, 17.4% of school managers, 28.2% of parents and 31.7% of students attributed the attacks to political allegiance of the perpetrators. However, 63.3% of clerics, 53.5% of security personnel, 28.5% of school managers, 41.5% of parents and 46.9% of students believed terrorist attacked school to assert ethnic vengeance.

4. What, in the opinions of stakeholders, are the psycho-vulnerability reasons for terrorists’ attacks on schools in Northern Nigeria?

Table 4: Opinions of stakeholders on psycho-vulnerability reasons for terrorists’ attack on school

Psycho-social	CLR		SP	SM		PRT		ST	
	n	%	n	n	%	n	%	n	%
Being Students	197	93.3	165	72.3	291	74.8	304	61.2	399
	76.773.5								
Location of school	96	45.4	210	92.1	327	84.1	299	60.2	364
	7070.2								
Maximized impact	206	97.6	185	81.5	288	74.1	246	46.5	385
	74.171.1								
Absence of Security	199	94.3	38	16.6	322	82.7	381	76.8	466
	89.676.2								

Key: CLR = Clerics; SP= Security Personnel; SM= School Managers; PRT= Parents; ST= Students

As shown on Table 4, among the sampled stakeholders, 93.3% of clerics, 72.3% of security personnel, 74.8% of school managers, 61.2% of parents and 76.7% of students believed that attacks occurred because the attackers particularly wanted their targets to be students. Also, 45.4% of clerics, 92.1% of security personnel, 84.1% of school managers, 60.2% of parents and 70% of students blamed the attacks on the locations of the schools being attacked. Collectively, 71.1% of the sampled stakeholders believed the schools were attacked to have maximum emotional impact on government while 76.2% believed that attacks occurred because of inadequate security around the schools.

4. DISCUSSION

The goals and strategic pillars that are emphasized in the African Union Agenda 2063 (AUA-2063) and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) are the need to evolve strategies with which to broaden educational opportunities and the need to evolve peaceful and secured environments in African countries (African Union, 2013; African Union, 2016). Unfortunately, one factor that may obstruct achieving these goals is high incidence of insecurity and terrorism in the continent. Most importantly, as bandits and terrorists consistently attack schools, achieving these goals for educational development may be under threat. No doubt, terrorism is a random act of violence or threat of violence by an individual or groups to intimidate others for political, religious or economic reasons. Terrorism can be very asymmetrical and irregular. It is a dangerous act that can endanger innocent people and put the life of learners at risk. Being a kind of conflict where the parties in conflict may not be clearly known or where their motives may not be obvious, anybody can be a victim.

Fortunately, in Nigeria, most of the culprits of school attacks are known. Some have even been officially identified and labeled as terrorists. Officially, it is known that terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, the Islamic State in West African Province (ISWAP); the Yan Bindiga and Yan Tadda groups have attacked schools in northern states of Nigeria ((Hassan & Eric, 2023; Ayorinde & Ariguzo, 2024). Other groups also operate under the leadership of notorious banditry kingpins who may not have a defined operational structure and locations but are known to be deadly in perpetrating violence in and around school facilities. Many of these irregular armed groups have established their operational camps in the ungoverned land spaces, forests and remote areas and villages of northern states. Their mode of operations are known to be very fatal and unpredictable. Aside from knowing all these, what we may not have taken time to know or find out is why the terror groups target schools. This creates a research gap that this study has now filled.

Specifically, findings in this research helped in identifying the main reasons why terrorists attacked schools in northern Nigeria. For example, this study revealed that stakeholders in the northern states believed schools were attacked mainly to oppose the spread of Western Education and to propagate Islam. These were identified as common ideological reasons for school attacks in the region; in the opinion of 69.1% and 55.8% of the sampled stakeholders, respectively. This is not really contrary to what the literature has asserted in the past. For example, Kingsley & Maximus (2023) had earlier opined that most of the attacks on schools in northern Nigeria were carried out to discourage the spread of Western education and culture. Such terrorists may have thought that accepting Western education would lead to acceptance and spread of Christianity in the region.

This belief and the rivalry between Islam and Christianity which now cumulated to terror attacks in present day Nigerian schools is age long. It is firmly rooted in the history of western education in the pre-colonial era of Nigeria (Ejiogwu, 1989). The activities and known ideologies of some terror groups, such as Boko Haram give credence to this particular finding in this study; i.e. that terrorists attacked school to discourage western education. Boko Haram has been an active terror group in northern Nigeria. It was founded in 2002 and originally named Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad but popularly known as Boko Haram. It has been established that this group operated on the purpose of propagating anti-Western Education activities (Mamladi, & Yousef, 2021; Ayorinde & Ariguzo, 2024). Invariably, one can assume that Boko Haram, which has attacked, killed and abducted lots of students and staff across schools in northern Nigeria, did all that purposefully. Its reason for series of attacks on schools could be to discourage spread of Western Education in the region.

Furthermore, a substantial percentage of sampled stakeholders also believed the attacks occurred for financial reasons. For example, 67.8% of the stakeholders agreed that the attacks occurred for terrorists to have means of averting the experience of poverty and solvency among themselves, and another 53.9% of the stakeholders agreed that the attacks occurred for the purpose of raising funds to finance terrorism. This sounds true, judging from the fact that abducted students were often freed after payment of ransom by parents or governments (Oluwole & Balogun, 2024). This is unfortunate. It is unfortunate because there are indications that when crime becomes lucrative, stopping it will become difficult (Giddens, 2001; Concklin, 2007). One can also assume that raising funds through terror attacks to finance further terror would be more complex in a situation of literacy and deeply rooted sentiments. With a high incidence of illiteracy, it could be difficult for members of terror groups to rationalise the moral and legal implications of getting money from a terror group to finance another terror.

Beyond financial reasons, the study also established that many schools in the region were targeted for attacks mainly due to inadequate security around them. Among the sampled stakeholders, 76.2% were of this opinion. Similarly, another 73.5% thought that students were attacked simply because they were students and young. This opinion is also inferable from 71.1% of the stakeholders, who stated that the schools were attacked mainly to maximise emotional impacts on society and the government. This implies that the schools and students may have been attacked and abducted to make the government and members of society feel very sad. Indeed, attacks on children can generate emotions (Maxwell, 2020). This might be what terrorists knew and decided to capitalise on. For whatever reason, attacks on school members and properties is not good for educational development. It is one experience that endanger all efforts for educational development and societal growth.

Terrorism against schools and their members should be seen as a grievous offence against the individual, the government and society.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the series of attacks on schools in northern states of Nigeria has reasons, and the reasons include the need to entrench deep-rooted anti-education ideology, the need to finance terror, and the need to achieve political and territorial motives. Other reasons include the psycho-vulnerability nature of school children, which is associated with the age and gender of students being attacked. These reasons were substantially expressed in this research by clerics, security agents, school managers, parents and students in the region. The implication of this is that knowledge of the reasons for the attacks can be applied in finding preventive solutions to incidents of school attacks in northern Nigeria now and in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommended based on the inputs of the findings of this study:

1. Government should reorient members of society in northern parts of Nigeria on the need to have accommodating ideologies that do not segregate on the basis of religion and source of education
2. More efforts should be made to detect, discourage and sanction all activities leading to terrorism financing in the country.
3. More physical security presence and tactics should be enacted and implemented in and around school localities in the northern states of Nigeria.

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