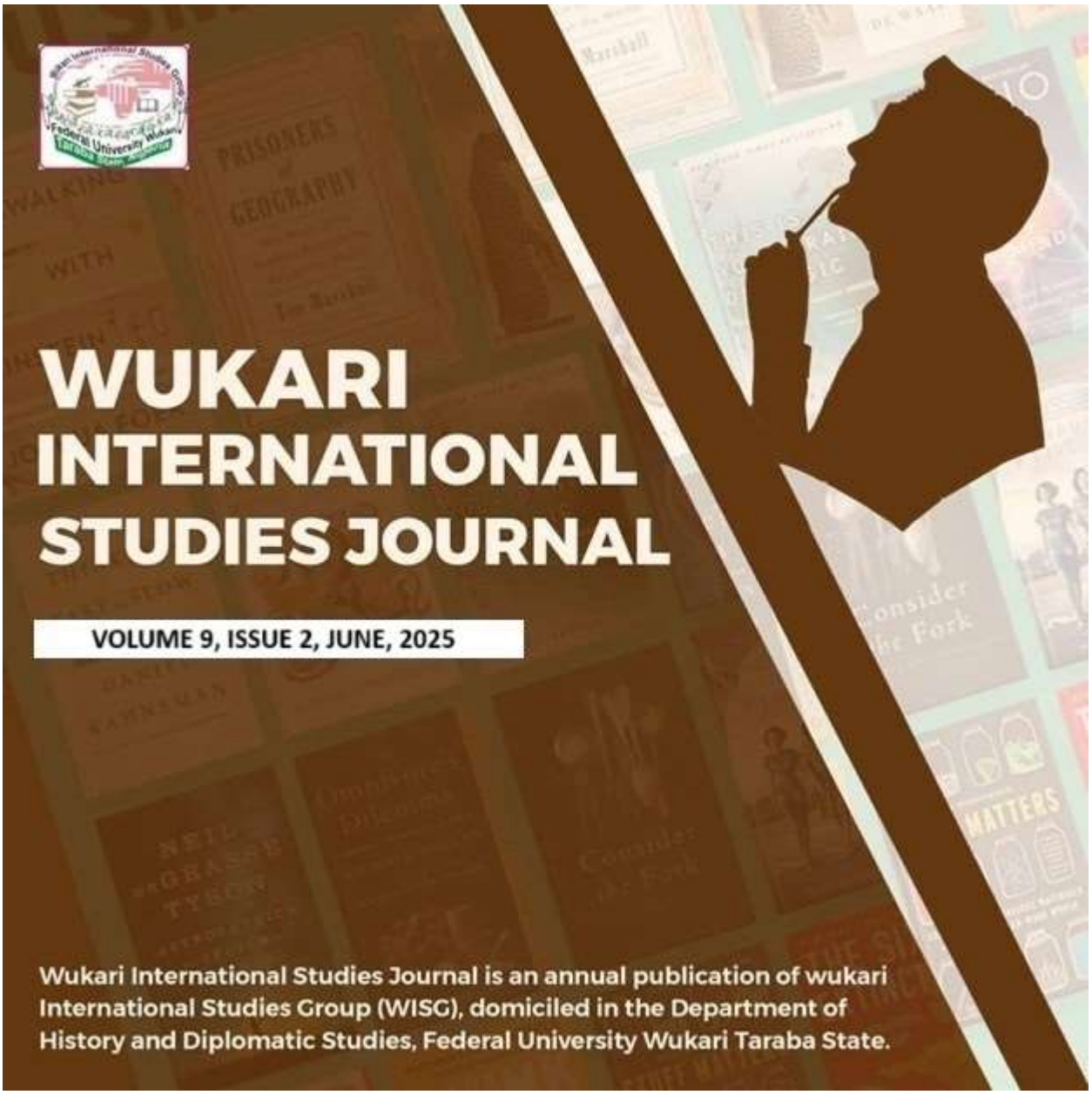
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EXPLORING GLOBAL TRENDS IN RESEARCH ON E-GOVERNMENT: A BIBLIOMETRIC REVIEW

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KEYWORDS

E-Government, Bibliometric Analysis, Global Trends, Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

ABSTRACT

This study provides a novel and comprehensive bibliometric analysis of global e-government research, examining 2,119 publications from Scopus (2017-2024) to map emerging themes, leading contributors, and the evolution of research on e-government services. Employing Scopus tools, Excel, and VOSviewer, the study analyzes publication patterns, citations, and collaborations across countries, institutions, and researchers. Key findings indicate steady growth in e-government research, with Asia, particularly Indonesia and China, making the largest contributions, primarily in computer science, social sciences, and business management. Universitas Indonesia emerged as the top institution, with Government Information Quarterly and Sustainability Switzerland as the most influential sources. While highlighting significant collaborative research, the study notes limited involvement from less-developed nations. Distinguishing itself from prior studies, this research offers a unique, comprehensive bibliometric mapping of the e-government literature, revealing its interdisciplinary nature and underscoring the necessity for greater global inclusivity. By synthesizing trends and patterns across a substantial body of work, this study offers a distinct perspective on the development and current landscape of e-government research, concluding that addressing regional disparities and promoting broader international collaboration are vital for maximizing its impact on public sector policy and strategic management.

1.1 Introduction

Governments fundamentally serve their citizens by providing essential services and meeting basic needs (Ogu & Chukwurah, 2023). To achieve these objectives, many are increasingly leveraging information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance service delivery, making it more accessible, efficient, and responsive (Ali, 2023). Consequently, e-government has become a critical element of modern governance, facilitating electronic interactions between governments and their constituents (Ogu et al., 2023; Manaf et al., 2023). This transition has been linked to improved service delivery, increased transparency, and greater accountability (Jejeniwa et al., 2024), transforming how governments engage with citizens, businesses, and other stakeholders (Ali, 2023).

Globally, countries have implemented diverse e-government initiatives with varying degrees of success. The extent of adoption and impact, however, differ significantly across regions and nations. In the African context, countries like Nigeria are exploring both the opportunities and challenges of e-government implementation (Shafiu, et al, 2023). Despite progress in some areas, Nigeria's e-government potential is still hampered by inadequate infrastructure, low digital literacy, and limited government capacity (Shafiu, 2020). While some Nigerian states, such as Kaduna, have launched e-government initiatives to improve subnational service delivery and governance, these efforts face obstacles like insufficient resources, inadequate infrastructure, and resistance to change (Oghuvbu et al., 2022).

Although existing literature from scholars like Jejeniwa et al. (2024), Ogu and Chukwurah (2023), Laila et al. (2020), Dibie and Quadri (2018), and Robert and Quadri (2018) offers valuable contributions to understanding e-government, a comprehensive, holistic view of the global research landscape remains elusive. Many studies tend to focus on specific regions, technologies, or particular aspects of e-government. Comprehensive, data-driven studies on the field's evolution, thematic areas, and global collaboration are not widespread. This research aims to bridge this gap by providing a comprehensive bibliometric review of e-government research. By analyzing a large dataset of publications, this study will offer insights into emerging trends, identify leading contributors, and map potential future directions for the field. Ultimately, a richer understanding of the worldwide challenges and opportunities tied to e-government can guide policymakers and practitioners in developing strategies to maximize its benefits and enhance citizens' quality of life globally.

1.2 Justification

The effective implementation of e-government holds immense potential for improving public service delivery, enhancing transparency, and fostering citizen engagement (Abdullahi, 2023). However, despite significant investments and growing scholarly attention, the full potential of e-government remains unrealized in many contexts (Ezeobele et al., 2021). Similarly, there is a notable gap in the broader understanding of the e-government research landscape. While individual studies explore specific technologies, regional implementations, or policy aspects, a comprehensive, data-driven analysis of the field's global evolution, thematic trends, and collaborative networks is conspicuously absent (Abdullahi, 2023). This lack of holistic insight hinders the ability of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to effectively identify key areas for future research, leverage successful strategies, and address persistent challenges (Umar, et al., 2023).

This study addresses this critical gap by providing a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of e-government research from 2017 to 2024. By systematically examining trends and patterns in the existing literature, this research explores the intricate relationships between various concepts from theoretical, methodological, and practical viewpoints. The goal is to determine whether the connection between e-government and its effectiveness is positive, neutral, or negative and to pinpoint the factors affecting the adoption and success of e-government initiatives. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to a more informed and strategic approach to e-government research and implementation, maximizing its impact on policy development, service delivery, and citizen well-being. To this end, this research intends to bridge this gap by exploring the following research questions:

i. RQ1: What are the emerging trends and major contributions in the field of e-government research?

ii. RQ2: Which countries, institutions, and authors are leading in e-government research?

iii. RQ3: Which publications and authors have the most influence within the e-government research landscape?

iv. RQ4: What are the main themes and areas of focus in e-government research?

v. RQ5: What are the potential future directions for e-government research?

2.1 Concept of E-Government

E-government is defined as a system that uses digital tools to provide information and services to the public, as emphasized by Almutairi et al. (2020). This approach includes leveraging the internet, web technologies, and mobile computing to transform interactions between government, citizens, and other businesses, (Chukwuemeka et al., 2018). In addition, Omebe (2019) describes e-government as the use of technology (ICT) to streamline public transactions, facilitate information exchange, and improve service delivery. Ali (2023) further elaborated that e-government focuses on enhancing internal operations and integrating various departments to increase efficiency. Similarly, Onuigbo and Eme (2018) defined e-government as the application of ICT in the public sector to achieve several goals, including improving service delivery and information dissemination, accountability, transparency, and efficiency.

Recent bibliometric analyses have begun to map the landscape of e-government research. For instance, Song et al. (2024) categorized e-government research into distinct phases, noting an evolution from basic technological implementation to more complex issues such as government transparency and smart city concepts. Other studies have highlighted areas like cloud technology adoption, risk management, and the increasing prominence of e-participation (Crăciun et al., 2023; Ravšelj & Umek, 2022). Irfan and Jabeen (2021) used keyword analysis to identify key themes like digital inclusion and e-government effectiveness.

However, while these studies offer valuable insights, they often focus on specific aspects or periods within the broader e-government landscape. There is a need for a more comprehensive, up-to-date bibliometric analysis that synthesizes the diverse trends and themes within the field to provide a clearer understanding of its current state and future directions. thus, contributing to a more informed and strategic discourse within the field.

3.1 Method

To examine relevant documents, this study employed a bibliometric approach analyzing 2,119 e-government publications indexed in the Scopus database (2017-2024). Quantitative and statistical methods, including Scopus's analysis tools, Microsoft Excel 2019 (for frequency and proportion calculations and graph generation), and VOSviewer (for visualizing bibliometric connections), were used to identify research trends and patterns, thus providing a foundation for future studies.

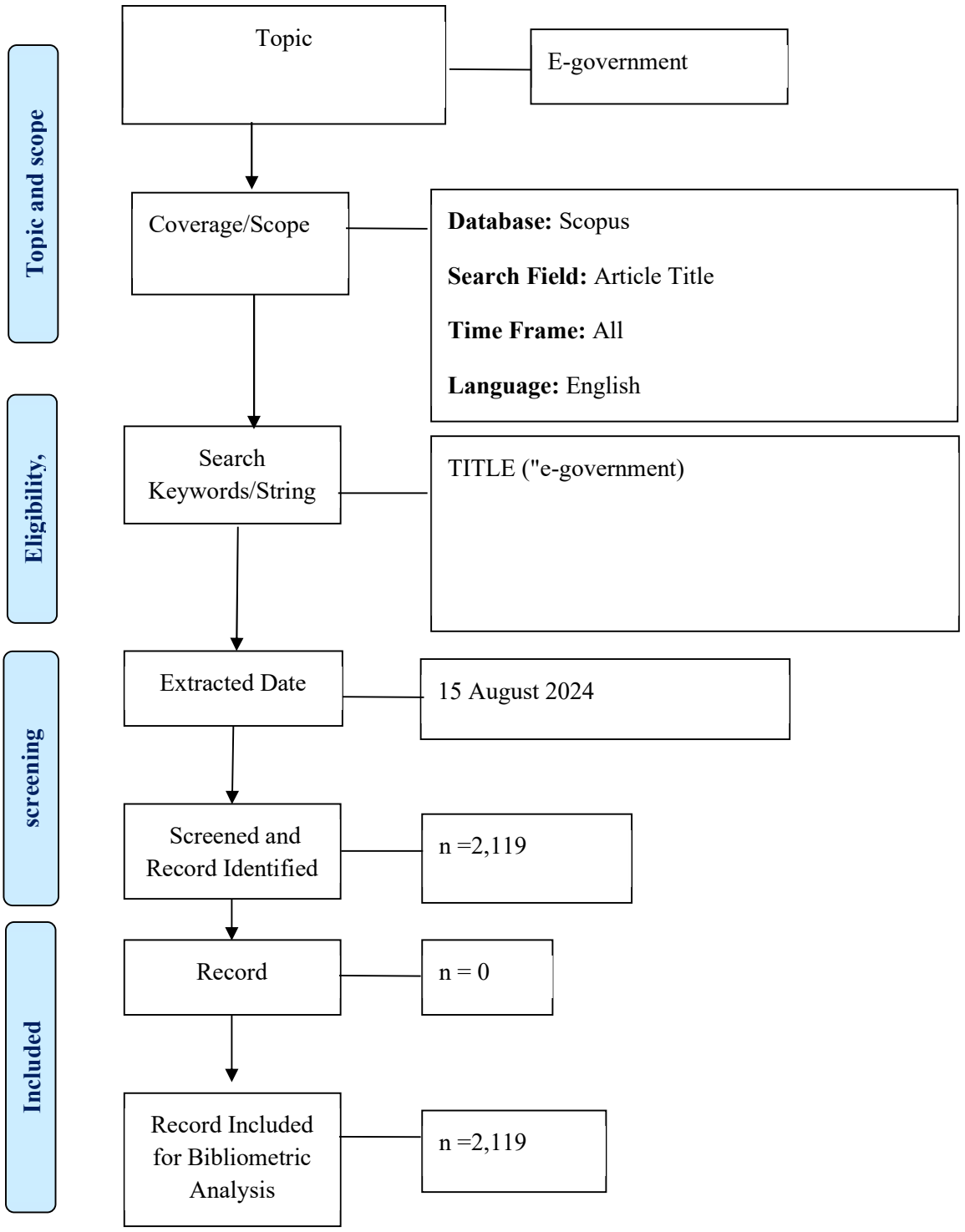


Fig. 1 PRISMA diagram showing the search strategy

4.0 Results

This section details the results of the bibliometric analysis, providing answers to key research questions concerning emerging trends, leading contributors, influential publications, main themes, and prospective research areas within the field of e-government. The analysis examines annual publication trends, source journals, document types, and languages to gain a comprehensive understanding of the field.

4.1 Publications by years

Table 1 illustrates the annual publication trends in e-government research from 2017 to 2024, showing a fluctuating pattern with periods of both growth and decline in publication numbers. The peak number of publications occurred in 2017, totalling 316 studies. In the following years, the trend fluctuated, showing alternating patterns of growth and decline. Notably, by August 15, 2024, 153 e-government publications had already been indexed in S

Table 1 Number of e-government publications by years

Year	TP	NCP	TC	C/P	C/CP	h	g
2024	153	35	60	0.39	1.71	3	4
2023	289	155	612	2.12	3.95	11	15
2022	272	206	1575	5.79	7.65	19	29
2021	268	209	1917	7.15	9.17	23	33
2020	287	236	3105	10.82	13.16	26	44
2019	279	247	3388	12.14	13.72	29	47
2018	252	226	3436	13.63	15.20	29	49
2017	316	272	4741	15.00	17.43	36	58

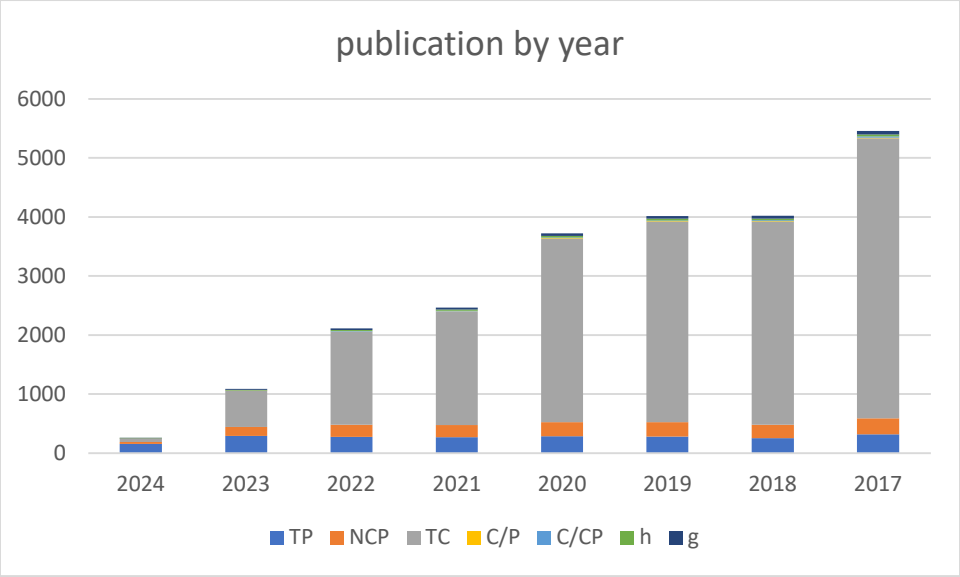


Fig. 2 Annual publication by years

4.2 Main Affiliations

Table 2 shows the top institutions contributing to e-government research. Universitas Indonesia is ranked first with 17 publications, followed by Jiangxi University of Science and Technology, China (16), Universitas Amikom (11), Universitas Budi Luhur (11), Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember (10), Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode (9), Universidad Técnica de Ambato (9), Yarmouk University (9), University of Münster (8), and Rauf Denktas University (8).

Table 2 Most Influential Institutions with their number of publications

TP	Affiliation	Country	NCP	TC	C/P	C/CP	h	g
17	Universitas Indonesia,	Indonesia	16	107	6.29	6.69	6	9
16	Jiangxi University of Science and Technology	China	10	98	6.13	9.80	5	9
11	Universitas Amikom Purwokerto	Indonesia	9	139	12.64	15.44	8	9
11	Universitas Budi Luhur	Indonesia	4	36	3.27	9.00	3	4
10	Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember	Indonesia	10	143	14.30	14.30	7	10
9	Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode,	India	8	114	12.67	14.25	4	8
9	Universidad Técnica de Ambato,	Ambato	8	60	6.67	7.50	4	7
9	Yarmouk University	Jordan	7	78	8.67	11.14	3	7
8	University of Münster	Germany	7	117	14.63	16.71	4	7
8	Rauf Denktas University,	Cyprus	8	69	8.63	8.63	5	8

The primary areas of e-government research were evaluated on the basis of (a) subject areas, (b) total publications (TP), and (c) corresponding percentages.

4.3 Subject Area

Table 3 categorizes the documents by subject area, demonstrating the diverse range of disciplines involved in e-government research. Computer Science dominates the publication landscape, representing 63.99% (1,354 documents), followed by Social Sciences at 39.60%. Other significant subject areas, each with over 100 publications, include Business, Management and Accounting; Engineering; Decision Science; Mathematics and Econometrics, Economics, and Finance. In contrast, fields such as Environmental Science, Energy, Arts and Humanities, and Medicine have fewer than 100 publications related to e-government.

Table 3 Subject Areas of E-government Research

Subject Area	TP	%
Computer Science	1354	63.99%
Social Sciences	838	39.60%
Business, Management and Accounting	425	20.09%
Engineering	390	18.43%
Decision Sciences	358	16.92%
Mathematics	203	9.59%
Economics, Econometrics and Finance	138	6.52%
Environmental Science	79	3.73%
Energy	69	3.26%
Arts and Humanities	61	2.88%
Physics and Astronomy	52	2.46%
Medicine	48	2.27%
Materials Science	33	1.56%
Psychology	30	1.42%
Earth and Planetary Sciences	24	1.13%
Multidisciplinary	15	0.71%
Agricultural and Biological Sciences	12	0.57%
Chemical Engineering	12	0.57%
Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology	8	0.38%
Chemistry	6	0.28%
Health Professions	3	0.14%
Nursing	3	0.14%
Immunology and Microbiology	2	0.09%
Neuroscience	2	0.09%
Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmaceutics	2	0.09%

4.4 Sources and Document Types

The study analyzed the publication sources of e-government research and found that articles were the most dominant, accounting for 1,084 (51.23%) of the total, followed by conference papers (n = 794; 37.52%), representing a difference of nearly 13%. Book chapters, reviews, and other document types collectively comprised less than 5% of the total. Despite being less frequently used, these sources are still scientifically valuable and can provide important insights for shaping e-government policy development.

Table 4Document Type

Document Type	TP	%
Article	1084	51.23%
Conference Paper	794	37.52%
Book Chapter	159	7.51%
Review	50	2.36%
Book	8	0.38%
Conference Review	8	0.38%
Editorial	5	0.24%
Erratum	5	0.24%
Data Paper	1	0.05%
Note	1	0.05%
Short Survey	1	0.05%

Notes: TP=total number of publications; % = percentage

4.5 Analysis of the Keywords

Keyword analysis operates under the assumption that the keywords selected by the authors are a reliable representation of the subject matter (Abdullahi, 2021; Comerio & Strozzi, 2019). The co-occurrence of two or more keywords within a single article indicates a relationship between these terms. Table 5 presents the most commonly used keywords in e-government research. Excluding 'e-government,' the most frequently appearing keyword was found in 1,264 documents, followed by another with 591 occurrences and a third with 186 instances. The term "e-government" was used both in its full and abbreviated forms, as well as interchangeably in singular and plural variations. Other frequently used keywords in e-government studies, appearing in over 100 documents, include government data processing, e-government services, information services, public administration, developing countries, and information systems. Additional keywords frequently appearing in over 50 e-government publications include: (a) Electronic Government, (b) Information Use, (c) Website, (d) Public Service, (e) E-government System, (f) Adoption, (g) Trust, (h) Decision Making, (i) Information and Communication Technologies, (j) Information Management, (k) Corruption, (l) Government Services, (m) Surveys, (n) Local Government, (o) E-government Implementation, (p) Digital Transformation, (q) Government, (r) E-participation, (s) Government Website, (t) Public Sector, (u) Transparency, and (v) Digital Government. The keywords primarily focused on governance-related themes. This study employed the VOSviewer software for keyword and co-occurrence analysis. VOSviewer, a tool designed for constructing and visualizing bibliometric networks, was used to identify the keywords in each publication. Figure 3 presents a keyword map generated by VOSviewer, visually representing the strength of the keyword relationships through variations in color, circle size, font, and line thickness. Keywords with similar thematic content are generally grouped and share the same color.

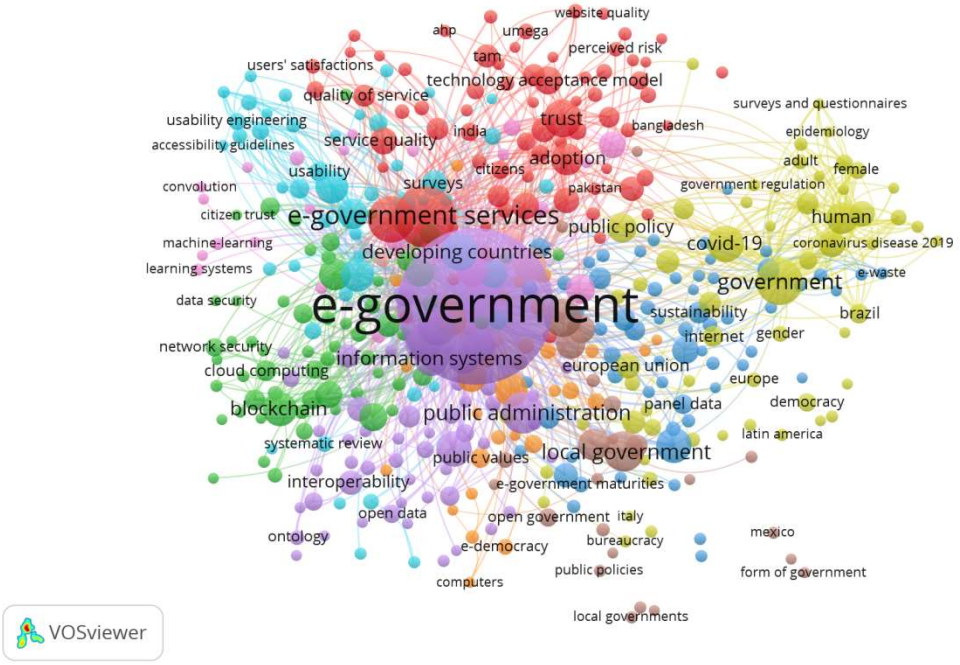


Fig. 3. Visual map of All keywords

Table 5 Keywords in E-government Research and Their Frequency

Keywords	TP	%
E-government	1264	59.74%
E-Government	591	27.93%
Government Data Processing	268	12.67%
E-government Services	264	12.48%
E-governments	186	8.79%
Information Services	176	8.32%
Public Administration	124	5.86%
Developing Countries	114	5.39%
Information Systems	110	5.20%
Electronic Government	98	4.63%
Information Use	93	4.40%
Websites	92	4.35%
Public Services	83	3.92%
E-government Systems	80	3.78%
Adoption	77	3.64%
Trust	76	3.59%
Decision Making	74	3.50%
Information And Communication Technologies	71	3.36%
Information Management	69	3.26%

Corruption	66	3.12%
Government Services	63	2.98%
Surveys	63	2.98%
Local Government	62	2.93%
E-government Implementation	60	2.84%
Digital Transformation	58	2.74%
Government	56	2.65%
E-participation	55	2.60%
Government Websites	55	2.60%
Public Sector	54	2.55%
Transparency	54	2.55%
Digital Government	51	2.41%
Artificial Intelligence	50	2.36%
Blockchain	50	2.36%
E-government Adoptions	50	2.36%
Government IS	50	2.36%
Indonesia	50	2.36%
ICT	49	2.32%
E-governance	48	2.27%
Interoperability	47	2.22%
Economic And Social Effects	46	2.17%
Big Data	45	2.13%
E-services	45	2.13%
Technology Acceptance Model	45	2.13%
Social Media	44	2.08%
Public Policy	38	1.80%
Digital Divide	37	1.75%
Sustainable Development	37	1.75%
E-Government Applications	36	1.70%
Information Technology	36	1.70%
Quality Of Service	35	1.65%
Literature Reviews	34	1.61%
Service Quality	34	1.61%
Smart City	34	1.61%
Crime	33	1.56%
E-Government Maturity	33	1.56%
Electronic government (e-government)	33	1.56%
Perceived Usefulness	33	1.56%
Cloud Computing	32	1.51%
Internet	32	1.51%
Technology Adoption	32	1.51%
Systematic Literature Review	31	1.47%
Social Networking (online)	30	1.42%

COVID-19	29	1.37%
Digitalization	29	1.37%
Web Design	28	1.32%
Behavioral Research	27	1.28%
E-government Adoption	27	1.28%
Human	27	1.28%
Public Values	27	1.28%
Satisfaction	27	1.28%
Structural Equation Modeling	27	1.28%
Usability	27	1.28%
Electronic Commerce	26	1.23%
Government Information	26	1.23%
Information And Communication Technology	26	1.23%
Information Quality	26	1.23%
Security	26	1.23%
TAM	26	1.23%
Accessibility	25	1.18%
Case-studies	25	1.18%
Data Mining	25	1.18%
Data Privacy	25	1.18%
Government Projects	25	1.18%
Privacy	25	1.18%
Quality Control	25	1.18%
Citizens	24	1.13%
India	24	1.13%
Laws And Legislation	24	1.13%
Network Security	24	1.13%
Online Service	24	1.13%
Public Value	24	1.13%
China	23	1.09%

This section explores the collaboration landscape and highlights the leading institutions engaged in e-government research. Universiti Sains Malaysia has surpassed Universiti Teknologi Mara to become the second-highest-ranked university, demonstrating its significant involvement in e-government research. As shown in Table 6, Universitas Indonesia remains the top contributor to e-government publications.

Table 6 Institutions Contributing More Than 20 E-government Research Documents

Institution	TP	Country	NCP	TC	C/P	C/CP	h	g
Universitas Indonesia	34	Indonesia	30	300	8.82	10.00	16	5
Universiti Sains Malaysia	23	Malaysia	17	225	9.78	13.24	8	14
Universiti Teknologi MARA	21	Malaysia	18	74	3.52	4.11	5	7
Yarmouk University	19	Jordan	14	287	15.11	20.50	8	14
Qatar University	18	Qatar	18	376	20.89	20.89	11	18
University of Cape Town	17	Ghana	13	36	2.12	2.77	3	5
Universiti Utara Malaysia	17	Malaysia	15	172	10.12	11.47	6	13
Bina Nusantara University	17	Indonesia	11	31	1.82	2.82	4	4
Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember	15	Indonesia	13	159	10.60	12.23	8	12
Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta	15	Indonesia	7	82	5.47	11.71	2	7
University of Münster	14	Germany	13	160	11.43	12.31	5	12
Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos	14	Peru	12	83	5.93	6.92	5	8
Universidad Técnica de Ambato	14	Ecuador	30	300	21.43	10.00	10	6
Indian Institute of Management, Ranchi	14	India	11	220	15.71	20.00	6	11
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	13	Malaysia	12	172	13.23	14.33	6	12
Tsinghua University	13	China	9	120	9.23	13.33	6	9
Huazhong University of Science and Technology	13	China	10	106	8.15	10.60	6	10
Universidade de Aveiro	12	Portugal	10	138	11.50	13.80	5	10
Kuwait University	12	Kuwait	8	66	5.50	8.25	5	8
Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia	12	Indonesia	11	100	8.33	9.09	5	9
Indian Institute of Management, Kozhikode	12	India	11	220	18.33	20.00	6	11

4.6 Publication by countries

To identify the leading countries, universities, and researchers contributing to e-government research, this study analyzed publication trends and their overall impact. To answer the second research question, publications were categorized by country section analyzes the present state of collaboration and identifies the most prominent countries in e-government research. Table 7 lists the top countries in the field, with Indonesia leading (n = 263), followed by China (n = 187), Malaysia (n = 143), and the USA (n = 129). In terms of citation impact, China

ranks highest with 2,615 citations, followed by the USA (1,942), Australia (1,607), and Indonesia (1,543). After analyzing the total number of publications for each country, the study shifted its focus to authorship to provide further insights into the second research question.

Table 7 *41 Top Countries with the Highest Number of E-government Documents*

Country	TP	NCP	TC	C/P	C/CP	h
Indonesia	263	180	1543	5.87	8.57	19
China	187	137	2615	13.98	19.09	26
Malaysia	143	112	1195	8.36	10.67	18
United States	129	92	1447	11.22	15.73	19
India	122	89	1247	10.22	14.01	20
United Kingdom	98	84	1942	19.82	23.12	21
South Africa	80	60	931	11.64	15.52	13
Spain	80	68	816	10.20	12.00	15
Saudi Arabia	72	55	817	11.35	14.85	16
Jordan	64	48	638	9.97	13.29	15
South Korea	57	96	1429	25.07	14.89	22
Germany	54	84	1053	19.50	12.54	17
Australia	53	90	1607	30.32	17.86	21
Greece	46	84	908	19.74	10.81	17
Portugal	45	32	319	7.09	9.97	10
Russian Federation	44	30	180	4.09	6.00	7
Turkey	40	31	452	11.30	14.58	8
Ecuador	36	29	141	3.92	4.86	7
Brazil	34	22	143	4.21	6.50	7
Italy	34	29	417	12.26	14.38	9
Peru	32	25	116	3.63	4.64	6
Sweden	31	29	800	25.81	27.59	11
Viet Nam	30	19	105	3.50	5.53	7
Iraq	28	19	126	4.50	6.63	5
Pakistan	28	27	510	18.21	18.89	13
Netherlands	27	22	482	17.85	21.91	11
United Arab Emirates	27	21	248	9.19	11.81	9
Canada	26	24	213	8.19	8.88	7
Colombia	24	22	213	8.88	9.68	7
Czech Republic	23	19	154	6.70	8.11	7
Egypt	23	20	215	9.35	10.75	6
Ghana	23	17	401	17.43	23.59	8
Poland	23	16	102	4.43	6.38	5
Thailand	23	16	102	4.43	6.38	5

Taiwan	21	14	173	8.24	12.36	7
Romania	20	16	152	7.60	9.50	6
Kuwait	19	15	195	10.26	13.00	7
Morocco	19	12	28	1.47	2.33	3
Serbia	19	13	86	4.53	6.62	6
Kazakhstan	18	16	255	14.17	15.94	8
Nigeria	18	12	111	6.17	9.25	6

The primary sources of the documents analyzed in this study were journals, which accounted for the largest proportion (54.25%), followed by conference proceedings (30.48%). Book series and individual books made up a significant portion of the total publications, with 9.78% and 5.48%, respectively.

Table 8 *Source Type*

Source Type	TP	%
Journal	1148	54.25%
Conference Proceeding	645	30.48%
Book Series	207	9.78%
Book	116	5.48%

4.7 Most Active Source Title

A diverse range of academic journals, conferences, and books have published articles on e-government research. Table 9 highlights the most prolific sources for e-government publications, ranked by the total number of contributions, ACM International Proceedings ranks first with 130 publications, followed by the Journal of Electronic Government (60 publications), Lecture Notes in Computer Science (46 publications), and Government Information Quarterly (45 publications), *Key sources include Transforming Government: People, Process, and Policy (37 publications), Electronic Government Research (34 publications), Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems (28 publications), Communications in Computer and Information Science (26 publications), Proceedings of the Annual Hawaii International Conference (26 publications), Proceedings of the European Conference on E-Government (26 publications), Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing (25 publications), and the International Journal of Electronic Governance and Sustainability (21 publications).* These sources collectively represent the most influential publications in the field of e-government research.

Table 9 shows the top 20 sources of publishing on E-government.

Source Title	TP	Publisher	Cite Score	SJR 2018	SNIP 2018	TC
ACM International Conference Proceeding Series	130					746
Electronic Government	60	Inder Science Publisher	2.3	0.279	0.64	404
Lecture Notes In Computer Science Including Subseries Lecture Notes In Artificial Intelligence And Lecture Notes In Bioinformatics	46	Springer Nature	2.6	0.606	0.59	299
Government Information Quarterly	45	Elsevier	15.7	2.171	2.979	2295
Transforming the Government People Process And Policy	37	Emerald Publishing	6.7	0.661	1.328	591
International Journal Of Electronic Government Research	34	IGI Global Publishing	2.6	0.294	0.554	359
Lecture Notes In Networks And Systems	28	Springer Nature	0.9	0.171	0.282	357
Communications In Computer And Information Science	26	Springer Nature	1.1	0.203	0.246	391
Proceedings Of The Annual Hawaii International Conference On System Sciences	26					18
Proceedings Of The European Conference On E Government Eceg	26					69
Advances In Intelligent Systems And Computing	25	Springer Nature	0.9	0.215	0.373	69
International Journal Of Electronic Governance	21	Inder Science Publisher	1.3	0.238	3.371	133
Sustainability Switzerland	21	multidisciplinary digital Publishing Institute	6.8	0.672	1.086	147
Electronic Journal Of Information Systems In Developing Countries	20	little lion Scientific	1.1	0.174	0.284	69
Journal Of Theoretical And Applied Information Technology	20	John Willey & sons	2.6	0.441	0.882	517
International Journal Of Public Administration	18	Taylor and Francis	4.7	0.614	1.107	140

Source Title	TP	Publisher	Cite Score	SJR 2018	SNIP 2018	TC
Aip Conference Proceedings	16	Conference Proceeding	0.5	0.152	0.291	179
Journal Of Physics Conference Series	15	Confrence Proceeding	1.2	0.18	0.303	44
Ceur Workshop Proceedings	14	Confrence Proceeding	1.1	0.191	0.235	17
IFIP Advances In Information And Communication Technology	14	Confrence Proceeding	4.5	0.505	0.871	207
Procedia of Computer Science	14	AIST	0.7	0.134	0.212	21

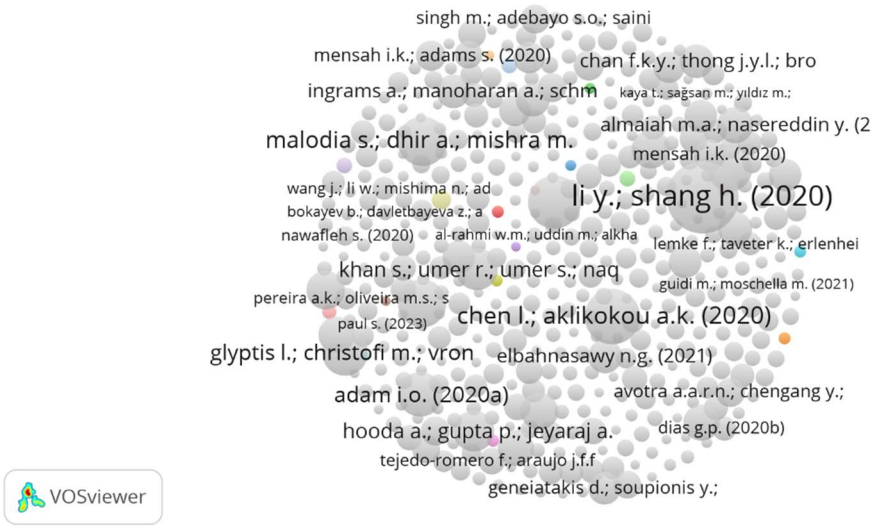


Fig 4. Visual Map of citation by document: Minimum Number of*;* Minimum number of citations of a document= 4

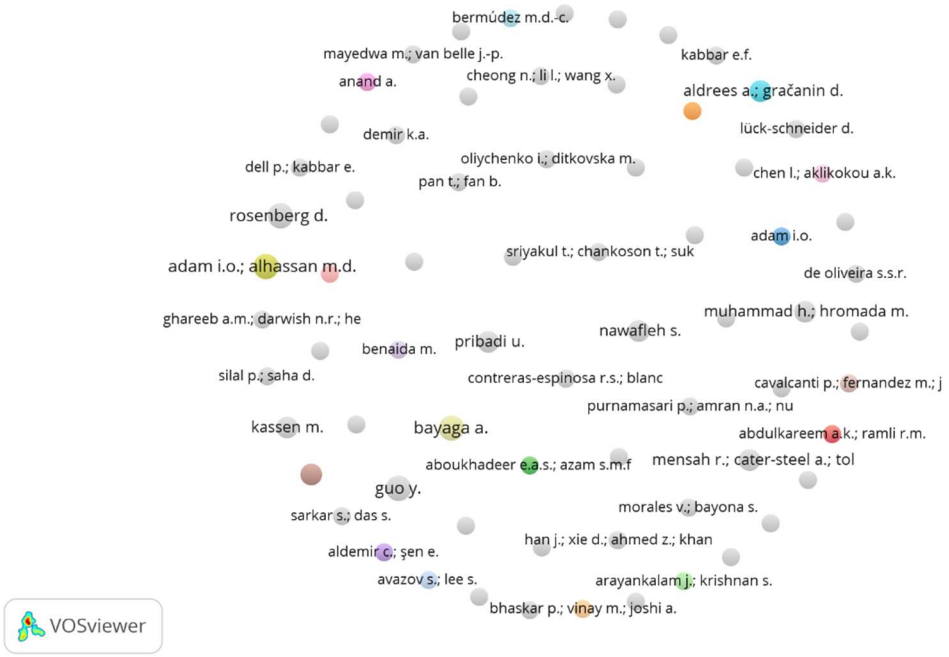


Fig. 5 *Visual* Map of Citation by Authors

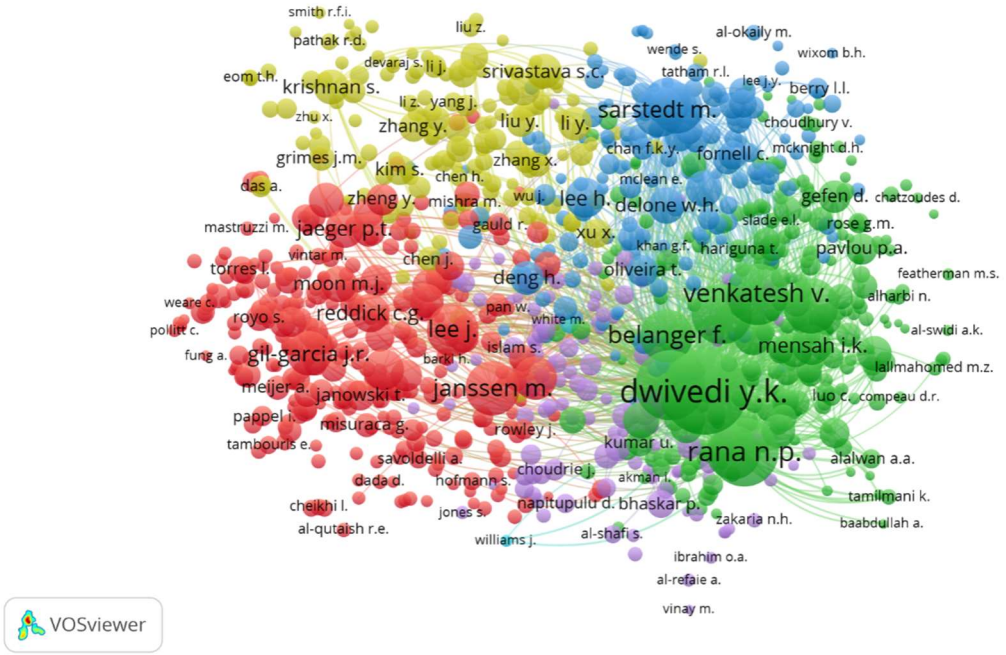


Fig 6 Visual Map of Co-Citation by Authors

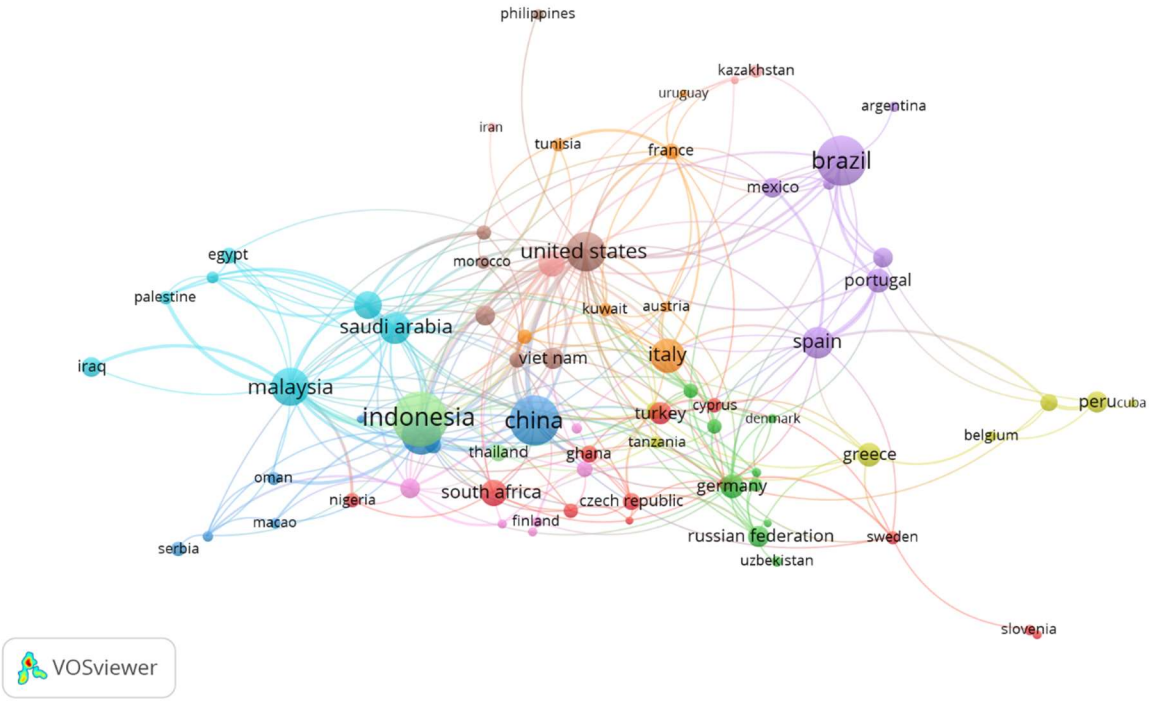


Fig 6 Visual Map of Co-Authorship by Countries Minimum number of documents by Authors = *4*

5.1 Discussion

Acknowledging e-government's potential to close the digital divide and enhance public service delivery, this study was conducted, E-government is also seen as a strategy for promoting transparency and accountability in governance (Sulaiman et al., 2022). However, despite the expanding body of research, questions remain regarding its interdisciplinary nature and the extent of global collaboration. Ensuring inclusivity by integrating diverse perspectives from various local contexts is essential for the effective implementation of e-government (Etebom, 2024). To fill these identified gaps, a bibliometric analysis was performed on 2,119 e-government publications from the Scopus database, spanning 2017 to August 15, 2024. This study sought to answer the following five core research questions (i) the emerging trends and key contributions in e-government research, (ii) the leading countries, institutions, and authors in this field, (iii) the most influential publications in e-government research, (iv) the main themes and areas of focus within e-government research, and (v) the potential avenues for future research in this domain. The analysis indicates a relatively high level of research activity on emerging trends and major contributions in e-government, although publication numbers have fluctuated over time. Most of these studies are published in English and originate from 76 different countries.

Regarding the second research question, the leading countries contributing to the e-government literature are Indonesia, China, Malaysia, the United States, and India, with 263, 187, 143, 129, and 122 publications, respectively (Table 7). The data suggest that e-government research is more concentrated in Asian countries and spans fields such as Computer Science (63.99%), Social Sciences (39.60%), Business, Management, and Accounting (20.09%), and Engineering (18.43%). Universitas Indonesia is the top institution in this area, contributing 18 publications and approximately 107 citations. Jiangxi University of Science and Technology, China, followed with 16 publications, while

Universitas Amikom Purwokerto and Universitas Budi Luhur each had 11 publications. Citation matrices were used to evaluate the impact of e-government research, showing significant growth with 2,119 articles and over 18,000 citations recorded in Scopus as of August 15, 2024.

To address the third research question, the study reviewed various academic journals, conferences, and books related to e-government research. Government Information Quarterly and Sustainability Switzerland received the highest number of citations per article, indicating their significant influence in the field. These journals are among the most productive sources for scholarly research on e-government, as shown in Table 9, which ranks journals by their number of e-government publications. Government Information Quarterly is a highly influential journal in the field of e-government, serving as a valuable resource for both academics and practitioners. Further analysis reveals that e-government research is largely collaborative, presenting opportunities for future exploration in this area. Co-authorship often serves as an indicator of collaboration, reflecting active engagement between researchers (Adam, 2013). This study found evidence of extensive collaboration in e-government research among scholars, institutions, and countries. Consistent with the findings of Zhu et al. (2018), most collaborations in e-government research are internal to institutions, with limited international collaboration.

While there is evidence of robust cross-country collaboration, proximity appears to have influenced the formation of these partnerships. E-government research in Asia, China, the USA, and the UK exhibited Top levels of collaboration, whereas collaboration in Africa was limited. This geographical concentration may restrict a broader understanding of e-government, indicating the need to consider geographical, economic, institutional, and cultural factors to facilitate wider adoption and impact.

Collaboration is essential for adapting e-government to local contexts and providing strategic guidance for its effective design, management, and implementation (Ratnaria et al., 2020). Collaborative efforts enhance the transfer, integration, and reinforcement of knowledge. Countries can benefit from shared experiences and insights to optimize the potential of e-government and refine implementation strategies. Partnerships with leading universities and experts in the field can also boost academic standing and increase the visibility of research publications.

Successful e-government implementation relies on knowledge spillover, which is closely connected to knowledge transfer and reinforcement. While collaboration in e-government research is evident, the extent of partnerships between universities in less developed regions remains unclear. International cooperation among countries, institutions, and researchers can promote knowledge and technology exchange, significantly contributing to global economic development. It is also important to investigate how collaborations in e-government research manage and protect intellectual property, which is essential for preserving and regulating original innovations.

5.2 Conclusion

A bibliometric analysis was conducted to review e-government research publications from 2017 to August 15, 2024. This research offered an in-depth analysis of e-government studies by exploring trends, core themes, collaborations, and multiple aspects, including yearly publication patterns, source journals, languages, subject areas, keywords, document titles, contributing nations, leading institutions, authorship trends, and citation metrics. The findings illustrate the broad application of e-government research, which involves contributions from scholars across multiple countries and demonstrates consistent growth and dissemination. The interdisciplinary nature of e-government research has encouraged collaboration and innovation, leading to the development of new ideas and perspectives within the field.

Collaboration among scholars and institutions globally has been increasing, emphasizing the value of integrating diverse perspectives from various economic, cultural, and institutional contexts. The growing interest in online courses worldwide further underscores the expanding focus on e-government and its potential to address the challenges associated with its implementation. However, collaboration and communication in e-government research often remain geographically concentrated, limiting the exchange of knowledge and perspectives across countries that could greatly benefit from these initiatives.

The conceptual implications of this research lie in its comprehensive mapping of the e-government research domain. By revealing dominant themes, influential actors, and collaborative networks, this study offers a framework for understanding the intellectual structure of the field. Theoretically, the findings reinforce the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to e-government research and highlight the role of collaborative knowledge creation in addressing complex challenges. In relation to previous studies, this analysis confirms the ongoing growth and increasing sophistication of e-government research, aligning with the findings of Song et al., (2024). However, unlike earlier studies that focused on specific regions or aspects of e-government, this research provides a broader, global perspective. The emphasis on collaborative networks and the identification of research gaps related to geographical disparities offer new insights not fully addressed in prior literature. Further research is needed to explore these disparities and to develop more inclusive and contextually relevant approaches to e-government research and implementation.

NOTES

TP=total number of publications; NCP=number of cited publications; TC=total citations; C/P=average citations per publication; C/CP=average citations per cited publication; h=h-index; and g=g-index.

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APPRAISAL OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE COMMUNICATION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST INDISCRIMINATE WASTE DISPOSALS IN FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY, ABUJA

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KEYWORDS
Communication, media campaign, social and behaviour change communication, and waste disposal

ABSTRACT
Everyone has a responsibility to ensure environmental sustainability; both the government and the people have a part to play because issues affecting the government also impact the people. In the fight against careless garbage disposal in the Abuja Municipal Area Council, the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria, Abuja, this study evaluates social and behaviour change communication. The purpose of this study was to find out how much the government has used social and behaviour change communication strategies in improving lives of the residents of Abuja Municipal Area Council as it concerns poor waste management and disposal practices. The social learning theory serves as the study's foundation while the survey design was adopted with structured questionnaire of (400) Abuja Municipal Area Council resident. The study revealed that people are aware of the improper disposal of various wastes, including leftover food, faeces, polythene, garment materials, and the like. Based on the findings, the study concludes that SBCC has demonstrated moderate effectiveness in promoting positive behaviour change however, awareness campaigns and the use of effective channel of communication in the subject matter are key in achieving this. The study therefore recommends that in order to maintain the wellbeing of the citizens or residents of Abuja Municipal Area Council, Abuja, as well as to make the local government neat and beautiful, the government should not only legislate but also execute or implement environmental policies, as well as create streets or locational waste collection bins and prosecute erring residents.

Introduction

Communication is an essential instrument in tackling environmental and other human concerns as the lifeblood of any responsible society. Communication is used in a wide range of health promotion initiatives, either as an instructional or norm-forming tactic. Furthermore, particular approaches need to be developed for high-risk populations, including women, youth, injectable drug users, homosexuals, and HIV positive individuals. It is frequently impossible to help people adopt the proper habits without addressing the social and environmental elements that shape those behaviours (UNICEF, 2020). This explains the necessity of social and behaviour change communication interventions, such as sending personalized messages and creating a nurturing atmosphere to encourage people to change their behaviours for the better in their personal and social lives.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) defines SBCC as the deliberate application of communication techniques to support modifications in norms, beliefs, behaviours, and knowledge. In addition, it involves coordinating actions and messages through a wide range of media to reach different societal levels, such as the individual, the community, services, and policy.

By strengthening the social context, systems, and processes through the use of theoretically, culturally, and contextually appropriate approaches, SBCC aims to improve health outcomes at the individual, community, and social levels as well as modify or maintain healthy behaviours. SBCC is based on the notion that all behaviours, including interpersonal interactions and the laws, cultural norms, and values that mould people's environments, must be comprehended and addressed within an ecological framework (McKee et al., 2014). The implication is that SBCC is a deliberate attempt to utilize communication strategies to maintain and modify healthy behaviors.

Scholars like Awantang et al. (2022), SBCC is crucial in establishing and preserving desired health behaviours and norms. In a similar vein, SBCC has shown promise in a number of health domains, including boosting the use of family planning techniques, curbing the spread of malaria and other infectious illnesses, and enhancing the health of new mothers and babies. An excellent tool for handling a variety of group and community-related issues is SBCC. SBCC has been adopted as a successful tactic for public outreach initiatives, health and environmental education, and community mobilization. Increasing understanding of the process of behaviour modification has made it easier to create communication campaigns aimed at lowering the risk of HIV and AIDS.

Solid waste generation, control, and disposal are among the most urgent environmental and public health issues in Nigeria today (Okwesili et al., 2016). It can be deduced from this submission that solid waste generation, control and disposal are environmental public health issues in the society. This is also consistent with Opara and Uwakwe (2016) submission that majority of people dispose of their solid trash in any open space as a result of inefficient waste management.

Sadly, in some areas of Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) such as Nyanya and Karu with population density are often affected by indiscriminate waste disposal that is detrimental effects on community growth and development. A typical example is the site along Karu market axis. Many waste materials are not properly disposed of and poorly managed at dump sites thereby causing discomfort for onlookers and commuters alike due to the unpleasant stench they release as well as defaces the city.

It is important to note that the attitudes of people and approaches toward issues that impact them can be influenced by effective communication, as evidenced by several studies. One of such strategies is the use of social behaviour and change communication. Nevertheless, there is scant proof that this strategy has been applied to Nigerian waste management and disposal, particularly in the Abuja Municipal Area Council. Although, much efforts has been claimed by the government of Abuja Municipal Area Council and it's agencies in addressing the issue of waste disposal and management like the Abuja Environmental Protection Board (AEPB) which is saddled with the responsibility to improve on the financial and technical resources needed to parallel this growth. However, due to factors such as increased rate of urbanization, illegal city structure and developments, rapid rate of population increase, rapid development, and changes in consumption pattern, the menace of

poor waste disposal seems not to have been under control.

Arising from the above, wastes are generated faster than they are collected, transported, and disposed. This problem of urbanization has also complicated the problem of waste management as land becomes scarce, human settlements encroach upon landfill spaces, and government in some cases encourage new development directly on top of operating on recently closed landfills (Ikemike, 2015). It is obvious from this argument that the movement from rural areas to urban cities is responsible for the problem of poor waste disposal. Against this backdrop, this study set out to appraise social and behavior change communication in the fight against indiscriminate waste disposals in AMAC.

Objectives of the study

This study set out to appraise social and behavior change communication in the fight against indiscriminate waste disposals in AMAC. The specific objectives of the study are:

i. To assess the extent of SBCC usage in addressing environmental issues in AMAC

ii. To evaluate the effects of SBCC on residents' behaviour regarding waste disposal

iii. To identify challenges associated with SBCC in waste management

iv. To suggest possible effective SBCC strategy to influence FCT residents' waste disposal practices

Theoretical Perspective

This work is hinged on the Social Learning Theory. In the 1960s, Bandura became known for his social learning theory (SLT). His approach recognized reinforcement and the importance of observing, modelling, and imitating the emotional reactions, attitudes, and behaviours of others in learning. In 1986, the SLT developed into the social cognitive theory, incorporating the idea that learning takes place in a social context, "with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behaviour," and a cognitive context that considers past experiences that shape engagement in behaviour (LaMorte, 2019). The idea behind social learning theory is that individuals can pick up knowledge from one another by watching, copying, and modelling that is, it investigates how human behaviour is influenced by socialization.

The core assumptions of the social learning theory is that people learn through observation, reinforcement and punishment have direct effects on behaviour and learning. Also, meditational processes influence our behaviour and lastly, learning does not necessarily lead to change. The theory has been adopted in several studies because it is flexible in explaining the differences in a person's behaviour or learning process, i.e. when there is a change in a person's environment, the person's behaviour may change.

In this study, the theory has been adopted because of it's relevance to identify the root of societal framework in solving environmental problems especially in the area of learning new behaviours that are geared towards human, health and environmental sustainability.

Conceptual Clarification

In this section of the study, the concepts of social and behaviour change communication and waste management have been extensively reviewed.

Social and Behaviour Change Communication

SBCC is the acronym for social and behaviour change communication. it is the strategic use of communication approaches to promote changes in knowledge, attitudes, norms, beliefs and behaviours. Furthermore, it is the coordination of messages and activities across a variety of channels to reach multiple levels of society, including the individual, the community, services and policy (USAID, 2019). This means that social and behaviour change communication is the use of communication as tool to enhance attitude and behaviour change towards a possible course in the society.

Similarly, Muturi (2023) rightly observed that social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) entails addressing issues that impact people directly or indirectly and that require behaviour change at the individual, societal, national, and international levels. Such issues

include health, environment, economic, risk, disaster preparedness, and climate change among other social and developmental challenges. This argument implies that SBCC is a multifaceted communication approach to addressing challenges that hinder access to basic human needs including food insecurity, shelter, clothing, clean water, basic education, health care, and security, among other factors and social injustices that contribute to various inequalities at a societal level.

Corroborating Arogyakeralom (2020), behavioural change communication is an interactive approach to any intervention that involves working with individuals, groups, or communities to develop communication strategies that encourage positive health behaviours that are appropriate for the current social conditions. In order to develop positive behaviours, promote and sustain individual, community, and societal behaviour change, and maintain appropriate behaviours, behaviour modification counselling (BCC) is an interactive process that works with communities (as part of a larger program) to develop customized messages and approaches using a variety of communication channels.

Waste Disposal

Waste disposal is described as how waste products such as leathers, leftover food, tins, clothing materials, papers, faeces among others are disposed or discarded. Abila and Kantola (2017) suggested that urban solid waste ought to be rightly disposed using several methods like landfill, incineration, composting and anaerobic digestion and recycling. Despite this suggestion, careless waste product disposal and disorderly consumption result in indiscriminate waste disposal and mismanagement (Brunner & Rechberger, 2014). This means that there is urgent need for attitudinal change regarding waste disposal in the society and AMAC is not an exception.

In this submission, Ghiani et al. (2014) averred that maintaining proper solid waste management organization is now crucial for protecting the ecosystem. This becomes a problem to the community or locale where it is been disposed as a result of poor disposal. This validates the report of Naphtali and Vimtim (2016); Opara et al. (2016); Opara and Uwakwe (2016) that most people dispose their solid waste in any open space which contribute to the improper management of waste. The implication is Nigerians have poor waste disposal culture and there is need for attitude change.

The argument above contradicts the position of Ruth (2016) that poor waste disposal is is characterized by inadequacy of dumpsites in urban regions, distance of the dumpsites from human habited regions, inadequacy of strong waste offerings, weak point of nearby government establishments, increased population and speedy urban boom, availability of open area, terrible human mind-set, less regards for environmental laws and rules and less situation for the spheres of the ecosystems.

However, waste management (or waste disposal) are the activities and actions required to manage waste from its inception to its final disposal. This includes the collection, transport, treatment, and disposal of waste, together with the regulation of the waste management process (United Nations Statistics Division Environment, 2017). Unfortunately, most waste in Africa is not collected by municipal collection systems because of poor management, fiscal irresponsibility, equipment failure, or inadequate waste management budgets (Opara et al., 2016). In essence, poor waste disposal in Nigeria calls for attitude change to enhance a safe and clean environment.

Literature Review

This section of the study reviewed the literature related to the study. The review is based on thematic analysis.

Overview of Social and Behaviour Change Communication

Social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) has emerged as a vital strategy in addressing environmental issues, including waste management (Maji et al., 2020). This means that social and behaviour change communication came about as a strategy to address environmental issues. aims to influence individuals' behaviours and attitudes towards environmental issues, promoting sustainable practices such as energy conservation and water conservation (Adeleke et al., 2021). It is a deliberate effort or campaign used to modify behaviours of humans towards positive growth and development.

The social and behaviour change communication framework consists of four stages:

i. Situational analysis: This stage involves gathering and analysing data to understand the target audience's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours (USAID, 2019). This will help to disseminate adequate message to the right audience

ii. Planning and strategy: This stage involves developing a communication strategy to achieve the desired behaviour change (HC3, 2020). Planning is mapping out the nitty-gritty of all factors or agents needed to carry out necessary campaign.

iii. Message and material development: This stage involves creating messages and materials that are tailored to the target audience's needs and preferences (Adhikari, 2019).

iv. Evaluation: This stage involves assessing the effectiveness of the SBCC intervention (USAID, 2019). Without proper evaluation, the impacts of any programme cannot be measured.

Social and behaviour change communication is essential for promoting environmental sustainability and addressing environmental menaces such as improper waste disposal (McKinnon et al., 2016). The implication is that this strategy can be used to promote behaviour change and encourage individuals to adopt sustainable practices towards effective environment sustainability and proper waste disposal with a view to enhance environment safety and cleanliness.

Importance of Social and Behaviour Change Communication in Combating Environmental Menaces

Environmental Sustainability is the broadening of our understanding of human activity to highlight its relationship with the environmental theory of interdependence. The idea of environmental sustainability can be seen as a way to improve on a particular facet of the generally recognized definition of sustainable development. To improve environmental wellbeing and fairness, the attitudes of humans must change and rightly positioned towards environmental, societal, national and global development.

The direct goal of behaviour change communication is behaviour modification. Scholars like Ngigi and Busolo (2018) posited that behaviour change communication can take several forms in order to persuade people or a group of people to alter their behaviour in response to a particular issue. This simply means that social and behaviour change communication is concerned with attitude and behaviour change among the people.

In the same vein, Wagle (2019) described behaviour change communication is important because it motivates a person or a group to alter their behaviour. The aforementioned suggests that the purpose of behaviour change communication is to persuade individuals to modify harmful behaviours or change their own behaviour. This is accurate in that behaviour change communication. He further argued that SBCC is a useful strategy for fostering shifts in norms, attitudes, knowledge, behaviours, and beliefs. This shows that behaviours command actions and in return pose results.

SBCC can help militate against bad behaviours considering some changes as posed by Open Learn Create. Firstly, the Pre-awareness Stage where people are unaware of the changes they must make. As a result, the individual exhibiting such unpleasant behaviour might not have realized there was anything wrong with it at the time. At this point, the behaviour changes communicator needs to fill his audience in on all the necessary details in an effort to influence their behaviour. The audience was unaware of the necessity or significance of change prior to this point. The necessity or significance of change should be emphasized in messages at this point. At this point, information is used to show the audience how important or necessary change is. It's the initial.

The second is Awareness Stage. In this stage, the audience is aware of the necessity or significance of change, but they still require more support and encouragement to begin making the necessary changes. This indicates that although they are aware that something needs to change, the public is still undecided. At this point, the message should centre on persuasion, and changing behaviour is the best way to accomplish this. A communicator can employ appeals that best serve his objectives. Here, one can entice the audience to want to

change by using persuasive communication. Here, the communicator might convince the listeners that by participating in bad habits, he or she is destroying the future for their offspring and future generations.

Furthermore; Stage of Contemplation entails when the audience is considering changing their behaviour, but they still require additional knowledge, on-going encouragement, and persuasion regarding the benefits and drawbacks of doing so. At this point, the communicator must highlight the benefits of change as well as the drawbacks of staying the same. In order to help the audience deal with the change they are considering, the communicator must provide them with advice. This demonstrates that the communicator is aware of the circumstances of the audience. At this point, the communicator must once more offer additional details regarding the significance of change. The fourth stage is the Stage of Intention where the audience is aware of the benefits and drawbacks of altering their behaviour, but they are unsure of how to make the change. It is the communicator's responsibility to assist the audience in removing obstacles to the adoption of new behaviours.

Fifth state includes - The Trial Stage where individual or audience has attempted the new behaviour at this point, but difficulties have been encountered. Additionally, the communicator must support the reinforcement of strategies for averting problems. Counselling is necessary for such citizens to get through their challenges.

Sixth stage is the Adoption Stage. At this stage the audience is now acting out the new behaviour. At this point, audiences need dialogue to support the changes they have made and to encourage their behaviour. Here, the communicator must go into further detail on the advantages of change, as well as inspire and thank the audiences and underline the necessity of change in order for it to be maintained.

Seventh stage is Maintenance Stage. At this point, the individual has altered his behaviour and is aware of its advantages. Right now, all that is required of the communicator or change agent is to provide the people with assistance so they can deal with any challenges that may arise.

Lastly, notifying others Stage is when the new behaviour has been practiced for so long that it has become second nature to the individual. At this point, the person has to spread the word about the advantages of the new behaviour to others since he is so persuaded of it. At this point, the person needs to hear nothing but praise.

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design to assess the effectiveness of Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) in reducing indiscriminate waste disposal in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). The study was conducted in AMAC, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria, with a population of 1,693,400 residents as of 2022 (National Population Commission, 2022). A sample size of 400 respondents was selected using Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1967), which is suitable for calculating sample size. Stratified random sampling was used to select the sample size, and simple random sampling was used to distribute questionnaires within households, markets, and motor parks in populated and affected areas.

Furthermore; a structured questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. The questionnaire was designed to assess the effectiveness of SBCC in reducing indiscriminate waste disposal. Questionnaires were distributed in Abuja Municipal Area Council, specifically in Nyanya and Karu areas. In every one of the layer, (200) women and (200) men were inspected. Also, a simple frequency table, simple percentages and footnotes are used to collate and analyse the responses from the questionnaires distributed.

Data presentation and Analysis

This section of the study focuses on the presentation and analysis of data obtained from the field survey.

Table 1: Awareness of waste disposal schemes

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Not aware at all	105	26.25%
Somewhat unaware	75	18.75%
Neutral	80	20%
Somewhat aware	65	16.25%
Very aware	75	18.75%
Total:	**400**	**100%**

Source: Field survey, 2024

Data in table 1 revealed that 180 (45%) of respondents are unaware, 80 (20%) respondents were neutral while 140 (35%) are somewhat aware and very aware of the implementation of SBCC of waste disposal schemes in AMAC. This implies that respondents are unaware of waste disposal scheme in AMAC as revealed by 180 (45%) of the entire respondents.

Table 2: Sources of information on waste disposal

Sources of Information	Frequency	Percentage
Radio	100	25%
Television Programme	70	17.5%
Social media	170	42.5%
Posters/Fliers	30	7.5%
Government Campaign/messages	30	7.5%
Total:	**400**	**100%**

Source: Field survey, 2024

Data evidence in table 2 revealed that social media is the most common source of information on waste disposal as affirmed by 170 (42.5%) respondents. 100 (25%) respondents listen to radio, 17.5% watch television, 30 (7.5%) respondents depend on posters/fliers and campaign messages respectively.

Effectiveness of Information	Frequency	Percentage
Not effective at all	175	43.75%
Somewhat ineffective	50	12.5%

Neutral	55	13.75%
Somewhat effective	50	12.5%
Very effective	70	17.5%
Total:	**400**	**100%**

Table 3: Effectiveness of information on waste disposal

Source: Field survey, 2024

Data in table 3 revealed that 175 (43.7%) affirmed that information on waste disposal is not effective, 120 (30%) of respondents find the information on waste disposal somewhat or very effective while, 225 (56.25%) respondents find it ineffective and 13.73% stood neutral. The implication is that information waste disposal is not effective as affirmed by 175 (43.7%) of the entire respondents.

Table 4: Practice of proper waste separation

Responses	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Never	300	75%
Rarely	-	0%
Sometimes	100	25%
Often	-	0%
Always	-	0%
Total:	**400%**	**100%**

Source: Field survey, 2024

Data in table 4 revealed that 300 (75%) of respondents affirmed that proper waste separation or disposal is not practiced often or always while 100 (25%) respondents affirmed that it is sometime practised. This implies that proper waste disposal is not practised in Abuja as affirmed by 300 (75%0) of the entire respondents.

Table 5: Challenges in practicing proper waste disposal

Challenges	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Lack of infrastructure	100	25%
Lack of awareness	150	37.5%
Lack of enforcement	100	25%
Financial constraint	50	12.5%
Other	0	0%

Total:	**400**	**100%**

Source: Field survey, 2024

Data in table 5 revealed that lack of awareness is the most common challenge faced in practicing proper waste disposal as affirmed by 150 (37.5%) of respondents. 100 (25%) respondents say lack of infrastructure and lack of enforcement while 50 (12.5%) owe the challenge to financial constraint. The implication is that the most common challenge of practising proper waste disposal is lack of awareness as affirmed by 150 (37%) of the entire respondents.

Table 6: Motivation to practice proper waste disposal

Challenges	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Not motivated at all	110	27.5%
Somewhat unmotivated	80	20%
Neutral	70	17.5%
Somewhat motivated	80	20%
Very motivated	60	15%
Total:	**400**	**100%**

Source: Field survey, 2024

Data in table 6 revealed that 110 (27%) respondents are not motivated at all to practice waste disposal. 80 (20%) are somewhat unmotivated, 70 (17.5%) were neutral while 60 (15%) are very much motivated to practice waste disposal. This implies that respondents are not motivated to practice proper waste disposal in AMAC as affirmed by 110 (27%) of the entire respondents.

Table 7: Ways for effective social and behaviour change communication

Strategies	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Community engagement and education	100	25%
Collaboration with local authorities	50	12.5%
Collaboration with NGOs	40	10%
Addressing infrastructure gaps	60	15%
Social media campaigns	150	37.5%
Total:	**400**	**100%**

Source: Field survey, 2024

Data in table 7 sought to find out effective ways for social and behaviour change communication. 100 (25%) affirmed community engagement and education, 50 (12%) affirmed

collaboration with local authorities, 40 (10%) affirmed collaboration with NGOs, 60 (15%) affirmed addressing infrastructure gaps while 150 (37.5%) respondents affirmed social media campaigns. The implication is that the social media campaigns is most effective ways for social and behaviour change communication as affirmed by 150 (37%) of the entire respondents.

Discussion of Findings

This section of the study is devoted to the discussion of findings. The findings are discussed in line with the objectives of the study, the theoretical underpinning and the general literature reviewed.

The first objective was to assess the extent of SBCC usage in addressing environmental issues in AMAC. In response to this objective, data evidence in table 2&3 revealed that SBCC has been partially moderately effective in addressing environmental issues in AMAC, with 140 (35%) respondents somewhat or very aware of SBCC waste disposal schemes. This finding is consistent with Arogyakeralom, 2020; McKinnon et al., 2016 submission that SBCC have shown to be an effective approach in promoting environmental.

The second objective was to evaluate the effects of SBCC on residents' behaviour regarding waste disposal. Data in table 4 revealed that SBCC has had a limited impact on residents' behaviour regarding waste disposal as 300 (75%) respondents affirmed never practicing proper waste separation. This finding is in consonance with previous studies by Ngigi & Busolo, 2018; Adeleke et al. (2021). that have shown that SBCC may not be enough to change behaviour, and that other factors such as infrastructure and enforcement are also necessary

Furthermore, the third objective was to identifying challenges associated with SBCC in waste disposal and management. The study identifies several challenges associated with SBCC in waste management, including lack of awareness lack of infrastructure, lack of enforcement, and financial constraints as presented in Table 6. These findings are consistent with previous studies by Muturi, 2023; Kabir et al. (2022).that have identified similar challenges in implementing SBCC programs

Finally, the study was conducted to provide recommendations for an effective SBCC strategy by the residents of AMAC. Data evidence revealed that awareness and education on proper waste disposal practices through social media campaigns and community engagement. This is amplified by Okocha et al. (2023) that communication on social media encourages interaction and engenders a sense of belonging thereby enhancing motivation and dedication towards accepting and achieving corporate objectives.

Conclusion and recommendation

In conclusion, social and behaviour change communication is significant in addressing the pressing environmental issue of indiscriminate waste disposal in AMAC, Nigeria. While SBCC has demonstrated moderate effectiveness in promoting positive behaviour change. Awareness campaigns and the use of effective channel of communication in the subject matter are key in achieving this. The findings highlight the need for a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that addresses the complex interplay of factors influencing waste disposal behaviours among residents of AMAC. By leveraging the strengths of SBCC and addressing its limitations, it is possible to create a transformative impact on waste disposal practices in Abuja Municipal Area Council.

To optimize the impact of SBCC on waste disposal practices in AMAC, the following recommendations are made:

i. The government of AMAC is to design and implement targeted SBCC campaigns that address specific behavioural determinants and community concerns, utilizing a range of communication channels and strategies to reach diverse audiences.

ii. The AMAC government is to foster multi-stakeholder collaborations between local authorities, NGOs, private sector organizations, and community groups to address infrastructure gaps, enhance enforcement, and promote collective action and shared responsibility for waste management.

iii. The government of Abuja Municipal Area Council is to introduce incentives and rewards to motivate residents to adopt proper waste disposal practices, such as discounts on waste management services, community recognition, or economic benefits.

iv. Abuja Municipal Authority is to establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track SBCC effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and inform adaptive management and program refinement. Also, integrate SBCC with other interventions, such as infrastructure development, policy changes, community engagement, and education, to achieve sustainable behaviour change and environmental impact, and to address the complex and interconnected factors driving waste disposal behaviours.

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INTER-RELIGIOUS RELATIONS AMONG THE YORUBA AND HAUSA IN A SELECTED COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH-WESTERN NIGERIA

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Inter-religious relations, Yoruba and Hausa communities, Peaceful co-existence and Sagamu town

ABSTRACT
Inter-religious relations and interactions between communities with diverse ethno-religious inclinations are aimed at promoting mutual understanding and coexistence, among the Yoruba and Hausa communities in Sagamu. Existing studies on relations among the Yoruba and Hausa communities have focused largely on their economic, political, social and cultural relations with little attention paid to their inter-religious relations. This study was, therefore, designed to examine inter-religious relations among the Yoruba and Hausa in Sagamu with a view to identifying factors that promoted and incidents that undermined their peaceful co-existence. Purposive sampling was used to select Sagamu Local Government Areas for being the core host Hausa Muslim settlers' communities in Ogun State. Key informant interviews were conducted with 20 religious leaders while Interreligious Relations Questionnaire on Peaceful Co-existence was administered to 188 respondents. The quantitative data were subjected to descriptive analysis. Seven factors promoted inter-religious harmony among the Yoruba and Hausa in Sagamu. They were: exposure of the people of Sagamu and the reception of foreigners, Islam and Hausa language as unifying factors, inter-ethnic marriage, Akarigbo's Role as father of all, participation in religious festivals, political relations and cultural assimilation. Four incidents undermined the inter-religious harmony between the Hausa and Yoruba in Sagamu. They were: interference in chieftaincy matters, violation of the Oro cult festival, indigenous land rights and collection of laada (payment of commission) which created enmity. Socio-economic and political factors both contributed to the promotion and incidents that undermined inter-religious relations among the Yoruba and Hausa communities in Sagamu, Southwestern Nigeria.

Introduction

Throughout its existence as an independent country, Nigeria has had several incidences of inter and intra-ethnic violence, and the issue is thought to have become worse and more persistent over time. More than twenty thousand Nigerians have died in several distinct confrontations along ethnic, religious, and other intra- and inter-communal lines since the end of military government in 1999.[1] While most of the occurrences have been relatively minor, some conflicts have destroyed whole villages and the loss of hundreds of people in a matter of days or weeks.

Nigeria's history has been significantly shaped by the division between Islam and Christianity as well as the differences in religion and ethnic affiliation. It has also contributed significantly to the ongoing problem of Christians and Muslims living in heterogeneous society. The majority of Nigerians express the view that such a diversity of individuals and ideologies cannot make impact on the growth of a strong and steady democracy. However, the intricacy offers a legitimate basis for reevaluating the intercultural and multicultural effects of coexisting faiths in a specific nation like Nigeria.

Among Nigeria's biggest, most politically engaged, and economically oriented ethnic groups are the Yoruba and the Hausa, who are also renowned for having a wide range of religious and cultural practices. Along with its many languages and multiracial culture, the diversity is reflected in the variety of religions. The Hausa is a member of a people living chiefly in northern Nigeria, whereas the Yoruba people are primarily concentrated in the South-Western part. The settlement of Hausas in the Southwest of Nigerian city of Sagamu was facilitated by the trade in kola nuts and livestock, as opposed to other factors. Over time, this commerce developed into a chance for both ethnic groups to forge friendly and peaceful ties.

The groups had interacted before colonial times. Substantial migrations of Northerners into Yoruba territory and vice versa have occurred, even as far as Lagos' coastal areas. Nevertheless, the Northerners had already established themselves in Lagos by the seventeenth century, if not even earlier.[2] The colonial situations further quicken the interaction. According to Albert[3] the Yoruba ethnic group first reached the city of Kano as early as 1903. Some of them came with the British Nationals as hired people to perform household and personal services. The reason was due to the fact that after the affirmation of Lagos as a colony in 1861, and the bombardment of Ibadan in 1893, the first set of people that were employed by the British nationals as assistants were the Yorubas. The revolution in the transportation sector which steered the process of laying the railway sleepers and tracks on the track bed that connects Kano to Yoruba land contributed massively to these contacts. Ever since, the Hausa and Yoruba have enjoyed a relatively cordial relationship.

However, in a pluralistic and interfaith community with certain forms of contextual discrimination, as it is known enclosed by cultural and devout sects in Nigeria, encounters concerning people may soon become attributed to lack of friendliness, mutual mistrust, and panic. Ethno-religious clashes have been a persistent aspect of the country since the 1980s. In reality, this distrust and lack of goodwill among the many ethnic components are the causes it.[4]

Sagamu is potentially instructive examples of how Christians and Muslims might coexist in certain circumstances yet engage in violent conflict in others in light of their experiences. The primary research questions that this effort seeks to answer are: What basic circumstances backed the peaceful co-existence of adherents of Christianity and Islam in Sagamu? What kind of patterns do the communities have in terms of their inter-religious relations? What are the factors affecting the interreligious relations between the two groups in the selected community? How does inter-religious relation between the Yoruba and Hausa communities

[1] I. Nwanaju. 2005. *Christian – Muslim Relations in Nigeria*. Free Enterprises Publishers. Lagos. P 35
[2] A. Tijani. 2008. The Community of Hausa in Agege, Nigeria. *Journal of Social Science*, Volume 17(2): p 173
[3] I.O. Albert. 1999. *Ife-Modakeke Crisis*: Community Conflicts in Nigeria: Management, Resolution and Transformation. Ibadan: Spectrum Books. p 5
[4] I Nwanaju, 2005, Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria, Free Enterprises Publishers; Lagos, p 35

affect peaceful co-existence in Sagamu? How can serene co-existence be promoted among the Yoruba and Hausa communities in Nigeria as a whole?

The study demonstrates that it is feasible for people of various faiths and ethnic backgrounds to coexist peacefully and that religion can be a highly effective instrument for promoting togetherness, which, when managed correctly, may lead to economic and political progress. On the other hand, religion could be a disturbing force and a useful crisis tool if improperly handled, and, on the other hand, how problems can be amicably resolved if all parties can sincerely come together to resolve their disagreements and then go on to coexist in peace. The solution to the ongoing ethno-religious crises in other regions of Nigeria will undoubtedly become clear after reading this. There is no doubt that accurate information on the causes, consequences, and countermeasures to the religious crisis in Sagamu will aid students, educators, religious researchers, political leaders, and policy makers in developing beneficial policies and making decisions on matters that affect religion even in other parts of the nation.

The research adopts Samuel Adewale's theory of Cross-Fertilization of religious elements which states that the ideas or elements of one religion flow into the other religions to enrich them. Adewale notes that a multi-religious society is bound to interact and exercise some reciprocal influence on one another. He posited that because of the unavoidable relationship between the adherents of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria especially at the local level, Christians and Muslims work, eat and drink together.

This theory reflects a system of approach whereby people of diverse religious beliefs interact with one another in Nigeria society. There is no doubt that the value of one religion flows into another thereby contributing to cordial inter-religious relations among the people. It is for this reason, that, the Cross-Fertilization of religion theory is very appropriate for this work.

The Hausa Community in Sagamu

The people of Sagamu welcome and accommodate strangers. This is why we have different immigrant communities such as the Hausa community among them. Hausas had been in Sagamu since the last decade of nineteenth century. A Muslim Missioner in *Makun,* Mallam Ibrahim Kodurogbejo was a descendant of a Hausa man who was already resident in *Makun*.[5] There were a few of them living among the Sagamu Communities. Their population grew year in and year out as they arrived in the town and stayed permanently among the Sagamu Communities. There are one or two families in Sagamu today, Muslims by religion, who are descendants of one of the series of forerunners of Hausas in Sagamu.

Migration of people from one part of the country to the other is not a new thing. It had happened centuries before, and it will continue to happen. As expressed above, Hausas had been living in Sagamu as far back as the nineteenth century and they were living predominantly in *Makun* and *Ofin*. During the reign of His Royal Majesty William Christopher Adedoyin, he put in another dimension to the occupation of the Hausas in Sagamu.[6] There were some Hausa Communities in *Iseri*; the Kabiyesi asked them to move out of Iseri to Sagamu with the promise of better care in respect of accommodation and their trade. The Kabiyesi's move was accepted by them and they moved from Iseri to Sagamu. Oral tradition said that they first settled in *Ibido*. On this migration were these few names that could be remembered. The leader of the emigrants was *Mallam Dogo Daura*. He was a butcher and a cow dealer by profession. *Mallam Dogo's* wife in the name of *Maikano* was part of the movement. Others were Mallam Jika, Yusuffu, there was Liman and there were *Mallam Adamu, Kandon Maidoki, Habibat* and others. The Hausa emigrants were accommodated at Mr. Alaba's compound in *Ibido* and they lived in this compound for many years.[7]

During the reign of Oba W.C. Adedoyin, he felt it was necessary to settle the Hausas in a commonplace. The Northern Communities were already in Sagamu and those who came in to join them on the invitation of the Kabiyesi lived

[5] O. Ayodele. 2003. *Sagamu: Migration to year 2000*. Ojoko-Biri-Kale Press

[6] O. Ayodele. 2003. *Sagamu: Migration to year 2000*. Ojoko-Biri-Kale Press

[7] O. Ayodele. 2003. *Sagamu: Migration to year 2000*. Ojoko-Biri-Kale Press

together in the town without any discrimination. By the year 1940, Kabiyesi allocated the land that we call Sabo today to the Hausas to settle. Luckily enough for the town, more Hausas came to Sagamu and stayed with their predecessors. The land was an isolated place out of the Sagamu metropolis. Sagamu Township then was within the limits of *Ijoku*. Sabo location was then separated from Sagamu town by bush. All the Hausas in the town of Sagamu then were advised to shift to Sabo, but despite the honour done to them by Oba Adedoyin, not all the Hausas moved. Many of them remained where they were living both in *Makun* and *Ofin*. Those who heeded the order to go were mostly the Iseri emigrants. The Kabiyesi W.C. *Adedoyin* made *Mallam Dogo Dan Daura* the appointed leader and head of Sabo Community. The intention was to put the Hausa Community under the same umbrella and under the supervision of an authorised Head.

Yoruba- Hausa relations in Sagamu

There was no significant ethnic conflict between Hausa and Yoruba communities in Sagamu before the crisis of 1999. In fact, there were friendly social, political, and economic ties between the two ethnic groups. It was observed that the Hausa people residing in the aforementioned region were not politically biased. Citizens were afforded the liberty to associate themselves with a political faction of their preference. Moreover, they contributed a substantial role in the public activities of the town. The selection of the individual who would serve as their representative on the council of the local government was at the discretion of the Hausa community. Alhaji Dan Sagamu, a member of the Hausa community, was selected to serve on the Sagamu Local Council at one point in time. Alhaji Lawal Isa and Alhaji Aminu Umaru were elected to serve on the Ijebu Remo Local Government Council during the periods of 1976-1979 and 1990-1991, respectively. Furthermore, Alhaji Sanni Aliyu held the position of a representative on the Sagamu Local Government Council during the period spanning from 1990 to 1991. Consequently, it is evident that the political landscape of Sagamu encompassed the Hausa community residing in Sabo. The individual's civil liberties pertaining to political participation were not revoked.

The economy of Sagamu was significantly impacted by the Hausa community. The Hausa people migrated to Sagamu with the primary objective of engaging in commercial activities. At the outset, the emphasis was placed on the livestock sector. Following the sale of their livestock, the individuals in question allocated a portion of their earnings towards procuring kola nuts from the inhabitants of Sagamu. These goods were subsequently transported back to Northern Nigeria in order to resale. Animals were transported from northern Nigeria to Sagamu for a specific objective. Both the Hausa and the Yoruba benefited from the kola nut trade in terms of riches and success. It provided locals with employment possibilities and a means for farmers to get rid of their kola nuts. The thriving kola nut industry contributed to the Hausa and Yoruba population of Sagamu living in peace. Due to the growing Hausa population in Sagamu, the natives granted permission for the construction of a Central Mosque in Sabo in 1976. They initiated supplementary community projects, such as the establishment of hospitals and schools with an Islamic focus. The aforementioned factors were mutually beneficial to the Hausa and Yoruba communities residing in the locality, thereby promoting amicable inter-ethnic relations.

At the societal level, a noteworthy prevalence of inter-ethnic marriages has been observed. Furthermore, a significant number of Hausa individuals residing in Sagamu are proficient in the Yoruba language and partake in the consumption of Yoruba cuisine, and conversely, the same can be said for Yoruba individuals in relation to Hausa culture. Furthermore, it is observed that individuals of Yoruba descent may be observed wearing traditional clothing typically associated with the Hausa ethnic group. The material that came before it makes it clear that the two ethnic groups got along well until the 1999 incident happened. In fact, an observer observed that both groups had continuously embraced one another's varied traditions, customs, and lifestyles.

Factors Responsible for Inter-Religious relations among Hausa and Yoruba in Sagamu

i. Exposure of the people of Sagamu and the reception of Foreigners

The Sagamu people have long being known for their travels beyond their hometown. People in Diaspora intentionally combined elements of Christianity, Islam and Traditional Yoruba Religion to create a dynamic example of multiple religious belongings and identities because of

their exposure and contacts with many people even outside of their homeland. Consequently, the people are very receptive to strangers and especially the Hausa and did not see their religion as a barrier.

ii. Akarigbo's Role as father of all

All the monarchs that have reigned in Sagamu like the present Akarigbo, Oba Ajayi seek to promote the well-being of all in their domain since every Oba is regarded as the custodian of the institution of the *Akarigbo*; the reigning monarch has been concerned with the particular interest of "strangers" in his domain. The fact that the Akarigbo receives Hausa shows that the people of Sagamu receive them and this has been the factor that allows peaceful co-existence between the two communities in Sagamu.

iii. Islamic Religion and Hausa Language as uniting Factors

Hausa commercial community in Sagamu continues to be characterised mostly by Islam. The Hausa are a population of immigrants who primarily retain their faith. As a result, the transit camp (*Zango or Sabo*) in Sagamu City is a unique social community that still practices Islam and speaks Hausa. The Hausa in Sagamu has been a strong correlation between morality and prosperity. The Islamic rules of conduct, that fostered a climate of trust, is to blame for the success. The Hausa's religion, Islam, offers such a moral code. Since a formal moral code was necessary for successful integration in order to approve and regulate business ties. Islam served as the "blueprint" for the development of a moral business community. Islam offers moral and religious punishments to enforce a code of behaviour that made confidence and credit feasible. It also allows merchants to recognise and deal easily with one another. Islam helps protect the identities of network members. In Sagamu, Islam and the Hausa language, therefore, serve as uniting factors in interactions between Hausa and Yoruba.

Though, the language of the people of Sagamu is Yoruba, today because of the cordial relations between the 'host' and 'stranger' communities, now they largely speak their languages which have really helped their relations. This becomes clearer in Hausa-speaking churches in Sagamu where indigenes participate in worship because they understand Hausa language.

iv. Inter-Ethnic marriage

Since the religion of Islam and Traditionalist allow marrying more than one wife, our investigation reveals that inter-religious and inter-ethnic marriage has been a viable means for inter-religious relations between the two communities. At the societal level, a notable prevalence of inter-ethnic marriages has been observed.

v. Participation in Muslim and Christian Festivals and Celebrations

One other factor that is promoting and enhancing inter-religious relations among Hausa and Yoruba communities is that discrimination and separation during each religion festivals are discouraged.

vi. Formation of political institution for Hausa

Our findings indicate that many Sabo Electoral Wards were won by Hausa candidates because the Sabo populace realised that, given their current predicament, it was to their advantage to vote for Southern political parties.

vii. Political Relations

The Hausa people in the town did not experience any political discrimination. They were allowed to join whatever political party they wanted. Additionally, members of the Hausa community had the ability to vote in the election of representatives to their local government council in addition to playing a significant role in town politics.

Religious conflicts and incidents that undermined inter-religious relations among the Hausa and the Yoruba Communities in Sagamu

There was no community without one problem or the other. The factors that brought about conflicts can be summarized below:

i. Interference in Chieftaincy Matters

The problem the Sagamu Community had with the Hausas was in 1952 when Oba. W. C. Adedoyin died. After his death, three people

emerged as contenders for the throne, Prince Adeleke Adedoyin (the first son of the late Kabiyesi) Prince Moses Sowemimo Awolesi and Prince Solanke from the ruling houses vying for the vacant stool of the position of the Akarigbo. Prince Adeleke Adedoyin took occupation of the palace having an edge over the others as the son of the immediate past King.

The Sabo Hausas came round in full support for Prince Adeleke Adedoyin. One could see the glaring reason for their support. Oba Adedoyin settled them in Sabo, hence their full support for the Prince. The Hausas stormed the palace as security guards. The Hausas brought cows which were killed daily on which the people supporting the Prince were fed. The Hausas at times moved in large groups with their walking sticks and cow sticks and swords chanting songs. They called the Prince "*Seriki n tulasi*". Meaning whether the people wanted it or not the Prince would be king. They created some crisis in the town through this venue. People were beaten up and people were harassed especially between Sabo and the palace. The Western Regional Government had to intervene by approving Prince Moses Sowemimo Awolesi who was installed as the Akarigbo of Remo. Prince Adeleke Adedoyin was ordered to move out of the palace. The Hausas moved back to Sabo and calmed down in disappointment.

ii. The Leader of butcher and the Leader of Hausa Community crisis of 1962

The Hausa cattle traders fought for the positions of *Sarkin Pawa* (the leader of butchers) and *Sarkin Hausawa* (the leader of Hausa community). At this time, the *Sarkin Pawa* served as both the chief butcher and the head of the whole Hausa population. His position gave him influence, which benefited his company. Because of his position, he became the most qualified and reliable commercial landlord. The commercial tenants would provide a lot of commission for this. Additionally, he was entitled to a portion of the royalties received from the selling of cattle. The fight between the wealthy Hausa chiefs for the position of *Sarkin Pawa* was justified by all of these factors, in addition to the respect and status that the office carried. Consequently, this created factions in both communities. The indigenes who supported a Hausa against the choice of the Hausa community led to both internal and external wrangling in the communities.[8]

iii. Conflicts concerning Hausa community acquiring Lands in 1968

Another problem with the Hausa community in Sabo, Sagamu was the issue of land. Since the Hausa had agreed to pay for any further land they needed, lands were being sold to them because of the monetary gains without the consent of family members who own the land ('*awon omo onile'*). The *omo onile* saw this as a threat to their future, most of the lands paid were forcefully claimed back without repayment of the money and this generated bad blood among the people.

iv. Yoruba Traditional Oro cults versus the Hausa community of 1999

It is pertinent to know that *Oro* had been part of the tradition of the Sagamu people[9]and the Hausa had been in Sagamu since the late nineteenth century. The Hausa, therefore, had become part and parcel of the Sagamu tradition.[10] The rules of the festival are known to all and sundry including those living in Sabo. Thus, when during the festival, some Hausa women "deliberately" violated the traditional rules that women should stay away from the streets, but rather stayed outside to watch the events, and problems erupted[11]. The pre-determined action was reported to the *Sarkin Hausawa* who pledged that the Hausa Community would adhere to the norms and the customs of the tradition. The traditional *Oro* Cult members concluded that their actions were intentional and that the women were used as

[8] A. Tijani. 2003. *Sabo Communities in Yorubaland, Nigeria (1916 – 1967)*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Ilorin: University of Ilorin

[9] O. Ayodele. 2003. *Sagamu: Migration to year 2000*. Ojoko-Biri-Kale Press

[10]L. Olagunju. 1999. Sagamu: Journey into the Valley of death. Nigerian Tribune. Olagunju, L., and W. Efunnuga. 1999, 20 July). Sagamu: Death toll now 120. Nigerian Tribune.

tool to perpetrate to ignite trouble and so trouble ensued.[12]

v. Hausa Domination of some markets and trades

The kola nut trade is basically dominated by the Hausa, just like the cow trade and transportation around Sabo area. Although we have other people living around Sabo, these other Sabo Communities were not domineering like the Hausas except the Igbo community that deals in electrical and electronic gadgets.[13] But as was already established, the Hausa played a significant role in Sagamu's economy. Initially, they focused on the livestock industry but later ventured in kola nuts trade which became the origin of their affluence and prosperity. The increasing enjoyment of the group led to the invitation of additional relatives from various locations. The rapid initiation of competition between the newcomers and the indigenous population resulted in conflicts and established the conditions for inter-ethnic hostilities within the community.

vi. **Rivalry and conflict among youths**:

There were tensions among the Yoruba and Hausa youths due to the rate at which Yoruba girls preferred the Hausa boys to the indigenes, and this affair was not for marriage but for sex satisfaction because of the material gains. Many parents supported their girls because through this they were able to own cattle and other material gains. There were even cases of married women sleeping with the Hausa for monetary gains.

vii. The Claim that Sabo belongs to the Hausa Community

The Hausa indigenes of Sabo as already expressed superseded all the other Communities in Sabo for their contributions towards the development of Sabo. Hausas claim that Sabo belongs to them became a big problem because some of them took Sabo as their home and not as a second home. They believe that they are the owner of Sabo; hence they assumed that Sabo belongs to them.[14] Their assumption is based on the fact that they excelled in population. After all, they were directed to live at Sabo as a Community of their own, when they originally arrived in Sagamu. To that end, *Sarkin Hausawa* was appointed for them and the *Sarkin Hausawa* had since been a recognised office like any other Baale (village head) in the Local Government.

viii. Engagement in Cattle business by the Natives

The Hausa cattle business flourished but the natives' involvement in cattle business in a large-scale spell doom for the Hausa's business which has been the main source of their living. Harmonious relations quickly gave way for mistrust and misunderstanding. This did not go down well to the settlers who indirectly or directly react violently at a little provocation thereafter.

Effects of Conflicts among Hausa and Yoruba in Sagamu

i. Economic Effects

Even though the crisis was always handled and the town typically saw a return to calm, the crises had a profound effect on the community and its residents. The town's economy was the first area where it was felt. The effects of crises on people's business activity have always been negative, costing millions of naira. The damages suffered were of considerable size. Those who lost will always remember the event. Shops, banks, and other commercial enterprises are always closed during times of crisis. Even drivers of cabs and motorcycles abandoned the road. The commercial trade of kola nuts, which enjoyed widespread popularity, constituted a significant sector that was susceptible to the adverse effects of crises on the local economy. There was a significant decrease in the trade of kola nuts at the Sabo market located in Sagamu. The occurrence can be attributed to the relocation of merchants who had previously procured kola nuts in Sagamu from the Sabo market to alternative locations deemed secure commercial centers.

[12] L. Olagunju. 1999, 20 July. Sagamu: Journey into the Valley of death. Nigerian Tribune. Olagunju,
.

[14]K. Olabanji and A. Sobanjo 2009. The 1999 Yoruba/Hausa Crisis of Sabo, Sagamu. Unpublished Bachelor of Arts long essay, Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU), Ago Iwoye, Nigeria.

ii. **Social - Cultural Effects**

Along with having an influence on the economy, the crisis also affected the Yoruba and Hausa socio-cultural interactions in Sagamu. The two groups of people, who had previously co-existed peacefully before the conflict, used to feel dread and mistrust towards one another during crises. It should be remembered that there had been several intermarriages between the two groups of people prior to the conflict. In Sagamu, there were really Hausa who were proficient in Yoruba and vice versa. Unfortunately, the foundation of such inter-ethnic unity and understanding was struck whenever there is crisis, there was a tendency for these social ties to substantially decline.

iii. Demographical Effects

A decrease in the town's population was another consequence of the crises, particularly the one in 1999, on demography. Numerous lives were lost as a result of the tragedy. Over 100 persons were mentioned in a newspaper piece. In addition, hardly everyone who left the town during the crisis returned. The government's attempt to repatriate everyone who left the town during the crisis was unsuccessful since some people returned, while others never did.

iv. Religious Effects

Religious practices were also impacted by the turmoil. Due to people's fear of attending their different places of worship during the crisis, there was a low attendance rate at churches and mosques. In fact, several churches chose not to operate throughout the crisis. It was urged to the members to remain at home till the town was peaceful once again. The same held true for Muslim religious practices. Only until law and order had been restored to the town could Islamic and Christian religious practices restart.[15]

Summary

It is hard to separate religion from Nigerian culture, according to the respondents' comments. The evidence of religious activity was never far from view or the subject of discussion in whatever area visited or with anybody we came into contact with. Nigeria is undoubtedly an exceptionally religious nation and it takes a short time to come to grips with it.

In the light of what has been said above, and with a more in-depth and critical examination of Christian-Muslim relations among Hausa and Yoruba in Sagamu communities, it is abundantly clear that the benefits of inter-religious concord at the vibrancy of stakeholder society will be of no use if adherents of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria do not improve the capability to cope with the questions of heterogeneity. Religious wars must stop under any guises and an acceptance of a brotherly oneness.

With respect to this research, it is established that irrespective of religious beliefs and without considering cultural or party-political background, the struggle lingers, no longer confined to the loose framework of ethno-religious affiliation but now sharply demarcated by the Islamic-Christian dichotomy. A brief examination of the evidence reveals that, despite the multifaceted nature of these conflicts, they nearly always involve Muslims opposing Christians or Christians opposing Muslims. Intra-faith violence is uncommon, whereas interfaith clashes are frequent and have become the norm.

Recommendations

From our findings, the following suggestions, among others, is provided for the consideration of the Yoruba and Hausa in Sagamu communities and Nigeria generally, in light of our study contribution:

i. One of the fundamental principles is that the customs and heritage of a specific group are deemed sacrosanct and should be respected by all individuals belonging to the corresponding community. The failure to respect cultural practices or the violation of established traditions within a community often leads to a state of unrest.

ii. The imperative for inter-ethnic tolerance among diverse groups residing within a given locality or municipality is evident. It is our belief that had both parties involved in the

[15] W. Efunnuga. 1999, 21 July). Sagamu's Day of Blood. Nigerian Tribune.

crisis exercised a certain level of restraint and tolerance, the Sagamu conflict could have been prevented.

iii. Traditional rulers in all pluralistic communities should emulate Sagamu Monarchs both past and present who created an enabling environment for all their subjects to live in peace. This they can do by setting up inter-tribal and inter-religious committees that will be saddled with the responsibility of dialoguing and resolving any inter-tribal and inter-religious misunderstanding at the grassroots. When all and sundry are involved, it will reduce the hindrances to inter-religious relations among the 'host' and 'strangers' in any particular community.

iv. The application of the theology of inter-religious understanding by the Yoruba and Hausa communities would entail viewing each other's religion as acknowledging faith within society. It is imperative that individuals refrain from discussing or categorising another's religion as a lesser faith. Rather, they should approach the discourse with an open mind and attentively consider the perspectives and beliefs of the other religion regarding the divine. The followers of both religions have the potential to gain knowledge and insight from each other.

v. The coexisting Yoruba and Hausa communities ought to acknowledge the reality of their existence in a pluralistic society. Consequently, each ethnic group should be able to exercise their religious duties without hindrance and with due regard for the religious beliefs of others.

vi. Public officials have a responsibility to promote awareness of a diverse society and fulfil their duties with fairness and consideration towards the various ethnic groups in Nigeria.

vii. It is recommended that a course on inter-religious understanding between Christians and Muslims be included in the curriculum of secondary schools and tertiary institutions, with particular emphasis on the religious studies department of all universities.

Conclusion

This research studied the inter-religious relations among Hausa and Yoruba communities in Sagamu. It is established that the city is a multi-ethnic and religiously diverse society like so many towns and cities in Nigeria. While the populations coexist peacefully and get along well, there are still instances of prejudice, lack of goodwill, distrust, and fear between them, as there are many ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria. Drawing from these events, Sagamu present itself as potentially instructive illustrations of the coexistence of religiously diverse groups in certain cases, while also highlighting the possibility of significant conflict. This argument posits that the nature of social and interreligious interactions among individuals from varying ethnic and cultural backgrounds can result in either integration or disintegration. If implemented, our recommendations have the potential to enhance inter-tribal relationships in Nigeria, leading to a harmonious coexistence in the country.

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NEO-COLONIAL INFLUENCES ON AFRICAN DEMOCRACY: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF EXTERNAL POWERS ON GOVERNANCE AND SOVEREIGNTY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT
Africa's democratic evolution in the 21st century remains profoundly influenced by external actors, raising concerns about neocolonial interventions in governance and sovereignty. For decades, African nations have struggled with the legacies of colonial rule, which continue to manifest through economic dependencies, political interference, and conditional aid from former colonial powers and global institutions. The rationale for this study stems from the increasing debate over the extent to which these external influences undermine genuine democratic consolidation and self-determination in African states. While extensive research exists on colonial legacies, there is a gap in contemporary analysis of how neocolonial practices shape political institutions, electoral processes, and policy decisions in modern Africa. This study aims to assess the mechanisms through which foreign powers exert control over African democracies, the implications for state sovereignty, and potential pathways for reinforcing independent governance structures. A qualitative research approach is employed, utilizing case studies of selected African countries and policy analysis. Key findings suggest that financial aid, diplomatic pressures, and military interventions serve as tools of neocolonial dominance, often prioritizing external interests over national development. The study concludes that strengthening regional cooperation, economic self-sufficiency, and institutional reforms are crucial to mitigating external influences and fostering authentic democratic governance in Africa.

Introduction

The democratic development of African countries in the post-independence era remains deeply shaped by external forces, raising ongoing concerns about neocolonial entrenchment. While the decolonization movement of the mid-20th century granted political independence to most African states, many scholars argue that this independence was partial. Nations remain enmeshed in systems of economic, political, and strategic dependency on former colonial powers and new global actors. Classical postcolonial theorists like Frantz Fanon (1963) and Kwame Nkrumah (1965) anticipated this trajectory, warning that colonialism would transform into subtler forms of control—what Nkrumah termed neo-colonialism. These ideas laid the groundwork for critiques of foreign involvement, especially in development assistance, which often undermines African self-determination. Later scholars such as Mkandawire (2010) have analyzed how externally driven policies like the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) of the 1980s–90s weakened state institutions, shifted power away from domestic accountability, and deepened inequality. Stiglitz (2002) similarly criticized the rigidity of these reforms, arguing they obstructed democratic consolidation. More recent scholarship has turned to the growing influence of actors like China and Russia. Researchers including Taylor (2014) and Carmody (2016) examine how new alliances, investments, and military partnerships may reinforce patterns of dependency and elite capture. Yet, much of this literature remains fragmented, often failing to assess how these dynamics collectively shape democracy across Africa today. This paper addresses that gap through a multidimensional analysis of foreign aid, trade deals, diplomatic ties, and military interventions. It contends that while democracy is widely embraced in Africa, its implementation is constrained by foreign interests prioritizing geopolitical and economic objectives. The study proposes pathways for African states to enhance democratic resilience through regional integration, economic autonomy, and renegotiated external engagements.

The Historical Context of Colonialism in Africa

Colonialism in Africa was a significant era that drastically altered the continent's political, economic, and social frameworks. The late 19th century signaled the beginning of organized European conquest, resource exploitation, and political control, especially after the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, which formalized the division of Africa among European nations. According to Ayeni and Okon (2023), the interference of former colonial powers continues to hinder progressive development across the continent through sustained political, economic, and cultural domination.

Before colonization, Africa boasted diverse and complex political systems, with empires such as Mali, Kongo, and Ashanti maintaining vibrant trade and governance networks (Davidson, 1994). These civilizations were part of global trade routes and exchanged commodities like gold and ivory with Europe, the Middle East, and Asia (Curtin et al., 1995). The transatlantic slave trade (16th–19th centuries) devastated African societies, weakening states and increasing internal strife (Thornton, 1998). By the 19th century, European interest shifted from the slave trade to territorial control and resource extraction, setting the stage for full colonization (Rodney, 1972).

The "Scramble for Africa" saw European powers, driven by industrial demands and nationalist rivalries, carve up the continent without regard for indigenous political or ethnic systems (Ayeni & Malumi, 2018). The British implemented indirect rule through local leaders, while the French pursued assimilationist policies (Crowder, 1968). Belgian rule in the Congo under King Leopold II was particularly brutal, resulting in millions of deaths through forced labour (Hochschild, 1998).

Colonial economies were restructured to extract raw materials for European industries. Heavy taxation, forced labour, and dependency on monoculture exports entrenched economic dependence (Amin, 1972; Rodney, 1972). Infrastructure developments primarily served colonial extraction rather than African needs. Traditional governance systems were undermined, and European legal, linguistic, and educational frameworks further eroded indigenous institutions.

Despite these oppressive conditions, Africans resisted. Movements such as the Zulu uprising (1879) and the Maji Maji Rebellion (1905–1907) reflected growing opposition to colonial rule. Mid-20th century nationalist movements, inspired by Pan-Africanism and global decolonization efforts, gained momentum. Leaders like Nkrumah, Kenyatta, and Nyerere led their nations to independence through both negotiation and armed struggle (Nkrumah, 1965; Hargreaves, 1996). However, the legacies of colonialism—economic dependency, artificial borders, and external political influence—continue to challenge African sovereignty and development today.

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

Neocolonialism: As articulated by Kwame Nkrumah (1965), neocolonialism is not a mere residue of colonialism but its strategic evolution. It operates through financial instruments, ideological influence, and global governance structures rather than direct territorial control. In Africa, this is evident in exploitative trade agreements, conditional aid, structural adjustment programmes, and the pervasive presence of multinational corporations whose interests often undermine national development (Amin, 1972). Neocolonialism cloaks subjugation in the language of partnership and development, raising critical concerns about the authenticity of postcolonial sovereignty.

Democracy: Democracy is commonly understood as a system grounded in popular sovereignty, rule of law, and political participation (Dahl, 1998). However, in Africa, democratic practice is frequently shaped by external influences. Donor-driven electoral assistance, diplomatic coercion, and the imposition of governance templates often subvert democratic institutions while preserving their formal appearance (Adejumobi, 2000). This paradox reveals democracy as both a universal ideal and a tool of geopolitical control in postcolonial Africa.

Governance: Governance refers to the mechanisms through which authority is distributed and exercised (Kaufmann et al., 1999). While the international discourse on "good governance" champions transparency and accountability, it often masks ideological agendas. These externally driven reforms—via aid conditionalities, debt management, and technical assistance—frequently reinforce dependency and undermine domestic policy autonomy (Hyden, 2013; Mamdani, 1996). Thus, governance failures must be viewed in light of both internal limitations and neocolonial entanglements.

Sovereignty*:* Though African states achieved formal sovereignty post-independence, real autonomy remains constrained. International financial institutions, foreign military presences, and diplomatic pressures challenge the essence of self-governance (Krasner, 1999). Sovereignty in Africa is therefore partial, negotiated, and often fragmented, raising the question of whether postcolonial states are substantively sovereign or merely administratively independent within a global system that limits their agency.

This paper draws on three interrelated theoretical traditions to analyse democracy and governance under neocolonial conditions in Africa:

Dependency Theory: Pioneered by scholars like Frank (1967) and Amin (1972), dependency theory highlights structural inequalities in the global economic system, where African states remain reliant on aid, foreign loans, and export-oriented economies (Rodney, 1972). This paper extends the theory by examining how these economic dependencies translate into political subordination and how emerging global actors like China are reshaping dependency dynamics in Africa.

Postcolonial Theory: Postcolonial theory, as developed by Fanon (1961), Said (1978), and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986), critiques the persistence of colonial epistemologies in African governance. It challenges the wholesale adoption of Western democratic models, advocating instead for the recovery and adaptation of indigenous governance systems. This paper proposes a decolonial reimagining of democracy grounded in local epistemologies and traditions.

World-Systems Analysis: Wallerstein's (1974) world-systems theory positions African nations as peripheral actors structurally subordinated to serve core economies. By linking global financial governance to domestic political fragility, this paper shows how systemic inequalities undermine democratic agency at the local level. It also critiques the static core-periphery model, acknowledging emerging global shifts through actors like the BRICS.

Despite formal independence, African governance remains heavily influenced by external actors. Cases such as Francafrique, China's economic foothold in Zambia, NATO's intervention in Libya, and multinational control over Nigeria's oil sector illustrate how sovereignty and democracy are continually negotiated within a neocolonial framework.

Neocolonial Influences in African Countries

Although African nations achieved formal independence in the mid-20th century, external powers, including former colonial rulers, international financial institutions, and multinational corporations, still wield considerable control over governance and sovereignty. For instance, the French influence in West Africa has its roots in colonization, which shaped the political and economic institutions of the countries in the region (Ayeni & Lori, 2025). Therefore, it is essential to analyze various neocolonial influences, such as France-Africa relations (Francafrique), China's economic dominance in Zambia, Western intervention in Libya, and the involvement of multinational corporations in Nigeria's oil industry.

France and Francafrique – Political and Economic Control

Francafrique refers to France's enduring influence over its former African colonies via informal political, economic, and military networks (Ayeni, 2025). Despite formal independence, many Francophones African nations remain bound to France through the CFA franc—used by 14 countries and pegged to the euro—which limits their monetary sovereignty and channels foreign reserves into French accounts (Sylla, 2021). France has repeatedly intervened militarily, as seen in Mali (2013) and the Central African Republic (2014), often under the guise of counterterrorism while protecting its strategic interests (Charbonneau, 2019). French-backed regimes, such as the Bongo family in Gabon, have been accused of repressing dissent to safeguard French economic stakes, especially in oil (Bayart, 2009). These enduring economic and military ties reveal how neocolonialism persists through indirect mechanisms, undermining national sovereignty and democratic reform in Francophone Africa.

China's Economic Influence in Zambia

China has emerged as a dominant economic force in Zambia through extensive investment in infrastructure and mining. However, these projects are largely financed through Chinese loans, contributing to Zambia's sovereign debt crisis, including its 2021 default (Carmody, 2020). Chinese companies dominate the copper mining sector, often criticised for exploitative labour practices and environmental harm (Haglund, 2008). This trade pattern—exporting raw materials and importing manufactured goods—mirrors colonial economic structures (Brautigam, 2009), compromising Zambia's economic sovereignty (Taylor, 2016).

***Western Intervention and the Collapse of Libya*:** Libya's NATO-led intervention in 2011, framed as humanitarian, resulted in the death of Muammar Gaddafi and plunged the country into instability (Forte, 2013). Analysts argue that the intervention was motivated by Libya's oil wealth and Gaddafi's challenge to Western financial dominance (Keenan, 2012). Since then, Libya has become a battleground for foreign powers exploiting its resources (Pack, 2019; Chorin, 2022).

Multinational Corporations in Nigeria's Oil Industry: Nigeria's oil sector is dominated by multinational corporations like Shell and Chevron, which extract significant profits while causing environmental damage and deepening inequality (Okonta & Douglas, 2003; Watts, 2004). These firms have also been implicated in corruption and the militarisation of the Niger Delta (Ikelegbe, 2005; Peel, 2009). Their operations exemplify how foreign capital continues to undermine national development and democratic governance.

Economic Neocolonialism: Debt, Trade, and Investment

Economic neocolonialism reflects the enduring economic dependencies of African nations on foreign powers, institutions, and corporations. While political sovereignty was achieved, true economic autonomy remains elusive due to debt dependency, inequitable trade, and exploitative investment. Many African countries rely on loans from the IMF, World Bank, and bilateral lenders like China, often with conditions that undermine national sovereignty (Mkandawire, 2015). Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) of the 1980s–90s required privatization, trade liberalization, and cuts in public spending, deepening poverty and economic instability (Stiglitz, 2002).

China's Belt and Road Initiative, while enabling infrastructure growth, has led to unsustainable debt, as seen in Zambia's 2021 default (Brautigam, 2020). Debt servicing consumes over 20% of African government revenues, limiting social investment (AfDB, 2022). Trade imbalances persist as African economies export raw materials and import manufactured goods, reinforcing colonial patterns (Rodney, 1972). Unfair trade agreements like the EPAs undermine local industries (Busse & Großmann, 2007), while foreign direct investment prioritizes ressource extraction over sustainable development (Kaplinsky, 2005; UNECA, 2015).

Political Neocolonialism: Military Interventions and Regime Change

Political neocolonialism highlights ongoing foreign interference in Africa's political affairs despite formal independence. Military interventions, often framed as peacekeeping or counterterrorism efforts, frequently advance the strategic interests of external powers—securing access to resources or extending geopolitical influence. France's repeated interventions in Mali and the Central African Republic exemplify this pattern (Charbonneau, 2017; Ayeni & Brown, 2025). During the Cold War, superpowers like the US and USSR backed opposing factions in African conflicts—a trend that continues today. Regime change remains a critical neocolonial tool: the US and Belgium orchestrated Patrice Lumumba's assassination, while the UK and US supported Nkrumah's ousting (Hansen, 2012). The 2011 NATO intervention in Libya and France's Operation Barkhane were presented as humanitarian but triggered regional instability (Ayeni & Ogbang, 2025). Such interventions foster dependence on foreign security, weakening sovereignty. The Libyan collapse intensified Sahelian insecurity, fuelling arms trafficking and militancy (Ayeni, Effiong & Ogban, 2025). Political neocolonialism thus entrenches instability, hindering democratic and developmental progress.

Cultural Neocolonialism: Media and Education

Cultural neocolonialism refers to the pervasive influence of former colonial powers and dominant global forces in shaping the cultural, intellectual, and ideological frameworks of postcolonial states, particularly in Africa. A unique linguistic diversity, inherited from the colonial history … includes the official languages of african states, which reflect the influence of former colonial powers. French in all former French and Belgian colonies, English in all former British colonies, and Portuguese in all former Portuguese colonies (Ayeni & Orji, 2024). This form of neocolonialism is distinct from political or economic dimensions, manifesting primarily through the dissemination of foreign values and norms that undermine indigenous identities and traditions. Two significant channels of cultural neocolonialism are media and education. In the media landscape, Western conglomerates dominate, controlling narratives that shape global perceptions, often portraying Africa through a lens of conflict and poverty (Fair, 1993). This biased representation marginalizes African voices, leading to what Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) describes as "the colonization of the mind." Furthermore, reliance on Western news agencies distorts African narratives, portraying local issues through a Eurocentric perspective (Bunce, Franks, & Paterson, 2017). Moreover, the dominance of foreign entertainment industries, such as Hollywood, encourages African youth to embrace Western lifestyles, frequently overshadowing local cultural traditions. The expansion of digital media has intensified this trend, as platforms like Facebook and Twitter, primarily owned by Western corporations, tend to amplify Western perspectives while marginalizing indigenous voices.African education systems continue to bear the imprint of colonial influence, with European languages and Eurocentric curricula taking precedence while sidelining indigenous knowledge. Mastery of languages such as English and French is frequently linked to upward social mobility, thereby reinforcing Western ideological dominance. This educational structure suppresses independent thought and sustains the notion that Africa's development is dependent on Western involvement. Furthermore, global institutions like the World Bank influence educational policies in ways that deepen this reliance, particularly through structural adjustment programmes.

Technological Neocolonialism and Africa's Digital Dependency

Technological neocolonialism describes how technologically advanced nations and corporations dominate Africa via digital infrastructure, data governance, and innovation (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). Despite ICTs' transformative potential, Africa remains digitally dependent, with just 39% internet penetration versus 87% in Europe (ITU, 2021). Limited broadband, high data costs, and power

shortages exacerbate this divide (Gwagwa et al., 2020). Initiatives like Google's Project Loon and Facebook's Free Basics raise concerns over digital colonialism, as foreign firms extract data from African users (Nyabola, 2018). Western tech giants control much of Africa's hardware, software, and cloud services, curbing local innovation and digital sovereignty (Gwagwa et al., 2020). Data colonialism enables external actors to monetise user data, as seen in the Cambridge Analytica scandal which demonstrated how social media data could be manipulated to influence African elections (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). To counter this, scholars urge investment in local infrastructure, open-source adoption, and data protection laws mandating local data storage (Amoah & Sutherland, 2022), essential for digital autonomy and economic justice.

Civil Society and Resistance to Neo-colonial Influences

Neo-colonialism in Africa manifests through economic dependence, political interference, cultural domination, and technological control. Civil society—including NGOs, grassroots movements, activists, intellectuals, and independent media—has become vital in resisting these influences and advocating for sovereignty and justice (Obadare, 2019). Pro-democracy movements like Y'en a Marre in Senegal and Balai Citoyen in Burkina Faso mobilise citizens against authoritarian, foreign-backed regimes (Branch & Mampilly, 2015). In Nigeria, SERAP and BudgIT promote transparency and electoral integrity (Ogundiya, 2012; Akinboye, 2013). To counter economic neocolonialism, groups like AFRODAD oppose debt dependence and unfair trade (Bond, 2006), while campaigns like Buy Naija encourage local industry (Ake, 1981). Cultural resistance includes challenging Western narratives through platforms like The Elephant and Decolonize Education (Nyamnjoh, 2017). In the digital space, Paradigm Initiative leads advocacy on data sovereignty, as seen in Nigeria's #StopTheSale movement (Amoah & Sutherland, 2022). Despite repression and funding constraints, strengthening civil society remains key to resisting neocolonial domination (Moyo, 2009).

International Organizations and Neo-colonial Dynamics

International organizations like the United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and World Trade Organization (WTO) were established to promote global peace, stability, and economic growth. However, in reality, these institutions have frequently faced criticism for perpetuating neo-colonial frameworks in Africa by deepening economic dependence and limiting political autonomy (Moyo, 2009; Bond, 2006). During the 1980s and 1990s, the IMF and World Bank introduced Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), which required African nations in debt crises to implement austerity measures, deregulate markets, and privatize public enterprises. These reforms led to cuts in vital sectors such as healthcare and education, exacerbating poverty and weakening state control over economic decision-making (Bond, 2006). The continued weight of external debt, much of it derived from restrictive IMF and World Bank loans, hampers African growth, with national budgets heavily burdened by debt servicing rather than development initiatives. Despite efforts like the HIPC Initiative, dependency remains, as new conditional loans perpetuate the same challenges (Mkandawire, 2010). Likewise, the WTO has drawn criticism for trade policies that favour the Global North by imposing unfair terms on African exports and restricting the continent's ability to grow indigenous industries through rigid intellectual property laws (Chang, 2002).

The UN also reflects neo-colonial tendencies, particularly through the unequal structure of the Security Council, where African voices remain marginalized (Adebajo, 2008). Moreover, UN peacekeeping missions often lack African leadership and are driven by selective political interests (Bachmann & Schenck, 2012).

In response, scholars advocate for regional integration, alternative development funding, and stronger demands for global institutional reform to help African nations regain sovereignty and foster genuine self-reliance (Adesina, 2021).

China and Other Emerging Powers in Africa

Africa has emerged as a strategic battleground for rising powers like China, India, Brazil, and Russia, which have increased their economic, political, and security involvement across the continent. Notably, China has become Africa's largest trading partner, overtaking traditional Western players. Through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), Beijing has funded large-scale infrastructure, energy, and mining projects, aiding in economic

integration (Carmody, 2016). However, concerns over debt sustainability and resource exploitation remain. India has also deepened ties with Africa, focusing on technology, pharmaceuticals, and ICT (Taylor, 2012). Brazil and Russia have engaged in agricultural, energy, and defence partnerships (Vickers, 2013). These collaborations offer alternatives to Western aid, promoting multipolarity and reducing external dependency (Cheru & Obi, 2010).

In addition to economic engagement, China has broadened its influence in diplomacy and security, enhancing its participation in UN peacekeeping operations and setting up its first overseas military base in Djibouti (Large, 2008; Shinn & Eisenman, 2012). While China's "no-strings-attached" aid is praised for enabling African agency (Zhao, 2014), others caution against emerging neocolonial dynamics (Hodzi, 2018). India leverages its diaspora and historical ties for political cooperation (Mawdsley, 2010), Brazil champions South-South cooperation in Lusophone countries (White, 2010), and Russia pursues influence through arms deals and energy diplomacy (Shubin, 2008). Although these engagements support development by boosting infrastructure and industrialization, they also pose challenges, including environmental degradation, labour rights violations, and governance risks.

Conclusion

The enduring impact of external powers on African democracy remains a significant issue in the 21st century, with neocolonial patterns continuing to influence political, economic, and institutional landscapes across the continent. While foreign investment and international cooperation can promote development, they often create imbalanced relationships that weaken national sovereignty and limit authentic democratic progression. This paper contributes to the postcolonial discourse by demonstrating how contemporary global influence—through diplomatic pressures, conditional aid, and military partnerships—mirrors colonial control in more subtle, yet equally powerful ways. The findings support the perspectives of dependency theory and world-systems analysis, which argue that African nations remain constrained within an unequal global order. However, the study goes further by acknowledging the increasing roles of emerging powers such as China and Russia, whose opaque, interest-driven engagements add new layers to Africa's geopolitical entanglements. Unlike earlier analyses that framed intervention as one-directional, this study recognizes the strategic agency of African leaders who navigate competing foreign interests with varied levels of autonomy. It also highlights growing regional and grassroots resistance to external dominance, including through African Union mechanisms, active civil society, and digital advocacy. The research concludes that for Africa to achieve genuine democratic sovereignty, it must foster internal legitimacy, economic independence, and assertive policy making, ultimately reshaping its relationships with global powers to avoid sustained dependency.

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PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF ACCOUNTING RECORD KEEPING ON THE PERFORMANCE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN ABA

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Accounting Record Keeping, SME Performance, Financial Management, Perceived Benefits, Business Growth

ABSTRACT
This study adds to the existing research on SME financial management by analysing the relationship between accounting practises, their perceived benefits and how widely they are used and their impact on performance. While studies have consistently stressed how important it is for SMEs to keep records, little research has looked at how subjective views of accounting practises are linked to performance. To do this, the research analyses 370 SMEs using Spearman's correlation, Independent Samples t-test and Multiple Linear Regression. The data shows that there is a noticeable but not major connexion between how useful SMEs find accounting practises and their performance. SMEs that believed in the advantages of social media did better. The amount of record-keeping, as seen by regular entries, software use, financial review and accountant involvement, explained 37.5% of the differences in performance. Most other studies centre on technical or compliance issues, but this study emphasises how SMEs' financial actions and views affect their success. These results suggest that policymakers, SME support agencies and entrepreneurs should promote financial literacy, make accounting easier and create environments that support the growth of SMEs.

Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) remain pivotal to economic growth and development, especially in emerging economies like Nigeria.(Olowookere et al., 2021) In cities like Aba, Abia State popularly referred to as the "Japan of Africa" due to its vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem SMEs form the backbone of local commerce and manufacturing. Despite their relevance, the survival and performance of these enterprises continue to face significant challenges, including poor financial management practices, limited access to credit, and inadequate accounting record-keeping.(Ikem et al., 2021). Accounting records keeping, which involves the systematic

documentation, classification, and summarization of financial transactions, is fundamental to informed decision-making and performance monitoring(Mohammed, 2024). The perceived benefits of maintaining such records such as improved financial control, ease of tax compliance, access to funding, and better strategic planning are often cited as critical drivers of operational success(Halabi et al., 2010). However, in practice, many SMEs in Aba operate with informal or inadequate bookkeeping systems, often due to a lack of awareness or resources. This study focuses on the *perceived benefits of accounting records keeping* and *performance of SMEs*. Performance, in this context, is assessed through indicators such as profitability, growth, efficiency, and sustainability(Ameer & Othman, 2012) The rationale is that SMEs that perceive greater benefits from accounting practices are more likely to adopt and consistently apply them, which in turn may enhance their overall performance. (Alsyouf et al., 2023).

The relationship between the perceived benefits and performance is both behavioral and functional(Dimitriadis, 2010). Behavioral, in the sense that perception drives action SMEs that understand the utility of financial documentation are more likely to embrace it; and functional, because quality accounting enables timely decisions, better resource allocation, and strategic competitiveness(Auliyah & Agit, 2024). Thus, performance outcomes are expected to vary significantly with the level of perceived value attached to accounting practices by SME operators. The study is situated in Aba, Abia State, a major industrial hub in Southeastern Nigeria known for its thriving informal sector and entrepreneurial innovation(Nwankpa, 2019). This location is strategically selected to provide grounded insights into how indigenous SMEs perceive and utilize accounting information in a high-activity business environment. By narrowing the scope to a specific geographic and economic context, this study enhances the validity and relevance of its findings for policy and practice.

The topic is validated by the observed disconnect between the availability of financial literacy tools and their practical application among SMEs in Nigeria, particularly in manufacturing and trade centers like Aba(Ahmed, 2023). Existing literature on SMEs in Nigeria often generalizes challenges without giving sufficient attention to perception-driven practices in record keeping(Hughes, 2021). This study fills this gap by providing empirical insights into how perceptions shape behavior and outcomes, contributing to a nuanced understanding of SME sustainability. The scope is limited to registered and active SMEs within Aba, covering sectors such as fashion, fabrication, leatherworks, and retail. The study will analyze variations in performance based on different levels of perceived benefit from accounting practices. By doing so, it not only establishes the importance of perception in accounting behavior but also provides policy-relevant recommendations for SME development and financial education programs.

Statement of Research Problems

Small and Medium Enterprises, (SMEs) serve as critical engines for economic development, job creation, and poverty alleviation, particularly in developing economies like Nigeria (Etuk et al., 2014). In cities such as Aba, Abia State renowned for its dense cluster of artisans, traders, and small-scale manufacturers SMEs contribute significantly to local industrialization and commercial vibrancy. However, despite their potential, a large number of these enterprises continue to experience stagnation, poor financial performance, and high failure rates (Fatoki, 2014). A recurring theme in extant literature points to weak financial management practices, particularly poor accounting records keeping, as a core challenge undermining SME sustainability. According to (Adela et al., 2024),the absence of proper bookkeeping practices hampers SMEs' ability to make sound financial decisions and access to external financing(Adeyemi & Akanji, 2020). Similarly,(Hyder & Lussier, 2016) emphasized that many small businesses fail not due to poor business models, but due to the inability to track income and expenditures effectively. While several studies (e.g.(Munjal & Sharma, 2023),(Kim, 2008)) have established a link between financial record keeping and performance, few have explored this connection from a perception-based perspective. That is, whether SME owners and managers truly perceive accounting records keeping as beneficial and how this perception influences their adoption of accounting practices and, consequently, their performance.

In the Nigerian context, where financial literacy levels among micro and small business

operators are often low, perception plays a crucial role (Esiebugie et al., 2018). Research (Maelah et al., 2021) by suggests that SMEs with a high appreciation for the value of accounting information are more likely to apply it in decision-making, leading to better business outcomes. This implies that beyond technical capacity, the belief in the utility of accounting practices may shape behavior and performance outcomes. However, few studies have empirically examined this dynamic within the unique socio-economic and entrepreneurial landscape of Aba, Abia State. Aba's SMEs, particularly in sectors like leatherworks, fashion, and fabrication, operate in a high-competition, low-margin environment where strategic financial management could determine survival. Yet, anecdotal evidence suggests that many operators still rely on informal or inconsistent financial tracking mechanisms(Oviedo et al., 2009, Darbi et al., 2018).

This gap between available accounting tools and the perceived relevance of such tools among SME owners raises critical questions:

i. Do SME operators in Aba truly perceive accounting record keeping as beneficial?

ii. Does this perception translate into consistent financial practices?

iii. More importantly, does this behavior influence measurable performance outcomes?

Therefore, this study seeks to bridge the knowledge gap by analyzing how the perceived benefits of accounting records keeping influence the performance of SMEs in Aba. It aims to provide empirical evidence that can guide financial literacy interventions, accounting education, and SME policy in Abia State and beyond.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to assess the impact of perceived benefits of accounting records keeping on the performance of SMEs in Aba, Abia State.

Specific Objectives:

i. To identify the perceived benefits of accounting records keeping among SME owners and managers.

ii. To evaluate the relationship between perceived benefits of accounting records keeping and SME performance.

iii. To determine whether SMEs that perceive greater benefits from accounting records keeping show higher performance outcomes than those who do not.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guide the empirical investigation:

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between perceived benefits of accounting records keeping and the performance of SMEs in Aba.

$H0_2$: SMEs in Aba that perceive greater benefits from accounting records keeping do not perform significantly better than those with low perceived benefits.

$H0_3$: The extent of accounting records keeping among SMEs in Aba does not significantly influence their performance.

Conceptual Clarification

The conceptual framework for this study establishes the theoretical and empirical link between **Perceived Benefits of Accounting Records Keeping** (independent variable) and **Performance of SMEs** (dependent variable). It offers a lens through which we examine how SME owners/managers' attitudes toward the utility of accounting records influence their business outcomes in terms of growth, profitability, efficiency, and sustainability.

Perceived Benefits of Accounting Records Keeping

Perceived benefits refer to the extent to which SME operators believe that maintaining accounting records has a positive impact on their businesses (Estébanez, 2021). These perceptions

play a crucial role in determining whether business owners are willing to adopt and consistently maintain proper accounting practices (Jackson & Allen, 2024). Karimian et al. (2022) note that many SMEs operate informally and depend largely on intuition for decision-making. However, when owners perceive accounting records as advantageous, they are more inclined to adopt sound documentation and financial reporting methods (Amoako, 2013).

These perceived benefits commonly include improved decision-making (Bahari et al., 2021), better cost control and financial planning (Valentinetti & Rea, 2025), enhanced access to credit facilities (2015), compliance with tax and regulatory requirements (2011), and increased transparency and accountability (2013). Such perceptions serve as both psychological and strategic motivators that shape accounting behaviors. Consequently, even in settings where resources are limited, SMEs that recognize the value of accounting are more likely to maintain proper financial records.

SME Performance

Firm performance, which serves as the dependent variable in this study, is a multi-dimensional construct that encompasses financial, operational, and market-based outcomes. For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), performance is typically reflected in areas such as growth in sales and profits, expansion of business operations, cost efficiency, customer retention, and long-term business sustainability. Valentinetti and Rea (2025) emphasize that performance assessment should not be limited to financial results alone but should also include indicators related to internal processes, strategic learning, and adaptive capacity.

In the context of this study, firm performance is operationalized using five key indicators: trends in profitability, growth in sales figures, expansion of business activities, efficiency in the use of financial and material resources, and overall operational sustainability. These indicators provide a holistic view of how well SMEs are functioning and evolving in a competitive environment.

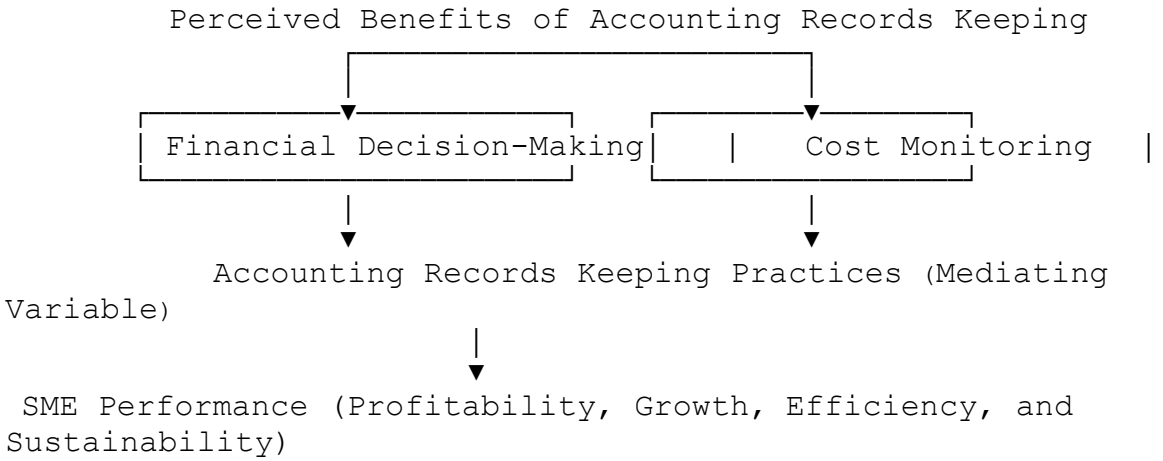
Previous research supports this multidimensional approach. For instance, Bechtsis et al. (2022), Oko-Odion et al. (2025), and Allioui and Mourdi (2023) found that businesses that engage in systematic recording and evaluation of financial transactions are better positioned to make informed, data-driven decisions. Such practices help prevent financial mismanagement, support strategic planning, and enhance the overall resilience and performance of SMEs.

The Link between the Variables

The framework assumes a causal relationship, where the perceived benefits of accounting records keeping positively influence actual record-keeping behavior, which in turn enhances business performance (Ibrahim and Musah, 2014). This aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior), which posits that behavior is driven by attitudes (perceptions), subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Rhodes, and Courneya, 2003). Hence, if SME owners perceive accounting as beneficial and manageable, they are more likely to maintain records that yield performance benefits.

Moreover, the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm supports this framework by arguing that internal capabilities, such as proper financial management, can serve as competitive advantages (Barney, 1991). Accounting records, when perceived as a valuable resource, contribute to organizational learning, financial discipline, and growth.

Literature-Driven Conceptual Model



This model illustrates a mediated relationship where perceived benefits influence actual practice, which in turn drives performance.

Theoretical Foundation

This study is grounded in two complementary theoretical frameworks: the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), and the Resource-Based View (RBV) advanced by Barney (1991). The Theory of Reasoned Action emphasizes that an individual's behavior is primarily driven by behavioral intentions, which are, in turn, shaped by their attitudes toward the behavior and subjective norms. Applied to the context of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the theory suggests that if SME owners and managers hold positive attitudes towards maintaining proper accounting records—viewing them as useful for informed decision-making, legal compliance, and accessing financial support—they are more likely to adopt and maintain such practices consistently. On the other hand, the Resource-Based View posits that a firm's performance is determined by its ability to develop and leverage valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable internal resources. Within this framework, accounting records are seen as intangible strategic assets that contribute to a firm's competitive advantage by enabling better cost control, strategic planning, and efficient allocation of resources. Integrating TRA and RBV, this study proposes that SMEs' record-keeping behaviors are influenced by perceived benefits, and those behaviors, in turn, impact organizational outcomes such as profitability, sustainability, and overall performance.

Empirical Framework

The empirical framework of this study is supported by a growing body of literature that highlights the relationship between perception, accounting practices, and business performance among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Several studies demonstrate that the way SME owners perceive the value of accounting information significantly influences their willingness to adopt and utilize sound financial practices.

For instance, Onaolapo and Adegbite (2014) found that in informal economic settings, such as those prevalent in many developing countries, the perception of accounting relevance strongly predicts the adoption of bookkeeping tools. SMEs that do not see accounting as useful are less likely to maintain proper records, thereby hindering their operational and strategic capacities.

Similarly, Sunday (2011) examined the Nigerian SME landscape and reported that enterprises that understood and implemented basic financial practices—such as cash flow monitoring, budgeting, and expense tracking—enjoyed better access to credit facilities and experienced higher profitability levels.

Furthermore, Ibrahim et al. (2019) highlighted the impact of training and awareness, showing that when SME owners were educated on the benefits of accounting, there was a noticeable improvement in their record-keeping behavior and overall business performance. These empirical findings collectively suggest that one of the key factors contributing to the performance gap among SMEs is the degree to which their owners value and apply accounting information. Perception, therefore, plays a central role not only in shaping financial behavior but also in influencing broader outcomes such as growth, competitiveness, and sustainability.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design, which is deemed appropriate as it facilitates the collection of primary data from a sample of Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) operators concerning their perceptions, accounting practices, and performance outcomes. The design also supports the use of statistical tools to describe variable relationships and test relevant hypotheses. The population of the study comprises registered SMEs operating in Aba, Abia State, across diverse sectors including manufacturing, fashion, leatherworks, retail, and fabrication. Based on data from the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN, 2023), there are approximately 5,000 formally registered SMEs in Aba.

To ensure representativeness and minimize bias, a multistage sampling technique was employed. Initially, Aba North and Aba South Local Government Areas were purposively selected due to their high density of SMEs. Subsequently, a stratified sampling technique was used to categorize the population into business sectors such as fashion, leatherworks, and retail. Within each stratum, simple random sampling was conducted to select individual respondents. The sample size was determined using Yamane's formula for finite population correction, yielding a sample of 370 SMEs from the total population of 5,000, with a 5% margin of error.

$$\frac{N}{1 + N(e)2}$$

Where:

- *n* = sample size
- *N* = population (5000)
- *e* = margin of error (0.05)

=

$$\frac{5000}{1 + 5000(0.05)2}$$

$$\frac{5000}{13.5}$$

= 370 Student

The primary instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire specifically designed to extract detailed and relevant information from SME operators. The questionnaire was organized into three key sections for clarity and focus. The first section gathered demographic data, including variables such as the respondent's gender, age, business type and years of operation which served to contextualize responses.

The second section explored respondents' perceptions of the benefits of accounting record-keeping using Likert-scale items. These items were adapted from validated instruments employed in prior studies by Amoako (2013) and Ibrahim et al. (2019), ensuring both relevance and reliability. The third section assessed SME performance across various dimensions such as profitability, business growth, operational efficiency, and sustainability, using a blend of subjective self-assessments and available objective data to provide a comprehensive evaluation.

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of experts, including academics in accounting and business research and professionals working directly with SMEs. Their feedback contributed to refining the questionnaire for clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness. Construct validity was addressed by aligning the questionnaire items with measurement scales previously validated in empirical literature, ensuring the instrument accurately captured key theoretical concepts such as perceived accounting benefits and SME performance. For reliability testing, a pilot study was conducted with 30 SME owners who were not part of the main sample.

Data from the pilot were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha to test internal consistency, with values of 0.70 and above considered acceptable, indicating that the instrument reliably measured the intended constructs. For data analysis, both descriptive and inferential

statistical methods were applied. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores were used to summarize demographic characteristics and perceptions of accounting practices. To uncover the underlying structure of the constructs—Perceived Benefits, Record Practices, and SME Performance—Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted using Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.82 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant at $p < .001$, confirming the suitability of the data for factor analysis. Furthermore, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was employed to test hypotheses regarding the relationship between accounting benefits and SME performance. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS software.

Data Analysis and Findings

A total of 370 responses were analyzed to determine the demographic distribution and characteristics of the SME owners/operators in Aba.

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	223	60.3
Male	147	39.7
Total	**370**	**100**

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Table 1 shows the gender distribution of respondents, with females accounting for 223 (60.3%) and males for 147 (39.7%) out of a total of 370 participants. This female majority indicates that women play a significant and possibly leading role in SME operations in Aba. The predominance of female respondents suggests that women are actively engaged in entrepreneurship within this region, which may have implications for targeted support and policies to further empower female-led SMEs.

Table 2: Age Distribution

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–25	41	11.1
26–35	65	17.6
36–45	142	38.4
46–55	71	19.2
56 and above	51	13.8
Total	**370**	**100**

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Table 2 presents the age distribution of respondents, revealing that the largest group is aged 36–45 years, with 142 individuals (38.4%). This indicates that a mature working population primarily manages SMEs in the area. Other age groups include 26–35 years (17.6%), 46–55 years (19.2%), 56 and above (13.8%), and 18–25 years (11.1%). The data suggests that middle-aged adults dominate SME operations, highlighting their critical role in the local entrepreneurial landscape.

Table 3: Type of Business

Business Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fashion/Design	148	40.0
Fabrication	95	25.7
Retail/Wholesale	49	13.2
Manufacturing	47	12.7
Others	31	8.4
Total	**370**	**100**

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Table 3 displays the distribution of business types among respondents, with Fashion/Design leading at 148 firms (40.0%). This dominance indicates a strong preference for creativity-driven enterprises within the SME sector. Fabrication follows with 95 businesses (25.7%), while Retail/Wholesale and Manufacturing account for 13.2% and 12.7% respectively. The remaining 8.4% fall into other categories. The data highlights the prominence of fashion and design as key drivers of entrepreneurial activity in the area.

Table 4: Years in Business

Years of Operation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	18	4.9
1–5 years	113	30.5
6–10 years	169	45.7
11+ years	70	18.9
Total	**370**	**100**

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Table 4 shows the distribution of SMEs based on their years of operation. The majority of businesses, 169 (45.7%), have been operating for 6 to 10 years, indicating a relatively established SME sector. Additionally, 113 businesses (30.5%) have been in operation for 1 to 5 years, while a smaller portion, 70 (18.9%) have operated for over 11 years. Only 18 SMEs (4.9%) are less than one year old, suggesting that most SMEs in the sample have surpassed the initial startup phase and possess some level of business experience.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 5: Perceived Benefits of Accounting Record Keeping (Mean Scores)

Statement	Mean
Accounting records help me understand my financial position	4.43
Accounting records aid financial decisions	4.36
Improve access to loans or credit	4.12
Useful for tax/regulatory compliance	4.25
Help track costs/reduce waste	4.30
Guide long-term planning	4.20
Time-consuming and unnecessary (Reversed)	2.10
Easier to attract investors/partners	4.18
Overall Mean Score	**4.00**

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Table 5 presents the mean scores for perceived benefits of accounting record keeping among SMEs. Respondents strongly agree that accounting records help them understand their financial position (mean = 4.43) and aid financial decision-making (4.36). Other highly rated benefits include tracking costs and reducing waste (4.30), tax and regulatory compliance (4.25), and guiding long-term planning (4.20). Access to loans (4.12) and attracting investors or partners (4.18) are also recognized advantages. The reversed statement regarding accounting being time-consuming and unnecessary scored low (2.10), indicating disagreement. The overall mean score of 4.00 suggests a generally positive perception of accounting record keeping's value among SMEs.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

To identify the underlying structure among observed variables and reduce items into coherent factors under *Perceived Benefits*, *Accounting Record Practices*, and *SME Performance* constructs. The following assumption checks were used and these includes **Sample size:** N = 370 (adequate, as N ≥ 300 is considered excellent; Field, 2018). KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy = **0.82** (good) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: $\chi^2 = 1940.77$, df = 153, **p < .001**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis
Rotation: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization
Factor Loadings (Above 0.50):

Item No.	Item Description	Factor 1: Perceived Benefits	Factor 2: Record Practices	Factor 3: SME Performance
Q1	Understanding financial position	0.74		
Q2	Financial decision making	0.79		
Q3	Loan and credit access	0.68		
Q4	Tax and regulatory compliance	0.66		
Q5	Cost tracking and waste reduction	0.71		

Q6	Long-term business planning	0.75			
Q8	Attracting investors	0.70			
Q7(R)	Time-consuming/unnecessary	-0.59 (reverse loading)			
Q9	Recording of income and expenses		0.81		
Q10	Use of software or record book		0.74		
Q11	Review of financial statements		0.69		
Q12	Engagement of accountant/bookkeeper		0.72		
Q13	Profitability improved			0.75	
Q14	Business expansion			0.72	
Q15	Increase in customer base			0.78	
Q16	Stability during downturns			0.71	
Q17	Better resource management			0.73	
Q18	Satisfaction with performance			0.76	

Source: Field Survey; 2025

The results from the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) reveal a clear and coherent three-factor structure representing perceived benefits of accounting record keeping, record-keeping practices, and SME performance. The first factor, *Perceived Benefits*, includes items such as understanding the financial position (Q1; loading = 0.74), financial decision-making (Q2; 0.79), and long-term business planning (Q6; 0.75). These high loadings indicate that SME owners in Aba strongly recognize the strategic value of accounting information in managing and planning their business operations. Other notable items under this factor include improved access to credit (Q3; 0.68), tax and regulatory compliance (Q4; 0.66), cost tracking and waste reduction (Q5; 0.71), and attracting investors (Q8; 0.70). The reverse-coded item (Q7) on accounting being time-consuming and unnecessary loaded negatively (-0.59), suggesting that respondents largely disagree with the notion that accounting practices are burdensome, further reinforcing the positive perception of accounting record keeping.

The second factor, *Record Practices*, includes items reflecting actual accounting behaviors such as recording income and expenses (Q9; 0.81), using accounting software or structured books (Q10; 0.74), reviewing financial statements (Q11; 0.69), and engaging an accountant or bookkeeper (Q12; 0.72). These loadings demonstrate that many SMEs are not only aware of accounting benefits but also apply systematic financial practices in their operations.

The third factor, *SME Performance*, consists of items related to business success indicators. These include improved profitability (Q13; 0.75), business expansion (Q14; 0.72), increased customer base (Q15; 0.78), business stability (Q16; 0.71), resource management (Q17; 0.73), and overall satisfaction with performance (Q18; 0.76). The consistency and strength of these loadings confirm that SME performance is a distinct and measurable construct. Overall, the factor structure confirms the validity of the instrument and highlights the integral relationship between perceived benefits, accounting practices, and performance outcomes.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1 ($H_0$1):

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between perceived benefits of accounting record keeping and SME performance.

Ho: There is a significant relationship between perceived benefits of accounting record keeping and SME performance.

Correlations

			SME performance	Perceived benefits of accounting record keeping
Spearman's rho	SME performance	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.067**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
		N	370	370
	Perceived benefits of accounting record keeping	Correlation Coefficient	.067**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
		N	370	370
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.001
		N	370	370

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient test reveals a **significant positive relationship** between perceived benefits of accounting record-keeping and SME performance, as indicated by the correlation coefficient of **0.067** and a **p-value of 0.001**, which is less than the 0.05 significance level. This suggests that as SME owners increasingly perceive accounting records as beneficial, their business performance tends to improve, albeit slightly. Since the p-value is statistically significant, the null hypothesis (**Ho1**), which states that there is no significant relationship, is rejected. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (**Ho**) is accepted, confirming a statistically significant relationship between the variables.

Hypothesis 2:

Ho_2: SMEs that perceive greater benefits from accounting records keeping do not perform significantly better than those with low perceived benefits.

Ho: SMEs that perceive greater benefits from accounting records keeping perform significantly better than those with low perceived benefits.

Test Method: Independent Samples t-test

Group	**Mean Performance Score**	**Std. Dev.**	**t**	**p-value**
High Perception (>Mean)	4.35	0.52	5.89	0.000**
Low Perception (≤Mean)	3.74	0.60		

The Independent Samples t-test was conducted to examine whether SMEs that perceive greater benefits from accounting record-keeping perform significantly better than those with low perceived benefits. The results show that SMEs with high perception scores (above the mean)

have a mean performance score of **4.35** with a standard deviation of **0.52**, while those with low perception scores (at or below the mean) have a mean performance score of **3.74** with a standard deviation of **0.60**. The calculated t-value is **5.89**, and the p-value is **0.000**, which is well below the 0.05 significance threshold. This indicates a statistically significant difference in performance between the two groups. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho) that SMEs perceiving greater benefits from accounting records do not perform significantly better is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is accepted, demonstrating that SMEs with higher perceived benefits from accounting practices tend to achieve significantly better performance outcomes.

Hypothesis 3:

Ho_3: The extent of accounting records keeping among SMEs does not significantly influence their performance.

Ho: The extent of accounting records keeping among SMEs significantly influence their performance.

Test Method: Multiple Linear Regression

Model Summary:

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	Sig.
0.612	0.375	0.368	45.32	0.000**

Coefficients Table:

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Regular recording	0.41	0.08	0.34	5.12	0.000**
Use of software	0.28	0.07	0.29	4.00	0.000**
Statement review	0.21	0.06	0.23	3.50	0.001**
Accountant engagement	0.14	0.05	0.18	2.80	0.005**

The multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of the extent of accounting records keeping on SME performance. The model summary shows an R value of 0.612, indicating a moderate positive correlation between the predictors and SME performance. The R^2 of 0.375 suggests that approximately 37.5% of the variation in SME performance can be explained by the accounting record-keeping practices included in the model. The Adjusted R^2 of 0.368 confirms the model's goodness of fit after adjusting for the number of predictors. The overall model is statistically significant, as indicated by the F-value of 45.32 and a p-value of 0.000, well below the 0.05 threshold.

Examining the coefficients table, all predictors—regular recording, use of accounting software, statement review, and engagement of an accountant—have positive and significant effects on SME performance. Regular recording has the strongest impact (Beta = 0.34, p = 0.000), followed by the use of software (Beta = 0.29, p = 0.000), statement review (Beta = 0.23, p = 0.001), and accountant engagement (Beta = 0.18, p = 0.005). This means that increasing the extent of these accounting practices significantly improves SME performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, confirming that accounting records keeping significantly influences SME performance.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that accounting record keeping is not only highly valued but also actively practiced among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Aba. More importantly, the results show that these practices have a statistically significant influence on business performance. The demographic profile of respondents reveals a strong presence of educated and experienced SME operators, particularly in the fashion and fabrication sectors. This observation is consistent with the findings of Ademola, Samuel, and Ifedolapo (2012), who emphasized that structured business experience enhances the likelihood of adopting effective accounting practices. The perceived benefits of accounting record keeping were rated highly by respondents, especially in areas such as understanding financial positions, making informed decisions, and accessing credit facilities. This aligns with the assertions of Ofurum, Egbe, and Micah (2018), who argued that transparent financial records enhance SME credibility and improve access to external funding. Furthermore, the significant correlation ($r = 0.67$) and the robust regression results suggest that both perceptions and actual accounting practices are strong predictors of SME performance. This finding supports the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, which maintains that internal resources such as financial knowledge and systems are critical to achieving competitive advantage (Barney, 1991).

Summary of Findings

i. The result reveals a statistically significant but weak positive relationship between the perceived benefits of accounting record keeping and SME performance ($r = 0.067$, $p = 0.001$). This indicates that as SME owners increasingly recognize the benefits of maintaining accounting records, there is a corresponding, albeit slight, improvement in their business performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between perceived benefits of accounting record keeping and SME performance.

ii. The outcome of the independent samples t-test shows that SMEs with a higher perception of the benefits of accounting record keeping (mean = 4.35, SD = 0.52) perform significantly better than those with lower perceptions (mean = 3.74, SD = 0.60), with a t-value of 5.89 and a p-value of 0.000. This statistically significant difference implies that SMEs which place greater value on accounting practices tend to achieve better performance outcomes. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming that SMEs that perceive greater benefits from accounting record keeping perform significantly better than those with lower perceived benefits.

iii. Finally, the results of the multiple linear regression analysis indicate that the extent of accounting record keeping significantly influences SME performance, with an R^2 value of 0.375 showing that approximately 37.5% of the variance in performance is explained by the model. Each accounting practice—regular recording ($\beta = 0.34$), use of software ($\beta = 0.29$), statement review ($\beta = 0.23$), and engagement of an accountant ($\beta = 0.18$)—had a positive and statistically significant impact on performance, with all p-values below 0.01. It is therefore concluded that the extent of accounting record keeping practices significantly and positively influences the performance of SMEs.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the perceived benefits of accounting record keeping play a crucial role in determining the financial behavior and overall performance of SMEs in Aba. SMEs that recognize the strategic advantages of maintaining proper records—such as access to finance, better decision-making, and regulatory compliance—are more likely to integrate accounting practices into their operations. This, in turn, enhances their chances of achieving profitability, operational efficiency, and long-term sustainability. Conversely, SMEs that undervalue or are unaware of these benefits often operate informally and face challenges in monitoring business progress, attracting investment, or managing resources effectively. The findings validate the theoretical link between perception and performance, aligning with behavioral and resource-based frameworks that emphasize the importance of internal capabilities in enterprise success. Importantly, the study highlights a significant gap between

perceived importance and actual accounting capacity, often constrained by lack of training or resources. Therefore, enhancing SME performance in Aba must go beyond providing accounting tools—it must also foster positive perceptions and build the capability to apply them effectively. These conclusions offer actionable insights for stakeholders aiming to support SMEs through policy, education, and institutional support.

Recommendations

i. Given the significant positive relationship between the perceived benefits of accounting record keeping and SME performance, it is recommended that government agencies, business development services, and SME associations intensify awareness campaigns and training programs to educate SME owners on the tangible advantages of maintaining proper accounting records. This will help reinforce positive perceptions and promote adoption.

ii. Since SMEs with higher perceptions of accounting benefits perform significantly better, stakeholders should promote the use of simple and affordable accounting tools—such as mobile accounting apps and spreadsheet templates—to enable small business owners to effectively track financial activities. Capacity-building workshops should be organized to improve financial literacy and accounting skills among SME operators.

iii. In light of the strong influence of specific accounting practices (such as regular recording, use of software, statement review, and engagement of accountants) on performance, SMEs should be encouraged to institutionalize these practices. Policymakers and financial institutions can support this by offering incentives such as reduced interest rates or access to grants for SMEs that demonstrate strong financial management and record-keeping systems.

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COLONISATION, DECOLONISATION AND THE CHALLENGES OF ENGENDERING AN AFRICAN DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

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ABSTRACT
During colonialism, many African countries had their territories conquered and subdued by Europe for the primary purpose of exploring, exploiting and establishing economic buffer zone in Africa. To achieve this, the colonialists introduced and substituted their political and administrative structures for the pre-colonial indigenous African political/administrative structures. This resulted in the adoption of the European model of liberal democracy. The paper discusses the ontology of Africa's pre-colonial indigenous political system, European colonialism and its attendant adverse effects on the post-colonial African state. The paper rues the aping of Western democratic theory by former African colonies as primarily responsible for the pervasive political crises across Africa. The paper thus recommends a reversion to and the renovation of the pre-colonial African indigenous political institutions as a pathway to engendering an identity for Africa's democracy. Not a total rejection of the western model of democracy and not a total acceptance of the pre-colonial political institution but a somewhat adoption of a middle course suitable for a typical African socio-cultural milieu.

Introduction

Post colonial Africa has continued to experience a unidirectional movement towards the Western version of democracy since independence. This trend has no doubt culminated in a profound attempt to substitute the pre-colonial indigenous African democratic values with the pervasive neo-liberal democratic tradition. This rapid erasure of the pre-colonial African indigenous democratic values and the dramatic embrace of and inclination towards the Western democratic culture has been a major source of serial political crisis across the African continent. Apparently, the patronage for Western political culture by the post-colonial African state is in conflict with the pre-colonial Africa's political heritage and democratic values. Overtime, this rather obscure conflict has gradually given way to vintage and manifest conflicts across Africa. The fusion of the Western liberal democracy and Africa's autocratic tradition has engendered inexorable crisis blowing across the African continent; from Kenya to the Arab countries of Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, and down to Ivory Coast, Benin Republic, Zimbabwe, etc.

With regard to the foregoing, there have been scholarly tendencies for post-colonial Africa to re-examine inherited western democratic values and practices. These tendencies have stimulated renewed interest in the pre-colonial indigenous political institutions. This renewed interest is ostensibly due to the failure of the inherited formal political structures

in terms of its resilience, effectiveness and reliability in the provision of required goods and services to the African peoples (Olowu and Erero, 1997)

The services provided by agencies under modern democratic institutions have declined sharply in quality and quantity. According to Olowu and Erero (1997), institutions operating under modern democratic structures are no longer responsible for the public services enjoyed by the citizens in the urban and rural areas of Nigeria. Such services are provided by a variety of non-governmental agencies, some of which are indigenous (e.g. townships, community-based action groups etc.) but some of which are not (e.g. religious and philanthropic agencies, donor organs etc.)

Pre-colonial African traditional institutions have also become more attractive due to its high moral values and strong ethical base. Studies have shown that the issue of morality is more commonly profound and observed among indigenous population and communities in Africa. This belief is derived from the perspective that the values and principles of African morality are founded on the character and integrity of the African tradition rather than on mere religion. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2010).

This paper undertakes an eclectic appraisal of the post-colonial political institution and the modern and western model of democracy on one hand; and the pre-colonial indigenous political institutions among African societies on the other hand. The juxtaposition of these two models of political structures is for the purpose of reviving and renovating the pre-colonial political institutions for the African society. This approach is premised on the fact that many scholarships work either advocated a total abrogation of the colonial political institution and/or a total acceptance of the pre-colonial political institution. However, the tendencies in this study is an overhaul and rejig of both the pre-colonial and the colonial political structures to make it suitable for the post-colonial African state.

Pre-Colonial Administrations in Africa: a Historical Perspective

This section discusses the indigenous political institutions in some African states before the colonial administrations but with copious references to Nigeria. Many African countries share similarities and dissimilarities in their pre-colonial administrations. However, there seems to be some consensus that most African countries had stable indigenous political institutions before colonialism. For example, history has it that most former colonial colonies, particularly former British colonies had stable and viable indigenous political institutions before the introduction of colonial administration.

The pre-colonial political institutions in Sierra Leone were dominated by the Atlantic sub-family made up of the Bulom and the Sherbro tribes. To the South east of Sierra Leone, we had the Mende tribe who came as settlers and hunters but later organised into war chiefdoms. The North of Sierra Leone were the Mandinka tribes, the Susus, the Limbas, the Konos and the Temenes. The Temnes conquered the land and enslaved the Susus, Limbas and the Lokos and created a strong and viable state which derived its prosperity from the slave trade with Europeans. The Susus later revolted against the Temnes and established their own state (Anene, 1966).

The coast belt of what is today Liberia and Ivory Coast use to be the home of many groups belonging to the Atlantic sub-family. The most popular of the Atlantic sub-family was the Kru tribe which could not integrate properly with its neighbours, the Vai, the Bassa and the Bakwe. However, the authority in the Atlantic sub-family was held by the elders representing family segments which claimed a common ancestry (Anene, 1966).

In Ghana, the pre-colonial indigenous institution was made up of mainly the Akan group of peoples which consisted of the Fante and the Asante. Incidentally, there were both the Fante and Asante Confederacies. While the Fante Confederacy bore allegiance to the Asantehene, the Asante form of government epitomized feudalism, with a hierarchy of chiefs owing various degrees of allegiance and obligation; an administrative system of government akin to indirect rule system, where tributary chiefs were empowered to rule their own peoples, sometimes under the supervision of resident representatives of the Asantehene. This arrangement served as a system of checks and balances, a replica of what obtained in pre-colonial Oyo Empire (Brown, 1996).

Unlike what we have in other parts of Africa, it has been relatively difficult trying to determine

when colonialism actually started in countries of North East Africa and in the Maghreb. The history of pre-colonial administration of the countries in the Maghreb was fraught with series of expansionist tendencies, foreign incursions and foreign military expeditions. Before the invasion of the Ottoman Turks in 1517, Egypt has been under the rulership of the Mamluks. The French occupied Egypt after Napoleon led a military expedition to crush the Mamluks in 1798. However, French occupation of Egypt came to an end when the British intervened and combined forces with the Ottoman Sultan to compel the withdrawal of French from Egypt (Al-Hajj, 1966).

In the Sudan, we had North Sudan and South Sudan. North Sudan was mainly arabized in culture and outlook, consisted mostly of Muslims and of Arab descent, while South Sudan was predominantly non-Muslims. The pre-colonial indigenous political institution in Sudan was predominantly under the firm control of the Ja'ali dynasty which was the major ruling group. This was in addition to the arabized Nubia ethnic group who were mainly sedentaries of the main Nile. However, virtually every notable group in the Sudan is intrinsically linked to the Ja'ali. There also existed the royal family of Taquali, a small Muslim state in the pagan Nuba Mountains which derived its origin from the marriage of a Ja'ali holy man to an indigenous princess. Invariably, the various ruling groups basically have claimed a Ja'ali ancestry (Holt, 1976).

Specifically speaking about Nigeria, Olowu and Erero (1997), in their work on *Governance of Nigeria's villages and cities through indigenous institutions* identified three types of indigenous institutions in Nigeria's pre-colonial political institutions. They include

i. Political and Administrative Indigenous Institutions,

ii. Socio-Cultural Organisations and

iii. Development and Economic Institutions

In the study, it was found that the indigenous political and administrative institutions which existed in various communities prior to colonialism consisted of the traditional leadership structures which played very important roles in the governance of their communities (Olowu and Erero, 1997). In North East Borno State of Nigeria for example, the traditional structure of governance was hierarchical with the Shehu of Borno and his council heading the entire emirate. The next level was the district which was headed by the district head and his council. Next were the villages whose affairs were handled by the village head (known as Lawan). At the base of the administrative structure were the wards which were governed by the hamlet or ward head (Bulama) and the council of elders (Dlakwa and Okafor, 1995).

Maduabum (2008) claims that what is known as Nigeria today emerged from a conglomeration of pockets of nationalities. He explains that Nigeria between the 14th and 18th centuries was a conglomeration of various empires such as the Oyo Empire, the Benin Empire, the Kanem-Bornu Empire, the Songhai Empire etc, which were autonomous entities and successfully administered. He observes that there existed an outstanding centralised political structure of government in the Sokoto Caliphate under the headship of Othman dan Fodio with an effective method of selecting and appointing rulers such as the emirs. These emirs ruled the various emirates and owed allegiance to dan Fodio and his two representatives at Gwandu and Sokoto. There is a general belief that the emirs had divine right to rule.

From the foregoing analysis of the pre-colonial political institutions of the selected territories, it is believed that many African countries had very stable indigenous political institutions which were undoubtedly in tandem with the cultural milieu of the people. Also, it is important to note that these indigenous political and administrative apparatus existed to promote harmony and peaceful coexistence among the indigenous people in the various kingdoms and empires that existed before the colonisation of Africa.

Colonial Administration in Africa and The Advent of Western Democracy

The potency of pre-colonial indigenous political institutions in Africa began to relapse with the conscious invasion of Africa by various European countries. Colonialism was invented in various forms by the colonialist. In some cases, colonialism was imposed by outright war between the colonialist and African leaders while in other cases colonialism was instituted with the consent and cooperation of some traditional African leaders. However, it has been

argued that the African traditional leaders did not consent to the type of colonial state which eventually evolved (Agbebaku and Aidelokhai, 1995).

The colonisation of Africa by European imperialist was motivated by three main factors- economic, political, and social. However, there was an overarching of the economic factor which began to develop in the nineteenth century when the slave trade became obviously obnoxious especially in terms of its profitability and debasement of humanity. This is in addition to the expansion of the European capitalist Industrial Revolution. The economic factor which is in form of capitalist industrialization includes the search for assured sources of raw materials, for guaranteed market outlets and profitable investment outlets; the same reason which spurred the European scramble and the partition and eventual conquest of Africa. Thus, the primary motivation for European intrusion was economic (Iweriebor @ exhibitions.nypl.org). While the political factor had to do with the inter European power tussle and competition for preeminence among Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Portugal and Spain the social factor witnessed the battle of major European powers to contend with the gargantuan and multifarious social problem of unemployment, poverty, homelessness, and social displacement from rural areas (Iweriebor @ exhibitions.nypl.org). By 1900 a larger proportion of Africa has been colonised by the major European super power comprised of Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, and Italy. This colonisation process set the stage for the administrative domination and economic exploitation of the colonized societies. Perhaps due to the military orientation and the racist ideology of the colonialists, the colonial states became authoritarian and excessively bureaucratic (Iweriebor @ exhibitions.nypl.org).

The Colonisation Process and Renaissance of African Democracy

No doubt, colonialism brought along with it the Western democratic structures and way of life which are considered alien to the African political milieu. Consequently, the African orientations, virtually in all ramifications were altered to reflect the European way of life. Typical of what Bulhan (2015) describes as the 'colonization of group behaviour'. According to Bulhan, colonization of Africa graduated and progressed from the occupation of land to the occupation of beings. In other words, colonialism visibly impacted on the social, political and economic lives of the colonized. To what extent did European colonisation impact on the democracy and politics of post colonial Africa states, particularly Nigeria?

The colonisation of Nigeria by the British invariably witnessed the introduction of several constitutional reforms and frameworks. There was the 1922 Clifford Constitution which introduced the elective principle in Nigeria and the 1954 Lyttleton Constitution which ostensibly entrenched the principle of federalism in Nigerian (Adigwe, 1989). Also through the colonisation process, the British introduced the Westminster parliamentary system of government in Nigeria which according to Maduabum (2008), was not only modeled along the British system of government but also greatly influenced by the British Government which granted independence to Nigeria at the time.

One noticeable impact of British colonialism on her former colonies was the excessive centralization of the political structures of her territories. The centralization of political structures in Nigeria under British colonial rule involved consolidating various regions and ethnic groups under a single colonial administration, though with some regional variations. This was achieved through direct and indirect rule, creating a centralized, albeit hierarchical system of governance. While aiming for efficiency and control, this process also laid the foundation for post-colonial political challenges related to unity and regional disparities. The British thus established a centralized colonial government, replacing pre-existing indigenous systems and establishing a clear hierarchy from the Governor-General to local administrators. The centralized colonial structure and the "divide and rule" policy have had lasting consequences on Nigeria's political landscape, influencing the relationship between the federal government and regional entities, and contributing to persistent ethnic and regional tensions (Lange in Ziltener and Kunzler, 2013). Colonial administration in Africa and particularly in Nigeria depicts exploitation, oppression, discrimination, cruelty, underdevelopment and poverty. Incidentally, the exploration and exploitation of the riches of Africa and her raw materials prospered the economies of imperialist countries. This is

antithetical to democracy; it is an anathema of egalitarianism which western democracy seeks to profess. The conflict inherent in the European orchestrated democracy has therefore provoked and intensified advocacy for a reversion to and renovation of the pre-colonial democratic practice and political structures.

A Case for African Democracy

Although, advocacy for an indigenous African model of democracy has not attracted the expected discourse in African philosophy over the years, a number of scholars have in recent times begun to see the imperatives of resonating and harnessing an indigenous African democratic culture and values, rooted in the traditional heritage of the African society capable of\ resolving her peculiar problems. A number of reasons have been adduced to buttress this renewed advocacy for an African model of democracy.

The colonial democratic structure inherited by the post-colonial African nations is believed to be dysfunctional in nature since the colonial democratic culture and political institutions bequeathed to African countries at independence merely created the mental picture of a 'dependent independent Africa'. The colonial political structure was imposed on Africa and Africans through the use of force. Many African countries were conquered and subdued to accept colonial rule. This culture of brute force became an enduring colonial legacy which later produced dictatorship and militarism across the African continent. It is for this reason Jost (1995) opines that after winning independence from European colonial powers, most African nations fell victim to dictatorial and military regimes.

Also, it has been argued that colonial politics and democratic structure and values grossly underdeveloped Africa. The point has already been made that the idea of European colonialism came with the tendency to primarily establish economic colonies. Therefore, through British colonial political system, many British former colonies including Nigeria were incorporated into the capitalist system; an economic system which engendered international economic inequality with African countries as victims of the unequal international relations. This whole idea revolves round the 'Universalist' thinking which prescribed western liberal democracy as a universal template and ultimate form of human government for African states together with its economic correlate, capitalism. This argument is premised on the assumption that the western liberal democracy is believed to be the most viable, desirable and imperative for addressing the challenges of development in third-world nations (Ademola, 2009).

On the other hand, the intensification of the advocacy for an African democracy and African democratic theory is based on the belief that such theory would be capable of addressing the peculiar socio-economic and political needs of the contemporary African state. This implies a reversion to the pre-colonial indigenous administrative system; the renaissance of the pre-colonial indigenous administrative structure. Interestingly, Traditionalism as a school of thought in the discourse on the state of democracy in Africa has expressed resentment at the way democracy is practiced today in the continent. For this school of thought, democracy as currently practiced in Africa can hardly be sustainable and incapable of resolving the crises besetting the continent. Those who have sympathy for an indigenous democratic system believe that such system could be more natural to the African culture. Therefore, they are of the opinion that the Western idea of democracy, which is fast gaining currency in contemporary Africa, should be jettisoned in lieu of our indigenous democratic culture (Ademola, 2009).

Pre-colonial indigenous political structures in Nigeria have been found to possess more formidable democratic values than the orchestrated western version. In the various pre-colonial kingdoms and empires, a kind of familial progressive democracy was practiced. In the old Oyo Kingdom for example, towns were delineated into quarters under their various rulers. Each town comprised of different family groups and what was known as villages of compounds from where the Obas were chosen. Frequent meetings were held by the various family groups where important issues concerning family members were deliberated upon, and one of the most important duties of the Family Head and the elders was to ensure that not only that every member's opinion was heard, but also that every member was encouraged to express his or her opinion. Thus, participation was regarded as every member's duty and the choice and/or election of those who govern at various levels was done in accordance with democratic principles. Thus, the appointment of a king under the kingdom was decidedly democratic (Akintoye, 2009).

Reversion to the pre-colonial indigenous African political values has been prescribed in place of the western liberal democracy because there is a general belief that the latter could be inadequate in addressing the problem of immorality and social injustice in post-colonial Africa state. In view of the problems bedeviling the social justice system in contemporary Africa vis a vis that of corruption, poverty and bad leadership, it has become imperative to appropriate relevant traditional institutions and values that define an indigenous justice system. The institution of social justice in pre-colonial Africa has a complementary relationship with traditional religion and morality. Where human knowledge and power is incapacitated, morality and religion become the ultra means of social justice. Thus, it has been recommended that one way of overcoming social injustice with all its threats to sustainable democracy is to embrace the complimentary contribution of spirituality and morality, which African traditional democratic practice affords. C.S. Momoh in Ademola (2009) captures this in his work, *Philosophy of a New Past and an Old Future*:

> *The present oath by our public officers during swearing-in ceremonies is a passive one. What we need is an active oath. An active oath is one …. Invoked in the name of indigenous gods, or spirits or juju… spelling out what should befall the oath taker if he willfully and deliberately enriches himself, friends or relations by exploiting or abusing his office (Ademola, 2009).*

In their argument for a renaissance of African indigenous democracy, Moshi and Osman in Ademola (2009), explained that western liberal 'democracy failed in many parts of Africa mainly because the Western political parties promoted class interests, whereas in Africa an established class system is mainly absent. They further contended that multiparty politics under the western liberal democracy does not consider indigenous cultural values, which makes multi-party electoral politics to degenerate into ethnic or communal rivalry and conflicts. Offor (2006) has argued that the practice of democracy in Africa and elsewhere should be done in recognition of the cultural differences. Offor (2006) and Wiredu (2009) are averse to the western model of majoritarian democracy which promotes multi-party system of politics in which the party that wins the most seats at the election forms the government. In such a political system, the losing party or parties become the opposition, singly or jointly and the minority representatives' votes are overridden by the votes of the majority. The implication of this is that the right of the minority representatives and their constituencies to meaningfully participate in the actual making of decisions is rendered nugatory. This has been a common cynosure in many contemporary African states where certain ethnic groups and political parties have found themselves perpetually in the minority and consistently staged outside the corridor of power; their fundamental human rights of decisional representation are permanently denied with impunity; all of this culminating in violation of the right of the minority and the many instances of political instability in Africa. This violation of rights of the minorities and the attendant political instability has no doubt intensified the advocacy for a return to the pre-colonial Africa indigenous political structures which depicts mutual tolerance and political inclusivity.

Conclusion

So far, we have been able to discuss the nature and identify the outstanding features and structure of the pre-colonial and colonial administrations in Africa. this was done with copious reference to Nigeria. We have also outlined the effects of colonialism on the democratic structures of post-colonial African states, particularly Nigeria.

By the very nature of European colonialism, it is believed to be a hostile system, unfriendly, acrimonious and has proved not to possess the mechanism to accommodate, harness and integrate a typical multi-ethnic and religiously diverse African society like Nigeria. Western democracy is believed to be alien and obtrusive to the African society; thus, it was misconceptualized, misunderstood and misappropriated. Periodic elections and politics which are common features of colonial politics degenerated to warfare in Nigeria and in many African countries. Paradoxically elections are never won and are never lost. Consequently, politics in many African countries and in Nigeria for instance has become very accusatorial and Hobbesian. An adversarial judicial system has become a permanent feature of Nigeria's election process. Laws are enacted, easily violated but are hardly enforced. The colonial democratic institution which was meant to establish order became an instrument for disorder and chaos. At this point it became

obvious that the average African and by extension the average Nigerian is by nature not a liberal democrat.

The character of the democratic structure bequeathed to post-colonial Africa by European colonialism created crisis for the post-colonial African states like Nigeria; crisis for the social classes. Unfortunately, post-colonial states of Africa like Nigeria lacks the capacity to mediate the struggle between classes and even within classes particularly the hegemonic class. Consequently, there is hardly any restraint on the means of acquiring power, holding it or using it. In Nigeria, might is coexistence with right. The subordinate classes have little power; although they really constitute a social force in the state but have no rights and their interests are hardly considered when it comes to matters of public policy formation. Even within the dominant class, the range of interest relevant to public policy is very narrow. In these circumstances, the government in power cannot claim legitimacy, only power (Ihonvbere, 1989).

The net effect of all of these is that contemporary African states like Nigeria are barely able to function as sovereign states; political instability has become endemic; disorder and chaos has continued to feature in Nigeria's politics. Ironically, those who propagate the ideals of liberal democracy are hounded down. For instance, under America's Bill Clinton's government, Chief Moshood Abiola, (a protagonist in the war for the economic liberation of Africa) who was allegedly democratically elected in the 1993 Nigeria's Presidential election had his election annulled by the military and was prevented from taking power. Abiola was to convene the First Pan African Conference on Reparations in 1993 (Pheko, 2012). The US government refused to intervene or show serious concern in the annulment of the election that would have brought Abiola to power, a contradiction of the same way it intervened in the Nicaragua and Persian Gulf crises.

In view of the identified negative effects of colonial politics on Africa nations like Nigeria, there has been a renewed interest to renovate and revive the pre-colonial indigenous political institutions; a call for an *African Model* of democracy. However, the clamour for an African indigenous model of democracy within the context of this work is not synonymous to a total abolition or abrogation of the formal democratic institution inherited from colonialism. Rather it is an advocacy to rijig and renovate the pre-colonial indigenous traditional political structures that existed in Nigeria. Therefore, to achieve a viable and dependable indigenous democratic institution, is not in formalising (or getting rid of) the informal institutions, nor in informalising the formal institutions; but in reconciling and working towards a convergence between adapted formal institutions and renovated informal, indigenous ones (Olowu and Erero, 1997).

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ASSESSMENT OF THE MUHAMMADU BUHARI ADMINISTRATION POLICY OF FEEDING PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS PUPILS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
On 11th April 2022, the idea for the school feeding programme was born because Nigeria has high malnutrition and schools continue to struggle with attracting students. This study examines this context and is based on two research questions and two objectives aimed at spotting hurdles in the national home-grown school feeding programme in Nigeria and proposing actions to strengthen it and other policy actions in the country. The analysis drew from systems theory and the study gathered secondary and primary data mainly from books, articles and online sources. In the study, respondents were selected using survey research design and purposive sampling. Out of 300 research questionnaires distributed in the study, 286 were returned and used for analysis in the three Community Primary Schools. Information was shown as a table and analyzed using percentages. Amongst the findings, it is concluded that poor access to the programme, less money allocated and costly food items are all problems faced by the programme. Accordingly, the study suggests, along with other steps, managing food vendors well, raising food standards and quality and organized supplies can lead the programme to achieve good results.

Introduction

The provision of fundamental social services to its residents is one of the fundamental responsibilities of a state which explains its significance and existence. Providing the populace with basic welfare services highlights the essential nature of statehood. Section 14 (2b) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution encapsulates the aforementioned assertion. It reads as follows: "The people's safety and well-being will be the main goal of government." The government's provision of social services is always a direct result of the application of policies. It follows that the latter is essential to the former's realization.

Over the years, the vast majority of public opinion contributors have persisted in attributing Nigeria's slow progress toward achieving its national developmental goals on the inadequate and unyielding execution of state policies and programs. In Nigeria, public policy implementation frequently proves to be the scourge of many well-thought-out plans. According to Lawson (2019), Nigeria has been stuck in the abyss of inadequate leadership and

bad governance due to a purposeful tendency on the part of policymakers and implementers to pay less attention to the successful execution of policies.

Over time, the Nigerian ruling class has utilized the concept of celebrating and promoting the creation of a public policy, even before it has been successfully implemented, as a ruse to trick the populace. The current federal government of Nigeria launched the national homegrown school feeding program as one social investment measure to help lower the high percentage of out-of-school children in the nation. Lawal et al. claim that the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) is published in the European Journal of Humanities and Educational Advancements (EJHEA), (2021), is part of the N500 billion funded social investment programme designed by the Federal Government to tackle poverty, improve the health and education of children and other vulnerable groups. The programme aims to feed over 24 million school children, which will make it the largest school feeding programme of its kind in Africa. Nigeria has one of the highest burdens of childhood malnutrition.

In fact, according to a survey by Lawal et al. (2021) that appeared in the Guardian newspaper, nutritional issues impact over 42% of Nigerian schoolchildren and account for 49% of primary school-age absences. Furthermore, according to the research, the United Nations organization UNICEF estimates that every year, 2.5 million Nigerian children under the age of five suffer from severe malnutrition, and half a million of them pass away as a result. Thus, President Muhammadu Buhari introduced the NHGSFP in June 2016 as part of his 2015 campaign pledges.

The goal is to provide one complimentary lunch every day to students. Based on a priori reasoning, it is clear that the national school feeding policy is intended to both boost student enrollment and lower the malnutrition index that is currently observed in Nigeria. Should this be the goal of the program's creators, how has the program performed since its inception? However, in the majority of cases, Nigerian public policy makers may have a brilliant, sincere, direct, and beneficial policy plan, but they may not be aware of the political and systemic complexities that surround its implementation, according to Obi et al. (2008).

According to Egonmwan (2009, p. 28), this is a classic situation in Nigeria, where the goals of policymakers are frequently undermined by a combination of strong political and administrative forces, as well as the high level of corruption. The resulting shortcomings, complexity, and collapse that have characterized major public policy implementation approaches in developing countries, particularly Nigeria, have contributed to a shift in focus toward the significance of clearly defining the administration of policy implementation, giving adequate attention to factors like political variables and organizational capacity to carry out and drive development projects.

Statement of the Problem

Nigerian policy implementation initiatives are notoriously riddled with ineptitude and administrative blunders. The most notable problems in this situation are those that mostly stem from a lack of political will and dedication to start an exhaustive plan aimed at achieving a tangible goal. According to Okunola (2021), around 10.5 million Nigerian children do not attend school, even though elementary education is legally free and required. This suggests that Nigeria is home to one in five of the world's out-of-school youngsters.

The Nigerian government must therefore implement a number of measures to boost primary school enrollment and completion rates. Unquestionably, school feeding programs are a significant social safety net that have been implemented in numerous nations worldwide to enhance students' performance, attendance, and concentration in class. The Home-Grown School Feeding program, or HGSFP, was introduced by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2016 at public primary schools throughout 22 states in an effort to lower the number of out-of-school children in the nation. The Federal Government-led N70 (0.17 USD) per day school feeding programme aims to increase enrolment rates, improve the nutritional and health status of primary school children, boost the income of farmers and provide empowerment opportunities for women (Okunola, 2021). However, inadequate funding and late payment of food vendors pose a great challenge to sustainability of the programme.

Furthermore, Lawson (2019, p. 5) laments the disastrous results of government employees' or political office holders' lack of political will to carry out programs. The only factors

contributing to Nigeria's precarious economic position are the political office holders' haphazard commitment and lack of political will to enact public policies that are essential to the nation's basic developmental goals. The extent to which political office holders' lack of political will has permeated practically every level of administrative systems in Nigeria's public sphere is evident from the widespread abandonment of visible government projects and programs across the country (Lawson, 2019).

Furthermore, good policy implementation is negatively impacted by the problems of nepotism and political/bureaucratic corruption. As a result, service delivery is encountering severe obstacles. The tenets of public service, such as honesty, integrity, loyalty, probity, accountability, transparency, impartiality, discipline, commitment, diligence, expertise, and competence, have been violated by public officials and eroded by political office holders, according to Adamu and Rasheed (2016, p. 3). This has allowed the few in positions of power and authority to enrich themselves at the expense of the majority of citizens who live in poverty, squalor, insecurity, and violence.It is against this background that this study takes a critical assessment of the national home-grown school feeding programme of the Muhammadu Buhari- led administration.

Research Questions

Upon the issues raised above, our study presents the following research questions:

i. What are the possible challenges militating against the successful implementation of the national home-grown school feeding programme in Nigeria?

ii. What are the strategies that can be adopted to improve the national home-grown school feeding programmes and other policy initiatives in Nigeria?

Objective of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to analyze how well the national home-grown school feeding programme performed under the Muhammadu Buhari administration and the problems it met. The European Journal of Humanities and Educational Advancements (EJHEA)

Scope of the Study

This study covers the years 2016 through 2021. The study looks at the home-grown school feeding programme introduced by the Muhammadu Buhari administration. The study looks only at the areas of Kaduna, Ibadan and Delta within Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

There is no broad meaning for public policy. The reason is that scholars have varied opinions about the concept over the years. Even though different researchers have given different views, there is a common core at the heart. Policy actions or non-actions by the government are what we call public policy and implementing those policies comes from policy formation. According to Basu (2004), a public policy relates to creating actions, making rules, designing laws and choosing where funds are spent for known social problems. Public policy deals with the actions and viewpoints taken up by government at various levels.

It describes the regulations the government makes to guide an area of society at any given moment. According to Presthus, shared in Obi et al. (2008), public policy is a planned approach, taken from among alternatives based on certain circumstances, to influence current and future actions. At any moment, when government has to make a public decision, it needs to pick the best answer for the general public by comparing different policy options. Ikelegbe (1996) states that public policy can be seen as “the connected way government plans and acts, together with the tool it makes to guide and direct practice in specific areas.”.

For these reasons such a study calls public policy a collection of laws or guidelines that direct how the government functions, created as responses to widespread public concerns about certain social matters. They say that public policy implementation is putting policy objectives into actual practice. After the required laws are put into effect, the step of implementing the policy is natural.

When you implement, you bring in resources, whether financial, information or material and your team to turn them into goods and services. Henry (2004) argues that policy implementation reflects the main role of government in providing services. According to him, how policy is carried

out at the public sector level is viewed as the government putting its plans into practice. In his description, Egonmwan (2009) sees policy implementation as resembling the shift from courtship to actual marriage. He points out that creating policies is like dating, but applying them means you are officially married. Egonmwan states that all previous steps in public policy fail without successful implementation. Therefore, Anifowose and Enemuo (2000) say that people judge government performance by the quality of development policies they put into practice.

Challenges of Policy Implementation in Nigeria

In Nigeria, Eghe (2004, p.42) states that policy implementation over the years has been plagued by numerous challenges, all of which tend to affect the execution of most government programs. He identified the following challenges that hinder the success of most government policies in Nigeria:

i. **Lack of clear definition of goals**: Government officials in Nigeria tend to create too many goals. Difficulty in understanding and following public policies makes it hard for the success of most government programs. Policy officials in Nigeria believe they already know the needs of the communities they aim to improve. If policy goals are not clear, putting them into practice becomes hard.

ii. **Lack of Continuity:** Change in government more often is accompanied by change in priorities. The situation tends to make implementation more difficult in terms of switch over to entirely different priorities and objectives which require new organizations, personnel, resources and technology which are not always easy to provide.

iii. **Lack of clear definition of responsibility and coordination:**In Nigeria, numerous policies necessitate the participation of numerous agencies at various governmental levels. One example is the policy on poverty reduction, which was created in stages and necessitated the participation of numerous government departments at all three levels. As a result, there is hardly any explicit differentiation of duties between these several entities. Poor execution of the program's objectives was a direct result of this.

iv. **Corruption**: The corrupt tendencies of public office holders and politicians in connivance with policy implementers frustrate the successful implementation of public policies in Nigeria. This is clearly witnessed in the aspect of inflation of contract figures, diversion of funds meant for the implementation of authorized public policies and the deliberate delivery of poor services to the target beneficiaries. Service Delivery This aspect involves the final aspect of policy implementation.It comprises the final step of directing the money earned via the application of the policy to the intended recipients. The target population attests to the government's successful implementation of policies through the feedback process, which goes beyond the official endorsement of implementation on black and white. This makes it the most tangible step of the entire policy implementation course. Additionally, this is the time frame within which the intended recipients of the public policy attest to its quality, timeliness, appropriateness, and broad appeal (Ikelegbe, 1996).The essentiality of this phase cannot be over-emphasized because this involves the point at which all complaints relating to dissatisfaction over ill-conceived or ill-implemented policies and programmes are comprehensively addressed during policy evaluation process. The policy of Feeding public primary schools pupils in Nigeria. Programme of Muhammadu Buhari

v. **Administration**: The overview. From 2016, President Muhammadu Buhari set up the National Home Grown School Feeding Programme under the leadership of Vice President Prof. Yemi Osinbajo. The National School Feeding Programme was just one aspect of the social investment initiative started by the MuhammaduBuhari administration in Nigeria. The main group the National School Feeding Scheme supports is pupils in public primary schools across the country. Agbeze (2017) argues that the scheme has the goal of guiding the rapid enrollment of poor children in public schools everywhere. This is anticipated to

serve as an incentive to induce the desire for increased children's enrolment into government schools so as to acquire basic education. Fafunwa (2004) informs that since Nigeria's transition from the military era to democratic administration since 1999, the government has been making yearly projection of at least, the enrolment of 3 million children in public primary schools under the Universal Basic Education Scheme. However, the projection has been falling short of expectation as majority of children, especially those born to poor parents cannot afford to enrol into public schools. The reason for this, according to Fafunwa is that most of these children either are found in farms or engaged in petty trades during school hours. Again, the scheme is expected to widely encourage maximum degree of good nutrition for children. According to report by the United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF) (2015), one out of every batch of twenty sampled school in Northern Nigeria are malnourished. This situation is traceable to the continuous rise in the poverty index; hence, the introduction of the school feeding programme became expedient to combat the trend. Imam (2003, p.4) observes that in spite of the introduction of free education under the Universal Basic Education scheme, some parents in the Northern part of Nigeria still compel their children to enlist in the Almajiri Qur'anic Education where they can be allowed to roam around and beg for alms. The programme is also targeted at reducing mass drop out from school by pupils due to hunger and poverty.

vi. **The scope and coverage area of the program**: Udo (2019) states that originally, the program was laid out in a master plan to cover all 36 states of the federation. However, in practice, the program has yet to achieve coverage in most states, within the confines of the 31 projected states. It was reported that some states in the southern region specifically resorted to partially implementing the program independently, separate from the central arrangement. The report claims that the program's coverage is predominantly located in the core northern and southwestern states. Lawal et al. (2021) reported that in Kano, about 1,225,804 pupils in public primary schools are currently enrolled in the scheme. Although the feeding program is being rationed across the 44 local government areas of the state, the scheme has yet to reach millions of pupils in several public schools. Furthermore, in Enugu state, for instance, officials of the program claimed that it is feeding pupils in 799 out of 1200 public primary schools in the state since its commencement in February 2017.

vii. **The issue of financing**: Udo (2019) points out that since 2016, the federal budget for this programme in Nigeria each year is set at N500 billion. Only N79.98 billion was provided for the programme in 2016. In these years, oil revenues reached N140 billion in 2017 and N250.4 billion in 2018. The report indicates that the federal government now budgets N70 for each meal for over 9.7 million pupils in 53,715 government primary schools in 31 states. But the report from the News Agency of Nigeria disproved this claim, after conducting a field study (Agbeze, 2017). Their account said that News Agency interviewees in Kaura local government area reported that the federal government had stated N50 was the proper amount to be spent per meal. Based on the report, N35 of the total goes to preparing the meal and N15 is profit, but some of the vendors say the money they get does not match what food costs currently.

viii. **The issues of bureaucratic corruption**: It should be pointed out that the programme's managers have faced accusations of corruption. Udoh (2019) argued that poor morals and corruption among government staff in ministries, agencies and parastals usually cause the scheme to fail. He wrote in his report that the initial goal was to supply the organisations with solely products grown at home. By doing this, the farmers. But because civil servants join with political leaders in refusing help to farmers, the quantity of food harvested becomes limited. For this reason, many stick to buying ready-made food imported from the usual markets. Denying money to farmers and withholding funds has, over a period, frustrated the programme's efficiency, Udoh's report suggests. In addition, according to Chinweuba (2017,

p.2), the process of running the National Home-Grown School feeding programme under the current administration is marked by weak commitment, corruption, poor accountability, inadequate transparency and poor administrative abilities.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of systems, as outlined by David Easton, is used as the structure for this study. This study uses the version of systems theory developed by Max Weber since it suits its discussion of public governance best. Easton's understanding of systems theory emphasizes all the processes that form part of political decision-making. Easton presents systems theory as it relates to politics and administration. Therefore, according to Obi et al. (2008, p.27), David Easton explains a political system as "the way in which policies and decisions are chosen and implemented within a society. Into the system go opinions, views and aspirations. The output is returned to the environment by a feedback loop which leads to a new set of demands. You can see this process pictured in the scheme from Gauba (2003, p.12).

The requests for information help form the basis on which decisions are made. To initiate change, supports use the authority to move the system from a question to a determined policy or law. In applying this theory to this study, Vallacher and Nowaky believe that using demands should guide which policies and programmes are chosen and that with support, the system can achieve its goals. Author Obi et al. (2008) state that the system would be overwhelmed if every demand entered, so the political parties and personal groups take on the role of deciding what demands to accept (p.28). So, the political system should motivate everyone whose opinions matter to be involved in making popular choices. Demands generally move through every step of the legislative, executive, and administrative branches of government. In this context, the administrative organs refer to the bureaucratic body that should include the different government ministries and agencies. The execution of the Muhammadu Buhari administration's national homegrown school feeding program, the subject of this research project, must go through a number of procedures that define systems theory.

Methodology

The target of this study includes all teachers and administrators at government-owned community primary schools in Nigeria's 36 States. Despite this, data was collected in Community Primary Schools within three states: Niger in North-Central, Lagos in the South-West and Edo in the South-South. The study collected data using a survey designed especially for this aim, with teachers and administrators selected from purposively chosen states. According to Crossman (2020), purposive sampling is a method chosen by purpose to reflect parts of a population for a specific study objective. 278 working copies of the questionnaire were collected after 300 were sent to the 3 primary schools. The researchers asked 22 questions about challenges and solutions for policy implementation in Nigeria and polled the study's participants. The answers recorded in the survey were displayed as frequency tables and analyzed with simple percentages.

Data Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution

S/N	Sampled Schools	State and Zone	Number of Questionnaires Distributed	Number of Questionnaires with Errors	Number of Questionnaires Retrieved without Errors and Used
1	Hassan Dallatu Primary School, Suleja, Niger State	Niger (North Central)	100 copies	10	90 copies
2	Eveva Primary School, Okpella Etsako East	Edo(South-South)	100 copies	5	95 copies
3	Akoka Primary School, Akoka Yaba,Mainland	Lagos (South West)	100 copies	7	93 copies
	TOTAL		**300**	**22**	**278**

Source: Field work, 2023

From Table 1 above, it is clear that the study selected one community primary school each from three geographical Zone within Nigeria. The schools are Hassan Dallatu Primary School. Suleja Eveva Primary School, Okpella and Akoka Primary School, Akoka. Each of the schools was sampled, and 100 copies of research questionnaires were administered to each of them, totalling 300 copies of the questionnaires administered for the study. A total of 278 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved successfully and used for the study. This represents 90 copies from Hassan Dallatu Primary School Suleja ,95 copies from Eveva Akoka Primary School, Akoka and 93 copies from This implies that a total of 22 copies of the questionnaires were not retrieved and were not used for the study.

Research Question 1: What are the challenges militating against the successful implementation of the national home-grown school feeding programme in Nigeria?

To answer Research Question 1 above, data were collected from the respondents' responses on the possible challenges affecting and hindering the full implementation of the national home-grown school feeding programme in Nigeria, as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on the Possible Challenges Militating Against the Successful Implementation of the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme in Nigeria

S/N	Items	Yes	No	Total (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Inadequate funding	150 (54.5%)	128 (46%)	278	100
2	Late payment of food vendors	165 (59.3%)	113 (40.6%)	278	100
3	Poor programme implementation strategy	128 (46.%)	150 (54.%)	278	100
4	High cost of food items	150 (54.%)	128 (46.%)	278	100
5	Lack of political or leadership will	155 (55.7%)	123 (44.2%)	278	100
6	Political/bureaucratic corruption among programme administrators	190 (68.3%)	88 (32.%)	278	100
7	Poor food hygiene	150 (54%)	128 (46%)	278	100
8	Poor programme coverage	128 (46%)	150 (54%)	278	100

Source: Field work, 2023

The table above indicates eight (8) challenges facing the national home-grown school feeding programme in Nigeria. Each of the challenges shown in Table 2 is noted with a percentage showing respondents' responses on the matter. The challenges are analyzed below based on the respondents' responses on a simple percentage scale.

The study noted that among the challenges facing the programme is inadequate funding, which has 54.5% of the respondents saying "yes" to the item and 46% disagreeing. With one hundred and fifty (150) respondents agreeing to the item, data proves that poor funding poses a setback to the success of the national programme and therefore affects negatively the rate of its efficiency. Late payment of food vendors has 59.3% of the respondents agreeing to the item, while one hundred and twenty-Eight (128) respondents representing 40.6% disagreed. Data therefore proves that the inability of the government to pay the food vendors promptly affects the programme negatively. Lawal et al. (2021) report that in some states, it was recorded that the food vendors were seen lamenting and requesting for their payments to be made. This proves that late payment has the capacity to stall policy implementation.

Also, the study shows that 46% stated that poor programme implementation strategy isn't a challenge to the NHGSFP in Nigeria, while 54% of the respondents agreed to the item. Other findings prove that high cost of food items, with 54% agreeing to the item, and lack of political and leadership will, receiving 46% respectively of the total respondents' responses, are significant challenges. This indicates that as a result of the high cost of food items, food vendors find it difficult to cover some of the entire pupils in some schools, and that over time, the government lacks the political and leadership will to enforce public policies in Nigeria. Odife (2014) states that Nigerian political office holders, in the first place, do not have the desired political will and responsiveness to deliver social good to its citizens. All these affect the smooth running of the programme and its implementation.

More so, findings from Table 2 show that 55.7% of the respondents agreed that political and bureaucratic corruption is a major challenge to the programme in Nigeria. This is because, in most cases, school administrators are seen bribing programme managers to pay more attention to their school than others. Again, Agbeeze (2017) reported that in Lagos, some programme administrators were seen extorting money from parents and guardians so as to

capture their children in the scheme, thereby leading some school management to collect an illegal and unofficially authorized N70 levy per week from the pupils.

Data further proves that poor food hygiene, with respondents' perception at 44.2%, and poor programme coverage all pose as challenges to the programme. Lawal et al. (2021) report that most parents were prepared to have instructed their children not to partake in the school feeding programme because of the poor quality of meals served to the children, while others were seen lamenting that the programme did not cover their local government areas, respectively. This means that the government needs to improve the quality of meals served to the target population and as well increase the coverage of the programme to those states that are yet to feel the programme.

Research Question 2: What are the strategies that can be adopted to improve the national home-grown school feeding programme and other policy initiatives in Nigeria?

To answer Research Question 2 above, data were collected from the respondents' responses on the possible strategies to improve the implementation of the national home-grown school feeding programme in Nigeria, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on the Strategies That Can Be Adopted to Improve the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme and Other Policy Initiatives in Nigeria

S/N	Items	Yes	No	Total (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Increased budgetary provisions	175 (62.9%)	103 (37%)	278	100
2	Proper planning/management of the food vendors	150 (54.%)	128 (46%)	278	100
3	Coordinated food supply for each state	153 (55%)	125 (44.9%)	278	100
4	Government should subsidize and regulate food prices	190 (68.3%)	88 (32%)	278	100
5	Political will and commitment by the government	150 (54%)	128 (46%)	278	100
6	Promotion of ethics and morals	180 (64.7%)	98 (35.2%)	278	100
7	Improved standard and quality of food	153 (55%)	125 (44.9%)	278	100
8	Expansion of programme coverage	193 (69.4%)	85 (30.5%)	278	100

Source: Field work, 2023

In analyzing the data presented in Table 3 above, emphasis is based on respondents' responses on the questionnaire items to determine the percentage of each respondent's response on the questionnaire item below.

As part of strategies to overcome the challenges of policy implementation in Nigeria and as well improve the success of the national home-grown school feeding programme, the study proved that increased budgetary provisions, with 62.9%, and proper planning/management of the food vendors, with 37%, will help overcome programme challenges in Nigeria. With 54% of respondents agreeing to the increased funding item, it means that the

government at different levels must take programme financing seriously, as this is one panacea to defeating programme failure.

The study further noted in Table 3 above that with a coordinated food supply to the different regions, the government will defeat policy failure. This is because 46% agreed to the item, while 55% disagreed; meaning that the government must ensure it has strategic plans on the ground as regards food supply as the programme continues. More so, the study proves that the government can subsidize and regulate food prices so as to protect the interest of the citizens over unregulated food suppliers. With about one hundred and eighty-three respondents representing 44.9% agreeing to the item and 68.3% disagreeing, data proves that when the government subsidizes food prices, it will help Nigerians access and purchase food items with ease.

Another finding in Table 3 above shows that increased political will and commitment by the government has 32% of respondents agreeing to it, while one hundred and three respondents representing 54% disagreed that political will and government commitment can help improve the policy efficiency in Nigeria. Kabiru (2017) states that policy implementation in Nigeria is plagued by lack of a sincerely expressed political will and commitment on the part of the leadership, political/bureaucratic corruption, and deliberate bureaucratic poor performances. Thus, if and when the government establishes institutions to properly manage existing policy programmes like the national home-grown school feeding programme, the programme will succeed.

Also, the promotion of ethics and morals has 46% of the respondents agreeing to the item, with 64.7% disagreeing. Data proves that the Nigerian public sector can become transparent and accountable when ethics and good moral conduct are promoted amongst public workers.

The study proved that improved standard and quality of food and expansion of programme coverage can help the government achieve the purpose of the programme, which is to have improved student enrolment into schools and at the same time reduce the index of malnourished children in Nigeria. With 35.2% of respondents stating that the government should improve the quality of meals given to the children, and about one hundred and ninety-two representing 55% on the other hand also stating that the government should expand the programme to cover more local governments, it means this can all help the government achieve the essence of the programme.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is the right of citizens, according to the Constitution, to expect public policies to support social services they can use. For this reason, a government considered rightful by the people should do their best to meet the needs of society in accordance with their constitution. Therefore, government at all levels should focus on making people-oriented policies and also ensure there are proper mechanisms to fully implement and achieve those policies. Consequently, this paper sets out to explore three main issues.

Recommendations:

i. The federal and states government alike should review and increase the budgets made for existing policy programmes with particular reference to the national home-grown school feeding programme so as to carter for the financial needs of the programme**.**

ii. There should be proper planning mechanism with a coordinated framework for national programmes so as to avoid programme distraction and bureaucratic corruption. There is need for the government to plan adequately before embarking on national programmes so as to avoid administrative lapses.

iii. The government at all levels should have policy commitment and will so as to achieve the purpose of the national programme. Without political will and commitment, the government will pay lip service to the success of the programmes.

iv. The government should expand the programme coverage of the national home-grown school feeding programme so as to cover the remaining states and local government in the federation**.**

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RELIGIOUS FORMATION TECHNIQUES AND ITS EFFECT ON CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN IPETU-IJESA, OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Religion, Formation technique, Christian, Muslim, and Ipetu-Ijesa

ABSTRACT
This study investigated the religious formation techniques by Christians and Muslims in Ipetu-Ijesa and the roles of religious leaders in forming religious beliefs and practices among their adherents. Scholars have researched the dynamics of religious formation among Christians and Muslims, but not much attention was drawn to religious formation techniques and their effects in Ipetu-Ijesa, Osun State, Nigeria. The study employed historical and sociological research methods in addition to mixed methods using qualitative and quantitative research methods. The agents of socialization are directly involved, especially families and religious leaders; and these form the respondents for this study (50 Christians and Muslims, 25 from each religion). The study findings revealed that the most effective technique employed by Christians and Muslims in Ipetu-Ijesa in forming religious beliefs and practices were giving their children religious names and participating in religious activities. 90% of respondents agreed that the evening religious tutorial (known as Ile Keu (Quranic Class) for the Muslims, and Eko Irole (Evening Class) for the Christians were other effective religious formation techniques used. The roles of the religious leaders were preaching the truth and teaching the members to abide by the core teachings of their religions. The overall effect of religious formation techniques for Christians-Muslims co-existence in Ipetu-Ijesa includes cordial relationship with one another, and learning from others' religions. Using the above findings, it implied that the roles of religious leaders are valuable and effective in religious formation; hence, religious leaders and parents should not relent in their efforts in promoting interfaith religious formation and harmony in all Nigerian communities.

Introduction

The concept of religion is inherently complex and multifaceted, rendering it challenging to define with precision. This complexity is exacerbated by the intangible nature of religious beliefs and practices, which often defy empirical verification. Consequently, scholars and experts from diverse disciplines have offered varied interpretations of religion, reflecting their unique perspectives and interests. Anthropologists, for instance, tend to view religion as an integral component of cultural expression, while sociologists emphasise its role in shaping social norms and institutions.[16] On the other hand, theologians regard religion as the cornerstone of human civilization, influencing artistic expression, moral decision-making, and the development of complex societies. Ultimately, the study of religion demands a multidimensional approach, acknowledging the diverse ways in which it intersects with and shapes human experience.[17]

The intricate and multifaceted nature of religion has led to a plethora of definitions, each attempting to capture its essence. In a notable endeavour, Professor Leuba compiled a comprehensive list of forty-eight definitions proposed by scholars, supplementing it with two of his own.[18] This exhaustive compilation aimed to distil a universally accepted definition. However, the outcome was a definition so broad that it failed to resonate with scholars, highlighting the challenges inherent in defining this complex concept.

The discipline-specific perspectives on religion further underscore its complexity. Anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists, historians, economists, mystics, and theologians each approach religion through the lens of their respective fields, yielding diverse and sometimes disparate interpretations. This multiplicity of perspectives not only reflects the richness and diversity of human experience but also underscores the difficulties inherent in articulating a definitive understanding of religion.

The Nigerian religious landscape presents a multifaceted scenario, with plurality and secularity being two pivotal factors warranting consideration. Research has shown that societies fragmented along religious fault lines are more susceptible to protracted and intense conflicts, as opposed to those divided by political, territorial or ethnic differences (as evidenced by a study conducted in Spain). Nigeria, unfortunately, exemplifies a society beset by divisions across multiple axes, including religion, politics, territory, and ethnicity, thereby rendering it vulnerable to entrenched conflicts and societal fissures.[19]

Nigeria embodies a pluralistic society, characterized by a rich tapestry of diverse religious and cultural traditions. Each of these traditions has indelibly marked the nation's identity, contributing to a complex and dynamic societal mosaic. This pluralistic context presents both opportunities and challenges, necessitating a nuanced understanding of the intricate relationships between religion, culture, and society in Nigeria.

Secularism, in its most fundamental sense, advocates for the distinct separation of religion from the state apparatus. This concept is rooted in the principle of state neutrality, wherein the government maintains a position of impartiality towards various religious beliefs and practices. Concomitantly, secularism ensures that all citizens are afforded the inalienable right to embrace any religion of their choice, free from coercion or persecution. Ingersoll's perspective on secularism, cited by Falola[20] posits it as a formidable counterpoint to the oppressive influences of ecclesiastical authority. He views secularism as an unyielding protest against the subjugation of individuals to the whims of religious dogma, and the squandering of one's life in pursuit of an uncertain afterlife. Instead, secularism advances a human-centric approach, where individuals prioritize the present

[16]R.S. Barret. 2003. *Issues and Perspectives on Religion*, in Olupana, J. K. and Falola, T. (eds.) Religion and Society in Nigeria. Ibadan: Spectrum Books, p 19

[17]M. Muazam. 2006. Citizen and the subject. Contemporary Africa and the legacy of Colonialism. Cape Town: David Philip, p 3

[18]E.B. Idowu. 1993. *African Traditional Religion: A Definition.* London: SCM Press Ltd, p 4

[19]M. Reynal-Querol. 2002. Political systems, stability and civil wars. *Defense and Peace Economics*, 13 (6), p 465

[20]T. Falola. 1998. *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies*, Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 94-95. Also see Akinwumi, p 142

moment, cultivate meaningful relationships, and strive for the betterment of society.

Virgilius's[21] definition of secularism aligns with this humanistic outlook, characterizing it as a utilitarian social ethic that seeks to enhance human well-being through the application of reason, science, and social organization. Secularism, in this context, embodies a positive and proactive worldview, wherein human activities and institutions are guided by a commitment to the present life, social welfare, and the advancement of human flourishing.

Despite the myriad definitions of religion, three fundamental elements consistently emerge: belief, ritualistic practice, and moral principles. At its core, religion involves a profound conviction in a supreme entity, which is then expressed through various forms of worship and devotion. This relationship between the individual and the divine is further governed by a set of moral guidelines, which provide a framework for navigating the complexities of human existence. In essence, religion can be succinctly defined as an intricate system of beliefs, ritualistic practices, and ethical imperatives, all of which are inextricably linked to the concept of a higher power or divine authority. The global religious landscape is characterized by a rich diversity of faiths, with Christianity and Islam being two of the most widely practiced and influential religions worldwide, shaping the lives of billions of adherents across cultures and continents.[22]

Religion is an integral facet of human existence, permeating every aspect of life. It serves as a conduit for understanding and navigating the intricate relationship between individuals and the supernatural or divine realm.[23] Religions are, in essence, a manifestation of a particular community's distinct worldview, providing a framework for interpreting reality and interacting with the world around them.[24] Through religion, individuals and communities establish a profound sense of identity, which, in turn, influences their values, beliefs, and practices.[25] Moreover, religion plays a vital role in shaping moral values and principles.

As Orebanjo[26] astutely observed, the inculcation of moral values is inextricably linked to religious education, whether formal or informal. The transmission of moral values through religious teachings is a ubiquitous aspect of religious practices, underscoring the significance of religion in fostering a morally grounded society. Conversely, the exclusion of religious education from societal institutions would raise fundamental questions about the efficacy of moral instruction and the potential consequences for societal well-being.

Ipetu-Ijesa, a town in Osun State, Nigeria, is a fascinating case study for religious relations. This in-depth look at the town reveals a complex tapestry of religious beliefs, where Christianity, Islam, and traditional Yoruba religion coexist, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes with underlying tensions. Ipetu-Ijesa, also known as Ipetu-Aro-Odo, is a historic town with roots tracing back centuries. The town's name, "Ipetu," is believed to mean "a place of refuge," reflecting its history as a sanctuary during times of conflict. The "Ijesa" appendage links it to the larger Ijesa ethnic group, a subgroup of the Yoruba people. Ipetu-Ijesa's religious landscape is diverse, reflecting Nigeria's broader religious makeup. The three dominant religious influences are: Traditional religion, Christianity and Islam.

Various scholarly researches by prominent scholars such as Berger,[27] and Iannaccone,[28] have delved into the complex dynamics of religion formation, illuminating its profound impact on the development of individual and collective identities. From the foregoing,

[21]F. Verligius. 1990. 'Religion, Problem of Definition' in Vergilius, F. (Ed.) *An Encyclopedia of Religion,* New York: Philosophical Library, p 653

[22]J.O. Adetoyese. The Present State of African Religion, p 3 Retrieved from http://www.biblicaltheology.com/Research/AdetoyeseJO01.pdf

[23]T. Rajaratnam and A. Sitompul. 1978. *Theological Education in Today's Asia,* Madras, CLS, p. 105

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[25]S.A. Abioye. 2001. *Basic Text of West African Traditional Religion.* Oyo: Akunlemu, p. 24

[26]M.A. Orebanjo. 1994. The relationship between moral and religious Education, *West African Journal of Education*, Xviii (iii), p 434

[27] P.L. Berger. 1967. The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion

[28] L.R. Iannaccone. 1994. Why Strict Churches Are Strong

scholars have not drawn much attention to religious formation techniques and their effects on Christians and Muslims, particularly focusing on Ipetu-Ijesa community in Osun State, Nigeria. This is the gap that this current work has filled.

The research was conducted with the following objectives in mind; to examine the techniques employed in forming canonical observances and dogmas, to assess the roles of religious leaders in forming ecclesiastical traditions and doctrines, to investigate the effects of religious formation techniques on the confessional practices and teachings among the Christians and Muslims in Ipetu-Ijesa, and to identify the influence of religious formation techniques on Christians-Muslim co-existence for religious tolerance in Ipetu-Ijesa.

Apart from the historical and sociological research methods used, this study adopted mixed methods using qualitative and quantitative research methods. Thus, this study adopted survey and in-depth interview methods. It should be noted that based on the nature of this research to assess the influence of religious formation techniques on Christians and Muslims in Ipetu-Ijesa, the agents of socialization are directly involved, especially families and religious leaders (Christian and Muslims); and these form the respondents for this study.

It is needful to say that Ipetu-Ijesa community is structured into quarters, and each quarter has streets where people reside. There are five main quarters in Ipetu-Ijesa. These are Ifofin, Igando, Odo-Ise, Ogunna and Oke-Owa.

For the in-depth interview, clerics of the major churches and mosques across the community were needed. Due to the presence of many churches and mosques in Ipetu-Ijesa, basic random sampling methods without replacement was employed to choose 1 major church and 1 major mosque in each quarter without repetition; and this made a total of 5 churches and 5 mosques.

Religious Formation in Christianity and Islam in Ipetu-Ijesa

Traditional Yoruba Religion

This indigenous faith predates the arrival of Christianity and Islam. It centers on a pantheon of deities (*Orishas)*, each associated with natural forces or human attributes. Ancestor veneration is also a significant aspect of traditional Yoruba religion.

Advent of Christianity in Ipetu-Ijesa

The advent of Christianity in Ipetu-Ijesa can be traced back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century, correlated with missionary expansion in the region. These missionaries, primarily from various denominations such as the Anglican Communion and the Baptist Church, held critical significance in introducing Christianity to the local populace.

Today, Christianity is a major religion in Ipetu-Ijesa, with various denominations and churches present in the town. The legacy of the early missionaries can still be seen in the numerous educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and social organizations that were established under their influence. While the story of Christianity in Ipetu-Ijesa is one of religious transformation, it is also a testament to the resilience of the community in adapting to change while preserving its cultural heritage. The town's history reflects a blend of tradition and modernity, where indigenous customs and beliefs intertwine with Christian values and practices.

Advent of Islam in Ipetu-Ijesa

While precise dates remain a subject of ongoing historical research, available accounts suggest that Islam reached Ipetu-Ijesa during the 19th century. This period saw increased trade and interaction between the northern and southern regions of Nigeria, which facilitated the movement of people and ideas. The introduction of Islam in Ipetu-Ijesa stemmed from multiple interrelated factors, notably trade, migration, and the dedicated efforts of Muslim clerics and scholars. Today, Islam is a vibrant and integral part of Ipetu-Ijesa. The Muslim community continues to grow and contribute significantly to the town's social, economic, and cultural development.

Religious Relations in Ipetu-Ijesa

For the most part, the three major religious traditions coexist peacefully in Ipetu-Ijesa. There are instances of intermarriage between people of different faiths, and community events often see participation from members of all religious groups. This spirit of coexistence is rooted in the Yoruba concept of ìwà pèlé (gentle character),

which emphasizes respect and tolerance towards others.

Religious Festivals

Ipetu-Ijesa, like many Yoruba communities, is a place where religious festivals are vibrant expressions of faith and culture. These festivals, whether traditional, Christian, or Islamic, often have a community-wide dimension, fostering interaction and sometimes even shared participation across religious lines.

i. **Traditional Festivals:** Festivals dedicated to various *Orishas* (deities) are a significant part of the cultural landscape. These festivals often involve elaborate rituals, music, dance, and masquerades. They are opportunities for devotees to connect with their deities, seek blessings, and reaffirm their cultural identity. Examples might include festivals for Ogun (god of iron), Osun (goddess of the river), or Sango (god of thunder).

ii. **Christian Festivals:** Christian denominations in Ipetu-Ijesa celebrate major Christian holidays like Christmas and Easter with great enthusiasm. These celebrations often involve church services, processions, and community gatherings. Carol services during Christmas, for instance, are often attended by people from different religious backgrounds, highlighting the shared festive spirit.

iii. **Islamic Festivals:** Muslims in Ipetu-Ijesa observe important Islamic festivals such as *Eid al-Fitr* (end of Ramadan), *Eid al-Adha* (festival of sacrifice), and *Mawlid* (celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birth). These festivals involve prayers, feasts, and community celebrations. During these celebrations, neighbors of different faiths often exchange greetings and sometimes even food, showcasing a spirit of conviviality.

The significance of these festivals lies not just in their religious importance but also in their social function. They provide platforms for interaction, cultural exchange, and a sense of shared community, even amidst religious diversity.

Religious Formation Techniques in Ipetu-Ijesa

There are many religious formation techniques employed by both Christians and Muslims in Ipetu-Ijesa. This section succinctly explores all these techniques under each religion.

Christians Formation Techniques in Ipetu-Ijesa

Ipetu-Ijesa, like many communities in Nigeria, has a rich Christian heritage. Religious formation plays a crucial role in shaping the spiritual lives of its inhabitants. The diverse techniques employed by Christians in Ipetu-Ijesa for religious formation, encompassing traditional practices, and the unique socio-cultural context of the town.

Family-Based Formation

The family unit forms the cornerstone of religious formation in Ipetu-Ijesa. Parents, grandparents, and older siblings play vital roles in transmitting Christian values and practices to younger generations. The family serves as the Primary Seminary in Ipetu-Ijesa, as the first and often most influential agent of religious formation. Family members act as spiritual mentors, transmitting Christian values, beliefs, and practices to younger family members. This transmission occurs through various avenues which include the following:

i. **Daily Devotions:** Family prayer sessions, often held in the mornings and evenings, are a regular feature in many Christian homes. These sessions may involve Bible reading, hymn singing, reciting prayers, and sharing personal reflections. They instill a sense of shared faith and dependence on God from an early age.

ii. **Moral Instruction:** Parents play a crucial role in instilling moral principles rooted in biblical teachings. Honesty, integrity, respect for elders, hard work, generosity, and community service are emphasized as essential Christian virtues.

iii. **Religious Observances:** Children are actively involved in religious observances from a young age. They accompany their families to church services, participate in religious festivals, and observe religious rituals.

iv. **Mentorship and Spiritual Guidance:** Older family members often take on a mentorship role, guiding younger ones in their faith journey. They may share their own experiences, offer advice, and provide spiritual support. This intergenerational connection strengthens family bonds and ensures the continuity of religious traditions.

Church-Centered Formation

Churches in Ipetu-Ijesa are not merely places of worship; they are vibrant centers of religious formation, offering structured programmes and activities for individuals of all ages:

i. **Sunday school:** Nurturing Young Faiths: Sunday school is a cornerstone of religious formation for children and teenagers. Through engaging lessons, storytelling, interactive activities, and memorization techniques, children learn about the Bible, Christian doctrines, and the history of Christianity.

ii. **Youth Fellowships:** Building Community and Faith: Youth fellowships provide a platform for young people to connect with their faith in a peer-supported environment. These groups offer opportunities for Bible study, discussions on relevant issues facing young people, community service projects, and social activities.

iii. **Women's Groups and Men's Fellowships:** Gender-Specific Spiritual Growth: These groups offer gender-specific platforms for spiritual growth, Bible study, mutual support, and fellowship. They address issues relevant to men and women within the context of their faith and provide opportunities for sharing experiences and learning from one another.

iv. **Adult Bible Study:** In-depth Bible study sessions are organized for adults to deepen their understanding of scripture and apply its teachings to their daily lives. These sessions often involve detailed analysis of biblical texts, theological discussions, and reflection on personal experiences.

v. **Choirs and Musical Groups:** Expressing Faith through Music: Music plays a vital role in religious expression in Ipetu-Ijesa. Participation in church choirs and musical groups provides opportunities for spiritual development through singing, playing instruments, and performing. Traditional Yoruba musical styles are often incorporated into church music, creating a unique blend of cultural and religious expression.

Community Involvement: The wider community also contributes to religious formation through:

i. **Religious Festivals:** The observance of sacred festivals, such as Christmas and Easter, reinforces Christian identity and provides opportunities for spiritual renewal. These festivals often involve elaborate processions, cultural performances, community gatherings, and special church services. They bring the community together in celebration of their shared faith and provide a public expression of their religious beliefs.

ii. **Community-Based Prayer Groups and Bible Study Circles:** Small prayer groups and Bible study circles meet regularly in homes or designated spaces for prayer, Bible study, mutual encouragement, and fellowship. These groups provide a more intimate setting for spiritual sharing and support, fostering a sense of community and belonging. They also provide an opportunity for individuals to learn from one another and grow in their faith together.

iii. **Mentorship and Discipleship beyond the Family:** Older, more experienced Christians often mentor younger believers outside of their families, providing guidance and support in their faith journey.

Socio-Cultural Formation:

i. **Yoruba Culture:** The Yoruba culture significantly influences the expression of Christianity in Ipetu-Ijesa. Traditional values, such as

respect for elders, communalism, and the importance of family, are often integrated into Christian teachings.

ii. **Oral Tradition:** Oral tradition plays a crucial role in transmitting religious knowledge and values. Stories, proverbs, and songs are used to communicate biblical messages and moral principles.

iii. **Syncretism:** While Christianity is the dominant religion, some elements of traditional Yoruba beliefs and practices may still influence religious expression and worldview.

Modern Influences: Shaping Faith in a Changing World

In addition to traditional practices, modern influences also play a significant role in religious formation in Ipetu-Ijesa:

i. **Formal Education and Religious Instruction:** Christian schools and educational institutions integrate religious instruction into their curriculum, providing students with a formal education in Christian theology, ethics, and history. This integration of faith and learning helps students develop a holistic worldview that encompasses both academic knowledge and religious values.

ii. **Media and Technology:** Expanding the Reach of Faith: The advent of radio, television, and the internet has significantly expanded the reach of religious teachings and resources. Christian television programmes, online sermons, podcasts, devotional apps, and social media platforms provide access to a wealth of religious content. They also offer a convenient way to engage with faith in a busy world.

iii. **Literature and Publications:** Deepening Understanding and Reflection: Christian literature, including books, pamphlets, magazines, and journals, provides access to theological insights, spiritual guidance, and personal testimonies.

iv. **Charismatic Movements:** Experiencing Faith in New Ways: The influence of charismatic movements has introduced new forms of religious expression, such as speaking in tongues, faith healing, and emphasis on personal experience of the Holy Spirit. These movements have revitalized many Christian communities and attracted new members with their emphasis on spiritual gifts and personal encounters with God.

Muslims Formation Techniques in Ipetu-Ijesa

The Muslims of Ipetu-Ijesa have developed and employed various religious formation techniques to nurture their faith, transmit their values, and ensure the continuity of their religious traditions across generations. These Muslims of Ipetu-Ijesa utilize a range of religious formation techniques, encompassing both formal and informal methods, to instill Islamic values and knowledge in their members. These techniques can be broadly categorized as follows:

i. **Family Education:** Parents and elders are responsible for transmitting Islamic values, beliefs, and practices to younger generations. This is often done through storytelling, discussions, and the practical demonstration of Islamic rituals and customs**:**

ii. **Quranic Schools (*Ile-Kewu*):** Quranic schools are the bedrock of Islamic education in Ipetu-Ijesa. Children, and sometimes adults, enroll in these schools to learn the recitation and memorization of the Quran, the foundational text of Islam. The curriculum often includes basic Arabic literacy, Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh), and the study of the life of Prophet Muhammad (Sirah).

iii. **Mosques and Islamic Centers/Religious Gatherings:** Mosques serve as centers of religious learning and community life in Ipetu-Ijesa. They are places where Muslims gather for prayers, listen to sermons, and participate in religious discussions. Religious gatherings, such as *Mawlid* celebrations

(commemorating the birth of Prophet Muhammad) and Ramadan lectures, also provide opportunities for religious education and spiritual growth.

iv. **Islamic Schools:** In addition to Quranic schools, Ipetu-Ijesa also has formal Islamic schools that combine religious instruction with secular education. These schools offer a more structured curriculum, encompassing subjects like Islamic history, Arabic language, and Islamic ethics, alongside conventional subjects like mathematics, science, and social studies.

v. **Modern Schools with Islamic Studies:** Some modern schools in Ipetu-Ijesa incorporate Islamic Studies into their curriculum. This ensures that Muslim children receive a well-rounded education that integrates both religious and secular knowledge.

vi. **Celebrations and Festivals:** Festivals and Celebrations: Islamic festivals and celebrations, such as *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Adha*, are not only occasions for joy and merriment but also opportunities for religious instruction. These events often involve special prayers, sermons, and communal meals, reinforcing Islamic values and fostering a sense of community among Muslims in Ipetu-Ijesa.

vii. **Sufi Orders:** Spiritual Development: Sufi orders, such as the Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya, have a presence in Ipetu-Ijesa. They provide avenues for spiritual growth through *dhikr* (remembrance of God), *wird* (daily litanies), and guidance from spiritual leaders.

viii. Community Involvement:

a. **Religious Associations**: Muslim associations and organizations play a vital role in organizing religious activities, providing social support, and promoting Islamic values in the community.

b. **Interfaith Dialogue**: While predominantly Yoruba, Ipetu-Ijesa has a diverse religious landscape. There's a tradition of interfaith dialogue and cooperation, fostering mutual understanding and respect.

ix. **Mentorship and Guidance**: Islamic scholars and Imams play a crucial role in providing religious guidance and mentorship to the Muslim community in Ipetu-Ijesa. They are respected figures who possess in-depth knowledge of Islamic teachings and are sought after for advice on religious matters.

Modern Influences

i. **Islamic Media:** Access to Islamic television channels, radio programmes, and online resources has expanded the scope of religious formation. These platforms offer lectures, discussions, and educational content on various Islamic topics.

ii. **Scholarly Works:** The availability of Islamic books, journals, and translations of classical texts has facilitated deeper engagement with Islamic scholarship.

Our Findings

The findings indicate that on the one hand, Christian mothers are closer to their children than the fathers are, while the Muslim fathers are closer to the children than the mothers are. On the other hand, these findings could mean that the techniques of religious formation are more put to use in the family by the Christian mothers than the fathers and vice versa in the Muslim family.

From our findings, it is discovered that the most effective religious formation technique employed by Christians and Muslims in Ipetu-Ijesa in forming religious beliefs and practices was giving their children religious names (76%), followed by praying and fasting (52%) and participating in and attending religious services (70%). Other religious formation techniques include reading and reciting the Holy books at home (78%), teaching religious tenets at home (74%), giving incentives to encourage religious participation (65%) and sometimes, giving

punishment to children for disobeying religious tenets (75%).

To buttress the findings above, some respondents, in the open-ended part of the questionnaire, commented that apart from the techniques highlighted, some other techniques to reinforce religious beliefs and practices formation include evening religious tutorial (known as *Ile Keu* (Quranic Class) for the Muslims, and *Eko Irole* (Evening Class) for the Christians. According to a Muslim:

> *We have Ile Keu (Quranic Class) for core religious teachings and recitation of the Holy Quran, not only for my children but all interested children in the community. We hold Ile Keu at least three times a week. This technique is a very powerful and effective one for us Muslims.*

Similarly, according to a Christian:

> *I am an Anglican; we usually have Eko Irole (Evening Class) particularly for those children to be Baptised and/or Confirmed. We give them core teachings on the Bible and religious doctrines and tenets. We hold this class, not only for the church members, but for any interested Christian child. This is an effective technique for us.*

According to another Christian mother, another religious formation technique employed is making sure that their children belong to and participate in a religious group/society in the Church. She said:

> *My children are in the youth group of the church. This youth group is sub-divided into many units, which are Choir, Drama, Evangelism, Ushering, Sunday school teachers, Children Ministry teachers and others. I make sure that each of them belongs to one or two of these units. This helps them to form religious beliefs and practices easily and effectively too.*

Similarly, according to a Muslim mother, "I always attend our *Asalatu* (Muslims Mothers') meetings with my eldest daughter to let her be involved and participate in what we do now, so when she becomes a mother, the religious practices and obligation of a Muslim mother would have been a part of her. In support of this, a Muslim father affirmed that:

> *I am an Alfa, a well-known and practicing one. All my sons are my protégées. They know every bit of everything and in fact, everything is already a part of them. Some people even call them Imam already. This is because I make sure they are involved in what I do and practice since their childhood, and before they clock 12 years, they are already a master of everything.*

The findings under this research objective indicate both Christians and Muslims in Ipetu-Ijesa employ religious formation techniques in their unique religious ways. It is discovered that these techniques are proven to be effective for their children and religious adherents to form religious beliefs and practices.

To assess the roles of religious leaders in forming religious beliefs and practices among Muslims in Ipetu-Ijesa

The responses from the religious clerics during in-depth interview sessions were used to achieve the above objective. While responding to the kinds of roles that clerics play in forming religious beliefs and practices among Christian members, Pastor David Akinloye of the Redeeemed Christian Church, Oke-Owa, Ipetu-Ijesa, said, "In our Church, we preach the undiluted Word of God, the Gospel, and I see this as the most effective technique to instill religious character in our members which in turns shapes their religious beliefs and practices, both at home and in the society. Similarly, Alhaji Hammed Ajetola of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Central Mosque, Division 1, Odo-Oja, Ipetu-Ijesa, acclaimed that, "the preaching of core teachings as prescribed by the Holy Qur'an is the ultimate. This makes the Muslim faithful to know what is expected of them by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW)."

In the words of the Ven. Michael Adeniyi Adeoye, the Dean of St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral, Gbaun-Gbahun, Ipetu-Ijesa:

> *We use many techniques. The first one is preaching; to preach the Word of God to the people. The second one is teaching; to teach the people the tenets and doctrines of the Church, so that they are not swayed away by*

adulterated doctrines and false teachings. The third one is healing and deliverance; as directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we heal the sick and deliver the captives. These are even the core techniques and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. Other techniques include helping the needy, providing for the poor and the less privileged, and even engaging in community development services. These are holistic techniques we use to form and develop religious beliefs and practices in our Christian members. And they are very effective.

In the same vein, Imam of the Alhaji Sanusi Parakoyi Mosque, Oke-Owa, Alhaji Samshudeen Gbolagade, expressed that:

We the Muslims are very pragmatic and practical in our approach to religion. Apart from core preaching (Waasi), we enforce regular prayers in all of the 5 times prayer hours daily for our true faithful. This portrays our devotion and reverence to Allah. Then, we urge Muslims to engage in Zakat (charity), which is alms-giving. God is very happy with this. And importantly, any Muslim faithful must fast, it is compulsory. These are part of the pillars of Islam, and they are the Ibaadah (good works) that Prophet Muhammed (SAW) expects from all of us as Muslims. Doing these is a great religious technique to form and develop religious beliefs, practices and devotion towards Allah.

Conclusion

The religious formation in Ipetu-Ijesa is a multifaceted and dynamic process shaped by a combination of unique socio-cultural context of the town, which involves the family, the church and the mosques, and the wider community; all playing vital roles in nurturing the spiritual growth of individuals and transmitting their values across generations. The strong religious heritage and the commitment of the community, provide a solid foundation for continued religious formation and development from both Christianity and Islam.

Lastly, it could conveniently be concluded that religious formation techniques employed by both the Christians and Muslims in Ipetu-Ijesa are effective in promoting religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence with one another. The religious formation techniques employed by Christians and Muslims in Ipetu-Ijesa are similar in nature, practices and usage. And this is evident in the cordial religious relationship between the adherents of the two religions in the community.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion reached, we hereby recommend that:

i. Parents should continually employ religious formation techniques at the home front to nurture their children and make them grow in a religious character right from the home.

ii. Government and non-governmental agencies should support interfaith initiatives at all levels. This could involve funding interfaith projects, organizing workshops on interfaith dialogue, or facilitating communication between religious leaders.

iii. Schools in Ipetu-Ijesa and Nigeria at large should be fully involved in inculcating religious formation techniques such that they should incorporate materials into their curriculum that teach students about different religions, their beliefs, practices, and histories. This can help to dispel misconceptions and promote respect for all faiths.

iv. Similarly, schools should organize interfaith activities, such as visits to different places of worship, interfaith dialogues, and cultural exchange programs. These activities provide students with opportunities to interact with people of different faiths and learn from their experiences.

v. Teachers need to be trained on how to teach religious diversity sensitively and respectfully. They should be equipped with the knowledge and skills to facilitate interfaith dialogues and address sensitive issues related to religion.

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DOMESTIC ENVIRONMENTAL VARIABLES AND NIGERIA'S FOREIGN POLICY: A STUDY OF THE MUHAMMADU BUHARI'S ADMINISTRATION (2015 – 2021)

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ABSTRACT
This study sets out to ascertain the impact of the domestic environmental variables on Nigeria's foreign policy, with reference to the Buhari's administration (2015-2021). To this end, it examined the dependent character of Nigeria's economy and her security challenges, with a focus on the Boko-Haram insurgency, because not much have been written on the subject, therefore, this study seeks to fill these yawning knowledge gaps. We anchored our analysis on the linkage theory as espoused by Rosenau (1967), Frankel (1972), and adopted the descriptive research design. The study employed the secondary/qualitative method of data collection, while content analysis was utilized for the analysis of data. Essentially, we discovered that the economic down-turn which the Buhari's administration inherited in 2015, prompted it to seek more financial succor from its bilateral and multilateral partners such as the USA, China, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This trend fosters the dependent status of the Nigerian economy which tends to undermine the development of a consistent and dynamic foreign policy. The rise in the wave of insecurity occasioned by the Boko Haram phenomenon, kidnapping, armed robbery, among others, had a negative impact on Buhari's economic diplomacy, following the exit of some major foreign investors to other countries with peaceful and stable economic environments. Consequently, the study recommends among others, the transformation of the weak, fragile and dependent economic structure of Nigeria, in other to achieve economic self-reliance.

Introduction

The foreign policy of every state is influenced by mainly two determinants; international or external and domestic or internal (Gibson 1944; Bojang 2018; Yitan 2008). Unarguably, international politics and domestic politics are engaged in an inseparable marriage of sort, such that whereas international politics influences domestic politics, the latter equally impacts on the former (Okeke, 2018).

With regard to Nigeria, Adefunye (1992) observes that the nature and conduct of her foreign policy since the attainment of statehood in 1960, have been influenced by a variety of factors. The most prominent among them have remained the domestic factors that are

anchored on ethnic composition, the colonial heritage, internal political and economic situations, the attitude and perception of the Nigeria elites, and the priorities which the government set for itself.

According to Akinrinade (1997), Nigeria came into the world stage with a relatively intimidating stature, with the country's numerical preponderance over the other states in Africa, and the volume of natural resources within the state, it was presumed that Nigeria had the potential to dominate global politics in favour of Africa in general and for its benefit in particular. Kolawole (2005, p.873). harps on this position thus:

> *By her resources and size, Nigeria was expected to be at the front seat of Africa, providing others the necessary leadership and weapons to fight the clutches of colonialism, neo-colonialism, under development, poverty, famine and racial discrimination.*

It was also expected that not too long after independence, she would become great and take over her rightful place in the comity of nations (Kolawole, 2005). Several years thereafter, this did not happen as the country was caught up in several challenges both domestic and external, which negatively affected her international reputation. To remedy this situation, various administrations introduced a lot of measures such as shuttle diplomacy, citizen diplomacy, economic diplomacy, among others, with the hope of turning things around for good.

Former President Buhari, upon inauguration assumes the obligation of being Nigeria's Chief diplomat and foreign policy officer in order to re-launch Nigeria into the international Community. This was mostly attributed to the situation he found himself, which was characterized by dwindling oil prices, terrorism, corruption, insurgency, among others (Aning et al, 2017).

Many articles have been written on the impact of domestic environmental variables on Nigeria's foreign policy, but not much have been written on the dependent character of Nigeria's economy, and her security challenges, with a focus on the Boko Haram insurgency during the Muhammadu Buhari's administration (2015-2021). A probe in these directions would have exposed the elements responsible for Nigeria's weak and subservient foreign policy posture and the way forward. Therefore, this study seeks to fill these yawning knowledge gaps.

In Nigeria as well as other countries of Africa, the colonial economic policy of extraversion of agriculture and imposition of primary production, forced the economy to a structural dependence on the world market for manufactured products and the exportation of raw materials (Onimode, 1985). This consequently, eroded real production, and not only weakened the country's economy, but also consigned it to the present peripheral status in international economic relations. This peripheral status makes Nigeria's economy not only vulnerable to external manipulations, but also a vicarious casualty of global economic crisis.

The problem was exacerbated with the insistence of the creditor countries on the complete surrender of the country's national policy making and implementation to the policies designed by international experts. Thus, Abba et al, (1985; p.57) remarked that:

> *The near total effective foreign control over our economy has serious consequences, not the least of which is that especially in manufacturing, the decisions about what to produce, with which machines, using what raw materials and at what cost, all these are left to foreigners, or technical partners as they are called… the end result is massive over-invoicing, transfer pricing and excessive consultancy fees collected by the foreigner mother country.*

Among the litany of challenges that confront the Nigerian state, terrorism appears to be acquiring the character of intractability. Thus, the Boko Haram insurgent group oppressively engages in irregular warfare tactics including mobilization of militants, suicide bombing, kidnapping, ambush, hostage – taking among others. Notable of these attacks was the infamous Baga massacre which occurred between January 3, and January 7, 2015, and the ones which involved the United Nations building on August 26, 2011, Nyanya motor park on April 14, 2014 and the Nigerian Police Headquarters on June, 16, 2011, all in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (Blanchard, 2015; Iyekekpolo, 2016). The focus of the group tilted towards the

young persons with the notorious abduction of 276 School girls in Chibok, Borno State on April 14, 2014 and 110 female students in Dapchi, Yobe State (Alimba, 2018).

Furthermore, over 2 million people were displaced from their homes and tens of thousands killed (Kaisor et al, 2020). The United Nations Refugees Agency (2020) estimated 3,019.318 to be the population of internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), which geographically spreads across countries of Lake Chad area with Nigeria, Chad, Cameroun, and Niger having 72.67%, 13.3%, 11.3%, and 2.8% respectively.

Research Questions

i. How did the dependent character of Nigeria's economy affect her foreign policy during the Buhari's administration (2015 - 2021)?

ii. What was the impact of Nigeria's security challenges on her foreign policy, with reference to Boko Haram insurgency within the period of study?

Objectives of Study

The study sets out to achieve the following objectives

To ascertain the impact of the dependent character of Nigeria's economy on her foreign policy during the Buhari's administration (2015 - 2021).

To examine the effects of security challenges on Nigeria's foreign policy, with a focus on Boko Haram insurgency within the period of study.

Conceptual Clarification

Determinants of Foreign Policy

In international relations, a state must conduct its foreign policy against the backdrop of influences from two critical environments; the domestic and external environments of states. The foreign policy environment is "occupied by a range of significant actors, issues and interests, all of which give it dynamism and life "(Webber & Smith, 2013, p.30).

In the extant literature of the subject, determinants are divided according to two criteria: objective and subjective determinants, as well as factors of internal and external provenance (Adanczyk & Baraniuk, 2017; Jaworski, 2010; Sajduk, 2009; Kuzniar, 2006; Zieba, 2005). Thus, it is possible to specify four types of conditions; internal objective, internal subjective, external objective and external subjective. The first category (internal objective factors) include; geographical environment (size and shape of the territory, course of borders, climate or natural resources), demographic potential (population, size, population density, direction of migration), economic and scientific/technical potential (size of the economy, and pace of its development, technological advancement and inclination to innovativeness, size of foreign investment, economic system etc), military potential (amount and structure of defence expenditure, size of particular types of armed forces, their technological advancement, level of training and morale, distribution of military bases in the country and the world, size and advancement of military industry), social and political systems (form of governance, activities of political parties, role of media and public opinion) (Jaworski, 2000; Sajduk, 2009; Kuzniar, 2006; Zieba, 2005). Another category of factors of internal origin are the determinants of subjective character in the form of perception of the international environment (which is influenced by historical experience, dominant religion and ideology, strategic culture or pertinent stereotypes about other nations).

The determinants of external provenance and objective character include; prevailing trends in the evolution of the international environment (their influence on the foreign policy of the state), the position and role of the state within international relations (resulting from its potentials). On the other hand, external subjective determinants include; international perception of the state and expectations towards it (countries with an established image of trustworthy partners will usually be able to conduct a more effective foreign policy than pariahs), foreign policy concepts of other members of the international community, or the quality of their foreign services (Jaworski 2010; Sajduk, 2009; Zieba, 2005).

The conclusion that can be drawn from the preceding contentions is that a state's foreign policy responds to internal (objective/subjective) as well as the external (objective/subjective) determinants. For instance, with regard to the internal objective

factors, the economic foundation and strength of a given state to a large extent determines its foreign policy thrust and orientation. Thus, a fragile, vulnerable and subservient economy will unequivocally lack the capacity to sustain an independent, dynamic and achievement orientated foreign policy. Furthermore, the circulation of terrorist mercenaries, proliferation of small and light weapons and other security equipments in the possession of unauthorized persons have informed the need for a foreign policy agenda that recognizes national security as its centre piece.

Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Nigeria's foreign policy has often been explained in terms of four "concentric circles" of national interest. The innermost circle represents Nigeria's security, independence and prosperity and is centered on its immediate neighbours – Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger; the second circle revolves around Nigeria's relations with its West African neigbhours; the third circle focuses on Continental African issues of peace, development and democratization; and the fourth circle involves Nigeria's relations with organizational institutions and states outside Africa (Gambari, 1989).

Gambari (1980), while focusing on 'the role of various domestic variables in the determination of a nation's foreign policy argues that many studies on Nigeria's foreign policy tend to overlook the linkage between domestic political, economic and social structures and foreign policy issues. He maintains that the linkage goes a long way to explain Nigeria's growing frustration in the actualization of its coveted leadership role in Africa. He further posits that weak economic and political structures, ineffective institutions and processes and bad governance characterized by quarrel – some, inept and corrupt public officers, have combined to undermine the influence and respectability that ought to have accrued to Nigeria's foreign policy undertakings. Furthermore Asobie (1990) posits that at the conceptual and theoretical levels, the study of Nigeria's foreign policy is grossly underdeveloped. According to him, despite its being a copious and voluminous industry, the study has been unsystematic, basically idiosyncratic and lacking in theoretical and empirical rigour.

The preceding arguments underscore the need for a more scientific and systematic study of Nigeria's foreign policy. It also highlights the linkage between, the domestic and external environments of states. Thus, Nigeria's weak economic and political structures, ineffective institutions and processes, bad governance, image crisis among others, tend to undermine her foreign policy posture.

Insurgency

> *The term insurgency conjures often wild disparate interpretations; suffering at the hands of both experts and pundits. Commonly accepted meanings remain elusive with predictable conceptual confusion (Moore, 2007, p. 2).*

As observed by Manual & Joel (cited in Ford 2007), insurgency movement traditionally find their roots in a desire for social and political change, and they utilize guerrilla warfare to accomplish their goals. Mustafa (2016) notes that insurgency has existed throughout antiquity but ebbed and flowed in strategic significance, this implies that it is not unique to Africa as some conceived, rather it is a wild wind that cut across human society and civilizations. Insurgency according to Steven & Raymond (2004; p.2) "is a strategy adopted by groups which cannot attain their political objectives through conventional means or by a quick seizure of power. It is used by those too weak to do otherwise." They further describe the attitude of insurgency as protracted, asymmetric violence, ambiguity, the use of complex terrain (jungles, mountains, urban areas), psychological warfare and political mobilization – all designed to protect the insurgents and eventually alter the balance of power in their favour.

The CIA (2020), defines insurgency as a protracted political – military activity towards completely or partially controlling the resources of a country, through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organizations. The common denominator of most insurgent groups is their desire to control a particular area. This objective differentiates insurgent groups from purely terrorist organizations, whose objectives do not include the creation of an alternative government capable of controlling a given area or country.

The objectives of most insurgent group, designed to help them achieve eventual domination, include;

i. Limit the ability of the government and enhance the capability of the insurgents to provide public services.

ii. Obtain the support or a neutrality of critical segments of the population.

iii. Isolate the government from international diplomatic and material support and increase international support for the insurgents.

iv. Increase domestic and international legitimacy of the insurgent organization at the expense of the government.

v. Reduce and if, possible neutralize government coercive power while strengthening insurgent coercive capabilities (CIA, 2020).

What can be deduced from the preceding contentions is that insurgency is a state of violent rebellion against any authority or leadership of a country through various acts of disruption, molestation and intimidation, in order to undermine its authority and control a given area or country.

Theoretical Perspective

This study is anchored on the linkage theory as espoused by Rosenau (1969), Frankel (1972). Like the systems theory, linkage theory attempts to establish the relationship or inter-connectivity between the domestic politics and foreign policy. It emphasizes that both national and international politics co-exist in a single system (Johari; 2004). Smith (2003) further explains that the theory of systems conveys the inter-relationship between the parts of a polity, so that when there is a change in one-part, other parts will be affected. This confirms Mingst's (2000; p.20) assertion that 'a system is an assemblage of units, objects or parts united by some forms of regular interaction."

In the light of the preceding contentions, Rosenau's linkage theory, however is a projection of the interdependence and interaction that exist in the Eastonian political system. It establishes the fact that systems can only survive in an environment where there is an input and output.

The linkage theory assumes that there are three forms of linkages, namely, the penetrative, reactive, as well as emulative linkages (Rosenau, 1969). The penetrative linkage is a situation where one polity (state) serves as a participant in the political and economic processes of another and shares the authority to allocate values within the penetrated unit. Johari, (2011) equally said that, Rosenau's penetrative linkage embraces not only political and military, but also economic and could be usefully employed to analyze industries and economies dominated by massive foreign investments. Furthermore, reactive linkage is concerned with a linkage that is caused by the boundary – crossing reaction without direct foreign participation in the decisions made within the unit.

In addition, emulative linkage focuses on the demonstration effect, especially in a situation whereby political activities in one country are perceived and emulated by another. Indeed, linkage is "emulative", when a state copies the initiating state without any expectation of "matching" (Johari, 2011).

This theory is apt for the study as a result of its ability to explain the linkage between, the domestic and external environments of States. Following the penetrative variant of the linkage theory, Nigeria responds to external issues within the context of the constraints imposed on her by the international capitalist system. Thus, the formulation and implementation of foreign policy in Nigeria is geared towards investment decisions and patterns, provision of high-technology, management skills, loans, grants in-aid, as projected by international financial institutions. This is a direct consequence of the dependent status of the Nigerian economy which is mostly controlled and directed by the advanced capitalist nations. Thus, the dependence on foreign capital by the political leadership tends to undermine the development of a consistent and dynamic foreign policy in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive research design. Qualitative data obtained from secondary sources like journals, textbooks, newspapers, magazines and internet materials were used, while the method of data analysis is content analysis.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Economic Dependence and Nigeria's Foreign Policy: A study of the Muhammadu Buhari's Administration (2015 – 2021).

The growing gap between the developed and developing countries has dominated international relations and diplomacy for a long time. This gap is as a result of constant capital inflow from the developed countries to those of the Third World, including Africa, under the pretext of helping them overcome their problems and reduce the gap (Andrews, 2009). The inflow takes various forms such as; loans, grant-in-aid, technical assistance among others.

Nations borrow for several reasons, namely, for capital projects and provision of social services to their citizens. Accordingly borrowing and therefore debt is a necessary economic policy intended to fill the development gap of a country. If judiciously deployed, loans would yield profit returns on investment that could be utilized to offset the loan capital and interest put together, while the project for which it has been contracted would provide for the general wellbeing and improvement of standard of living of the citizens. If mismanaged, or diverted to non-profit venture, the debtor is bound to be trapped in the miasma of debt burden and economic dependence (Soludo, 2003).

Nigeria at independence joined her counterparts in contracting foreign loans for the advanced reason of fulfilling the promise of developing social welfare. Based on these loans and the providential oil boom, the leadership of the country erected many development plans geared towards realizing the dreams of an independent and egalitarian society. However, rather than realizing this dream, the country sooner than later fell into a deep economic crisis that rolled her into the club of highly indebted poor countries (HIPC's) (Obadan, 2003).

Table I: Nigeria's Total Public Debt Portfolio As At December 31, 2020

	Debt Category	Amount Outstanding US $M	Amount Outstanding ₦'M	% of Total
A.	Total External Debt	33,348.08	12,705,618.48	38.60%
	FGN Only	28,735.38	10,940,179.98	33.26%
	States & FCT	4,612.70	1,757,438.70	5.34%
B.	Total Domestic Debt	53,044.46	20,209,894.37	61.40%
	FGN Only	42,057.55	16,023,896.38	48.68%
	States & FCT	10,986.91	4,186,010.99	12,72%
C.	Total Public Debt (A+B)	86,392.54	32,915.514.85	100%

Source: Debt Management Office (DMO) (2020)

Table I, shows that Nigeria's Total Public Debt as at December 31, 2020 was ₦32.915 trillion. The figures include the Debt Stock of the Federal and State Governments as well as the Federal Capital Territory.

President Muhammadu Buhari's economic team was actively engaged in selling the government's economic plans to international investors. A quintessence was the increased bilateral relationship with China and the opening of the Nigerian economy to the Chinese *Renminbi Yuan*. Barely one year after assumption of office, president Buhari visited China, the visit was on the heels of invitation by Chinese President Xi-jinping. According to Bello et al (2017, p.50), the visit:

> *… led to the signing of the framework to enhance infrastructural development and industrial activities in Nigeria between National Development Reform Commission of China and Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment of Nigeria; Technological and Scientific Cooperation between both countries, the visit lasted for one week. In the aftermath of the visit, loans were granted to Nigeria, to finance the deficit of 2016 budget, train infrastructure among others,*

These loans, according to Odubajo (2017) were to secure commitment for investments worth US$6 billion from the Chinese government and private companies most of whom signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Nigerian government. Following President Buhari's shuttle diplomacy, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) had announced $89 million in additional development assistance to Nigeria, to continue its support for development goals outlined in a Development objectives Assistance Agreement between US and Nigerian government signed in 2015 (USAID, 2018).

Nearly half of the new funding ($44million) was to support HIV/AIDS control through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDs Relief (PERFAR). The remainder was to be used to help the Northwest Nigeria increase agricultural productivity and economic growth ($15million); strengthen education ($11million); support good governance ($10.5million) and improve water and sanitation infrastructure ($9million). The funding brought the total of US government assistance provided under the five-year assistance agreement to $808.5miilion (USAID,2018).

One of the consequences of the dependence on foreign capital is its decapitalization process which frustrates domestic accumulation and nurtures the persistence of external dependence through the unequal international economic relations fostered by the centre-periphery asymmetry. Therefore, the foreign policy implications of the dependence on foreign capital is that the dominance and hegemony of the comprador elements and external agents dictate the thrust and orientation of Nigeria's foreign policy. Thus, foreign policy becomes a set response to external stimuli, dictated by the owners of foreign capital.

Security Challenges and Nigeria's Foreign Policy: A Study of Boko Haram Insurgency (2015 – 2021)

In 2009, following the extra-judicial killing of the sect's pioneer leader, Imam Yusuf Mohammed, the activities of Boko Haram metamorphosed from a local peace militia into a violent group, deploying tactics such as suicide bombing, kidnapping and attacking Islamic clerics, mosques and churches to drive home their agenda. This violent strategy became imperative after the government attacked the members of the group in some major cities of northern Nigeria, which led to five days without clash between the group members and the Nigerian forces. (Blanchard, cited in Shuaibu, Sallah & Shehu, 2015). Meanwhile, from 2009, Boko Haram successfully coordinated series of violent and deadly attacks which culminated into massive loss of lives and property of both Nigerians and foreigners. These ranged from attacks on police headquarters and United Nation's office in Abuja in 2011, alleged kidnap of 250 female students from Government Girls' Secondary School Chibok in Borno State in 2014, kidnap and execution of seven foreigners who were staff of international construction companies in 2013, bomb explosion at St. Theresa's Catholic Church in Madalla, Niger State in 2011, Gwoza Massacre in 2014, to Baga massacre in 2015 (Ezeani & Chilaka, 2013; Anyadike, 2013; Onuoha & Ugwueze, 2014; Olowaselu, Bello & Onuselogu 2014; Audu, 2015, BBC, 2015).

Table 2: Timeline of some Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria between 2015-2021

S/N	Date of Attack	State	Nature of Attacks/Locations	Casualties
1	Jan. 3 & 7, 2015	Borno State	Massacre of the Town of Baga	Killed about 200 people
2	Feb. 15, 2015	Yobe State	Suicide bomb blast in Damaturu	Killed about 16 people
3	Sept. 20, 2015	Borno State	3 bomb explosions in Maiduguri	Killed about 54 people
4	Nov. 17, 2015	Adamawa State	Bomb blast in the North-east city of Yola	Killed about 32 people and injured 80
5	April 24, 2016	Borno State	Alau village Maiduguri was raided	Killed about 30 people

6	June 17, 2016	Plateau State	The Venue of funeral ceremony in Kuda was attached	Killed about 24 people
7	August 20, 2016	Borno State	Kuburu village was raided	Killed about 7 people
8	Jan. 7, 2021	Yobe State	Nigerian Army base in Buni-Yadi was attacked	Killed about 5 Soldiers
9	June 18, 2017	Borno State	Multiple suicide bomb blasts in Maiduguri	Killed about 14 people
10	June 17, 2019	Borno State	Suicide bombing of Konduga	Killed about 30 people and wounded 40
11	July 27, 2019	Borno State	Nganzi funeral attach in Borno	Killed about 65 people
12	Jan. 6. 2020	Borno State	Bomb blast at Gamboru	Killed about 32 people and injured 35
13	Feb. 9, 2020	Borno State	Auno village was attacked	About 30 people were killed and many abducted
14	April 10, 2021	Borno State	An attack on Goniri, near the Niger-Nigerian border	2 militia men were killed and several buildings burnt down
15	April, 25. 2021	Borno State	Kaga village in Borno was attacked	About 33 Nigerian Soldiers were killed

Sources: Orokpo (2015), Stanford University (2017), Anyadike (2013) Amnesty Int'l (2020), Dokua Sasu, (2024) Searcey (2027); Compbell & Horward (2018); US Department of State (2020; 2021).

Muhammadu Buhari assumed office as civilian president in 2015, the administration like its predecessors adopted economic diplomacy as its foreign policy instrument. This informed his shuttle diplomacy is search of assistance in the fight against Boko Haram insurgency and corruption, to galvanize domestic economy and attract foreign direct investment (Bollo et al, 2017; Odubajo, 2017).

The quantum leap in the rate of insecurity, violence, hostage taking and terrorism in many parts of Nigeria had brought some negative effects on Buhari's economic diplomacy. Aro (2013,p.12) remarked that "Boko-Haram insurgency had not only led to the closure or abandonment of people's business activities within the effected regions, but also led to immigration of people from the effected regions."

From billions of dollars in financial loss by manufacturers to large scale decline in foreign direct investment (FDI), some major investors had to abandon Nigeria for other countries with peaceful and stable economic environments (Onyebuchi, 2018). Thus, the total value of capital importation into Nigeria in 2015 stood at $1.4 billion, it declined to $1.04 billion in 2016, it went further down to $981.75 billion in 2017, it slumped to $1.19 billion in 2018, $934million in 2020, and $698 million in 2021 (NBS, 2021).

Conclusion

The study sets out to ascertain the impact of the domestic environmental variables on Nigeria's foreign policy with reference to the Muhammadu Buhari's administration (2015-2021). To this end, it examines the dependent character of Nigeria's economy, and her security challenges, with a focus on the Boko – Haram insurgency. We anchored our analysis on the linkage theory as espoused by Rosenau (1967); Frankel (1972) and discovered that the economic down-turn which the Buhari's administration inherited in 2015, inhibited the proper funding of Nigeria's missions and embassies abroad. Consequently, the administration withdrew from 90 international organizations out of 310 international organizations it belonged to, to save Nigeria from embarrassment that accumulation of arrears of subscription fees

could bring (Adebisi, 2021). The economic crunch also led the country into seeking more international financial succor from its bilateral and multilateral partners such as USA, China, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). This situation nurtures the dependent status of the Nigerian economy, which tends to undermine the development of a consistent and dynamic foreign policy.

In April, 2018, the Buhari's administration launched the Nigerian Economic Diplomacy Initiative (NEDI). However, the rise in the wave of insecurity posed by the Boko Haram phenomenon, kidnapping, armed robbery, among others, had a negative impact on the policy, following the exit of some major foreign investors to other countries with peaceful and stable economic environments.

Recommendations:

i. The Nigeria's neocolonial leadership should transform the fragile, weak and dependent economic structure of the country and strive to achieve economic self-reliance.

ii. The Boko-Haram insurgent group should be confronted with both national and international counter-insurgency rule of engagement and procedure.

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THE FACTS AND MIRAGE OF INTEGRATING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE INTO THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM OF NIGERIA

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Artificial, Intelligence, Technology, Judicial, System

ABSTRACT
The creation of machines that are able to learn, reason and perform activities in typical ways of human intelligence is becoming the state-of-the-art application in almost all human endeavour. It is acceptable as a means of relieving excessive workloads on human. The intrigue of these machines is that they are imbued with human intellect and are referred to as Artificial Intelligence (AI) due to the fact that they mimic human capabilities in reasoning, discovering meaning and or learning from past experiences. Their employment is revolutionizing all sectors of the world including the judicial sector. The doctrinal research approach is adopted in this study. It is manifest that the integration of AI in the complex Nigeria judicial system is feasible with identifiable benefits ranging from easy and quick access to justice, accurate legal research, efficiency and accuracy in legal processes and reduction of backlog cases while creating ample time for legal professionals to handle more strategic legal tasks. A technological framework to interface AI with judicial functions is what is required. Despite these benefits, the mirage of AI technology manifests in surmountable set-backs, such as lack of technological infrastructure, inadequate regulatory framework, societal and cultural acceptance, fear of job displacement, vulnerability to cyber-attacks and AI algorithms biases among others. However, fusing AI technology in Nigeria's judicial system is an acceptable choice when compared to the benefits therefrom. It is recommended that a formidable legal and regulatory framework be developed in fulfilment of the provision of section 18 (2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to achieve a seamless AI integration in the justice system of Nigeria.

Introduction

In recent times, the influence and advancement in human modes of carrying out routine economic and social chores with the aid of advanced technology, such as computers and other machines that are able to mimic human capabilities is undeniable. These machines according to Sharma (2009), have the capabilities of exhibiting a human kind of intelligence with the aid of algorithms in a computer friendly coherence. They have built-in resources that activate capabilities like humans, to reason, discover meaning and or learn from past experiences. These capabilities have, in the assertion of Aigbokhaevbo (2024), revolutionized all sectors of the economy and society at large, including the judicial sector. It is expected that its integration into the judicial system of Nigeria, will bring about easy, effective and efficient justice delivery system.

This paper seeks to explore the feasibility of integrating AI technologies into the Nigerian Judicial System and their impact on the Nigerian judicial terrain. It examines both the potential enhancements to judicial processes and the ethical dilemmas that emerges while attempting to comprehend AI's role in fostering fairness and efficiency in justice delivery. However, the impact of the digital evolution and how it would align with Nigeria's socio-political dynamics is paramount in order not to become a slave to it. It should be a tool for empowerment and not a driver to the existing inequalities in the judicial system. The paper is in eight segments: an introduction; insight to Artificial intelligence; the benefits inherent in integrating AI to Nigeria's judicial system and challenges thereto. Segments seven and eight are the conclusion and recommendations respectively.

Artificial Intelligence

The word 'artificial' according to Kehinde, Oyedeji and Awonuga (2024), suggests something unnatural, a man-made thing with a semblance of a natural thing while the ability of this unnatural thing to acquire and use information like humans suggests 'intelligence' In other words, the cloned ability of the unnatural machines to emulate human intelligence makes them have artificial intelligence. In the same vein Russel and Norvig (2021) stressed that Artificial Intelligence connotes a man-made technology fabricated to imitate the intelligence of man in performing simple and complex tasks with minimal supervision by man. As Copeland (2024) explained, AI basically points to a computer-controlled robot, programmed with human intellect to execute tasks like humans. Artificial Intelligence is also known as machine intelligence. It is, according to Sultan, an aspect of computer science where machines are manipulated through programmes to solve difficult tasks in ways humans cannot. This is plausible by use of computational models of human intelligent processes that enable machines learn to take independent decision and carry out tasks on behalf of humans. However, Schatsky, Muraskin and Gurumurthy (2014), conceptualized AI as not just a built-up programme that attempt to behave like humans but one that does it even better like humans with ease. The revolutionized conventional norms of handling tasks is a fit achieved in AI innovations and have inspired a paradigm shift in technology, making it a necessity rather than a novelty.

AI has made progressive and effective in-road into the fields of health, financial services, commerce, insurance, the hospitality industry, legal practice and the justice delivery sector etc. Legal research and case management has been made easy and affordable through AI's ability to analyse vast amounts of legal data far more efficiently than the traditional methods, due to its algorithm and data analytics.

Historically, Artificial Intelligence has, according to Sharma (2009), been in vogue since the 1950s. However, the phrase "Artificial intelligence" as stated by Frankenfield (2024), was first used by John McCarthy in 1956 at a conference titled "The Darthmont Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence". Since then, tremendous advancement in AI technology has been witnessed with unparalleled innovations in all facet of human endeavours. Machines are now programmed with simple simulation of human intelligence causing it to think like humans and mimic human actions.

Artificial Intelligence as described by Marr (2020), may be classified based on their level of sophistication and modes of operation, such as: (a) Reactive AI which is designed for predictable output relying on the data input; (b) Limited Memory AI, which is programmed to predict and perform complex tasks using programmed information on historical observed data. This type of AI is used in cars to observe speed, road and detect direction; (c) Theory of mind AI. This type of AI humanizes robots to behave like humans in ways that it expresses emotions and takes decision with the theory of mind; (d) the self-aware AI, also known as Artificial Super Intelligence (ASI). It represents AI of the future, programmed to be self-aware and able to make decisions based on emotional responses from environmental stimuli. Bostrom (2003) describes this AI as a hypothetical variant with intelligence that surpasses that of the best human brains in every aspect including general knowledge, social skills and scientific innovation.

It is worthy of note that robot algorithms significantly differ from the conventional computer algorithms. The conventional computer algorithms take full control over, and perfects access to the data they use. That way, the inherent problems of floating-point arithmetic is managed. On the other hand, Tsianos et al (2009), explained that robot algorithm applies to physical objects in the real world. Despite the fact that these objects are subject to the independent and imperfectly

modelled law of nature, they still control them. In other words, Robot algorithms present ability to observe, recognise and control. These are not present in computer algorithms. The whole gamut of AI is that it is in vogue to assist human efforts in handling tasks even better than humans would do.

The Nigerian Judicial System

The judicial system encompasses, according to Nigerian Law Dictionary (2022), to "the network or hierarchy of courts in a country; the jurisdiction, powers and functions of the courts". It inherently refers to the judicial branch of government comprising courts of law that has constitutional powers to administer justice. In any democratic government, as held in the case of *AG Abia State v AG Federation (2007) 2 SC 146 at 1338*, a fair and independent judicial system hosts the rule of law and its legitimacy while guaranteeing human rights and justice for citizens of the nation. Furthermore, it was held in *Gadi v Male (2010) 7 NWLR (Pt. 1193) 225* that judicial functions are conferred on the courts in Nigeria by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) (as amended). The section 6 (5) of the CFRN details the composition, character and status of the judiciary as federal and state courts including the hierarchy of courts.

Flowing from the latter, Sourdin and Zariski (2013), opined that the judicial system embodies judicial officers who interact with people in the course of dispute resolution, judicial activism, case management, public education and commentary. Therefore, the independence of the judiciary and her administrative role in justice delivery play pivotal role in judicial functionality and existence. The independence of the judiciary, as put forward by Bello and Ogufere (2024), assures an unmediated separation of powers and gives the courts unfettered leverage to render impartial decisions free from the influence of other arms of government. In *Inspector General of Police v Eko Ejembi Eko,* SC/CV/268/2023, the Supreme Court of Nigeria held that section 84 of the Sheriff and Civil Process Act (SCPA) which mandated a judgment creditor to obtain the consent of the Attorney General of the Federation or the Attorney General of a State before enforcing judgment against government funds is in direct conflict with sections 1, 3, 6, and 287 of the Constitution of Nigeria (as amended) and undermines the independence of the judiciary and so ordered the striking down of the offending section from the statute books. The court further stressed in its ruling that the requirement for the AGFs consent undermines the judiciary's independence and the rule of law as it subjects the enforcement of courts judgment to the discretion of the executive arm of government. More so, Maduagwu (2017), expressed that it is the Court's responsibility to administratively ensure that judicial matters, management of courts, appointment and conduct of judges, case handling and court operations which exhibits the full proof of efficient justice delivery, run without friction. It is therefore trite to reiterate the Supreme Court decision in AG *Abia State v AG Federation (2007)1 CCLR SC, 104 at 131,* that the government is kept constitutionally focused to the goals of democracy and good governance to her citizens by the functionality of the court.

The Judicial System and Artificial Intelligence

The functions of the judiciary in justice delivery is tasking. It spans from clerical work to legal decision-making which require precedents, predictions and references to volumes of national and international legal authorities in order to arrive at an informed decision. It is often breath-taking for a clerk to manually search out case files from amongst thousands heaped or filed, in order to prepare a cause list. On the other hand, it may take a judge late nights, like a student, to conduct legal research on a pending case due for determination, having to manually search for relevant laws and precedents from among millions of decided cases.

In the western world, like the United States of America and others, as expressed by Jorge and Andrade (2014), AI has long been introduced to replace the manual methods of court duties including aiding judges in judicial decision-making. Its introduction, as stated by Schurbarth (2016), has been seen to reduce search time and analysis of large amounts of legal data. It is also seen that AI integration has simplified legal research, decision-making and access to justice and introduced predictive analytics, enabling predictions to litigation outcomes. Interestingly, Liptak (2017), stressed that Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr., affirmed that the day "when smart machines, driven with artificial intelligence will assist with courtroom fact-finding or more controversially even, judicial decision-making" is already here and has revolutionized how the judiciary functions. The introduction of the AI

lawyer, Ross, is a confirmation and a game changer. Kehinde, Oyedeji and Awonuga (2024), agrees that Ross has the capability and is actually able to assist lawyers search through thousands of cases, turning out relevant results within seconds. Its capability in analysing difficult legal issues and detecting connections which humans would ordinarily not detect is amazing. Ross is able to write legal memos and other legal documents like any human lawyer, they stated.

Furthermore, the novel case of Loomis v State of Wisconsin 881 N.W. 2d 749 (Wis.2016) is on target about the prowess of AI. In this case, Eric L. Loomis was sentenced to a six-year jail term for evading La Crosse WIS Police. The trial Judge, in part, arrived at his decision, using the assessment of COMPAS, a secret algorithm software operational in the Wisconsin Justice System. COMPAS's assessment was that Loomis had a "high risk of violence, high risk of recidivism, high pre-trial risk". Even though Loomis appealed the decision of the lower court on the grounds that using the evaluation of AI to determine his case was an infringement of his fundamental human rights. The US Supreme Court upheld the decision of the lower court.

In Argentina, an Artificial Intelligence called PROMETEA, developed in 2017, is used by the District Attorney in complex decision writing on cases. Judges, however, have the freedom to either accept, rewrite or reject it. The main fact is that it is convenient and less cumbersome to use PROMETEA because it provides the district attorney's digital library data base with over 2000 rulings most relevant and related to matters in issue. The State of Columbia cashed in on this prototype in 2019 because "The 'intelligent' tool according to Hernmandeza (2024), automatically reads information from the judgments and selects priority cases for study". In the same spirit, according to Allsop (2021), Australia embraced the AI technology.

In all intent and purpose, Ashley (2017) opined that AI stands out as a potential catalyst for transformative change; providing an interface for predictive coding, predictive analytics and machine learning and provides easy mode for legal practitioner's to present materials to judges even in the face of criticisms, though arising out of jurisdictional development.

The Benefits of AI in the Judicial System

The AI technological revolution, once a novelty is now a necessity within the judicial system, to the extent that it minimizes delays in handling cases even from the overwhelming volumes of legal information. Agbakoba (2024), posits that it enhances the efficiency of judicial processes and reduces human error while promoting fairer judicial outcomes. The benefits enjoyable from integrating AI into the judicial system may be summed up as follows:

Affordable, Quick and Easy Legal Research:

AI technology has revolutionized legal information search. It turns out in seconds, any legal information needed from a vast database or volumes of legal documents, case laws and statutes in less time and cost than any legal practitioner, searching manually can. Pavon (2020), maintains that the accurate capability of AI to intelligently execute legal researches, eases and quickens the search time a law librarian or legal practitioner would waste in searching for such information manually. In agreement, Ogoniba (2023), posits that the deployment of AI to the justice system makes it easier and quicker for a judge or a legal practitioner to access relevant precedents, analyse their similarities and differences and arrive at a balanced opinion to support legal arguments and decision-making. Furthermore, the use of AI by judicial officers minimizes delays in judicial proceedings by prioritizing cases for accelerated hearing and quick determination.

i. Access to justice Delivery:

AI search features eliminate human errors and enhances precision when handling large amount of conflicting documents or court rulings. It is the view of Waisberg (2021), that the cost associated with manual search methods are avoided, giving room for underprivileged persons to affordably have easy access to high quality legal services. More so, the characteristic AI Predictive analytics software, data analysis tools, speech to text transcription features equip judges and legal practitioners for better results in enhancing access to justice. For instance, the use of Zoom, Michrosoft Team, Chatbots and virtual assistance platforms have made video conferencing, consultation with clients and court proceedings possible. The divide to legal services for those who would otherwise not have access to justice due to distance, fear of victimization and financial constraint is bridged by AI technology. It is, in fact, a development to be

adopted in aid to quick and easy judicial processes in Nigeria.

ii. **Efficient and Accurate Legal Processes:**

Automating routine judicial tasks using the AI technology enhances efficient and accurate access to judicial precedents. It streamlines, according to Fell et al (2012), workflows and reduces backlog of cases in courts. The risk prediction algorithms feature of AI improves decision-making consistency. It is however warned that care must be taken to avoid the potential application inconsistencies.

1. Feasibility of Integrating AI to Nigeria's Judicial System

The benefits accruable from the use of AI in the Judicial System of Nigeria, such as automated legal tasks, easy and affordable access to legal advice and efficient mode of dispute resolution and ease of access to legal authorities pummelled Adekoya (2022), to call for the deployment of Artificial Intelligence in Nigeria's justice system. This clarion call is apt, considering the benefits derivable from deploying AI assistance to Nigeria's judicial system. However, the feasibility of achieving this fit would require the understanding of the level of development and set-back of the judicial system of Nigeria. The endemic set-back, according to Agbakoba (2024), generally manifests in striking a balance between a moribund manual system bedevilled by gap in knowledge, inadequate legal framework, and poor access to justice and system inefficiencies. These set-backs are briefly x-rayed thus:

i. There is an endemic bureaucratic bottleneck creating a clog to the efficient operation of the judicial system in Nigeria. In the view of Ayuba (2007), this is as a result of an age-long paper-based administrative procedures and obsolete laws including unwieldy piles of backlog cases. These accounts for the unending delays and inability of courts to effectively dispense cases under Nigeria's judicial system.

ii. The support staff of the judiciary in Nigeria are largely untrained for the specialized work. As such, there are more interested in material benefits for sustenance than what the job genuinely offers. This heightens bribery and corruption as exemplified where processes filed in court attracts extra fees for it to be treated at every stage until the case is assigned to a court. This attitude, according to Adisa and Alabi (2021), undermines the very essence, integrity and fairness of the judicial system and erodes public trust, as the high and mighty in society use the instrument of bribery to buy justice to their favour and turning justice into a commodity for the highest bidder. This translates to justice inequality.

iii. In the view of Gwunireama (2022), there is a manifested marginalized and restricted access to justice for the poor and rural dwellers who make up about 70 percent of the population of the country. This restricted access to justice is a result of lack of legal awareness, poverty and access to capable legal representation. It is an unfortunate set-back to a fair and efficient justice delivery in Nigeria.

iv. The fear and reluctance to integrate AI technology into the judicial system of Nigeria for the fear of the unknown, according to Ajayi (2022), is another set-back. This attitude stems from an inherited Common Wealth conservative approach to legal practice. There is the fear that AI innovations would distort the nature of the legal practice in Nigeria especially when there is no formidable legal framework.

v. The power generating system in Nigeria is a great set-back as well. AI technology rely heavily on power for sustainability and internet connectivity**.** Power generation is at its lowest ebb in Nigeria. Unless it is improved, integrating AI into the judicial system will remain a mirage.

Integrating AI to the Nigeria's Judicial System

In consideration of the discourse above relating to the benefits of AI in the Judicial System and also considering the set-backs akin to the Nigerian Judicial System, it is clear that the benefits of integrating AI into the judicial system of Nigeria out-weighs the set-backs. In that wise, a little tune-up would be necessary to bring the desired interface in line with other developed countries.

Firstly, there is need for an elaborate specific legislative and regulatory platform in the judicial system of Nigeria for AI technology to strive and to avert the dangers concomitant to its use. This same view, according to Neuwirth (2023), pushed the European Union (EU) to press for the enactment of the Artificial Intelligence Act to assure the safety, legal compliance and ethical use of AI within their region. A comprehensive legal framework to accommodate the use of AI in Nigeria Legal Space is paramount. Such broad legislation should accommodate issues relating to Privacy and Data Protection. The reason is that the complex nature of the country and its judicial system harbours intricacies which may not be detected timeously. Succinctly, Ibidapo-Obe and Olabode (2023), rightly expressed that Nigeria judicial system lacks comprehensive data protection laws. This may give room for inappropriate data sharing and breach of privacy and intellectual property rights violation. It is therefore suggested that the AI systems should be built in conformity with existing privacy laws, intellectual property rights and data protection regulations. It is vital to prioritize the mitigation of this risk on ethical consideration to achieve a robust AI legislation to save the situation.

The provision of section 18 (2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as (amended), entrenched the platform upon which the AI technology would strive by stating that "Government shall promote science and technology". It is heart-warming, according to Michael (2023) that steps are already being taken towards achieving it by the formulation of the National Artificial Intelligence Policy (NAIPS) to partner with the National Information Technology Department Agency (NITDA), even though the National AI strategy is yet to be formulated. However, the establishment of the National Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (NCAIR), commissioned in Abuja, November 13 2020 as captured by Effoduh (2021), is a great mile stone.

The courts in Nigeria are subtly amending their court rules to accommodate the use of AI in electronic filing of court processes and remote virtual court sittings, while law firms and judicial officers alike are boldly embracing AI technology in legal searches. A comprehensive AI legislation will harmonize and advance AI integration in the Nigerian judicial system. Secondly, it will be necessary to improve upon the technological and infrastructural facilities of Nigeria's judicial system in order to embrace the AI technology. At the moment, the requisite AI operational infrastructure is lacking in Nigeria's judicial system. There is need for a reliable and constant power supply and high-speed internet connectivity, significant processing power, high performance processors, data management capabilities and a right environment for data storage as Olaniyan and Folorunso (2021), opined. This, invariably suggests little renovations and innovations to Nigeria's court buildings to accommodate the new technology as well as sustain it. As at date and in the view of Agbakoba (2024), in Nigeria, "the law struggles to keep up" due to the rapid speed AI technologies move. In this wise, Okocha and Edafewotu (2022), asserts that the lack of infrastructural facilities exposes judges and legal practitioners to the struggle of meeting up with the speed of AI technology. This is as a result of a glaring digital divide with unequal access to technology and internet facilities. This situation creates limitation to accessing online facilities necessary for AI to operate. If improved upon, Nigeria will be on the second lap of integrating AI to its judicial system.

Thirdly, Integrating the AI technology into the Nigerian judicial system calls for technical expertise. Such expertise is minimal or lacking in the judicial system depending on the jurisdiction. This is a colossal set-back to AI application. Agbakoba (2024) insists that there is a clear disconnect between rapid evolution of AI and the lack of requisite technical crew and framework to run it. If the lack of technical expertise in the judicial system is addressed, the third huddle of integrating AI in the judicial system is scaled through. It is heart-warming to note that AI has been introduced into the Law School Curriculum. This is commendable as Cohen et al (2020), sees it as a way to equip future legal professionals with requisite AI skills to strike a balance at the point of leveraging AI technologies and maintaining the essential skills and expertise of legal practitioners.

Fourthly, the issue of job displacement, societal and cultural acceptance has to be mindfully handled to avert total rejection of the AI technology in the judicial system. The reason is that AI has the capability to automate several manually performed tasks. This may lead to unemployment. It is estimated, according to Sil et al (2020) that about 23 to 39 percent of legal tasks are automatable and may lead employers in the judicial system to cut down on their human workforce. It would therefore be imperative to reassure employees of their job safety and for them to have the understanding

that the deployment of AI does not serve as a replacement but a veritable assisting tool to the workforce in the judicial system.

Also, it should be known that the integration of Artificial Intelligence into the judicial system may not be easily acceptable as a feasibility by those who may prefer natural human judgment to automated processes. It becomes important therefore, to integrate AI in such a convincing way that it assists human expertise rather than controlling it in order to respect the set cultural and social norms. This ploy is achievable with the proliferation and use of smart phones by the same people.

Fifthly, ethical considerations come into play at this point for a smooth integration of AI into the Nigerian judicial system. The AI algorithms come with existing legal biases that hamper judicial fairness in automated decision-making. It therefore needs a practically sound platform to achieve the best potentials in the judicial system according to Akindele and Adewuyi (2023). The systemic biases so mentioned above, would raise issues relating to intellectual property law in Nigeria, especially where non-human creators/ inventors/authors were not contemplated. This definitely will lead to contentions on AI generated legal works as Adaka and Olubiyi (2022), opined. This challenge is surmountable in Nigeria, according to Akindele and Adewuyi (2023), if stakeholders in the legal profession are able to chart a common regulatory platform for AI integration in the judicial system.

Also, there will be need to re-evaluate the level of the AI biases in accountability and judicial process transparency in order to evade systemic inequalities that will result to different outcomes endemic in a biased AI algorithms when it attempts to imitate a complex human behaviour. In situations like this, Fell, (2012), suggests that a re-evaluation is important because similar cases are bound to have different outcomes as a result of an inconsistency prediction algorithms. These biases must be eradicated, otherwise, legal practitioners will find it extremely difficult to decipher ambiguous AI decision in equitable handling of cases in the judicial process. This situation will amount to judicial unaccountability.

Another ethical concern to be handled is regulatory transparency. This can be properly handled by a comprehensive AI legislation. A legislation providing for who should be held liable for inconsistencies emanating from AI biases in judicial decision-making. This consideration arises from the fact that the developers of AI technologies are non-legal professionals and the opaque nature of AI technologies inhibits unknown biases that affect decision-making processes. It therefore would be impossible to hold developers and users responsible for any adverse results. Therefore, in integrating AI into the Nigerian Judicial System, stakeholders must conduct a regular monitoring and evaluation of the system for optimal performance to reduce any risks therefrom.

Conclusion

The discourse above delineates the feasibility of integrating AI technology into the judicial system of Nigeria based on the inherent benefits therefrom which outweighs its shortcomings. It is advisable, following the global trend in AI technological advancement and information management *vis-à-vis* the traditional or manual uses, that the judicial system of Nigeria and indeed the legal practitioners embraces it in full as it promises a lee-way out of the lingering inefficient set-backs crippling the entire Nigerian Judicial System.

It is feasible to integrate AI into the judicial system of Nigeria while still maintaining the integrity of the judicial processes. All infrastructural and legislative defects should be effectively upgraded as a matter of urgency while ethical issues relating to AI integration, addressed properly to align with approved oversights, devoid of inconsistencies, to achieve accuracy, efficiency and accessibility, speed and quality of legal services particularly in the Nigerian judicial system long characterized by conventional methods.

Recommendations

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence technology and its integration to the Nigeria judicial system would offer immense benefits in providing easy and affordable access to justice, quick and accurate legal research and predictive analytics in decision-making jncluding efficiency and accuracy. However, for the sustainability of these benefits, it is recommended that:

i. Policy makers should comprehensively evaluate the challenges inherent in AI technologies discussed in paragraph 4 above, in order to come up with an all-

inclusive policy that would guide the enactment of a specific and elaborate localized AI legislation and regulations for the nations' judicial system.

ii. The software and hardware developers should tailor the AI technologies to suit Nigeria's complex judicial system while ensuring that AI related biases are minimized. Also the developers should, in collaboration with stakeholders, train or recruit the requisite support manpower to understudy the complexities associated with AI technologies.

iii. A continuous and intensive training courses on the requisite skills in using the AI system should be made paramount for the judges and legal professionals and the support staff of the judiciary. The requisite software and hardware should be put in place and the end users trained on it for better results.

iv. Consideration should be given to providing independent power sources to ensure an uninterrupted power supply and high speed internet connectivity even to the remote areas in order that the AI technology would strive.

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THE STATE LEGISLATURE AND DEMOCRATIC DIVIDENDS FOR RURAL AREAS: A STUDY OF JIGAWA STATE, 2015-2023

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KEYWORDS
Democracy, State legislature, dividends of democracy, rural areas

ABSTRACT
This study appraised the role of the State Legislature in the delivery of dividends of democracy to rural areas in Jigawa State, Nigeria; the study sought to assess the extent to which the State Legislature has effectively translated the principles of democracy into tangible benefits for rural communities to have access to basic services, infrastructure development, and socio - economic well-being; Data was generated through both primary and secondary sources, the research utilized the qualitative and quantitative technique while explanatory and expository approach was used in the analysis of data. The findings revealed that Jigawa State legislature has made strides in the delivery of dividends of democracy to rural areas through efforts to promote economic empowerment in rural areas through initiatives such as agricultural support programs, small business development, and empowerment. The research contributes to the understanding of the dynamics of democracy and development and highlights the importance of effective legislative representation in ensuring that rural communities benefit from the dividends of democracy. The study recommends that for Jigawa State Legislature to succeed in delivering dividends of democracy to the people living in the rural areas, it must improve the allocation of resources towards rural development, strengthen legislative oversight functions by fostering community engagement, promote transparency and accountability in legislative processes in order to ensure meaningful development to the people living in the rural areas.

Introduction

Democratic practices gave opportunity for the enthronement of good governance and rule of law in Nigeria. Different methods were often taken by politicians at all levels of governance to deliver dividends of democracy to the public. The term dividend of democracy is a regular political term used by the Nigerian political elites. It has become so common among politicians such that it has lost its real meaning, proper usage, and application. It is seen today by the ordinary Nigerian to mean benefits for the political elite who used it quite often, while the ordinary Nigerian is yet to realize and benefit from it (Ikelegbe (2005). Dividend of democracy supposed to mean the gains or profits realized from democracy. Jamo (2013) stated that democracy is fast spreading due to its ability to provide good governance and development, this development often ends the struggle for supremacy over hegemonic emergent government. Nigeria is not an exception because the process of democratic change that occurred in the Nigerian state was largely the product of internal and external pressures exerted because it is believed that democracy should encourage and stimulate development.

The 1999 Constitution as amended implicitly gave a framework for rule of law, separation of powers, checks and balances among the organs of government but one of the areas spelt out in the Constitution is the delivery of dividends of democracy. Projects executed in the legislative constituencies by legislators are often associated with the delivery of dividends of democracy, but the implementation of these dividends is expected to be on the principles of accountability to the rural areas.

Majority of the Nigerian population reside in the rural areas, the development of rural areas thus, became imperative because the development of rural areas tend to impact positively on the nation's economy. The development of the rural areas is supposed to be the concern of every responsible and responsive government. Yusuf (2017) stated that rural development is the product of a progressive quantitative and qualitative transformation taking place among a given rural population, where the effect indicate improvement in the standard of living and positive changes in the way of life of the people concerned.

The need by legislators to provide visible evidence of dividends of democracy to the rural areas has resulted in the implementation of constituency projects in one form or the other in Nigeria. The operation or implementation of these projects has often led to some controversies, sometimes resulting in delays in the passage of budgets and appropriation bills into law.

The reason why people prefer democratic governance was in anticipation that it will bring about dividends of democracy, but the expectation of most Nigerians have failed because the expected development have not been experienced. Many people still doubt whether development is achievable or not under democratic dispensation. The doubts became evident because of insecurity, poverty, corruption, ethnic disturbances, Boko haram insurgences, kidnapping, abduction, and underdevelopment (Abga & Aide, 2020).

The concept of constituency projects in Nigeria, constitutionally, legally and practicability meant providing socio-economic transformation to every stratum of the Nigerian society. The constitutional privileges vested in legislature is very important in the provision of goods and services in the form of dividends of democracy to the populace (NDI, 2000).

In spite of the huge resources committed to rural development in Nigeria, rural development still remains a mere illusion because the authorities which are saddled with the responsibilities have not been able to perform up to expectation to bring about rapid and sustained development at the grassroots level. Successive governments have grossly underperformed in almost all the areas of development because the resources available which otherwise should be used for development programmes at the grassroots are being used to service the already overfed elected officials and unproductive bureaucracies (Obasanjo, 2003).

Instead of dividend of democracy what we see now is democratic failures and divide and rule policy of those in government because of negligence to deliver the dividend of democracy (Adebayo 2014). It is based on the foregoing observed problems that this paper consider it imperative to appraise the role of state legislature in delivery of dividends of democracy to the rural areas in Jigawa state Nigeria from 2015 – 2023 by finding out:

i. What is the role of the state legislature in the delivery of dividend of democracy to rural areas of Jigawa state between 2015 and 2023?

ii. How did the state legislatures deliver dividend of democracy to rural areas in Jigawa state?

iii. What factors influence the performance of the state legislature in the delivery of dividend of democracy to rural area in Jigawa state?

iv. Howcan thestate legislature improve the delivery of dividend of democracy to rural area in Jigawa state?

Literature Review

The term legislature has different names across nations of the world, itis referred to as Parliament in Britain, National Assembly in Nigeria, Congress in United States etc. (Abonyi, 2006) Lafenwa, (2009) noted that there is no serious contention about its definition, the legislature is seen as occupying a key position in the machinery of government (Heywood, 2007) with the singular purpose of articulating and expressing the collective will of the people (Okoosi-Simbine,2010). As an organ of government, it is the forum for the representation of the electorate, functional branch of government made up of elected representatives or a constitutionally constituted assembly of people whose responsibilities are to make laws, control the executive and safeguard the interest of the people and having the role of making, revising, amending and repealing laws for the advancement and wellbeing of the citizenry that it represents (Anyaegbunam 2000).

The legislature is an official body usually selected by election and given the power to make, change, and repeal laws and represent the constituent units and control government, a law-making, deliberative and policy making body working for the furtherance of democratic political system (Okoosi Simbine 2010). It is described as the First Estate of the Realm, the realm of representation and the site of sovereignty, the only expression of the will of the people, this suggest that the authority of the legislature is derived from the people and should be exercise according to the will of the people whom they represent. This is supported by Pereira, (2010) who assert that the authority of the legislature as a political institution whose members are representative of the community and decisions are collectively made according to complex procedures. Smith (2010) postulates legislature as the symbol of power and legitimacy because its decision is based on the collective wisdom of men and women who enjoy the confidence of the electorate.

Jigawa State House of Assembly (2012) identifies two features that distinguish the legislature from other branches of government. The first feature is that the legislature possesses formal authority to make laws, and secondly, members are normally elected to represent various elements in the population while Davies (2004) avers that representative liberal democracy cannot exist without a healthy, lively and credible legislature and that the establishment of the legislature rests on the assumption that political power still resides in the people and that the people can if they choose, delegate the exercise of their sovereignty to elected representatives. Ukudolo, Emmanuel and Wale Akinola (2011) and Okoosi-Simbine (2010) perceived the legislature as the people's representative and assemblies of elected representatives from geographically defined constituencies and the fact that the legislature is an assembly of people elected to represent the citizens suggest that they are ambassadors who serve their constituencies in various ways as intermediaries between the citizens and the government.

Renno & Lucio (2010) see the legislatures as differing in size, composition, operation, role, tenure of office and internal rules from one democracy to the other. Nwabuzor and Muller (1985) averred that such factors as the role of the presiding officer, the establishment of the order of business, legislation process, number and power of legislative committee, degree of intra-party discipline expected and manner of terminating debate on questions under consideration account for the differences among countries, the size of the legislature in some African countries are relatively small though the longer term tenure is however to ensure the stability of national interests which do not have to be bent to constantly changing public opinion.

Theoretical Framework

Situating a study within a theoretical framework thus bridges the range of facts that are to be investigated. The structural Functionalist theory is reviewed and adopted as the best theory to explain the topic under consideration in this discourse (Oluwaseun, Anofi& Dele 2012) .Erturk, et al (2011) held that the structural-functionalist approach provides a more comprehensive theoretical framework for the analysis of legislative performance in the delivery of dividends of democracy to electorates. The theory provided a consistent and integrated framework from which can be derived explanatory hypotheses relevant to all aspects of a political system Oarhe, Osumah (2010). The structural -functional model was associated with Carlos (2011) whose work was greatly influenced by structural-functional analysis where all political systems must perform certain requisite functions and by comparison, one must identify which structure performs the tasks (Peter 2005). Thus, the structural-functional theory describes societal reality largely in terms of structures, processes, mechanisms, and functions.

The theory postulates that social systems meet certain needs and suggests that there are functional imperatives that must be met for a group to survive Orimogunje, Olusesan Olugbenga (2015) defined function as the satisfaction of a need. He further asserts that the rules of conduct within a society often leads to a social structure consisting of defined roles that are coordinated by these rules and as these roles are enacted, they contribute to maintaining the social structure. This alignment of social relations is critical for the survival of the society; the society can therefore be viewed as a system of mutually interdependent parts. Sakyi, Kojo E. (2010) was of the view that a change in one segment of the culture of a society results in corresponding changes in other segments off that society.

Structural functionalism provides a framework for the analysis of the performance of the state legislature in the delivery of dividends of democracy in the society and in this study, the rural areas in Jigawa state. By this frame work, the government is conceived as a social system and the performance, and the legislature are political institutions viewed as structural parts or units of the political system or government. Each of these political institutions performs explicitly specified requisite functions that contribute to the stability, continuity, and survival of the political system (Ray, 2004).

The legislature maybe constitutionally or structurally delineated by their personnel's and functions; they however, necessarily collaborate through their shared functions as institutions of governance for the maintenance of the state. Since the legislature is influenced by internal and external environments, the structural-functional political systems must perform certain requisite functions (Peter 2005). These functions in this regard, include policy making policy implementation and rule adjudication which is carried out by the legislature. Thus, structural functionalism, as a framework for this study, provides an effective measure for assessing the different functions performed by the separate but interdependent organs of government in a democratic set up.

As emphasized by the structural-functional proponents, a study of the functions of these structural institutions is necessary for the understanding of the workings of the political system's structural-functional approach, therefore legislature-performance in the delivery of dividends of democracy to the rural areas described largely in terms of structure, personality, processes, mechanisms and functions which contribute to maintaining and stabilizing the social structure hence the role of the state legislature in delivery of dividends of democracy to the rural areas in Jigawa state were based these social relations, their mutual interactions and collaboration in the policy process which had been critical for the stability and survival of the society.

Dividends of Democracy

Dividends of democracy refer to the benefits and outcomes that citizens expect and receive from a democratic system of government. Dividends can simply be called the gains or profits realized from democracy. Many policies, programmes and plans have been termed dividends of democracy by politicians and people have include the introduction of new salary scale for civil servants, multi-party system, deregulation, introduction of social intervention programmes, and traderMoni as dividends of democracy. In the context of this paper, the dividends of democracy can include:

Political rights and freedoms: Citizen's right to participate in political processes, such as voting,

running for office, and expressing their opinions freely.

Rule of law and justice: Democracy upholds the principle of the rule of law regardless of social or economic status people are subjected to the same set of laws and regulations.

Protection of the fundamental human rights: Demanding and securing the rights of citizens is an essential aspect of democratic dividends which the state legislatures seek to provide to the rural areas.

Accountability and transparency: Dividends of democracy include transparency in decision-making, public access to information, and mechanisms to hold elected representatives and public officials accountable for their actions.

Economic development and prosperity: Dividends of democracy in economic terms include policies that promote entrepreneurship, fair competition, innovation, and economic opportunities for all citizens.

Social welfare and public services: Dividends of democracy include the provision of social services to improve the well-being and quality of life for all citizens.

Peace and stability: Democracy reduces the likelihood of political violence and promotes cooperation and dialogue among diverse groups.

Functions of the Legislature in a Democratic Society

Democracy is a system of government in which power is vested in the people, who have the right to participate in decision-making processes and elect their representatives. The importance of democracy cannot be overstated. It ensures that all citizens, regardless of their geographic location or socioeconomic background, have equal representation in making policies and decisions that affect their lives.

There are a wide range of the status, powers, and functions of the legislature among states. For example, the United States Congress assumes wide powers and exercises real power with respect to various decision-making processes. In some other political systems especially the former Soviet Union), the legislature exists as a mere rubber stamp for decisions made elsewhere, an assembly whose main role was to legitimize the policy of government. A similar observation is made on Africa's legislature by Nijzink, Mozaffar &Azevedo (2006) where such variables as colonial legacies, the appointment and dismissal powers of governing parties, executivecontrol of state resources and roles of the legislators has contributed to the institutional and policy-making weakness of the legislature by limiting their capacity to represent citizens, make laws and perform their oversight role. While the functions performed by the legislature may vary from country to country some fundamental similarities exist among parliament.

The legislative branch plays a crucial role in the delivery of dividends of democracy. Here are some key roles of the legislative branch in ensuring the dividends of democracy reached the people at the grassroots.

Legislation: Legislation functions are said to be the basic, primary and the most important role of the legislature (Abonyi, 2006). According to Cheibub, Jose Antonio and Limongi, Fernado (2010), laws made by the legislature must be in the interest of the general populace with the expectation of modifying people's behaviour and response towards a given situation. Heywood (2007) stated that the twentieth century witnesses a progressive weakening of legislation power and that this situation had reduced many legislative assemblies to mere talking shops that do little more than rubber-stamp decisions.

Oversight: According to NDI (2000) oversight is perhaps the most important function of any legislature. The importance stems from the continuous wielding of enormous powers by the leaders. Saliu and Muhammad (2010) define legislative oversight as a process by which the legislative body takes active role in understanding and monitoring the performance the executive arm and its agencies. The oversight function enables the legislature to monitor the policy implementation process to uncover any defects and act to correct misinterpretation or maladministration.

Representation: Roberts (2002) declared that the legislature plays dual representational roles. First, they represent their people to government and second, they represent government in their constituencies. Political representation according to Saliu and Muhammad (2010) is a central component of democratic governance, it is a key institution, machinery and process of a democratic

government because the fulcrum of legislative activity is expected to be the articulation and aggregation of diverse interests of the represented constituencies in the policy process and enhances the legitimacy of public policy, reduces alienation, estrangement between the government and the governed and it enhances the stability of the system (Edosa & Azelama, 1995).

Financial Function: The legislature has the responsibility of authorizing the expenditure of the government, Sanyal (2009) states that all government expenditure except a few items specified in the Constitution need to be approved by the legislature as part of the annual budgetary process and any otherexpenditure may also be allowed through supplementary demands

Committee function: Fashagba (2010) describe committees as task-oriented bodieswith clearly defined purpose and direction. Heywood (2007) sees committee functions as the nucleus of the legislative process and the power houses of the legislature because they examine legislative measures in detail;for example, bills and financial demands of the government and other important issues related to ministries and oversee the financial functioning of the government based on audits done by the Controller and Auditor-General (Edigheji, 2006).

State Legislature and the Delivery of Democratic Dividends in Jigawa State 2015-2023

The Jigawa State Legislature delivers dividends of democracy to the public through various mechanisms and initiatives; some of the ways in which they contribute to the welfare and development of the state include:

Legislation: The state legislature is responsible for enacting laws that address the needs and concerns of the public. They create legislation that promotes good governance, protects citizens' rights, and enhances socio-economic development. These laws serve as a framework for delivering dividends of democracy.

Budgetary allocation: The state legislature plays a crucial role in the budgeting process; they analyze and review the annual budget proposed by the executive branch, ensuring that funds are allocated to the various sectors and programs that directly benefit the public, this includes prioritizing investments in infrastructural development, education, healthcare, agriculture, and other areas that impact citizens' lives (Omodia, 2010)

Oversight function: The Jigawa state legislature exercises oversight over the executive branch to ensure transparency and accountability in the implementation of government programs and policies through committee hearings, legislative inquiries, and investigations, they monitor the performance of government agencies and hold officials accountable for their actions. The oversight function helps in delivering effective governance and preventing waste or misuse of public resources.

Representation and constituency projects: Members of the Jigawa state legislature represent the interests and concerns of their constituents; they always consult with the public through regular interactions, town hall meetings, and constituency visits, through these engagements the Legislators identify the needs

of their constituents and initiate projects that address those needs. These constituency projects can include the construction of schools, hospitals, roads, markets, construction of places of worship, provision of water supply systems, provision of agricultural inputs and other development initiatives.

Public outreach and advocacy: The legislature organizes public enlightenment programs to educate citizens on their rights, responsibilities, and the workings of government; this helps to enhance civic education and awareness, empowering the public to actively participate in the democratic process through workshops, seminars, and public campaigns, the legislature promotes citizen engagement and participation in governance.

Decentralization of power: The Jigawa State Legislature ensures that there is decentralization of power from the state capital to various local government areas; this allows for more inclusive representation, decision-making, and development at the grassroots level. By fostering participation and involvement of local communities, the legislature enables citizens to have a voice in the governance process and ensures the delivery of dividends of democracy to all segments of the society.

Overall, the Jigawa State Legislature contributes to the delivery of dividends of democracy by enacting laws, overseeing the government, representing constituents, and promoting citizens' participation and engagement. Through these efforts, the state legislature always works to improve the quality of life, economic development, and welfare of the people of Jigawa State both in the urban and rural areas.

Challenges of State Legislators in the Delivery of Democratic Dividends to Rural Areas of Jigawa State.

The state legislatures in Jigawa State tend to encounter various challenges when it comes to delivering dividends of democracy to rural areas. Some of these challenges include:

Infrastructure: Rural areas often lack proper infrastructure, including roads, electricity, and communication networks; these poses a serious challenge in delivering essential services and development projects to these areas. The state legislature often face difficulties in providing basic amenities such as schools, healthcare facilities and clean water as the lack of infrastructure hampers accessibility and implementation.

Limited resources: Rural areas generally have limited resources and economic opportunities; this makes it challenging for the state legislature to allocate funds and invest in rural development projects, the limited financial tend to restrict the full implementation of initiatives that can deliver dividends of democracy to the rural areas

especially agricultural programs, rural electrification, or small-scale industries.

Low education and awareness levels: The rural areas in Jigawa state has lower educational attainment levels and limited awareness of citizens' rights, responsibilities, and the functioning of government; this often hinder effective citizen engagement, participation, and demand for dividends of democracy, the state legislature usually makes great effort to create awareness to educate the rural residents about their rights, how to access public services and how to be acquainted with the legislative processes in the state about their welfare.

Inadequate representation and outreach: Rural areas may not have adequate representation in the state legislature, leading to limited advocacy for their specific needs and concerns. Lack of accessibility and connectivity can also make it difficult for legislators to reach rural constituents and hold meaningful interactions. This can result in a limited understanding of the issues faced by rural communities and hinder the delivery of dividends of democracy tailored to their needs.

Traditional and cultural practices: One of the challenges often encountered by the Jigawa state legislature in the delivery of dividends of democracy is that some traditional and cultural practices prevalent in rural areas often influences decision-making and hinder the implementation of democratic processes, programmes and projects. Constraints such as gender inequalities, hierarchical structures, and traditional leadership impacts on the ability of the state legislature to effectively deliver dividends of democracy; overcoming such hurdles often requires dialogue, community sensitization, and engagement to bridge the gap between cultural practices and democratic values.

Limited access to information: Rural areas frequently have limited access to media, internet, and information sources; the lack of access to information has the propensity to inhibit the dissemination of information about government policies, programs, and projects to rural communities, the state legislature usually encounters challenges in effectively communicating with rural residents resulting in reduced or even complete lack of awareness on participation in democratic processes.

Addressing these challenges requires the state legislature to actively strategize and tailor their initiatives to the specific needs in the context of rural areas in Jigawa state which can include investing in rural infrastructure, enhancing educational and awareness campaigns, promoting inclusive representation, and facilitating access to information and communication technologies. Collaboration

between the executive and the legislature, local communities and other stakeholders is vital to overcome these challenges and ensure the delivery of dividends of democracy to rural areas in Jigawa state.

Conclusion

The focus of this study is the appraisal of the performance of the state legislature in the delivery of dividends of democracy to the rural areas in Jigawa state from 2015 - 2023. The study appraised the extent to which the state legislature in Jigawa States were able to perform their constitutional functions especially in the formulation of policies and programmes geared towards the delivery of the dividends of democracy to the people at the grassroots level. The empirical study showed a gap in knowledge on the intrigues and dynamics of legislative performance in relation to how those dividends of democracy affect the lives of the rural dwellers emanating from the political and socio-cultural environments in which the state legislators operate.

The paper concludes that the success of the democratic system, depends on healthy legislative performance predicated upon democratic ethos. While institutional designs and legal frameworks for democracy make legislative performance inevitable when the state legislature assert its functions and position within the constitutional framework of government. Findings from the study further reveal that delivery of dividends of democracy is determined by the extent to which the legislature independently performs its role of citizens representation through legislation and oversight functions so there is the need for capacity for the legislature to effectively influence policy implementation in relation to the delivery of dividends of democracy to the rural areas in Jigawa state. The paper recommends the following.

i. The Jigawa State Legislature must enact laws that will promote citizens' participation and engagement in the political process.

ii. There must be collaboration between the executive and the legislature, local communities and other stakeholders to ensure the delivery of dividends of democracy to rural areas in Jigawa state.

iii. The House Committees with direct responsibility for oversight functions and accountability should be strengthened in term of capacity building in order to enable the state legislature deliver dividends of democracy to the rural communities in the state effectively and efficiently.

iv. Town Hall Meetings which will serve as an avenue for public participation in law making process by way of public hearing should be encouraged.

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NEO-LIBERAL CLASS WAR AND HOBBESIAN STATE OF NATURE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
Evidently, divergent literary exploration has attributed the Hobbesian state of Nature in Nigeria to various reasons like tribalism, mixed cultural heritage, corruption, among others. This study microscopes Neo liberalism as the major political and social melee affecting the country. The research investigates how neo-liberalism in the feature of global capitalism and imperialism forms an extreme division between top elite 1% and bottom struggling 99% which results in huge inequality while promoting corruption and weakening institutions. The research bases itself on neo-liberal theory to disclose how elite groups achieve resource control and economic instability while destroying national sovereignty and ethics. A qualitative study of secondary reports and economic indices and journal entries confirms that Nigeria experienced 32.5% inflation in 2024 alongside a 76–77% corruption index between 2022 and 2025 and 735 mass abductions and 24,720 recorded rapes from 2023 to date. The privatization process benefits wealthy individuals while electricity reaches only 30% of people and homelessness affects more than 4.5 to 5 million people in the country. The research finds that Nigeria became a Hobbesian state because neo-liberal policies increased class conflicts while demanding judicial changes alongside fair resource distribution and economic expansion to stop the development of permanent chaos. The research calls for rebuilding Nigeria's approach to fairness and stability by confronting the world's current economic model of liberalism.

Introduction

Nigeria with its significant oil resources and massive 200 million population reaches a critical juncture because it faces a neo-liberal class conflict which brings forth a Hobbesian state of nature in the present day. All of these neo-liberal policies involving deregulation and privatization and global trade enable a small elite group referred to as the 1% to seize control of resources while controlling elections and creating massive economic inequality that keeps 99% people in perpetual poverty and insecurity (Volle, 2011). Under neo-liberal policies Nigeria has lost its national sovereignty and developed severe social divisions and an environment matching Hobbes's depiction of "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" as life has become oppressive (Hobbes 1651 p.10). The combination of neo-liberalism which interacts with imperialist forces and globalization and neo-colonialism systems makes elite groups able to take advantage of broken institutions to steal national assets and ultimately deteriorate democratic systems. Nigeria demonstrates a condition of societal breakdown because 70% of its people live in poverty alongside 4.5–5.0 million displaced population groups and widespread security threats that led to 735 group kidnappings throughout 2023 (Oxfam, 2017; OCHA, 2024).

This research interacts with opposing academic and literary discussions that show various factors that explain Nigeria's transition to a Hobbesian state. Nigerian academics analyze their nation's problems through local analysis which identifies Historical Elements and Structured Deterioration behind the country's challenges. Researchers like Ake (1978); Badmus (2009); Mlambo et al. (2024) focus on colonial heritage by noting that British indirect rule combined with different protectorate-nations led to ethnic divisions that worsened during Nigeria's intermittent military coups and political turbulence spanning from 1960 to 1999. The hundreds of indigenous groups and tribes in Nigeria contribute to deteriorated state institutions and politicians competing for control while causing governance breakdowns (Achebe, 1983; Tam-George, 2023; Agbede & Oparinde, 2024). The oil wealth and natural resources of Nigeria alongside its extensive land and water supply create an unending competition which leads to destabilizing conflicts such as the farmer-herder clashes, the activities of oil bunkers and the disputes surrounding privatization according to natural resource theorists (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006; Abugu et al., 2020). The opposing viewpoints about Nigeria's crisis between neo-liberal optimists, tribal skirmish scholars alongside research within Nigerian social contexts prove its multifaceted nature thus requiring deep investigation of the role of neo-liberalism.

According to neo-liberal scholars Hayek (1929), Friedman (1951) and Vallier (2021) state actors serve to defend public interests by using deregulation and privatization competitions and innovation as mechanisms. These market freedoms in Nigeria allow government officials and politically favored elites to gain wealth by rejecting the goal of equitable growth for workers, entrepreneurs and peasants which runs contrary to neo-liberal principles (Edeji, 2024; Smith, 2025). According to Marxist scholars, Nigeria faces a bourgeoisie-controlled class war in which neo-liberalism functions as an imperialist apparatus extracting southern global wealth to enrich world elites (Marx & Engels, 1848; Harvey, 2005; Pradella, 2021). The authors demonstrate that market integration maintains "accumulation by dispossession" which mirrors Marx's concept of "primitive accumulation" because elites plunder local resources for capital gain (Harvey, 2006).

Therefore, the primary research goal is to investigate how neo-liberal policies create in Nigeria a Hobbesian state of nature through severe income disparities and extensive corruption and overall security risks. This research aims to evaluate three factors that create a Hobbesian state of nature in Nigeria. First, it examines income inequality and self-interest corruption as factors that maintain elite control and social unrest while investigating the impact of privatized natural resources and the absence of strong legal systems to identify factors that cause lawlessness. Third, the study assesses how homelessness and sustained fear from conflicts and economic isolation and environmental disasters reveal breakdowns of governance. The research questions the suitability of the global neo-liberal model for countries which lack strong institutional frameworks because it shows that Nigeria requires immediate systemic transformations to recover public trust and economic fairness and national security throughout the country. This analysis detects Nigeria's current problems while offering a path for restoring its position as an

African entity known for strength and advancement.

The research approach relies on an analytical design with qualitative documentary analysis for synthesizing secondary data sourced from economic indices such as National Bureau of Statistics and World Bank reports together with scholarly journals, government publications, and media outlets. Through this research method Nigeria's socio-economic decline can be thoroughly analyzed with historical sketches and event tables combined with meta-analysis for understanding patterns of neo-liberal exploitation and social effects (University of Southern California Libraries, 2016). The analytical method uniting diverse studies expands sample measurements which allows synoptic reasoning to formulate new predictions about Nigeria's future direction.

Theoretical Perspective

This research uses neo-liberal theory to understand Nigeria's economic and social challenges because the country faces these issues due to the fact that market-driven approaches pursue individual benefits without considering societal needs. According to Hayek (1929) and Friedman (1951) and Slobodian (2018) neo-liberalism upholds free market capitalism together with deregulation and worldwide trade as the foundation of economic success. These principles act as a mechanism which allows elite groups to take control and worsen inequality in Nigeria matching what Hobbes envisioned as the violent chaos in a war-torn state of nature.

Neo-liberalism receives criticism because it intensifies inequality and weakens national sovereignty in developing states following colonial rule through its patterns of capital movement and privatization activities which mainly benefit elite classes at the expense of lower-income citizens (Harvey, 2005; Brown, 2019). The neo-liberal economic reforms in Nigeria generated a tiny political class to control the key sectors of oil and power which resulted in high rates of poverty throughout the population and social disturbances across the nation.

Five Key Assumptions of Neo-Liberal Theory:

i. Neo-Liberal Theory produce efficient resource allocation that results in innovative growth because of market competition.

ii. Strategic freedom forms a core belief of Neo-Liberalism since economic liberty enables people to follow their personal goals toward creating prosperity.

iii. According to Neo-Liberalism international trade and investment create economic interdependence for development purposes.

iv. The principle-ownership rights of Neo-Liberalism promotes investment through private property security as well as resource handling improvement.

v. In Neoliberalism rational behavior from people and businesses results in useful maximization which leads to equitable outcomes.

The global perspective of neo-liberalism described by Slobodian's 'Globalists' (2018) allows capital free movement at the expense of national sovereignty which highlights Nigeria's continued dependence on foreign loans and multinational corporations (Vallier, 2021). The theoretical framework offers an effective way to study Nigeria's economic crisis because it shows how development-based neo-liberal principles actually fuel social gaps and damage government structures. Elites apply deregulation and privatization principles from global economic policies to seize control of oil and power sectors thus creating mass poverty across Nigeria. The concept of free markets produces a disorderly society that enables institutional weakness to uphold elite rule. The study demonstrates through this analytical approach that Nigeria's neo-liberal policies create a class-based struggle between elites and workers which weakens both economic growth and social cohesion in the nation therefore the study further suggest reforms to merge governance strength with economic markets.

Examining the Key Variables of Neo-Liberal Class War and Hobbesian State of Nature in Nigeria

Income Inequality and Self-Interest Corruption in Nigeria

The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) launched in 2001 along with the N-POWER youth empowerment scheme initiated in 2016 experienced failure because governing elites stole public welfare funds through systemic corruption (Gbosi, 2012 & Oxfam International, 2017). The corruption resulting from individualistic pursuits under neo-liberal principles produces two detrimental effects such as expansive economic inequality while simultaneously destroying institutional confidence and leading Nigeria toward lawlessness where the common population fights to survive as the elite obtain massive wealth. This widespread phenomenon of corruption resulting from neo-liberal deregulation allows elite groups to abuse public property without consequences. These dynamics underscore the study's argument that neo-liberalism through fostering unchecked capitalism drives Nigeria toward a Hobbesian state of nature where survival hinges on competition and conflict, rather than cooperation and justice.

The economic statistics in Table 1 below depict Nigeria's unstable financial state which results from the destructive nature of the neo-liberal class war. Unemployment declined from 3.07% in 2023 to reach 3.70% in the following year yet inflation climbed from 16.95% in 2022 to hit 32.5% in 2024 before falling to 23.18% by February 2025. The Naira lost its value significantly across 2022 and 2024 when it dropped from 415–448 NGN per USD to 1,668 NGN per USD. This extreme decrease led to growing nominal income but poor households faced decreasing real purchasing power (Musa et al., 2024). The corruption index reached its highest point at 77.37% in 2023 to indicate deep-rooted elite bribery that Adisa (2023) names as the main obstacle to achieving sustainable development and electoral reform. A 5.5 percent predicted GDP growth rate for 2025 presents no relief from persistent high inflation and exchange rate instability along with systemic corruption which demonstrates a neo-liberal economic system that benefits elites through incentivizing scarcity and self-interest at the cost of overall mass poverty as Hobbes envisaged.

Table 1

Economic Index of Nigeria 2022 -2025

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025
Unemployment Rate	3.83%	3.07%	3.70%	3.62% (In March 2025)
Inflation Rate	16.95 %	24.66%	32.5%	23.18 (In February, 2025)
Cost of Living: (USA = 100%)	41.84 %	42.23%	33.69%	– (No data yet)
Commercial Taxes and Contributions:	34.80 %	33.31%	30.97%	– (No data yet)
Average income Per Anum in US$:	2,100 US$	2,558 US$	2,406 US$	2,406US$
Dollar Rate	1Dollar = 415 - **448** NGN	1 Dollar = 448 - **859** NGN	1 Dollar = 859 – **1,668** NGN	1 Dollar = 1668 – **1,533** NGN (In March 2025)

(Average income Per Anum in US$) × (Dollar Rate in Naira) = Average income Per Annum in Naira	940,800 NGN	2,197,322 NGN	4,061,328 NGN	3,688,398 NGN
Corruption index:	76.00%	77.37%	76.91%	– (No data yet)
GDP (growth rate %)	3.25%	2.74%	3.40%	5.5%

Note. compiled by the author from documents of National Bureau of Statistics, World Data Info 2022 and World Bank report 2024 among other documents @ https://www.worlddata.info/country-comparison.php?country1=NGA&country2=ZAF

The data in Table 2 demonstrates how substantial corruption among elites results from neo-liberal policy implementation which damages regulatory systems. The reported $2–5 billion loot obtained by Abacha alongside $400 billion in losses since 1960 show an ongoing national wealth theft which mostly affects the oil sector through petroleum export dependence (Intersociety, 2018). The paper establishes connections to Hobbesian natural states through its analysis of enabling elite dominance which costs the common people and endangers public security. Painted through oil revenue theft the system demonstrates how market liberalization makes rent-making possible which jeopardizes social welfare and intensifies social class conflicts.

Table 2

Money Amassed or Siphoned by the Ruling Class in Nigeria (Historical and Reported Estimates)

Period/Person	Estimated Amount	Details
Sani Abacha (1993–1998)	$2–5 billion USD	Funds looted via fraudulent security votes and cash withdrawals from the Central Bank of Nigeria. Over $1.4 billion recovered from Swiss and other accounts.
James Ibori (1999 –2007)	Tens of millions USD	Former Delta State governor convicted of laundering money in the UK; £50 million+ traced.
Post-Independence Total (1960–2012)	$400 billion USD	Cumulative estimate of corruption losses since independence, per 2012 reports.
Intersociety Estimate (2003–2018)	$302 billion USD (₦66.7 trillion)	Alleged squandering by politicians across parties, based on rights group calculations.

Oil Sector Corruption (Ongoing)	Billions USD annually	Politicians and elites siphon oil revenues (90% of export earnings) via NNPC and contracts.

Note. U.S. Department of Justice, Swiss reports, UK court records – 2012 conviction, Transparency International, EFCC, Intersociety, 2018 report, Wikipedia – industry analysis.

Conclusively, the Corruption Index demonstrates how corruption in the country remains at an intolerably high level between 2022 and 2024 as it stays within the tight range of 76.00% to 77.37% (Pring, 2025). The corruption index illustrates how the practice of grand theft started during Abacha's time remains through poor management of oil revenue resources. Worldwide inflation and currency value decreases worsen income inequality which traps 70% of Nigerians in poverty though wage hikes appear higher than reality (George-Anokwuru & Inimino, 2024). Under the influence of neo-liberal deregulation Nigeria developed into an elitist society where selfish interests dominate which broke democratic institutions while provoking EndSARS protests (Amnesty International, 2021). Nigeria faces prolonged inequality and lawlessness because it lacks essential reform measures for anti-corruption as well as equitable resources distribution which according to Hobbes leads to survival through conflict rather than cooperative strategies.

Privatization of Natural Resources and Absence of Law and Justice in Nigeria

Private entities in a neo-liberal system prefer profit over public welfare and this has created vast energy poverty alongside a Hobbesian struggle to survive for millions of people. According to research, inadequate legal oversight creates an opportunity for profit-seeking firms to deliver subpar performance thereby pushing Nigeria toward greater lawlessness. Multiple reforms have produced divergent results in Nigeria because weak governance systems and inefficient judiciary have permitted elite groups to confiscate resources at the cost-of-service delivery to the general population and worsening social inequalities. For instance, under the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) of 1986 Nigeria established its serious privatization efforts through this neo-liberal reform package which IMF required as a condition for financial support (Olukoshi, 1990). The Privatization and Commercialization Decree of 1988 together with the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) Act of 1993 established formal procedures to target specific sectors involving oil and gas as well as electricity and agriculture (Adeyemo & Salami, 2008). The Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) underwent privatization in 2013 to break it into 18 separate successor companies that included six generation companies and eleven distribution companies together with one transmission company (Okeke & Eze, 2019). The 2021 Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) established the commercialization of Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and it endorsed the involvement of private entities throughout oil and gas activities spanning from exploration to distribution (ICLG, 2025).

The privatization of Nigeria's power sector creates a paradoxical situation revealed through Table 3 below because financial gains from privatization do not lead to actual benefits for citizens as discussed in neo-liberal theories. The government earned 298 billion Naira from privatization transactions in 2024 despite the initial 91 billion Naira collected in 2022 following the 2013 PHCN unbundling (Nigeria - United States Department of State, 2024). Annual power generation maintained approximately 4,000 megawatts (MW) continuity without reaching the energy demands for a population exceeding 195 million (Energypedia, 2022). The percentage of Nigerians without access to reliable electricity decreased minimally from 77 million in 2022 to an estimated 70 million in 2024 despite ongoing issues with inefficiency and regulatory problems and corruption (Adepoju et al., 2024). The stagnation reveals how

Table 3

Privatization of Power Sector 2022-2024

Year	Privatization Proceeds (NGN)	Power Generation (MW)	Population Without Access (Millions)
2022	91 billion	~4,000	77
2023	206 billion	~4,000	~75
2024	298 billion	~4,000	~70 (est.)

Note. Nigeria - United States Department of State (2024); Energypedia (2022)

Table 4 below shows that the majority of Nigeria's petroleum wealth goes to elite members because of neo-liberal privatization policies which support private ownership at the expense of equal distribution. Production of Nigerian oil during November 2024 amounted to 1.69 million barrels per day with three elite figures namely Mike Adenuga (Conoil) Theophilus Danjuma (SAPETRO) and Folorunsho Alakija (Famfa Oil) controlling major production operations (ICLG, 2025). Since 1960 the licensing processes for oil assets have been criticized for favoritism because elites acquired assets through opaque licensing while releasing $400 billion of corruption funds (Intersociety, 2018). The spread of wealth caused by neo-liberal deregulation creates a situation which imitates Hobbes's state of nature since powerful actors freely misuse resources thus damaging local communities in the Niger Delta and destroying their environment. Nigerians with political connections along with wealthy individuals control the majority of oil wells through Oil Mining Leases and Oil Prospecting Licenses with their ownership amounting to 52% while foreign firms possess 46% (Nigerian Informer, 2025). Therefore, the report demonstrates how elite capture breaks Nigeria's social agreement because it produces an unruleful climate for which inequality thrives.

Table 4

Oil Wells/Oil Blocks Owned by the Rich in Nigeria

Name	Company	Oil Well/Block	Details
Mike Adenuga	Conoil Producing Ltd	OML 103, 136, others	Operates 6 oil blocks; first indigenous company to strike oil in 1991; exports ~200,000 bpd.
Theophilus Danjuma	South Atlantic Petroleum (SAPETRO)	OML 246	Exports up to 300,000 bpd; sold part of assets for $1.8 billion to a Chinese firm in 2006.
Benedict Peters	Aiteo Group	OML 29	Largest indigenous oil producer; acquired from Shell in 2015; significant Niger Delta asset.
Mohammed Indimi	Oriental Energy Resources	OML 115, Ebok, Okwok	Offshore Niger Delta projects; family-run with children on the board.
Folorunsho Alakija	Famfa Oil Ltd	OPL 216 (Agbami Field)	Partner in one of Nigeria's largest deepwater fields; produces ~250,000 bpd at peak.
Arthur Eze	Atlas Petroleum International	OPL 109	Long-standing oil block owner; influential in eastern Nigeria.
Tein Jack-Rich	Belemaoil Producing Ltd	OML 55	Acquired from Chevron in 2013; first indigenous firm from an oil-producing community.

Aminu Dantata	Express Petroleum & Gas	OPL 108, OPL 227	Veteran businessman with stakes in multiple blocks; tied to northern elite networks.
Tijani Folawiyo	Yinka Folawiyo Group	OML 113	Inherited and expanded family oil interests in the Niger Delta.
Emeka Offor	Addax Petroleum (via Starcrest)	OPL 291	Sold initial stakes to Addax; remains influential in oil exploration.

Note. Compiled by the researcher from Nigerian Finder (2023); Billionaires.Africa (2023); Petroleum Industry in Nigeria (2025); ICLG Oil & Gas Laws (2025) and Intersociety, 2018.

These privatization failures become worse because of the weak legal framework which enables both corruption as well as environmental and social conflicts. Section 6(6)(c) of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution declares environmental and socioeconomic rights outside judicial jurisdiction so communities are defenseless against their exploitation by elites (Olujobi & Odogbo, 2024). The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) struggle to perform effectively because political forces and limited resources obstruct their operations (Adisa, 2023). The empty space in laws permits individuals in marginalized communities to carry out destructive activities like oil bunkering and pipeline vandalism because they seek survival within an economic framework which fails to include them (Narh, 2023).

The statistics in Table 5 below demonstrate that economic needs and ineffective law enforcement jointly drive oil bunkering and pipeline vandalism which results in billions of annual losses to Nigeria while destroying Niger Delta's natural environment. According to Reuters (2025) information shows that oil incidents reached their highest point during 2019–2025 while losing $5–10 billion in value during 2024 (Reuters, 2025). During 2022–2024 the military forces increased their operations resulting in the recovery of more than 280,000 liters of stolen crude oil but the continuous resource theft exposed the failures of resource security through neo-liberal privatization (World Pipelines, 2024). Rivers State faced a state of emergency in 2025 due to continuous vandalism activities even after implementing new regulatory provisions in the PIA (Reuters, March 18, 2025). This research demonstrates that resource exploitation continues without legal control because elites as well as marginalized groups gain access to resources in a Hobbesian state ecosystem which leads to persistent violence.

Table 5

Oil Bunkering and Pipeline Vandalization in Nigeria (2019–2025)

Incidents Reported	Oil Lost (Barrels/Day)	Economic Loss (USD)
~3,800 pipeline breaks (est.)	100,000–200,000	~$2–4 billion/year
~3,500 (est.)	100,000–250,000	~$1.5–3 billion/year
4,000+ breaks (est.)	200,000–300,000	~$3 billion/year
3,732 breaks (NNPC)	200,000–470,000	$700 million/month
7,143 cases (5-yr total)	200,000–400,000	$3.3 billion/year
5,913 illegal connections removed	200,000–300,000	$5–10 billion (est.)
~1,500 (Jan–Mar est.)	150,000–250,000 (est.)	$1–2 billion (Q1 est.)

Note. From news reports (Reuters, BBC, World Pipelines) and contextual studies, reflecting enforcement efforts, major incidents, and policy responses. Source: Compiled from Reuters (2025); BBC (2023); World Pipelines (2024).

Conclusively, the implementation of natural resource privatization policies in Nigeria has failed to achieve efficiency initiatives while creating more social disparities through environmental destruction and legal chaos because of inadequate legal oversight. Weak governance creates opportunities for elite capture because all oil wealth concentrates in the Niger Delta and the power sector fails to provide basic electricity to the 70 million Nigerian people even though privatization procedures generated substantial funds (Nigeria - United States Department of State, 2024). The $400 billion dollar loss since 1960 alongside non-justiciable rights in the judicial system allow Nigerian elites to exploit resources without facing consequences (Intersociety, 2018; Olujobi & Odogbo, 2024). The nation faces additional devastation because communities who face marginalization through neo-liberal prosperity resort to oil bunkering along with vandalism as reported by Reuters (2025).

Increased Homelessness and Perpetual Fear in Nigeria

The World Population Review (2025) reports that Nigeria has 4.5–5.0 million individuals experiencing homelessness together with many thousands who live in unsafe informal housing areas and those forced out by violent conflicts and environmental disasters. The country confronts two major crises: widespread insecurity showcased through 735 mass abductions and 24,720 reported rapes between January and October 2023. These events contribute to societal instability (Human Rights Watch, 2024; Amnesty International, 2023). 1651). Homeless individuals who do not have access to safe housing are prone to violent attacks and environmental threats and predatory behavior which intensifies their security risk (Famous, 2024). Fear of eviction and climate disasters together with banditry activities push people to migrate into urban slums which leads to worsened homelessness problems along with extreme crowding. Homeless people in Lagos City face increased fear due to police mistreatment and eviction orders since most people in the city live under the poverty threshold (Development Aid, 2025; Farha, 2019). The Nigeria Humanitarian Needs Overview (2024) reports that IDPs consisting of 23% women experience increased dangers of sexual violence which deepen their state of constant worry (OCHA, 2024). This study demonstrates how neo-liberalism fails because it does not solve structural inequities which creates a Hobbesian community where people experience daily fear and forced displacement.

The homeless population has increased from 4.0 million in 2019 to projected estimates of 4.5–5.0 million by early 2025 accompanied by an IDP population growth from 2.0 million to over 3.6 million according to Table 6 below. Homelessness and displacement intensify from Boko Haram's 2019 insurgency through the combination of 2022 floods and kidnappings and climate-based evictions in 2024 to 2025 due to public welfare-unfriendly neo-liberal policies. The early 2025 statistics show that displacement continues because of events like the Trans Niger Pipeline blast which led to ongoing displacement (OCHA, 2024). The research shows how Hobbesian conditions emerge when neo-liberal policies fail to resolve structural weaknesses thus creating homelessness and insecurity among millions of people who face continuous fear within an unstable social environment.

Table 6

Homelessness and Displacement Statistics (2019–2025)

Year	Estimated Homeless Population (Millions)	IDPs (Millions)	Major Fears
2019	~4.0	2.0	Boko Haram, Inflation, Unemployment
2022	4.5	3.2	Flooding, political crises, Kidnapping in the South East
2024	4.5–5.0 (est.)	3.6	Climate change, evictions Unemployment
2025 (Q1)	~4.5–5.0 (est.)	3.6+	Ongoing crises, Kidnapping in the South East

Note. World Population Review (2025); IOM DTM Round 47 (2024); OCHA (2024)

The kidnapping situation in Nigeria has worsened according to Table 7 below which shows that 1,500 kidnappings took place in 2021 alongside a total of 735 mass kidnappings recorded by 2023 and this increase is caused by banditry and attacks on schools. Ransom payments demonstrate economic challenges as they decrease to $387179 during 2023 according to Al Jazeera (2024). The research connects both factors to neo-liberalism through institutional decline because weak public institutions neglect security measures which leads to diminish citizens' protection and creates fear of violence.

Table 7

Kidnappings and Related Fear Indicators in Nigeria (2019–2023)

Year	Kidnapping Incidents	Victims Abducted	Ransom Paid (USD)	Key Fear Driver
2019	~1,000 (est.)	~5,000 (est.)	$18.5M (2011–2020 avg.)	Banditry in Northwest, Boko Haram abductions
2020	1,071 (Q1 alone)	~6,000 (est.)	$18.5M (2011–2020 avg.)	School abductions rise (e.g., Niger State)
2021	~1,500 (est.)	3,620 (Jul 2022–Jun 2023)	$1.12M (2022 total)	Mass school kidnappings (e.g., Bethel Baptist)
2022	582 (Jul 2022–Jun 2023)	3,620 (Jul 2022–Jun 2023)	$1.12M (full year)	279 schoolgirls freed, unrest peaks
2023	735 (total since 2019)	2,452 (est. full year)	$387,179 (full year)	287 schoolchildren kidnapped in Kaduna

Note. Data generated by the researcher through Human Rights Watch (2020, 2024); World Report 2020: Nigeria; Reuters (2021); Wikipedia (2025); Al Jazeera (2024).

Statistics in Table 8 below demonstrate increasing violence patterns that show a significant increase in rape cases from 2,000 in 2019 to 24,720 by October 2023 while also presenting a maximum of 3,732 pipeline breaks during 2022. The total number of deaths resulting from violent causes reached 22,873 during 2022 due to insurgent and communal

conflicts (Amnesty International, 2023). The analysis establishes a link between neo-liberalism's weak police enforcement structure which has led the state to become Hobbesian resulting in violence and fear that destroys social solidarity.

Table 8

Rape, Unrest, and Violence-Related Fear Indicators in Nigeria (2019–2023)

Year	Reported Rape Cases	Unrest Incidents	Violence-Related Deaths	Key Fear Driver
2019	~2,000 (est.)	~2,500 (est.)	10,000 (est.)	Boko Haram suicide bombings, herder clashes
2020	~3,000 (est.)	~3,000 (est.)	6,000 (first half)	EndSARS riots, banditry surge
2021	11,200 (full year)	~3,500 (est.)	169,033 (2006–2021 total)	ISWAP train attack, school abductions
2022	~12,000 (est.)	3,732 (pipeline breaks)	22,873 (peak year)	Imo explosion (100+ deaths), unrest
2023	24,720 (Jan–Oct)	~4,000 (est.)	109 (election-related)	Christmas Day assault (140 deaths)

Note. Compiled from Amnesty International (2021, 2023); Council on Foreign Relations (2017); Injury Prevention (2023); Human Rights Watch (2019-2024)

Therefore, elites who control resources through capture procedures drive both environmental debasement and conflicts which, with urban development, push millions out of their homes and bring about persistent fear throughout the country. The tables from 6–8 demonstrate a worsening scenario because the growing numbers of homeless individuals together with kidnappings and rising violence indicate shortcomings in governance. This research locates these dilemmas within a neo-liberal economic class struggle that makes some wealthy through market advantages yet forces others into unstable lives through such policies which need fundamental changes to bring back fairness and order.

Conclusion

This research reveals how Nigeria entered a Hobbesian state of nature due to a neo-liberal class struggle that transferred wealth to the elite class while subjecting the majority to continuous poverty alongside constant fear. A combination of 32.5% inflation and a Naira devaluation along with 76–77% corruption caused privatization failures which led to 70 million individuals without electricity while displacing 4.5–5.0 million people during 2022 to 2025. The lawless condition of Nigeria is characterized by 735 mass abductions and 24,720 rapes during 2023 through the exploitation of neo-liberal market freedoms by elite groups which leads to institutional downfall. The neo-liberal approach exposes deregulation and global integration policies as projects that created both economic inequality and disorder while following a Hobbesian vision of life-as-war. The country faces an escalating instability crisis because neo-liberal regulations continue to expand disparities while destroying public trust alongside sustaining violence throughout the nation.

The research proves that Nigeria needs an immediate overhaul of its social economic design while opposing the worldwide neo-liberal principle that gives precedence to profitmaking above human welfare. The study demonstrates how domestic elite exploitation together with international economic pressures creates Nigeria's Hobbesian crisis thus demanding governance reforms focused on equality and human rights to extract the nation from this condition.

Recommendations

The country needs to establish revolutionary reforms which would enable it to emerge from this neoliberal quandary alongside Hobbesian disorder. The first step involves constitutional amendment for socioeconomic right

enforcement which grants the judiciary power to fight elite corruption through independent funding of anti-graft agencies. The privatization system must undergo changes according to public welfare requirements through distributing oil and power money transparently towards community development programs which fight against inequality. The government should finance sustainable affordable housing while also promoting resilience to climate change together with community-oriented security systems as approaches for reducing homelessness and violent incidents (IOM, 2024). The application of biometric voting structures together with an independent electoral commission should be established to restore democratic trust. The economy should develop various industries instead of being dependent on oil resources to achieve national independence.

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INSECURITY IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS: THE QUEST FOR A LASTING SOLUTION

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ABSTRACT
Nigeria is facing a myriad of security challenges that are threatening her institutional efficiency, socio-political stability and economic development. However, insecurity issues are global concerns which are not limited to a particular country. Though, Nigeria also has her fair share of the problem due to the fact that she is being overwhelmed by series of terror attacks and other forms of insecurity for over a decade which has led to the clarion call for a long-term solution by the citizens and other stakeholders to the government. These attacks on government infrastructures, humans and institutions including religious houses seemed unabating whereas they have direct and indirect consequences on the citizens, institutions, political environment and the economy. Insecurity is a situation where safety or protection of lives and properties are lacking or uncertain while the people are being subjected to anxiety, fear, injury, danger, or worry as it adversely affects meaningful development of any kind in all areas of human endeavour. On the opposite side of it, security is a state that guarantees protection from all threats by consciously establishing secured structures or programmes that ensure the trust of the public. This study examines insecurity in Nigerian schools highlighting the causes, consequences and likely solutions. It discussed further the concept of insecurity, school safety, forms of insecurity in the Nigerian schools, theoretical framework on security, factors that contributes to schools' insecurity, consequences of insecurity on the Nigerian school system, and lasting solutions to insecurity in Nigerian schools. The study argued that insecurity has adversely affected many schools, lives

and properties by way of depriving these institutions from achieving the intended educational goals and has negatively impacted the quality of teaching and research in all levels of education especially the tertiary institutions. The paper was anchored on the Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory propounded by Abraham Maslow. The study concluded that the duty of securing lives and properties rests on every individual in the society and the government to the extent that the cooperation of all and sundry is needed to have a safe society where all sectors of the economy including education can thrive. It also added that the absence of a comprehensive approach to solving insecurity issues will make many Nigerian schools to be vulnerable to series of attack. This study recommended a whole society approach to fight against insecurity where everybody in the community or society is a stakeholder. All the three tiers of government should work assiduously to ensure that all the schools in their domains or areas of jurisdiction are well protected. Security agents should address all issues causing insecurity in all the regions of the country without fear or bias while the government should continue to invest bountifully on the security sector.

Introduction

The quality of education cannot improve in the environment endangered with surges of attack or threat. It is imperative to note that there can no meaningful development in the absence of peace and security in the education sector of the economy. Security of lives and properties is an issue of great concern to all sane humans, societies and even nations in any part of the world. Insecurity refers to the absence of protection from attacks or threats whereas security means the state of being free from danger, hazards or threats. It is a fact that there is no country in the world today that is completely free from danger or some forms of threat. Although, the security situations vary across regions and governments as some countries may appear more peaceful or stable than others. It is saddening that schools have turned to target of attack by the criminal elements as Abubakar, Otakey, Umar, Fulani, & Isah (2023) submitted that the menace has a detrimental effect on the basic educational institutions which are frequently the target of criminal elements.

Insecurity has become a major problem faced by humans on earth today. For example, Nigeria has become one of the hubs of insecurity due to the activities of bandits (banditry), terrorism by the boko haram sect, kidnapping, herdsmen-farmers' clash, youth restiveness, ritual killings and militancy to mention but a few. Insecurity has direct and indirect consequences on the education sector. In Nigeria, insecurity has grown to become a serious threat to peaceful coexistence of the citizens in all the federating units, states or geo-political zones. The instance of cultism, banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery, herder attacks, and other social vices have adversely affected employees and students at various educational levels. In an effort to identify the reasons for these ongoing and unsettling national disturbances, various researchers, scholars, intellectuals and security experts have put forward different ideas as to what is causing these dreadful national disturbances as well as suggested ways out the quagmire bedeviling the nation as a whole. Psychologically, Nigerians are being crushed and overwhelmed beyond the ability to endure pains and worries which has prompted and provoked the citizenry to think that they would never live through this ugly situation while putting up the clarion calls for a lasting solution. Over the years, there has been spate of attacks on the members of staff, students and properties of different educational institutions across Nigeria. For example, the case of abducted Chibok girls from their school in Borno state had devastating effects on the

immediate community, victims and their parents which have proven to be very difficult to remedy. However, these attacks or threats are manifested in the form of kidnapping of students, teachers, non-teaching members of staff or other stakeholders as well as destruction of school properties or infrastructures and cult clashes in the tertiary institutions to mention but a few. This fact is corroborated by Ogunode, Ukozor & Ayoko (2023) which asserted that insecurity issues have resulted in a decreased funding for higher education, the deaths of students and staff members, as well as the destruction of infrastructural facilities and equipment in Nigeria.

It is sad to note that as a result of high rate of crimes that fueled insecurity, many Nigerian schools (primary schools, secondary schools and the tertiary institutions) are still suffering from these disturbances without any hope of abating them in the nearest future irrespective of government efforts and commitments. Hence the citizens and other stakeholders are continuously making clarion calls for lasting solutions to the menace.

Conceptual Clarifications

i. Insecurity

Insecurity simply means the situation where lives and properties are not safe thereby making people to live in fear. Manga (2019) sees insecurity as a condition of fear of imminent danger and real experience of harmful activities that cause properties and human destruction. Moreover, Insecurity refers to a state of being endangered or lack of proper security measures in place. (Paul (2015) described insecurity as the state of being subject to danger or injury, anxiety, fear, worry, uncertainty, unsureness etc. Also Insecurity encompasses both the actual lack of protection and the subjective feeling of fear (Beland 2005).

In this paper, insecurity is operationalized to be a situation where safety and protection of lives and properties are lacking or uncertain while people are being subjected to anxiety, fear, injury, danger, or worry as it adversely affects meaningful development of any kind in all areas of human endeavour. On the opposite side, security can be described as a state that guarantees protection from all threats by consciously establishing secure structures or programmes that ensure the trust of the public.

ii. School Safety.

School safety is simply the opposite of school insecurity. A situation when students (or pupils), teachers and non-teaching staff members are protected against any form of intimidation, violence, bullying, harassment, attack and the effects of substance use in schools and school-related activities is known as school safety. It is the ideal way to go in educational planning and administration in all the levels of educational institutions. According to World Bank group (2022), schools are safe when all students, teachers, and staff can thrive in a welcoming environment that supports learning, health and well-being, and positive relationships. Promoting school safety should consider the physical and remote spaces in which education takes place as well as the non-physical aspects of the school environment, such as norms and values. In the consideration of physical safety of the school system, it has to do with safety from risks that can cause bodily harm in school or on the way to and from school, for example, from aggression, including acts of physical or sexual violence and abuse; the school physical infrastructure; or health conditions/diseases such as those that stem from poor nutrition, contaminated water, and inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services. In terms of mental health and well-being, school safety talks about avoidance of negative stress, anxiety, despair, and other unpleasant thoughts and emotions; and defense against psychological aggression, such as hostile, harassing, disruptive, and other emotionally damaging behaviors and activities by students, instructors, and school personnel.

Security of lives, properties and the environments is of great concern to the individuals and government. Mubita (2022) emphasized that educational environments must be safe and possess secure spaces for learners, teachers, non-teaching staff and the local community. Also the provision of a safe and secure environment at school is imperative to helping learners succeed academically, socially and emotionally which encompasses the attainment of the educational goals of concerned institutions.

Moreover, security of lives and properties are also put into consideration in the design and construction of school buildings and other educational infrastructures. Kaidanovska and Dumnych (2023) established that the creation of a safe learning environment is an important area

of architectural science and practice as well as the educational environment of a school should consider security requirements. This lend credence to the fact that most incidents of collapsed buildings that have taken place in Nigeria could be attributed to faulty designs from the architectural planning stages which were not given much needed attention that would have averted such unwanted life-threatening occurrences.

iii. Forms of Insecurity in the Nigerian Schools.

Insecurity, being one of the major challenges facing the education sector in most Nigerian schools likely manifests in the form fighting among cult groups, bullying, assault, destruction of school properties, banditry, kidnapping of students or teachers, and stealing (theft) of school properties to mention but a few. However, Umar (2022) identified cultism, violence, armed robbery, sexual harassment, abduction and kidnapping as forms of insecurity in educational institutions in Nigeria. All these forms have adverse effects on the development of education in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Akor, Abubakar and Ogunode (2021) identified physical violence, battery and assault, burning of schools or fire outbreaks, abduction and kidnapping of persons, false imprisonment and detention of students, armed robbery, stealing and trespassing, burglary and vandalism, rape, sexual harassment and prostitution, bombings and school shootings, etc. as some of the forms of insecurity found in educational system. In fact, the list seems unending.

Theoretical framework

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory served as the theoretical foundation for this paper. According to the belief, if man is to live and reach self-actualization, he must have safety and security needs. Given Nigeria's worsening level of insecurity nationwide, it is clear that Maslow's ideas which placed a strong focus on the need for safety and security seemed indispensable. Practically, the level of the security of lives and properties that is offered in most Nigerian schools is significantly low. Many schools in this country have done little or nothing to strengthen their internal security and support the work of state security services, despite the swift spread of armed robbery, terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, occultism and other security issues.

The safety needs of humans in any society or organisation cannot be overemphasized, hence McLeod (2024) reiterated Maslow's argument that survival needs (safety needs inclusive) must be satisfied before the individual can satisfy the higher needs. Safety need in this case means the need for security and protection such as being safe from harm or attack, occupational safety, financial security, job security, health and wellbeing, etc.

The figure 1 below shows the pictorial view of the Maslow's hierarchy of needs. In the hierarchy, it demonstrated that Safety, Protection and Security need which is the second level of needs after physiological needs (first level of needs) are very important for the survival of human beings in any society we found themselves.

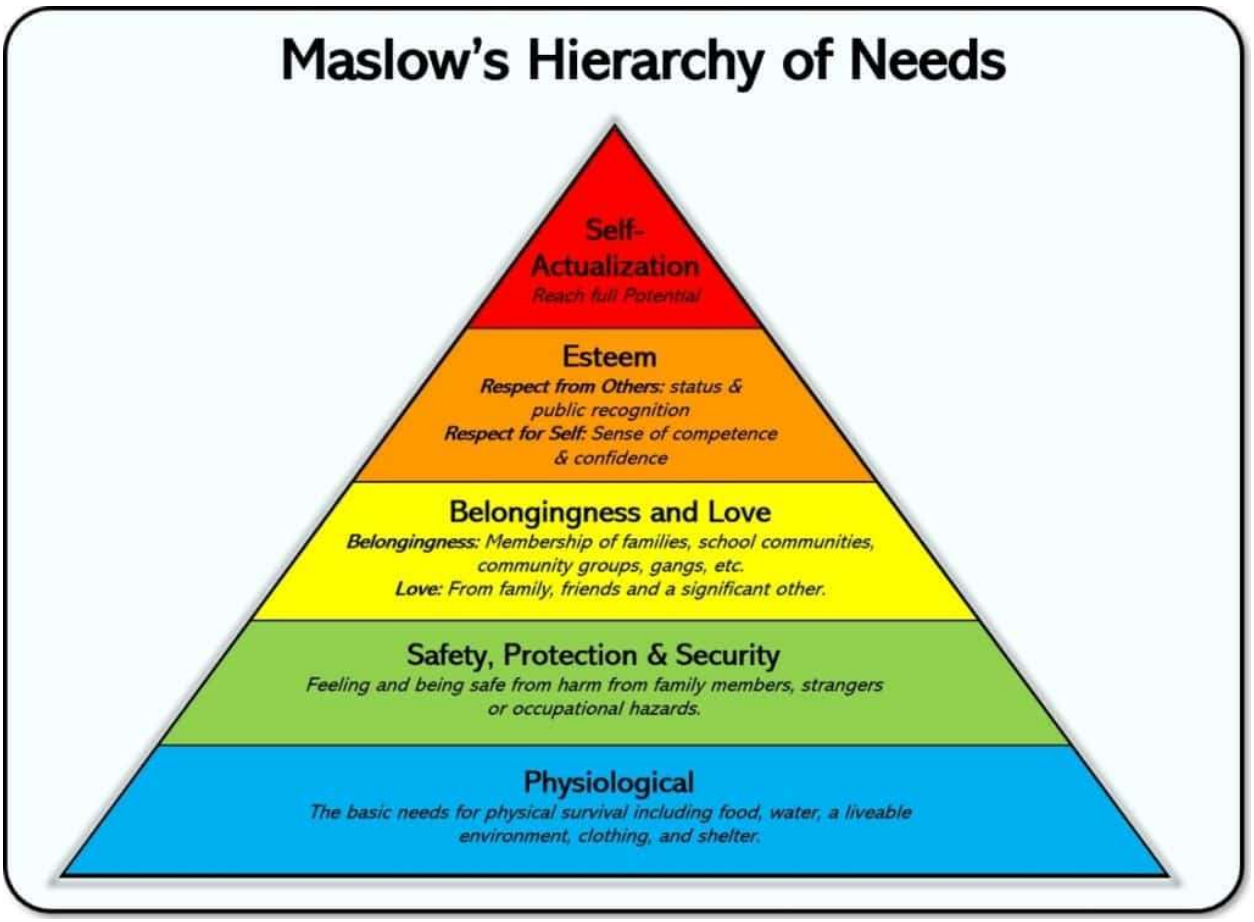


Fig. 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Factors that contribute to Schools Insecurity in Nigeria.

Research has shown that among the elements contributing to insecurity in our schools are the schools' casual attitude toward security, their porous nature, their inept and untrained security personnel, their incomplete security strategy, their lack of awareness and manpower, and their soft target status. However, Udo (2015) emphasized that many people believed that insecurity and its factors are direct consequences of bad leadership, poverty, unemployment, widespread illiteracy and extreme deprivation.

There are a number of factors that has contributed to insecurity issues in the Nigerian schools. A few of them are religious extremism, absence of a comprehensive security policy, political factors, international undue influences (neo-colonialism and imperialism), incompetent security personnel, inter-ethnic or communal crises, Etc. However, Manga (2019) has identified causes of insecurity in Nigerian education system as nonchalant attitude of school administrators on security matters; Lack of comprehensive school security policy to guide action; Non execution of security duties by incompetent guards: Overcrowding of students with diverse characters in schools; Efficiencies in school plant construction and faulty buildings; Lack of permanent security guards in schools; Lack of security inspection by the Ministry of Education and Faulty school vehicles and reckless driving. Meanwhile, Manga (2021) also confirmed that a number of factors that contributed to school insecurity, included the careless attitude of certain administrators toward security issues, the absence of a thorough and widely publicized school security policy, and the inability of school security guards to carry out their duties.

Moreover, poverty, unemployment and illiteracy are the major causes of insecurity in Nigeria especially in the north east and south

east of Nigeria (Adeodu, Ademola and Babafemi 2024). Nevertheless, the study conducted by Abubakar, Otakey, Shafiu, Umar, Fulani, and Isah (2022) identified the causes of insecurity in Nigerian schools as lack of awareness and manpower; a porous school; incompetent and unskilled guards; a lack of comprehensive security policy; and the schools' casual attitude toward security. They also found that some of the reasons for Nigeria's insecurity include poverty, terrorism, injustice, illiteracy, and foreign influence.

Consequences of Insecurity on the Nigerian School System

All forms of school insecurity pose serious security challenges to the teaching and learning process in the institutions. Insecurity in Nigeria has affected all sectors of the economy including the education sector in which it had many negative effects on the schools. Umar (2022) confirmed that school drop-outs, poor academic performance, loss of school resources and fear in students, teachers and parent are consequences of insecurity in Nigerian educational institutions. However, the International Organization for Peace Building and Social Justice (2024) reported among others that numerous attacks are forcing schools around the country to shut down thereby depriving many children of the opportunity to go to school. With fifteen percent (15%) of the world's total out-of-school children, Nigeria currently has one of the largest populations in the world in which there are staggering 1.6 million out-of-school children in the Northeast alone.

Without doubt, insecurity have meted devastating effects on the Nigerian schools at all levels which would be difficult for some of them to recover from. In the light these facts, Oguniyi, Ahaotu and Obi-Ezenekwe (2021) enumerated the effects of insecurity on school administration in Nigeria to include brain drain, closure of educational institutions, loss of personnel in educational institutions, poor quality of education, destruction of infrastructure, internal displacement of learners, reduction of private investment in education, and inadequate funding of education.

More so, Uzuegbu-Wilson (2019) posited that in the past ten years, safe schools in Nigeria have faced security challenges which is due to terrorist attacks on educational institutions that have destroyed school property, kidnapped teachers and students, forced schools to close down, and caused a rise in internal displacement in areas where security is a concern.

Furthermore, insecurity has devastating consequences on the Nigerian school system in all ramifications. Akor, Abubakar and Ogunode (2021) identified loss of manpower in educational institutions, poor quality of education, destruction of infrastructural facilities, and discouragement of educational pursuit by children, resort to foreign education and internal displacement of learners among others as some of the consequences of insecurity on Nigerian educational system in Nigeria. However, according to Abubakar et al (2022), among the detrimental effects of insecurity on schools in Nigeria were low enrollment, death, interruption of the academic programmes, and damage to the physical infrastructure of the schools.

Roles of Nigerian Security Agencies to Combatting Insecurity in Nigerian Schools

All the established security agencies are expected to work in synergy to protecting lives and properties. The Military (army, navy and air force), Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), State Security Service (SSS) and Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) are players in the protection of critical national assets and infrastructures as well as managing internal security and fostering community engagement cutting across all the sectors of the economy.

Specifically, to protect Nigerian schools and their properties, the security agents are duty-bound to do the needful. For example, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) through the National Safe Schools Response Coordination Centre (NSSRCC) established in 2022 and charged with the responsibility to provide adequate security to all levels of schools in the country, including the host communities of the schools. Additionally, the centre is expected to enhance security for schools and host communities by coordinating with security agencies and stakeholders, receiving and referring complaints, and maintaining emergency hotlines. The Centre will formulate and implement safety and security training, maintain a standby force for quick response to emergencies, and engage with organizations for support. It is also expected to conduct security

vulnerability surveys, maintain a security ecosystem map, and share intelligence and situational reports with relevant agencies and the Office of the National Security Adviser.

Peterside (2014) submitted that despite the fact that the 1999 Nigerian Constitution explicitly stated in section 217 that the military's duties include "defending Nigeria from external aggression, maintaining its territorial integrity and securing its borders from isolation on land, sea, or air, suppressing insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the President but subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by an Act of National Assembly," the rise in insecurity issues in Nigeria, including communal/ethnic clashes, religious conflicts, and most recently, acts of terrorism, have made the military's involvement in internal security operations necessary. These operations are being expected to be extended to schools to ensure safe schools in all the states of the federation.

Regrettably, Uzuegbu-Wilson (2019) emphasized that the roles and responsibilities of law enforcement agencies are however being hampered by large “ungoverned space” which Boko Haram insurgents’ group and other criminal groups take advantage off in perpetrating various crimes and criminality. Besides the lack of Biometrics data and ICT driven security architecture have also hindered the effort of law enforcement agencies in Nigeria to tackle insecurity as expected.

Lasting Solutions to Insecurity in Nigerian Schools

Varieties of workable approaches can be adopted to counter all forms of insecurity depending on their nature, topography of the environment, causes and sponsors to mention but a few. Nevertheless, in the tackling of insecurity, Nigerian administrations past and present have used a variety of strategies such as the military approach, the economic explanation approach, and the amnesty or "carrot" strategy. However, Atai, , Esetang, Atai, and Itina, (2024) suggested the combination of the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp Approach, the America-Mexico Border Wall Approach, the China Population Growth Control Approach, and the Compulsory and Free Education Approach in order to address the security drift, taking into account the shortcomings of the current strategies.

In as much as remedy to insecurity challenges is not just one approach but diversified strategies are encouraged and embraced. Adeodu, Ademola and Babafemi (2024) in their study also emphasized that eradication of poverty, provision of better job, and free education at all levels will reduce insecurity to the barest minimum. In addition to all aforementioned solutions, Zubaru (2020) stated that the threats of poverty and unemployment, elite exploitation of racial and religious distinctions, corruption, a shoddy security system, a porous border, national inequality and marginalization, and inadequate leadership and governance are the main drivers of insecurity. The solutions consist of combating the reasons of insecurity listed above.

Furthermore, to cushion the effects of insecurity on the Nigerian school system, certain long-term strategies could be adopted such as provision of CCTV in the school environment; Provision and training of adequate security personnel as well as equipping them with the right tools that conform with the digital era to work with and adoption of Public-Private partnership arrangement to foot the bills of securing the school staff, students or pupils, properties etc. In the. light of the foregoing, Umar (2022) emphasized on training security personnel to make them brave as well as face any security challenge in schools while government should recruit sufficient security personnel in the country with electronic based security gadgets for easy access and detection of criminals in society. Meanwhile, Olanipekun, Usman, Garuba and Mohammed (2024) unraveled some potential answers to Nigeria's current security issues, such as using a variety of ICT technologies to fight insecurity, such as cell phones, CCTV, and biometric data mining, to stop the insurgency and other criminal activities.

Additionally, this era of digital transformation has attracted and embraced high-powered technology to solve problems. Given the challenges facing the nation's security force, it is now imperative to employ technological devices, such as drones alongside vehicular patrols to complement and enhance more efficient monitoring and surveillance operations for the prevention and control of crimes across all the schools in Nigeria. The instance of drones utilization has been very effective in tackling the challenges of insecurity being in agreement with the findings of Emmanuel (2024) which revealed that drones have significant impact in the prevention of kidnappings, armed robbery,

communal killings and other crimes in Nigeria. As part of the solutions to insecurity issues, it is also expected that teachers, students, and security staff members are trained on safety, emergency responses and security awareness using modern technologies.

Discussions

From the foregoing, it clearly revealed that insecurity in Nigeria has adversely affected many schools by way of depriving them from achieving the intended educational goals. Also, insecurity has significantly impacted the quality of teaching and research in all levels of education including the tertiary institutions which aligned with the findings of Oweikpodor (2024) as it revealed that the ongoing insecurities have led to the suspension of research programs, as institutions struggle to maintain normal operations amid threats and disturbances. However, it is acknowledged that the establishment or installation of high-powered security personnel or equipment may create anxiety or fear among students in the schools, but it is believed that adequate communication and student-friendly approaches that would ensure that the security measures put in place make the students to feel safe and not scared nor worried.

Conclusion

Insecurity as a threat to any form of development with its severe consequences is being borne by mankind. Though, it is unwanted but it will continue to have its way by force due to weak government institutions if not nipped in the bud. It should be noted that the duty of securing lives and properties rests on every individual in the society and the government. That means the cooperation of all and sundry is needed to have a safe society where all sectors of the economy including education can thrive. It is impossible to overstate the complementing roles played by the government, security agencies, international organizations, local vigilante groups, and private security firms in the overall endeavour to reverse the security risks to schools. As a result, stronger stakeholder commitments are needed to advance policies and save school initiatives towards ensuring the attainment of the goals of education in enabling environments devoid of threats irrespective of the location, terrain or topography of the learning environment. In all these approaches, we should be mindful of the fact, that in the absence of a comprehensive approach to solving insecurity issues, many Nigerian schools will continue to be vulnerable to series of attack. It is quite imperative that all stakeholders must prioritize and finance the proposed and efficacious strategies required to tackle school insecurity issues.

Recommendations

In the light of the foregoing, the following recommendations were made:

i. There should be whole society approach to fight against insecurity where everybody in the community or society is a stakeholder.

ii. All the three tiers of government (Federal, state and local government) should work assiduously to ensure that all the schools in their domains or areas of jurisdiction are well protected.

iii. Security agents and other security bodies should address all issues causing insecurity in all the regions of the country.

iv. The government should invest bountifully in the security sector as well as monitor and evaluate its progress.

v. There is the need for schools' authorities and their stakeholders to work closely with law enforcement agents such as Nigeria armed forces, Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria Civil Defence Corps as well as local security outfits such as vigilante, hunters etc.

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U.S POSTURE ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN AFRICAN: IMPLICATIONS ON THE PROGENITORS

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KEYWORDS
US and Human rights, Violations of human rights in Africa and U.S-Africa relation

ABSTRACT
There is a convulsion taking place in Africa in the form of wanton human rights violations attracting the attention of the United States. As a strong bias in the need to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals and groups, U.S is playing catalytic roles to check human rights violations in Africa by adopting certain measures, aimed at changing the behavior of human rights violators. An important conclusion that can be discerned from this study is that even though there are cases of human rights violations in many African countries, U.S. efforts in grappling with this outrageous problem are yielding significant results. The study calls the attention of the U.S. to assist African countries to provide socio-economic environment that will make authoritarian rule in Africa unattractive.

Introduction

In a liberal democratic paradigm, respect for human rights and fundamental freedom of citizen's is a pride of place. This is because as Lindsay (1943:229) has noted, since the essence of democracy means general participation of the citizenry, the rights and liberties of the citizens must be guaranteed if it is to achieve those ends.

In its totality, the balance sheet of human rights in Africa shows signs of deterioration every year, and many African countries rank among the world's most repressive dictatorships. The incessant military intervention in the politics of these countries since 1966 has made it impossible for people to enjoy their human rights and freedoms. The incompatibility of military dictatorship with the democratic tradition embedded in the human rights ideology has resulted in the inability of the courts to guarantee these rights and liberties of the people because of the obnoxious provisions of decrees and edicts. According to Onyewo (1991:17), "Nigerians do not savor human rights at all. Starting from the power of the police to check, arrest, detain and treat suspects as they do, one knows that so many human rights abuses go on".

Hence, Human rights violations constitute a significant problem in Africa, even though almost all African countries are signatory to the UN Declaration and African Charter of Human Rights. Dictators rhetorically declare their commitment and observance of human rights as soon as they take over power; these are purely cosmetic, and intended not only to win the support and confidence of the masses, but also to receive sympathy from the international community at large.

The concept of gross violation of human rights is defined as:

> *Torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, prolonged detention without charges and trial, causing the disappearance of persons by the abduction and clandestine detention of those*

persons, and other flagrant denial of the right to life, liberty, or the security of persons, (Buergenthal & Cohen, 1988:234).

In contemporary times, Africa, human rights violations go beyond cracking down on the individuals and groups opposed to the regime in power as the definition of concept portrays above. **Section II** is dedicated to the theme "**The international justice system and human rights in Africa**". In his article entitled: The United Nations and the advancement of human rights in Africa, **Wilfred Nderitu (2007)** premised on the issue of poverty as a violation of human rights, elaborates on definitions of *poverty* in various international human rights documents, and describes various UN efforts in this regard as human-rights-related regimes or initiatives. Synergies between and among different international institutions and actors in the fight against poverty are debated, and the responsibility of the State in alleviating poverty is considered from a juristic perspective.

The second volume of human rights violations in many African countries implies derogation from the minimum standard by government the rights of an individual given to him by nature and protected by the constitution. These include among other things;

a. Denial of educational opportunities to the majority of African children: Statistics show that many African countries have limited number of educational institutions compared to the number of children of school age seeking admissions. Many African leaders see the education of their citizens not as a right, but a privilege. To this end, education is given the least priority in the national budgets, thereby denying many children the opportunity in all levels of the educational system.

b. Denial of gainful employment: Unemployment is one of Africa's major problems, and has created economic, social and psychological and health problems to many Africans. The high employment rate is cited in the case of Nigeria where about 82,697 people registered for employment opportunities, but 2,378 or 2.88% were employed (Ogbuagu, 1991:157). This problem is shared by other African countries.

c. Violations of women's human rights and freedoms: The discrimination imposed on women in African countries has been part of an African cultural tradition. Though women's roles are shaped by cultural traditions, it is observed that African tradition has been used to perpetuate unjust treatment of women. Women in Africa are denied political, educational, property and other rights equal to those of men. They are regarded to have secondary rights instead of human rights, and qualified to hold important public offices and perform public functions.

Our main focus in this paper is U.S. response to gross human rights violations in Africa, and Africa's attitude to these reactions, aspects about which little has been written so far. To this end, the primary objective of the study is to update, refine and enrich the numerous available literatures in this field. The paper will attempt to answer the questions as to what implications the U.S. human rights foreign policy are on the African continent and the extent to which this policy has deterred the civilian c-zars and juntas from gross violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of African citizens. This will go a long way to demonstrating the extent to which the influence of the United States can go in changing the behavior of other sovereign states in Africa. The study will also address itself to the measures U.S. has adopted in handling human rights abuses in Africa, including the glaring inconsistencies in the implementation patterns of this policy, especially when human rights violation involves regimes that appear friendly and cooperative with the U.S.

Again, the deep commitment of the United State to championing the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Right is driven by founding values of our nation and the conviction that international peace, security, and prosperity are strengthened when human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected, (https:hrc//2009-2017).

Social and Political Theoretical Underpinnings

Jurists come across various political and social theories in search of jurisprudential concepts that form a good proportion of the basis for legal learning. In *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes advanced the theory of the *social contract*. This is the contract between the citizen and the State, i.e. the body politic, in which the people advance from an anarchical 'state of nature' by handing over their instincts of self-preservation and, as such, mutually destructive powers to a central authority (the *Leviathan*) to enable the central authority to exercise the collective power for the benefit of the whole populace. Liberal analysis of the social contract theory stipulates that it is from this contract between man and State, that the latter derives its legitimacy. In return, the populace is entitled to certain fundamental rights and freedoms.

Like any contract, the social contract entails both rights and duties for both parties. As such, citizens have duties to fulfill as subjects, and have natural rights they should enjoy as human beings. Hence, the very legitimacy of the State is partially based on the ability of the citizens to enjoy certain basic rights. It is the proposition of this paper that no right could be more fundamental, basic or natural than the right to basic human dignity: a right recognized by the social contract, and which forms the basic ethos of the human rights philosophy.

Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau are the best-known proponents of this immensely influential theory, which has been one of the most dominant within the moral and political ambit. Rousseau, an influential 18th-Century Hobbes 1998/1651), Political theorist, elaborates on the social contract (also referred to as the *social compact*) as follows:

To maintain its legitimacy, the sovereign must meet its obligations to the citizen, which include ensuring that the citizen is entitled to his or her fundamental human rights. This includes the right to minimum standards of human dignity – which may, from one perspective, be interpreted as the right to be free from poverty and hunger. This is because poverty and hunger deny the citizen the ability to live within minimum acceptable standards of human dignity.

This brings out the equality dimension of liberal political theory. In real sense, true equality is cumbersome to achieve, but the argument is that there should be a certain basic minimum standard available to all citizens to ensure that their lives are commensurate with the basic acceptable standards of human dignity. It follows that the right to basic human dignity entails the right to be free from poverty and hunger.

A resume of U.S. support for and its response to the Violation of Human Rights in Africa Human rights and fundamental freedoms have received prominent attention in the U.S. It has provided added support to UN efforts to promote human rights and is among the first nations of the world to adopt a substantial body of domestic law to promote the enforcement of internationally guaranteed human rights and liberties. The U.S strongly advocated for a treaty aimed at protecting human rights and played significant role in drafting the human rights provisions of the UN Charter (Green, 1956:13-15; Holcombe, 1948:4-5; Sohn and Buergenthal, 1973:506-509).

The Jimmy Carter administration made human rights the centre piece of its foreign policy. During his campaign for the presidency, and subsequently in the opening months of his administration, he moved quickly to make clear the concern of the U.S government over the fate of human rights in many Third World countries including African States. This implied that human rights were going to be an integral part of U.S foreign policy agenda. To demonstrate his administration's strong support and commitment to human rights, President Carter signed three major human right treaties during his first year in office. These include two International Covenants of Human Rights, and the American Convention on Human Rights.

In making itself the champion of human rights, the U.S in the thinking of Carter administration would attain the following objectives:

i. To gain the high ground of public opinion, and place human rights abuses in the Third World as a problem that would be addressed;

ii. To revitalize the links binding the U.S to the world's other major democratic nations who were also its most important security and economic partners, and;

iii. To place itself on the right side of what was seen as the inevitable move of the Third World towards liberty, and equality (James W. Ceaser, et al. 1984:617).

iv. The U.S human rights policy is based on the principle of the common heritage of mankind. According to this principle, man is entitled to enjoy certain inalienable rights, and this is also embedded in the basic American values – the traditional American 19th century optimism, exemplified in Woodrow Wilson's doctrine that liberal democracy is eventual destiny of all people.

U.S. Strategies to Deal with Human Rights Violations

Be it as it may, the gross violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals and political organizations in Africa is not a new problem. For more than 30 years, the United States and United Nations have grappled with these problems, whose consequences have posed serious political, economic and psychological problems. In his speech in London in June, 1988 in the aftermath of the US-USSR Summit in Moscow, President Ronald Reagan described the oppression and denial of human rights as another threat to mankind on the planet earth after the nuclear war (Obiozor, 1988: XXIX).

Given the strong commitment of the United States in its crusade against the flagrant violation of human rights in Africa, specific strategies have been employed to demonstrate U.S. disapproval of dictatorships which are not fairly respectful of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The strategies range from outright suspension of financial and military assistance to verbal condemnation of military dictatorships. These strategies are discussed in details below.

The suspension of financial and military aid packages have been a veritable strategy to deal with countries which engage in activities that violates fundamental human rights. Such action consequently does not constitute, as many scholars have argued, an illegal interference in the internal affairs of those countries concerned. This strategy finds an expression in the U.S laws, for example, Sections 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, and 116 of the same Act (Buergenthal, 1988:232).

The U.S. government and human rights organizations in their speeches have condemned African dictators for human rights violations. The U.S was the first country to condemn the massive killings of innocent citizens in Burundi in1993, and the hanging of the eight leaders of Ogoni land by the Abacha regime in Nigeria in 1997. The U.S Press has been vehement in denouncing military dictatorships in Africa, even though it has come under fire for extreme biases in reporting information about human rights violation. It also believes that the enforcement of human rights lies primarily in political and social pressures. It has therefore used propaganda on an unprecedented scale to dramatize the issue and to mobilize and strengthen pro-democratic elements within the political elite from all the countries in Africa.

Far more fundamental is the measure adopted by the U.S to mobilize other Western European countries that do business in Africa to suspend transactions with those countries where there are cases of human rights abuses. This measure produces a multiplier effect leading to greater economic hardships on the citizens. The U.S has also influenced international financial institutions and communities against African countries that have bad human rights records.

With its close relations with the International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, the International Community of the Red Cross, and the International League for the Rights of Man, the U.S uses these organizations, although scholars claim that they operate outside the nation-state framework, as major political instrument to expose human rights violations, and to put pressure on African and other states to respect human rights.

The attitudes of African dictatorships to U.S response to Human Rights Violation

The United State's response to human rights violation in Africa have, generated a series of controversy. To the African civilian rulers such reactions are not in tune with African needs and goals, and therefore, unwarranted. This attitude evolves from the fact that Western democratic

tradition cannot be applicable especially where perhaps, poverty, and illiteracy work to make fundamental human rights, in terms of freedom of political expression an unacceptable luxury at this stage of their political and economic development. The provision of U.S financial and military assistance to Latin American dictatorship in the 1960s with the justification that it would contribute to social and economic development is a strong support to the claim made by African military leaders that the suppression of human rights is influenced by their desire to improve the poor economic situations of other countries. Dictators claim that African countries should deny free expressions to certain group of people in the common interest of promoting more rapid economic growth of the people.

They also maintained that human rights can be guaranteed and protected without building the intricate structure of institutions and laws that characterize the Western approach to human rights. Furthermore, it is argued that political parties, for example, aggravate conflicts, while elections polarize opinions and foster instability. Political opposition groups therefore, take advantage of free speech to whip up the masses and instigate them to actions against the government.

Most important, many African leaders attempt to justify their policies by claiming that public order is required to preserve the individual liberties, and that those who would disrupt the public order must be suppressed in order to protect fundamental human rights of those who are loyal to the state. The obstacles listed by the seven African governments that responded to the questionnaire in respect of implementing human rights education programmes are an indication of a lack of political will rather than the obstacles themselves being insurmountable. This lack of will is evidenced by there being no technical assistance for developing and executing national human rights education plan, and no provision of long-term State funding. NGOs, on the other hand attribute many of the obstacles to a lack of political will.

Given the high expectation that the High Commissioner for Human Rights had and the important role that the UN Plan of Action gave to governments, a mere 14% response by governments can hardly be seen as successful after the first five years of the Plan's existence. Moreover, even those who responded did not necessarily indicate major successes.

The performance of governments in the second five years did not improve significantly. In a High Commissioner for Human Rights report in October 2003, only 17 out of a potential total of 50 sub-Saharan-African countries were listed amongst UN member states who had in fact reported to the High Commissioner on initiatives taken in their countries as part of the Decade for Human Rights Education. Many of these sub-Saharan-African reports were outdated.64 Also evidencing a lack of political will among African governments is the fact that Burundi has not reported to the High Commissioner since June 2000, Cameroon since May 1999, Cape Verde since February 1999, and the list goes on.

However, there were also countries who submitted elaborate reports. These included Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, the UN does not have any instruments by means of which to measure the success of human rights education efforts. For example, is a programme successful if human rights are the content of a well-structured and managed school subject? Zimbabwe is a case in point, where the country spent time, money and effort in setting up and implementing human rights education programmes, but the state of the country shows little real impact of these programmes. Indeed, on the contrary: the decline of human rights started at a time when one would have expected the education programmes to produce some results.

Whatever the merit of African leaders' to the U.S concern over human rights violation in this continent, there is in fact a growing residue of resentment against U.S by many African military leaders. Concomitantly, U.S is accused of over-reacting to events happening in Africa, human rights violations being a case in point. In comparison, the U.S reactions to human rights violation in Latin America for instance, especially in the 1960s, showed some inconsistencies in terms of the objectives and the means used to implement U.S reactions. As Buergenthal and Torney (1976) rightly observed, "the position of the U.S as far as international human rights are concerned is a bundle of contradictions". The U.S which advertises itself as the champion of human rights was actively engaged in assisting as morally hypocritical. In the first decade of the century, President Theodore Roosevelt referred to Portifirio Diaz, the Mexican dictator as the greatest statesman of his time. Peron

dictatorship was defended by the American ambassador to Argentina. President Somoza of Nicaragua was adjudged as all-right by the U.S Ambassador to that country (Needler, 1968:33; Edelmann, 1969:39; Gerassi, 1965:144-145; Blankstein, 1967:417). The Johnson administration recognized the Brazilian military coup of 1964, while the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, praised the junta for redeeming the Brazilian democracy (Lens, 1969:5).

Since World War II, the U.S has given financial and military assistance to Latin America and has trained a large number of its military men in the U.S (Dietsch, 1969). The humanitarian explanation is that U.S aid was offered to relieve the suffering of people in Latin America. It was also argued that the economic aid was not given to dictatorships, but rather to people who happened to be governed by authoritarian rulers. the underlying explanation for U.S and others hypocrisy in its reactions to human rights violations also centres on the fact that Latin American dictators have traditionally advertised themselves as friends of the U.S, have facilitated U.S influence in Latin America, said the things the U.S wanted to hear, and have acted in accordance with the U.S policies and prejudices and praised U.S and damned its enemies. In Sahel countries, where the leader want to be independent at the detriment of the masses, their freedom so-called were gotten through by the establishment Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali pulling out of the union Channels television (Channels 2024, 24).

Implications of U.S response to Human Rights Violation in the context of U.S-African Relations

The U.S enthusiastic reactions to human rights violation have had obvious implications in U.S-African relations. Some of these have been negative and others positive.

On the negative side of these implications is the fact that Africans see U.S over response to human rights issues as another variant of Western imperialism in Africa. Imperialism, as William (1971:2) has noted, connotes the policy, practice, or advocacy of seeking to extend, and control dominion of a nation. In other words, the issue of human rights violation is an instrument to blatantly interfere in the domestic politics in African countries by supporting the countries that seem favorable to U.S and intimidating those not in the U.S good book.

They have drawn our attention to U.S economic interests in Africa. When Warren Christopher, for instance, on a tour of Africa in 1996 called for further measures against Nigeria's human rights violation, the American Secretary of State quietly reassured Mobil and Exxon (Oil Producing Corporations) in Nigeria that he did not mean oil sanctions (Newswatch 1996:30). U.S interest in cheap Nigerian oil seemed to undermine its positive action against Abacha administration.

In another way, U.S reactions have lent support to human rights groups in Africa thereby sharpening conflict situations and perpetuating political instability. Joseph Kamotho, the former Secretary-General of Kenyan African National Union (KANU) charged U.S of setting aside the sum of $30 million to formant instability in selected countries in Africa (Quoted from Enin, 1991:29).

The linkage of U.S financial and economic assistance to African countries for U.S observance of human rights appears to affect the economic fortune of the masses whose human rights and fundamental freedoms U.S is trying to protect. The untold hardships the Nigerian masses for instance, have experienced as a result of American suspensions of aid and imposition of economic sanctions against Abacha regime is a case in point.

On the other hand, U.S reactions to human rights violations have had some positive implications on the domestic policies of some African countries. This has significantly shaped the domestic politics of many African countries towards their struggle for a return to democratic rule, and condemnations of repressive regimes. It was however, these reactions that contributed to the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa, the deposition of Idi Amin to mention, but a few.

World Programme for Human Rights Education

Despite opposition from some European countries and the United States of America, the UN General Assembly adopted a second decade for human rights education, this time called World Programme for Human Rights Education.94

The programme started on 1 January 2005 and still ongoing. The first phase ran until the

end of 2009, and focuses on primary and secondary education.

The Human Rights Council, however, has remained silent on the focus areas of the second phase. National strategies and minimum standards were this time given to governments. The minimum standards expect governments to evaluate the human rights programmes in their education systems. Unfortunately, the programme assigns a politician – the minister of education – rather than a human rights UN (2004). It takes commission or Ombudsman to take responsibility for the implementation.

Informal education and other role players will be dealt with in later phases. However, by repeating the mistakes of the first Decade, the prospects of a more successful second decade must be questioned.

Conclusion

It would be impolitic to assert that U.S reactions to human rights violations have failed because there are still cases of human rights abuses in many other African countries. If these reactions have ameliorated human rights violations, but have not eliminated them, it could be judged successful. This suggests that U.S human rights efforts currently in place in African countries are yielding positive results.

The inevitable question is: What could be done to further improve the human rights situation in Africa. This fundamental question must be seriously addressed by U.S and African countries. It is therefore important in this study to suggest the following policy options, some of which will provide answers to the above questions.

i. There must be a close synergy between the U.S and Africa on the issues of human rights when there are in the mutual interest of the two to do so;

ii. U.S should assist African countries to create socio-economic environment which would make dictatorship unattractive and unacceptable in Africa. This will be achieved through support in the areas of political education which will help create a new and positive political consciousness among the masses, thereby helping to change their thinking, feelings and overt action;

iii. U.S should also focus attention to the abject poverty, and other economic constraints in Africa by providing economic aid, which if well managed will eliminate the conditions which have subjected the masses to injustice and denial of their fundamental freedoms;

iv. Non-governmental Organizations should give support for free access to the markets in U.S, stabilization of prices for African export commodities at prices favorable to African countries. This will reduce the grievous balance of trade deficits and other painful dislocations in their highly vulnerable economies;

v. The debt burden resulting from past foreign loans is so great for African countries that they can never realistically hope to meet their obligations. In such a case, the U.S should assist Africa renegotiate the debts with the lending countries, and if possible, convince them to cancel the debts altogether;

vi. The U.S information agencies should provide unbiased information about human rights issues in African countries.

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THE PRACTICE AND CHALLENGES OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE IN MAKURDI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE, 1960 – 2020

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines the practice and challenges of traditional medicine in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, 1960 – 2020. It conceptualizes traditional medicine and traditional medical practitioners. The call, training, and initiation, as well as forms of traditional medical practitioners in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, 1960 – 2020 also came into focus. It analyzes the roles of traditional medical practitioners in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, 1960 – 2020. It also examines the challenges of traditional medicine and its practice in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, 1960 – 2020. The study relied on both primary sources like oral interviews and archival materials and secondary sources like books, theses, articles, newspapers, journals, etc. The study finds out that traditional medicine is part and parcel of the health care system in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, 1960 – 2020. The study demonstrates that traditional medicine is an important component of the health sector in Makurdi Local Government Area as it provides an alternative to modern medicine in the area and doubles as a veritable tool for revenue generation and employment creation. The study concludes, among other things, that the solutions to the challenges confronting traditional medicines and traditional medical practitioners in the area lie in the provision of incentives, the elimination of quackery, and positive government policies to confront these challenges faced by traditional medicines and traditional medical practitioners in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State.

Introduction

Traditional medicine has a long root and wide acceptance throughout Nigeria. It is compatible with prevailing health beliefs and practices in most parts of Nigeria (Njoku, 2002; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016; Ugbabe, et al, 2021). Traditional Nigerian pharmacopoeia mainly comes from the vegetable kingdom and comprises the leaves, flowers, seeds, bark, sap, and roots of a wide variety of plants. The animal kingdom also provides four main articles of medicine: honey, butter, animals' fat, and certain insects with medicinal properties. The practice of traditional medicine in Nigeria thus includes the use of herbs (or washing with various herbs and other substances), steam and smoke inhalation, oral medicaments (for e.g., inducing diarrhea and vomiting), spiritual healings, holy water (including thermal baths), bone-setting, and minor surgical procedures like bleeding, cupping, counter irritation and cauteries (Njoku, 2002; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016; Ugbabe, et al, 2021). In Nigeria, like in many African countries, 75-80% of the population consults traditional medical practitioners (TMPs) and depends on traditional medicine for their primary health care (Ancha, 2015; Sam, 2019; Telles, 2014; Kigen, 2013; Hedvig, 2013). Traditional medicine (TM) is, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), the total sum of knowledge, skills and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures that are used to maintain health, as well as to prevent, diagnose, improve, or treat physical and mental illnesses (Abdullahi, 2011; Ancha, 2015; Hedvig, 2013). Before modern/scientific methods of curing sicknesses and diseases came into play, the use of plants for medicine was dominant and available to millions of people in Nigeria in both rural and urban communities. The development of traditional medicine in Nigeria has led to various categories of healers, the various healing methods, strategies, and remedies that are now well known (Ancha, 2015; Njoku, 2002; Shishima, 2006). The knowledge is often handed down from generation to generation on how to prevent or treat diseases and ailments (Njoku, 2002; Shishima, 2006).

The practice of traditional medicine within Nigeria is at risk of being lost due to the impact of colonialism. The impact of colonialism and the subsequent displacement and disconnection of people both from their traditional lands and later from their traditional families has been significant in its subsequent effect on the use of traditional practices, including traditional medicine. Prior to colonization, traditional forms of healing, such as the use of traditional healers and traditional medicines, were the only sources of primary health care (Njoku, 2002). The introduction of Western culture, particularly into rural parts of Africa, has had a tremendous negative impact on the role traditional medicine plays. As Western education, Christianity, and increased contact with the global community become an integral part of rural communities, taboos, traditions, and customs have been affected and, in some instances, abandoned altogether. These challenges notwithstanding, there is increasing evidence that traditional medicine would continue to hold sway in both rural and urban communities of Africa even when modern health care facilities are available to meet a wide range of healthcare needs (Ancha, 2015; Njoku, 2002; Shishima, 2006). This implies that despite the availability of orthodox medicines, traditional medicines still play a major role in meeting the healthcare needs of the indigenous people and the people, maintain a strong belief that the traditional medicine practices which are a huge part of the culture handed over to them by their forefathers, are very effective and can therefore not be discarded due to the availability of orthodox medicines. It has been reported that about 60% of people depend on plants for the management of ailments (Olotu, 2017; Njoku, 2002; Shishima, 2006). However, it is unclear to what extent traditional medical practice remains in Nigeria in the 21st century within the primary healthcare setting and how this practice sits alongside the current biomedical healthcare model. It is against this background that this paper seeks to examine the practice and challenges of traditional medicine in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, 1960 – 2020.

The study is carried out in Makurdi Local Government Area, which is located between latitudes 7° 13' North and 8° 00' North, and longitudes 8° 00' East and 9° 00' East and occupies a total area of 77,379.32 square kilometers (Goon, 2011; Ajene & Ogorry, 2016). The climate of Makurdi is characterized by tropical wet and dry seasons with an annual average temperature ranging from 21°C to 38°C, respectively. The annual average rainfall of this region is estimated at 1152.2 mm, of which approximately 88% falls in the months between April and October. The dry season normally starts in November and ends in March (Goon,

2011). According to the 2006 census in Nigeria, it has an estimated population of 300,377 and is inhabited predominantly by the Tiv people, who speak the Tiv language, and their economy lies predominantly on agricultural practices (Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette, 2009: Goon, 2011).

Conceptualizing Traditional Medicines and Traditional Medical Practitioners

Traditional medicine (TM), variously known as ethnomedicine, folk medicine, native healing, or complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), is the oldest form of healthcare system that has stood the test of time. It is an ancient and culture-bound method of healing that humans have used to cope with and deal with various diseases that have threatened their existence and survival. Hence, TM is broad and diverse. Consequently, different societies have evolved different forms of indigenous healing methods that are captured under the broad concept of TM, e.g. Chinese, Indian, and African traditional medicines. This explains the reason why there is no single universally accepted definition of the term. This notwithstanding, one of the most acceptable definitions of TM has been provided by the World Health Organization (WHO). According to WHO, TM is the sum total of the knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health, as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement, or treatment of physical and mental illnesses (Abdullahi, 2011; Ancha, 2015; Hedvig, 2013; Abbott, 2014). Traditional medicine (TM) also refers to health practices, approaches, knowledge, and beliefs incorporating plant, animal, and mineral-based medicines, spiritual therapies, and manual techniques applied individually or in combination to treat, diagnose, and prevent illnesses or maintain well-being (Telles, 2014). Traditional medicine (TM) could also be defined as a collection of knowledge, skills, and practices that the health maintenance as well as prevention, diagnosis, improvement, or treatment of physical and mental diseases. Herbal drugs form the main part of the TM system (Mirzaeian, 2019). Herbal drugs are used around the world to treat conditions and diseases, and many studies prove their efficacy. Herbal drugs are used for the treatment of chronic and acute conditions and various ailments, including major health concerns like cardiovascular disease, prostate problems, depression, inflammation, and weakened immune system (Mirzaeian, 2019).

TM can be considered to belong to three main categories. These are (i) codified medical systems, (ii) folk medicine, and (iii) allied forms of health knowledge (Telles, 2014; Abbott, 2014). Codified medical systems include great traditions which have evolved over 3-4 millennia and include Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani in the Indian subcontinent and traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture in China. These medical traditions have a unique understanding of physiology, pathogenesis, pharmacology, and pharmaceuticals which is different from Western biomedicine (Telles, 2014; Sam, 2019; Abbott, 2014). Perhaps because of this systematic approach, these medical systems have been professionalized within the last millennium. Folk medicine is those traditional knowledge systems which are more often orally transmitted, have been generated by communities over centuries, and use components of the ecosystem which are locally available and accessible. Folk medicine has not been formalized and is diverse and adaptable based on changing contexts. There are several similarities in the folk/indigenous medicine of widely differing, geographically distinct communities. Allied forms of health knowledge include techniques which are related to well-being, though they are not purely medical systems, such as yoga, tai-chi, qi-gong, and different meditations and breathing techniques (Telles, 2014).

A traditional medicine practitioner, also called a traditional healer, plays a pivotal role in the health care system in Nigeria. A traditional medicine practitioner, or traditional healer, is a person who is recognized by the community where he or she lives as someone competent to provide health care by using plant, animal, and mineral substances and other methods based on social, cultural and religious practices (Abdullahi, 2011). Traditional medicine practitioners are known as ortwer among the Tiv and otechi among the Idoma peoples, both of Benue State. They are similar to eze-mmuo/eze-dibia in Igboland, babalawo in Yorubaland, and boka in the Hausaland. They are first and foremost herbalists who prepare medicines from herbs mixed with some other material objects, especially parts of animals, which can have miraculous effects on other objects and consequently can affect a man and human conditions (Shishima, 2006).

Affirming the above assertions, Njoku (2002) points out that intimate knowledge of medical psychic and cosmic properties of weeds, herbs, and plants is the basis of traditional medical science. But traditional medicine ranged beyond purely herbal care, dealing with simple and commonly known recipes. It encompassed more professional recipes for the cure of more complicated ailments such as snake bites, whitlow, impotence/infertility, stroke, and mental disorder (Njoku, 2002). The recipes for this category of diseases lay with the professional doctors (traditional medicine practitioners/traditional healers) whose therapeutic techniques were shrouded in mystique and secrecy (Njoku, 2002; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016). These professionals (experienced traditional medical practitioners) were versed in the medicinal properties and potencies of herbs and plants. And a well-trained doctor (traditional medicine practitioner/traditional healer) could, with ease, reel off hundreds of such herbs and plants. Intimate knowledge of this pedigree is acquired over a long and rigorous period of apprenticeship (Njoku, 2002).

Contributions of the Study on Traditional Medicine in Makurdi

The study on traditional medicine practices in Makurdi Local Government Area, Benue State, from 1960 to 2020 will provide insights into their evolution, key figures, scope, effectiveness, and safety. It will also identify challenges faced by practitioners, such as lack of recognition, regulation, and resource access. Strategies for addressing these issues will be proposed, including training programs, quality control measures, and integration with modern healthcare systems. The study will also promote sustainable use of medicinal plants and raise awareness about their conservation. The findings will inform policy and healthcare implications, promoting better regulation and support for traditional medicine practices. Community engagement and education will be promoted, promoting informed healthcare choices.

The Call, Training and Initiation of Traditional Medical Practitioners

The traditional medical practitioner is very essential in any given African society. He/she is a specialist in the art of preparing, controlling and administrating traditional medicines. By implication, the traditional medical practitioner is concerned with sickness, diseases and misfortunes but he/she can also be called upon to provide protective medicine for any form of misfortune just as he/she could approach to prepare medicine to attract some fortunes (Njoku, 2002; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016). The ways traditional medical practitioners receive their vocation differ from one society to the other in Africa. In some societies, it is naturally endowed on a person, in other societies, only those who are called by the deity can become traditional medical practitioners (Njoku, 2002: Shishima, 2006). The call, training and initiation of traditional medical practitioners are organized in a way that minimized quackery, imposters and harmful practice while at the same time enhancing the efficiency of the vocation. There are three principal stages in undergoing training and initiation under an experienced traditional medical practitioner. They are the call stage, training stage and initiation stage.

a. It all begins with ***the call***, which is the stage when any would-be traditional medical practitioners (i.e. persons who are naturally endowed in the art, wards of a person of an experienced traditional medical practitioner, those who are called by the deity, etc.) are introduced to the vocation, their duties, roles and overall workings of the vocation. It is a period of orientation (Atule Uver, 2022; Tunde Nuhu, 2022). With particular reference to our area of study, According to Shishima (2006), there are major ways in which a person may be called to become a traditional medical practitioner. These are through:

    i. Inheritance as part of family patrimony;

    ii. The art could be bought;

    iii. A gift by one's kinsmen (*Ityo*). However, the qualification to be called to be a traditional medical practitioner by the *Ityo* is based on one's good character (Shishima, 2006).

    Furthermore, if the art of medicine making is through purchase, the experienced traditional medical practitioner sells the art to his/her client after due negotiation. The novice then learns all the laws/taboos of the art under his/her master before leaving to practice on his/her own

(Shishima, 2006). It is pertinent to note that, there are fixed rules governing the call of an individual to become a traditional medical practitioner. One can be called at whatever age; one may be married or not, just as a father can pass the art to a son or relative (Shishima, 2006).

b. The next is the period of **training**, which offers the apprentice(s) the spaces of learning to mature in the vocation, in co-creation and training. The training stage is full of risks and practical in nature. It is during this period that the apprentice is trained and nurtured. During this period, honesty, accountability and work ethic are core principles (Abu Iorbee, 2022; Doshima Kile, 2022; Isah Nuhu, 2022). Concerning the training of a traditional medical practitioner, it is a must that the apprentice (novice) receives training from an experienced traditional medical practitioner before beginning his/her practice (Njoku, 2002; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016). Each experience traditional medical practitioner has his/her own regulation for his/her own pupils as refraining from eating certain foods and various plants and from sexual intercourse. Training can last between three months to several years (Njoku, 2002; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016).

   An apprentice has to pass through an intensive and rigorous internship under a master doctor (an experienced traditional medical practitioner). He/she accompanies the master to the bush to obtain herbs for treating various diseases. He/she learns which herb could be combined for the treatment of various diseases. He/she is also taught how to harness mystic and cosmic forces, through the power of the mind, to deal with spiritual human problems. It is through this system that centuries of accumulated knowledge are transmitted from generation to generation (Njoku, 2002; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016).

c. The final stage is **initiation**. This is when an experienced traditional medical practitioner certifies and settles the apprentice to begin practice on his/her own. This is dependent on the understanding and commitment of the apprentice to the vocation during the training period (Godwin Ali, 2022). Regarding initiation, an apprentice, a trainee, or novice may only be allowed to practice on his/her own if one is certified by his/her master in character and professional competence and has been publicly initiated into the local guild of experienced traditional medical practitioners (Shishima, 2006). Among the Tiv of our study area, the art of initiation is known as kor. Literally, the word would imply "to catch" or grasp. But the actual meaning of the word is to "begin" the art of healing. The art of initiation is sealed with a payment which includes, amongst other things a chicken, goat, a little bag of salt, a strand of tobacco, an arrowhead, and money. This fee must be paid to ensure success. Therefore, initiation is very vital for any would-be traditional medical practitioner if he/she is to succeed and similarly prevents "quacks" from practicing the art of medicine making (Shishima, 2006).

d. Also, among the Tiv of our study area, if a non-initiate in (to) any akombo (healing rituals) dares prepare medicines for any patient, the treatment will not only be inefficacious, but also the disease and others will affect the so-called "traditional healer." This connotes that initiation opens the way for the would-be traditional medical practitioner to prepare efficacious medicines. At initiation, the trainee is similarly bestowed with the powers of communicating with the spirits through prayers and incantations (Njoku, 2002; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016). Thus, no medicine is regarded as potent without religious rites because the practitioners are apprehensive of the involvement of the spirits in their trade. At all stages of medicine-making, the powers of the spirit are invoked through prayers and incantations (Njoku, 2002; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016).

Forms of Traditional Medical Practitioners in Makurdi Local Government Area

Traditional medical practitioners are usually trained to deal with all forms of human ill-health, internal and external, including psychiatry. But this did not imply the absence of specialization. In every community, there are traditional healers known for their specialty in one or two areas of medicine (Njoku, 2002; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016). There were at least two types of traditional medical practitioners or more in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State during the period under review. There were general-purpose traditional medical

practitioners and special-purpose traditional medical practitioners.

a. General-purpose traditional medical practitioner was a description of traditional healers who were capable of treating/curing a large number of ailments. General-purpose traditional medical practitioners were usually trained to treat many different types of ailments. By being versed in traditional medicine, they thrived and focused on a large number of conditions, rather than on a particular area of medicine that typically arises from a lack of equilibrium of the mind, body and environment (Ogbu Daniel, 2022; Rosemary Abari, 2022; Bunde Dzurgba, 2022). For example, a traditional orthopaedic is a special-purpose traditional medical practitioner that is trained to correct disorders of the bones, joints, ligaments, or muscles, while a general-purpose traditional medical practitioner sometimes engaged in the correction of disorders of bones, joints, ligaments, or muscles mostly as first aid before a specialist is contacted. The ability to treat a large number of ailments allows general-purpose traditional medical practitioners to be quite versatile in terms of the medicinal properties and potencies of herbs and plants (Doshima Kile, 2022; Isah Nuhu, 2022). They were deemed to possess mystical and extra-sensory powers. This enabled them to harness the cosmic forces and so exercise considerable influence on the elements such as plants, animals and the weather (Atule Uver, 2022, Tunde Nuhu, 2022; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016).

b. Special-purpose traditional medical practitioners were trained for one specific ailment or class of ailments and most often wouldn't be able to treat/cure many ailments. However, they were highly efficient at carrying out their specialties (specialized areas of medicine) and extremely reliable (Atule Uver, 2022; Maryrose Chukwuemeka, 2022; Tunde Nuhu, 2022). They were also deemed to possess mystical and extra-sensory powers. This enabled them to harness the cosmic forces and so exercise considerable influence the elements such as plants, animals and the weather (Abu Iorbee, 2022; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016). In our area of study orthopaedic is an area of medicine in which traditional medical practitioners demonstrated remarkable expertise and continue to do so. Some specialized in paediatrics and were versed in children-related diseases such as convulsion. Some established reputation in gynaecology, involving pre-natal and post-natal medicine. They administered drugs to effect abortion, stabilize a stubborn pregnancy, induce and facilitate labour, and activate the flow of a mother's breast milk. Some traditional medical practitioners were such experts that by merely caressing the tummy of a pregnant woman, they could accurately tell the gender of the unborn baby (Aisha Ibrahim, 2022; Bunde Dzurgba, 2022; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016).

   Furthermore, some traditional medical practitioners specialized in the production of amulets and charms which their clients could ward off evil forces. Some specialized in divination and so were deemed be able to decipher the cosmic explanations of ill-health and other misfortunes. They prescribed suitable remedies against such misfortunes and these often-involved ritual sacrifices (Atule Uver, 2022; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016). This infers that in contemporary times, the reservoir of traditional medical know-how continues to be exploited, even in spite of the attractive advertisements eulogizing modern medicine and decrying traditional medicine. All in all, traditional medicine has continued to aim at restoring the individual's equilibrium with the total environment.

The Roles of Traditional Medical Practitioners in Makurdi Local Government Area

Traditional medical practitioners are highly respected persons in African society. Their importance is borne out by the presence of many traditional medical practitioners in many African cities. Their increasing relevance in the changing Nigerian society is deemed to be considerable, knowing that their clientele comes from all sectors of the community and includes politicians, highly placed government officials, university lecturers and students, businessmen and military officers (Andrew Ogbole, 2022; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016). There were at least six roles of traditional medical practitioners or more in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State during the period under review. There are preserver of traditional social/religious patterns, the role of healer, the role of protector, the judicial role, the role of success maker and specific roles during conflicts.

i. *Preserver of Traditional Social/Religious Patterns:* Traditional medical practitioners are the main professional functionaries of traditional practices. They thus serve as a symbolic link with the past. They reconcile those with problems regarding their relationship with their ancestors. They keep alive the knowledge and observance of clan taboos; from time to time, they credit disease or calamity to the breaking of a taboo and arrange ritual cleansing accordingly (Godwin Ali, 2022; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016).

ii. *The Role of Healer:* Traditional medical practitioners treat people with different ailments. The illnesses they treat include stomach problems, dizziness, tuberculosis, mental illness, menstrual problems, heart problems, chest problems, snake bites, fertility difficulties, etc. The traditional medical practitioners' knowledge makes them know various combinations of medicines, both herbal and magical, which can cure clients. Sometimes they refer a client to the hospital, especially if they consider the problem to be a "European Sickness" (Godwin Ali, 2022; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016).

ii. *The Role of Protector:* Traditional medical practitioners protect their communities and clients against the forces of evil, both human and spiritual. The fear of evil spirits, witchcraft, and sorcerers is very great, and their presence is recognized by Africans. Though they offer protection and alleviate the immediate fear, at the same time they perpetrate the system of belief, which is the underlying cause of the tension (Andrew Ogbole, 2022; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016).

iii. *The Judicial Role:* The traditional medical practitioners, to an extent, play some judicial roles in African societies. They administer oaths (*chia)* and ordeals (*kor),* thereby becoming a Judge, arbitrator and peace-maker among those who are willing to bring their problems to them (Atule Uver, 2022; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016).

iv. *The Role of Success Maker:* Traditional medical practitioners offer success to people. For the weak and those who suffer frustration and failure in any business endeavour, they offer the way to success in life. They handle problems such as those of unemployment and fear of losing a job. They equally prepare charms for success in trade, examination, love, marriage, or simply for physical strength (Godwin Ali, 2022; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016).

v. *Specific Roles during Conflicts:* Africans are known to take special care to protect themselves because they have a profound belief in a spiritual universe; here phenomena and events in the universe are determined not only by material and physical laws and forces but also by invisible powers and spiritual beings. This explains why Africans employ the service of traditional medical practitioners to provide protective charms and amulets for the protection of the homesteads and the families and other property (Atule Uver, 2022; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016).

Challenges Associated with Traditional Medicine in Makurdi Local Government Area

We may at this juncture outline the challenges associated with traditional medicine in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. Some of the challenges have been mentioned in passing or obliquely in the course of our discussion above.

a. The ethnocentric and medicocentric tendencies of the Western hegemonic mentality that are usually paraded by most stakeholders in modern medicine remain a very serious challenge. It is a general belief in the medical circle that TM defies scientific procedures in terms of objectivity, measurement, codification, and classification. Even then, there are indications that the physical aspects of TM (i.e., the physical ingredients) can be scientifically studied and analyzed (Ogbu Daniel, 2022; Rosemary Abari, 2022; Abdullahi, 2011).

b. Widespread reported cases of fake healers and healing, though, this is not limited to TM practice only (Bunde Dzurgba, 2022; Abdullahi, 2011). It is observed that since proficient healers could be rendering beneficial services to a large population, it might be a common place to encounter quacks among the practitioners. In the same vein, it is noted that "in the current economic climate and amid the concomitant unemployment, there is a marked increase in the ranks of traditional healers, among

whom there are, unfortunately, quite a number of charlatans" (Godwin Ali, 2022; Abdullahi, 2011).

c. The process of colonialism and neo-colonialism has greatly impacted the use of TM in both rural and urban communities of Makurdi. All forms and practices of traditional medicine and its practice have been negatively impacted by the practices and policies of colonization. Neo-colonialism in its multi-faceted ramifications has underestimated and undervalued traditional medicine and contributed to the loss of culture and identity in indigenous communities. The result has been the marginalization of indigenous traditional systems of knowledge of medicine, and in some cases, it has resulted in the alteration or the loss of the practice (Atule Uver, 2022).

d. The craze for modernity and globalization has also endangered traditional medicine. Traditional medicine has often been dismissed as unsystematic and incapable of meeting the rapid economic growth needs of the modern world. Historically, modern societies have regarded indigenous people and traditional medicine (tradition) as less progressive, and as a result many groups of indigenous peoples, especially their younger generations, are influenced to devalue their native cultures and to adopt new lifestyles and technologies. The lust for modernity and new technologies is threatening the loss of a great store of knowledge held by native people and has contributed to mass social upheavals and distress apparent in high suicide rates, substance abuse, and troubling health statistics (Godwin Ali, 2022).

e. The lack of systematic documented diagnosis and healing procedures. Probably illiteracy and secrecy in the practice preclude communication and collation of information they could adopt in modern scientific methods in its development (Apenda, 2016).

f. Inadequate diagnostic techniques of dictating particular illnesses and diseases. Extant records have indicated that millions of Nigerian children die from epidemics because traditional healers could not diagnose the exact problem. For instance, a baby suffering from dehydration or lack of sufficient food supplements is ignorantly carried from one traditional healer to other seeking herbs for the treatment of malnutrition (Apenda, 2016).

g. Overdosage is another constraint of traditional medicine. It is observed that the traditional healer measures dosage in cups rather than in teaspoons; hence they do not know that it leads to poisoning and lack of therapy (Atule Uver, 2022; Apenda, 2016). It is also noted that the policies and objectives of the government on national health issues affect traditional medicine. It is significant here that politics is seen influencing the nature, scope, and patronage of traditional medicine in Nigeria (Apenda, 2016).

Challenges Associated with the Practice of Traditional Medicine in Makurdi Local Government Area

There are a lot of challenges associated with the practice of traditional medicine in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State during the period under review, although every traditional medical practitioner has his/her issues to deal with. However, the issues common to almost all traditional medical practitioners were low value of traditional medical practice, lack of formal contract in training, lack of certification, no harmonized curriculum, and lack of governmental support (Godwin Ali, 2022; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016).

a. *Low value of traditional medical practice:* It does appear that traditional medical practice in Markurdi and the diaspora has not flourished, as one would expect owing to attractive advertisements eulogizing modern medicine and decrying traditional medicine or low socio-cultural image of traditional medical practice observed globally to the misperception in the public domain that a traditional medical practitioner is a witch doctor which is but a fraction of traditional medical practice. It seems to us trite that such a public negative perspective of traditional medical practitioners has kept many young adults that ordinarily would have been interested out of the practice. It is felt that the traditional medical practice is populated by not-too-bright individuals, academic failures, and never do wells, which some people refer to derogatorily as the *"practice of juju" or" witch craft"*. In the distant past, the success stories posted by successful traditional medical practitioners were significant wake-up calls for their cohorts in

their communities to lobby or solicit through their families to be "recruited" as traditional medicine apprentices. They became role models, reference groups, and significant others, and copying them was a major boost to the vocation.

b. *Lack of formal contracts in training:* Another major challenge that traditional medical practice has faced over the years is the absence of a clear, formalized contract in training. It is expected in some quarters that contracts of apprenticeship/training have to be written to subsist and be valid in law. This is clearly not the case, as it seems to us reasonable to argue that the attrition rate in apprenticeships/trainings of traditional medical practitioners may not be rosy, and this needs effective monitoring. In the absence of tight social bonds that will ensure that the master or professional (experienced traditional medical practitioner) respects the reciprocal relationship or verbal agreements, the master (experienced traditional medical practitioner) has very easily found escape routes or the opportunity or convenient excuses not to "settle" the "apprentices," meaning not to equip the successful apprentices and set him on his own journey for the vocation and life.

c. *Lack of certification:* Another challenge posed to traditional medical practice in Makurdi and Nigeria at large is evident in the lack of certification, which has greatly hampered the development of the vocation. One may argue that awarding certificates, or the undue emphasis on credentials, what is known as credentialism, has been the bane of education in Nigeria, yet it seems incomplete for a training programme, vocational or practical, not to have evidence of having successfully completed a programme, and even the duration. This has been a major hindrance, making it difficult to separate the successful apprentices/trainees from the uninitiated or untrained practitioners (quacks) in the vocation/profession.

d. *No harmonized curriculum in training:* Similarly, the content of the curriculum may be another stumbling block. There are no mechanisms to check what is being taught, as some of the apprentices/trainees do more household chores rather than what they have been brought to do, under the traditional, informal arrangement that still holds sway in traditional medical practice in Makurdi and Nigeria at large. It is, of course, this aspect that is worrisome, and it seems to us improper, as it could be very easily seen as outdated or old-fashioned, rural, unsystematic, and incapable of meeting the rapid economic growth needs of the modern world since it does not assume the familiar and dominant Western model with classes, libraries, laboratories, chemicals, and reagents as pivotal components (Njoku, 2002; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016). It is not, therefore, surprising that traditional medical practice is held in such contempt and hostility as to attract such derogatory references as "archaic" and "unsystematic" (Njoku, 2002; Shishima, 2006; Apenda, 2016). Although, the traditional medical practice internship/training relationship in Makurdi is an unequal one, both parties expect something in return. It, therefore, cannot be skewed or one-sided if it is going to be sustainable.

e. *Lack of governmental support:* The vocation/profession in Makurdi and the diaspora is left entirely in the hands of the individual master or professional (experienced traditional medical practitioner). No funds are made available to subsidize the training costs. The Nigerian state does not consider it necessary, and has not seen the propriety of encouraging the vocation to succeed and transform itself. Any success of the vocation across the divide in Nigeria has to be rightly placed on the doorstep of individuals who have dedicated their lives and shown love for the vocation/profession. Needless to say, this marginalization has continued to this day. The lack of support from the Nigerian state is understood in the light of the prebendal, patrimonial, and rentier character of the state. What is more perplexing, however, is that the component units, the states in Nigeria, have also not paid any heed to what is happening in the world of traditional medical practice. It is this official neglect of traditional medical practices that is, in our view, the singular and most important factor that has affected the vocation/profession and stopped it from flourishing. These challenges notwithstanding, there is increasing evidence that traditional medicine and its practice would continue to hold sway in both rural and urban communities of Makurdi and Nigeria at large even when modern healthcare facilities are

available to meet a wide range of healthcare needs.

Implications of the Study on Traditional Medicine in Makurdi

A comprehensive study on the practice and challenges of traditional medicine in Makurdi has profound and multifaceted implications, impacting various aspects of the community and beyond:

a. *For Traditional Medicine Practitioners:* The study reinforces traditional medicine practices, enhancing their credibility and professionalism. This would lead to improved access to resources, government support, funding for research and training, and inclusion in healthcare insurance schemes. The study will also improve the quality of care by identifying knowledge gaps and skill deficiencies among practitioners. This information will be used to design targeted training programmes to enhance diagnostic, therapeutic, and counseling skills. The study will also contribute to the development of quality control mechanisms for traditional medicines, building public trust and confidence in the practice. It also emphasizes the importance of conserving medicinal plant species and their habitats, leading to sustainable harvesting and cultivation practices. The study also encourages intergenerational knowledge transfer, preserving cultural heritage and ensuring the continuity of traditional medicine practices.

b. *For Policymakers and Healthcare Professionals:* The study provides policymakers with data and evidence to formulate informed policies regarding the regulation, integration, and promotion of traditional medicine. It will also guide resource allocation for the development and support of traditional medicine, ensuring that resources are directed towards evidence-based interventions. The study will also improve healthcare delivery by facilitating the integration of traditional medicine into the existing healthcare system, leading to the establishment of referral systems, collaborative care models, and combined treatment protocols. Supporting traditional medicine will improve access to healthcare services, especially in underserved and rural areas. Additionally, the study will inform the development of public health programmes that utilize traditional medicine practices, such as herbal remedies for common ailments and preventive measures for chronic diseases.

c. *For the Community:* Supporting traditional medicine will improve health outcomes by providing affordable healthcare options for the community. It will also help preserve cultural identity and diversity, as traditional medicine is an integral part of the Tiv people's cultural heritage. Supporting traditional medicine will also create economic opportunities for local communities, particularly women who play a significant role in collecting, processing, and distributing medicinal plants. Furthermore, involving the community in the development and implementation of traditional medicine programmes empowers them to take ownership of their healthcare.

d. *For Researchers and Academics:* The study will stimulate interdisciplinary research, contribute to drug discovery and development, contribute to knowledge dissemination through academic publications and conferences, and inform the development of academic programmes and training courses on traditional medicine, fostering the next generation of researchers and practitioners.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Nigeria at independence inherited weak and dualistic health care structures, being almost perfect mirror images of the domestic economies, with the traditional and modern sectors coexisting side by side (i.e., traditional and modern health care systems are more complementary than competitive), and Benue State was not an exception. During its creation, in 1976, Benue State inherited weak health services, which were understaffed, distorted, and located mainly in urban areas; in consequence, the bulk of the population, which resided in rural areas, relied on traditional medicine to meet its basic health care needs. This study has succeeded in bringing to the limelight the practice and challenges of traditional medicine in Makurdi Local Government of Benue State. It shows that traditional medicine is not a substitute for modern medicine as some scholars believed; rather, they are complementary. The study has also showcased the indispensable role of traditional medicine in medicare development.

Indeed, traditional medicine practitioners do not only provide training for the apprentices; they also provide mentoring services and serve as Medicare providers. If the government can support the practice and deepen the vocation, she can comfortably fix the medical care problem that is affecting Nigerians and as well drastically reduce medical tourism in the country. All the government at all levels needs to do is to create the enabling environment for the vocation to flourish as a direct intervention in the upgrading of the vocation, increasing the general skill levels, and massively supporting through injection of funds is a panacea to the observed flaws in the vocation/profession.

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EFFECT OF ETHNOCHEMISTRY INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND RETENTION IN CHEMISTRY IN BAUCHI STATE NIGERIA

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Academic Achievement, Chemistry, Ethno-science, Instructional Strategy, Retention

ABSTRACT
The study investigated the effect of ethno-science instructional strategy (EEI) on senior secondary school students' achievement and retention in chemistry. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The design of the study was pretest, posttest, and quasi-experimental experimental design. The population of the study was 20604 senior Secondary School year two (SS 2) chemistry students in Bauchi state, Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling technique was used at six levels in selecting the sample size of this study. One hundred and ninety-three (193) SS II chemistry students from four intact classes in four senior secondary schools made up the sample for the study. Chemistry Achievement Test (CAT) with Kuder-Richardson formula reliability index of 0.94 was used for data collection after validation by experts. Data were collected by administering the instrument as pretest and posttest after treatment of the groups. The data obtained were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). The results showed that there is a significant difference in the mean achievement and retention test scores of students in the experimental and control groups in favour of the experimental group taught using EEI strategy. However, based on school location the instructional approach was successful in helping students retain and apply knowledge over time, irrespective of their school location. The study recommended that strategy improved senior secondary school academic achievement and retention irrespective of school location, hence it should be encouraged.

Introduction

The miracle workers on the road towards national development are science, technology and mathematics education (STME) this explains why most countries of the world particularly the developed ones make huge investments in them. For any country that wants to maintain its independence, sovereignty, self-reliance, ensure growth, and have its head held high among civilized countries most have a sound STME (Ifeyinwa, 2016; Okwara & Upu, 2017, Halliru, 2021; Suwaiba & Halliru, 2022). It is an instrument for worldwide effectiveness and profession (Fomunyam, 2019). Hence, a lot of premium has been placed on its teaching and learning so as to achieve the key aim of science education, as contained in the National Policy on Education. Nevertheless, for decades, there have been repetitive calls for improvements and revolutions aimed at improving Science Education in Nigeria. These means that there are problems in Science Education in Nigeria that searches for its value-addition and improvement so as to achieve the national purposes and goals. The objective of Science Education in Nigeria as reflected in the National Policy on Education is to produce scientifically literate personalities that are concerned with high competence for balanced judgments and actions for national development. Similarly, it is part of the objectives of Science Education include the need to foster curiosity, enthusiasm, critical reflection and objectivity to develop students' attitude toward science (FRN, 2009). In addition, the National Policy on Education states that STME should be taught in an integrated manner in the schools (FGN, 2014). This mean to empower the students to be able to unravel day-to-day problems encountered in their environment by applying the science knowledge and skills gained so as to be self-assured and self-determining.

In Nigerian Senior Secondary School, science curriculum Chemistry is one of the core science subjects taught in Nigerian Secondary Schools. It is a subdivision of knowledge that is concern with the study of material substances and the physico-chemical, transformational and structural changes the material undergo in the universe. It is a popular and mandatory subject among Senior Secondary School Subjects in Nigeria due to its nature, central important position and novel role toward national development. Thus, for Nigerian post primary candidate, credit in Chemistry Examination (SSCE) result is measure of the prerequisite for the study of discipline in Sciences, and all science and Technology related courses at high educational level in Nigeria. However, in spite of the importance of chemistry and its educational value, which is relevant to the need of individual learner, economics and technological breakthrough of a nation and the efforts of researchers to improve on its teaching and learning the academic achievement of students in the subjects is not very encouraging. Literature have been reporting displeasure and no considerable improvement with regard to academic achievement and retention of students' in senior secondary school certificate examination (SSCE) in Chemistry (WAEC, Chief Examiners report, 2020; Chikendu, Obikezie, & Abumchukwu, 2021). This unfavourable remark has been associated with many factors by different researchers to different various factors, UNESCO (2006); Ugwu and Diovu (2016); Khaddour, et al. (2017); Ibe and Nwosu (2017); Shumba (2017; Siwale, Singh & Hayumbu, 2020).

Hereafter, it is part of the necessities of learning that, it should be retained. Nonetheless that should go afar from simple memory but relatively meaningful memory. Simple memory indicates rote-learning, then meaningful memory implies meaningful learning. This brings about ineradicable meaningful learning. The learning style which covers only 'remembering' is simple memory and is not encouraged because is the lowest cognition stage. Whereas, meaningful learning includes 'remembering', 'understanding' and 'application' stages of the cognition. In this case the search for retention ability of students becomes of paramount important to researchers. Researchers were also found curious in search for means either in or outside the classroom by which students' ability to regurgitate learned knowledge after a long period of time could be enhanced (Azuka, 2012). Hence, there are some things that enhance students' retention and some things that retard students' retention. Ideally, any phenomenon, materials or activities in learning situation should improve students' academic achievement and poster retention ability, but those phenomenon that leads to misperception, misunderstanding or misreading between learning activities or materials hinder the swiftness, effectiveness and quickens forgetting (Bichi, 2002 & Muhammad, 2011).

However, instructional ways of realizing improved academic achievement and retention as a shift to successful chemistry understanding and usefulness it should be taught based on sociocultural context of the students. Which

involve social and traditional applies, indigenous knowledge and applies and other daily lifespan familiarities of the students (Afrianawati, et al., 2016). Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is a wide term that designate numerous local knowledge completely held and accomplished by Native people of a given culture or community. It also holds Indigenous Science (IS) which means restrictively indigenous knowledge related to science of a certain culture (Siwale, Singh & Hayumbu, 2020). The broad Indigenous or cultural practices that have scientific relevance are referred to by experts in science education (Peni, 2015; Abonyi, Ugama, Okafor, & Abiam, 2016;). as ethno-science. This is a sub-system of IK that includes an description of the natural creation, which has real-world presentations and is used for extrapolative purposes by a specific individuals in a specific culture (Hwang, 2013). Ethno-science is the scientific information that is original in a given culture and is concerned with natural substances and proceedings so that it may have possibly the same divisions as western science which include ethno-physics, ethno-mathematics, ethno-biology, ethno-chemistry to mention but a few. Hence, this study employed ethno-chemistry instructional strategy to teaching chemistry as modification to the conventional teaching method. Essentially, ethno-chemistry instructional strategy utilizes the initial chemistry related knowledge and experiences found within the students' culture and environment to explain new concepts in chemistry classroom. (Abumchukwu, Eke, & Achugbu, 2021 accordingly, ethno-chemistry in this study refers to the initial chemistry related knowledge and experiences found within the students' culture and environment that are used to explain new concepts in chemistry classroom.

Hence, this study employed Ethno-chemistry Based Approach to teaching chemistry as an alternative or modification to the conventional teaching approach. Basically, ethno-chemistry is the study of chemical ideas found in any culture, where appreciation of cultural heritage is preserved. It describes the chemical practices of identifiable cultural groups. It comprises of various chemically related cultural and community practices of a particular people (Singh & Chibuye, 2016). For this study, accordingly, ethno as crossed with chemistry (i.e. ethno+chemistry) denotes to numerous original, old-style, socio-historico-scientific applies and background insights of chemistry of known culture of a specific individuals at a specific setting.

Similarly, available literature shows the evidence of the effects of ethno-science instructional strategies to teaching and learning for example, on academic achievement, interest and retention in mathematics (Abonyi, et al., 2016); academic performance and attitude in physics (Chongo & Baliga, 2019). This suggests that related results are likely when ethno-chemistry is functional in chemistry classroom setting. It can also assistance students to be conscious of the part in which chemistry shows in their commonplace be in this world. In the interim, Marasinghe (2016) succeeded in the synthesis and introduction of Unit in Chemistry Syllabus of students in Grade 11 and 12 titled 'Traditional Chemical Practices' of ancient Papua of New Guinea. Correspondingly, Fasasi (2018) prospers in developing an instructional framework of ethno-science for teaching science subjects in Nigeria. Consequently, the study re-exposed the usability of ethno-chemistry in the resolute effect of Ethnoc-hemistry instructional strategy on Senior Secondary School Chemistry Students' Academic Achievement and Retention in Bauchi State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Recognizing the novel part of chemistry on the road to the progress of humankind and carrier importance makes its academic achievement and retention by students vital. This can be visualized form the level of academic achievement and retention of students in chemistry at various examinations both internal and external. This stresses for the need of any probable instructional strategy that will improve chemistry students' achievement and retention in the subject. However, in Nigeria, report form summative evaluation bodies on chemistry shows encouraging results in the research setting. This claim can be supported by West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) academic achievement in chemistry in Bauchi state, between, 2018-2023 (Table 1).

Table 1: Students' Academic Achievement in WAEC (2018 - 2023) in Bauchi state

Years	Number of registered Candidate	Number of Student With Credit and Above	Percentage Pass
2018	26,202	1,733	7%
2019	34,969	6,524	18%
2020	11,989	2,901	24%
2021	17,123	9,242	27%
2022	7,118	4,500	47%
2023	7,228	4,625	61%

Source: Bauchi State Directorate for examination and Record 2023.

Table 1, illustrate the percentage pass in credit and above in WASSCE in chemistry over the years.. The lowest percentage was 7% in 2018 and the highest percentage 61% in 2023. There has been a gradual increase in the percentage pass 7% in 2018 and 18% in 2019. The trend continued to increase to 24% in 2020, 27% in 2021 and to 47% in 2022 until it riches peak that is 61% in 2023. Observations from the percentage of students with credit and above in WASSCE was below 50% pass except in 2023 which was 61%. Though, there was improvement in the percentage pass this seems to suggest that a lot need to be done to improve the percentage passes. This would give students more chance to gain admission into other science related courses in the university and other institutions of higher learning.

In this study, this problem is connected with the inattention of teachers in assimilating relevant cultural and indigenous does and practices from around the students in teaching and learning chemistry concepts. This claim is backed by the assertions made by Ugwu and Diovu (2016); studies that reported the rejection of students' culture in the way chemistry and other sciences are taught in Africa and Nigeria inclusive which in turn lead to poor academic achievement. However, an alarming bell of poor students' retention abilities of learned concepts was toll by (Ogbeba & Ajayi, 2016). Hence, students' academic achievement is a function of student' ability to retained the concepts learned in chemistry. .Similarly, students measured chemistry as difficult subject who led poor students' ability to retain concepts learned which in turn manifest in their poor academic achievement in the subject. Also, chemistry teachers adopt "examination focused teaching" in which fundamental concept that has relevant simple analogues in the student background experience and environment are not utilized. Consequently, students possess low retention, and adopt "read-and-pass learning style" and could not explain simple everyday occurrence around them with which meaningful learning can take place. This entails the role of teacher to determine the students' previous knowledge and commencement before a new knowledge or concept is taught. In this respect, Ethno-chemistry instructional strategy as the teaching strategy involving cultural and local practices which were already familiar, by the students recommend its practicability in improving academic achievement and hence retention capability of students'.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of ethno-science enriched instruction (EEI) on rural and urban secondary schools' chemistry students' academic achievement, attitude and retention. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the effect of EEI strategy on academic achievement of secondary school chemistry students in Bauchi state.

2. Determine the effect of EEI strategy on retention abilities of secondary school chemistry students in Bauchi state.

3. Determine the effect of EEI on retention of secondary school students in chemistry based on school location in Bauchi state.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the pre-test and post-test mean scores difference of secondary school chemistry students taught using ethno – science-enriched instruction (EEI) strategy and those taught using conventional teaching method (CTM) in Bauchi state?

2. What is the post-test and retention mean scores difference of secondary school chemistry students taught using EEI strategy and those taught using CTM in Bauchi state?

3. What is the post-test and retention mean scores of secondary school chemistry students in urban and rural schools taught using EEI strategy in Bauchi state?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were stated and tested at 0.05 alpha level;

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in the mean pre-test and post-test scores of secondary school chemistry students in Bauchi state.

Ho_2. There is no significant difference between the retention of chemistry students taught using EEI and those taught using CTM in Bauchi state.

Ho_3. There is no significant difference between the academic achievements of secondary school chemistry students taught using EEI based on school location in Bauchi state.

Methods

The design of the study was pre-test, post-test, control group, quasi-experimental, 2x2 Factorial Matrix as recommended by (Kelinger, 1973) that recommended minimum number of subjects is 30 in each experimental and control for an experimental study. However, 2x2 factorial design allows the researchers to understand the effects of two independent variables (each with two levels) on the dependent variable. The study involves experimental group that were taught chemistry concepts using ethno-science-enriched-instructional strategy (EEI), and a control taught chemistry concepts using the conventional lecture method (CTM)). Both the experimental and control groups consist of subjects from rural and urban schools.

There are three categories of variables in the study. The independent variable (that is method of instruction) manipulated at two levels namely, Ethno science Instructional Strategy (EEI). Conventional Teaching Method (CTM). The dependent variables or outcome variables namely; Academic Achievement and Retention. The moderator variable categorized at two levels. That is Urban and Rural locations (School location) respectively. The population of this study comprised of all senior secondary school students (SSII) in the 2022/2023 academic session in Bauchi state. Accordingly, the total number of (SSII) students that offer chemistry is 20604 from 221 public senior secondary schools spread across the three education zones in Bauchi state. The Sample of the study comprised 193 SS II Chemistry students drawn from four intact classes of the four senior secondary schools selected for the study. The sample was obtained through a multi-stage sampling technique. Chemistry Achievement Test (CAT) was used as the instrument for data collection. The Chemistry Achievement Test (CAT) was reshuffled to serve as retention test after two weeks of treatment. The Chemistry Achievement Test (CAT) was face validated by experts from chemistry, physical sciences education departments of Moddibo Adama University Yola and an experienced chemistry teacher from government girls' college Sakwa (special school) in Bauchi State respectively. Reliability coefficient of CAT was determined by administering it to 40 SSII Chemistry students of Government Secondary school Madara (which is not part of the sample). Kuder-Richardson formula was used for the estimation of the reliability coeffient of the test items. Internal

consistency co-efficient of 0.94 was obtained, showing that the instrument is reliable for the study. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) with the pre-test scores as serving as covariates.

Results

Presentations in this section are based on research questions and hypotheses respectively:

Research Question 1: What is the pre-test and post-test mean scores difference of secondary school chemistry students taught using ethno – science-enriched instruction (EEI) strategy and those taught using conventional teaching method (CTM) in Bauchi state?

Table 2: Pre-Test and Post-Test Mean Scores Difference of Secondary School Chemistry Students Taught Using Ethno – Science-Enriched Instruction (EEI) Strategy and Those Taught Using Conventional Teaching Method (CTM) in Bauchi State.

Group	N	Pretest Mean	S.D	Posttest Mean	S.D	Mean difference
Ethno – Science Enriched Instruction	96	14.30	3.86	32.56	4.80	18.26
Conventional Teaching Method	97	12.78	2.82	24.32	4.68	11.54

Table 2 presents the pre-test and post-test mean scores for the two groups. The group taught using EEI showed a notable improvement in mean scores from the pre-test (M = 14.30, SD = 3.86) to the post-test (M = 32.56, SD = 4.80), with a mean difference of 18.26. This suggests a substantial learning gain attributed to the EEI strategy. In contrast, the group taught using CTM also demonstrated improvement but to a lesser extent. Their pre-test mean score was lower (M = 12.78, SD = 2.82) compared to the EEI group, and the post-test mean score increased to 24.32 (SD = 4.68), resulting in a mean difference of 11.54. These results indicate that both instructional methods led to improvements in students' chemistry knowledge, but the EEI strategy resulted in a higher mean difference between pre-test and post-test scores compared to the CTM.

Research Question 2: What is the post-test and retention mean scores difference of secondary school chemistry students taught using EEI strategy and those taught using CTM in Bauchi state?

TABLE 3: Post-Test and Retention Mean Scores Difference of Secondary School Chemistry Students Taught Using EEI Strategy and those Taught Using CTM in Bauchi State.

Group	N	Retention test Mean	S.D	Posttest Mean	S.D	Mean difference
Ethno – Science Enriched Instruction	96	34.79	4.96	32.56	4.80	2.23
Conventional Teaching Method	97	25.49	4.26	24.32	4.68	1.17

Based on the results from Table 3, which compares the post-test and retention mean scores of secondary school chemistry students taught using Ethno-Science Enriched Instruction (EEI) strategy and Conventional Teaching Method (CTM) in Bauchi State, several key findings emerge. Firstly, regarding the post-test scores, students in the EEI group achieved a mean score of 32.56 with a standard deviation of 4.80, while students in the CTM group achieved a slightly lower mean score of 24.32 with a standard deviation of 4.68. This indicates a statistically significant mean difference of 8.24 points favoring the EEI strategy. This difference suggests that students exposed to EEI performed markedly better on the post-test compared to those taught through CTM. Secondly, looking at retention test scores, students taught with EEI maintained a higher mean score of 34.79 with a standard deviation of 4.96, whereas those taught with CTM had a lower mean score of 25.49 with a standard deviation of 4.26. This

shows a significant mean difference of 9.30 points in favour of the EEI strategy for retention scores. This suggests that not only did EEI lead to higher immediate test scores, but it also facilitated better retention of knowledge over time compared to CTM. These results strongly support the effectiveness of the Ethno-Science Enriched Instruction (EEI) strategy over the Conventional Teaching Method (CTM) in enhancing both immediate learning outcomes (post-test scores) and longer-term retention of knowledge (retention test scores) among secondary school chemistry students in Bauchi State.

Research Question 3

What is the post-test and retention mean scores of secondary school chemistry students in urban and rural schools taught using EEI strategy in Bauchi state?

Table 4: Post-Test and Retention Mean Scores of Secondary School Chemistry Students in Urban and Rural Schools Taught Using EEI Strategy in Bauchi State

Group	School Location	N	Retention test Mean	Retention test S.D	Posttest Mean	Posttest S.D	Mean difference
EEI	Urban	49	34.41	4.93	32.18	5.24	2.23
	Rural	47	35.19	5.02	32.96	4.31	2.23

Based on the results presented in Table 4, which compare the post-test and retention mean scores of secondary school chemistry students in urban and rural schools taught using the EEI (Explore, Explain, Illustrate) strategy in Bauchi State, several insights can be derived.

In urban schools, the mean retention test score was 34.41 (SD = 4.93), while the mean post-test score was 32.18 (SD = 5.24), resulting in a mean difference of 2.23 points. This suggests that students in urban schools maintained a slightly higher level of understanding after the teaching intervention compared to their initial post-test achievement.

Conversely, in rural schools, the mean retention test score was slightly higher at 35.19 (SD = 5.02), with a mean post-test score of 32.96 (SD = 4.31), also resulting in a mean difference of 2.23 points. This indicates a similar pattern of retention and performance improvement following the EEI strategy, though with slightly higher scores in rural schools compared to urban schools.

These results suggest that the EEI strategy was effective in both urban and rural settings in Bauchi State, as evidenced by the consistent mean difference of 2.23 points between post-test and retention scores in both groups. This consistency implies that the instructional approach was successful in helping students retain and apply their knowledge over time, irrespective of their school location.

Testing Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance in this study.

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in the mean pre-test and post-test scores of secondary school chemistry students in Bauchi state.

Table 5: Summary of ANCOVA of Effect of Ethno - Science - Enriched Instruction (EEI) on the Academic Achievement of Secondary School Chemistry Students.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	4171.864[a]	2	2085.932	97.082	.000	.505
Intercept	10414.405	1	10414.405	484.700	.000	.718

Pretest	1.685	1	1.685	.078	.780	.000
Teaching methods	4003.525	1	4003.525	186.329	.000	.495
Error	4082.395	190	21.486			
Total	183337.000	193				
Corrected Total	8254.259	192				

a. R Squared = .505 (Adjusted R Squared = .500)

The results of the analysis in Table 5 show the summary of ANCOVA conducted to test whether there is significant effect of ethno-science-enriched instruction (EEI) on the academic achievement of secondary school chemistry students. The results reveal that there is significant effect of ethno-science-enriched instruction (EEI) on the academic achievement of secondary school chemistry students, F (1, 192) = 186.329, p< 0.05 with a moderate effect size as indicated by the Partial Eta Squared value of 0.495. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Ho_2. There is no significant difference between the retention of chemistry students taught using EEI and those taught using CTM in Bauchi state.

Table 6: Summary of ANCOVA of Effect of EEI on the Retention Scores of Secondary School Chemistry Students.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	3373.146[a]	2	1686.573	76.409	.000	.446
Intercept	7335.240	1	7335.240	332.318	.000	.636
Pretest	94.859	1	94.859	4.298	.040	.022
Teaching methods	2883.579	1	2883.579	130.639	.000	.407
Error	4193.859	190	22.073			
Total	163449.000	193				
Corrected Total	7567.005	192				

a. R Squared = .446 (Adjusted R Squared = .440)

The results of analysis in Table 6 reveal that there is significant effect of EEI on the retention of subjects in chemistry, F(1, 192) =130.639, p< 0.05 with a moderate effect size as indicated by the Partial Eta Squared value of 0.407. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Ho4. There is no significant difference between the academic achievements of secondary school chemistry students taught using EEI based on school location in Bauchi state.

Table 7: Summary of ANCOVA of Effect of EEI on the Academic Achievement of Secondary School Chemistry Students Based On School Location.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	14.883[a]	2	7.441	.298	.743	.006
Intercept	7301.006	1	7301.006	292.046	.000	.758
Pre test	.163	1	.163	.007	.936	.000
School location	13.180	1	13.180	.527	.470	.006
Error	2324.950	93	24.999			
Total	118544.000	96				
Corrected Total	2339.833	95				

a. R Squared = .006 (Adjusted R Squared = -.015)

As shown in Table 7, the effects of EEI on the academic achievement of subjects in chemistry are insignificant based on school location, F(1, 95) = 0.527, p>0.05 with a very low Partial Eta Squared effect size of 0.006. Thus, the null hypothesis was upheld.

Discussion of Findings

This suggests that not only did EEI lead to higher immediate test scores, but it also facilitated better retention of knowledge over time compared to CTM. These results strongly support the effectiveness of the Ethno-Science Enriched Instruction (EEI) strategy over the Conventional Teaching Method (CTM) in enhancing both immediate learning outcomes (post-test scores) and longer-term retention of knowledge (retention test scores) among secondary school chemistry students in Bauchi State. This finding is in consistent with the findings of (Abumchukwu, et al., 2021; Idah, 2018; Ajayi, et al., 2017; Ugwu & Diovu, 2016; Singh & Chibuye, 2016;) who reported that, students taught chemistry concepts through the Ethno-chemistry-based approach have higher academic achievement than the students taught same chemistry concepts through conventional method. Conversely, when the retention abilities of the two groups were compared, it indicates a similar pattern of retention and academic achievement following the EEI strategy, though with slightly higher scores in rural schools compared to urban schools. These results suggest that the EEI strategy was effective in both urban and rural settings in Bauchi State, as evidenced by the consistent mean difference of 2.23 points between post-test and retention scores in both groups. This consistency implies that the instructional approach was successful in helping students retain and apply knowledge over time, irrespective of their school location. Similarly, the results reveal that there is significant effect of ethno-science-enriched instruction (EEI) on both the academic achievement retention of secondary school chemistry students in Bauchi state. However, the EEI was found to have no significant effect based on school location in Bauchi state.

Conclusion

This study was carried out as part of the determinations of researcher's efforts in finding suitable, applicable and appropriate instruction in teaching chemistry in senior secondary schools which will assistance in speaking on problems associated to student's academic achievement and retention in Chemistry. Based on the findings of the study, it can be established that ethno chemistry instructional strategy is effective in augmenting students' academic achievement and retention irrespective of school location. Henceforth, this teaching strategy could be used to address the present trend of senior secondary students' poor

academic achievement and retention in Chemistry.

Recommendations

1. Chemistry teachers should be encouraged to use such teaching strategy as ethno-chemistry instructional strategy in teaching senior secondary school students chemistry irrespective of school location.

2. Chemistry teachers should be encouraged to teach the subject within the students' cultural background understanding and should similarly relate to their day-to-day undertakings and involvements.

3. Government should make effort in reinforcing and integrating relevant indigenous cultural practices that are relevant in teaching and learning chemistry (ethno-chemistry) into senior secondary school curriculum for effective teaching and learning of chemistry.

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THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF LIBERIAN REFUGEES IN WEST AFRICA, 1990-2007: A DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT
The main aim of this paper is to critically interrogate the nexus between the United Nations (UN) and the management of Liberian refugees in West Africa between 1990 and 2007. The UN has the mandate to provide humanitarian assistance to the various categories of uprooted persons such as refugees, internally displaced persons and asylum seekers. This assistance is being carried out by the UN refugee agency, known as, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The outbreak of Liberian civil war in 1989 resulted in the production of refugees, who sought safety in the neighbouring countries in West Africa and beyond. By 1990, the UNHCR took over the responsibility of the management of Liberian refugees in their various host countries in West Africa. The various host countries of Liberian refugees in West Africa included Guinea, Sierra Leone, Cote d' Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria. Through effective collaboration with the governments of host countries, other UN agencies and non-governmental organisations, the UNHCR succeeded in managing Liberian refugees in these countries. It highlights and discusses major pragmatic steps taken by the UNHCR in conjunction with these partners towards the management of Liberian refugees during this period. Following the restoration of peace into Liberia in 2003, the UNHCR began to implement durable solutions, which were completed in 2007. Thus, in 2007, the UNHCR finally wounded up the various Liberian refugee camps in West Africa. The methodology adopted in this paper is historical, thematic, qualitative and quantitative utilising materials from both primary and secondary sources of data collection.

Introduction

Historically, the origin of refugee production could be traced to the existence of human society. However, it is one of the social problems facing different continents of the world, though in varying degrees in the contemporary times. As pointed out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, since the end of the Second World War, there has been a constant rise in the number of refugees globally (UNHCR, 2019). Fraogmen explains that this development may be due to the constant turbulence in various nations after this era (Fraogmen,1970). For instance, as at 1950, when the United Nations

High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established, there were some 1.5 million refugees in the world (Loescher, 1992:9). According to the report of the UNHCR, the global population of refugees rose steadily from 2.8 million in 1976 to about 21.3 million in 2017, including adults and children. Of these number, over 26% of the global population of refugees is found in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNHCR, 2019). Generally, the sudden rise in the number of global refugees was hinged on several factors and forces. Boamah-Gyau argues that the world refugee problem is caused by a variety of reasons; factors and forces, which include massive violations of human rights, especially the practice of colonialism, direct and structural violence, war, internal conflicts, external aggression, ethnic and religious strife, direct political persecution and economic and national disasters (Boamah-Gyau, 2008).

Although the production of refugee is not confined to Africa, the continent is one of the most acute refugee problems in the world (Hamrell, 1967:9). Without doubt, the population of refugees of African origin has been on the rise in the contemporary times. This increase has been hinged on rise in conflict and violence in the continent most especially in the post-colonial period. Castaneda and others argue that the increase in refugee population poses great problems to the continent and the globe at large (Castaneda et al, 2017). Nindi explains that the history of refugee phenomenon in Africa began in the early 1960s (Nindi, 1986:96). This, however, took several dimensions between the 1960s and 2000s. These dimensions, which were caused by both internal and external factors resulted in the increase in the number of refugees in the continent. While the politics of independence and the rising tide of political instability (such as domestic strife and civil) in several independent African countries are pertinent internal factors, the external factors derive mainly from situations of racist and minority regimes in Southern Africa and, to an increasing extent, the continued outside intervention in the internal affairs of the independent African states (neo-colonialism) (Adepoju, 1982:22). The resultant effect of this development during these years, was unprecedented increase in the number of African refugees to the extent that by the 1980s, Africa had the largest refugee problem in the world. This was why Hamrell aptly described Africa as the home of millions of refugees (Hamrell, 1967:14-15). For example, the number of African refugees grew from a mere 400,000 in 1964 to about 735,000 in 1967 (Hamrell, 1967:6-7), and later to more than 2.5 million in the 1980s (Nindi, 1986:96). This challenge forced Gould to observe that, “refugees constitute one of the greatest but least well-appreciated and least well-documented tragedies of present-day Africa” (Gould, 1974:413).

It is significant to point out that though refugee crisis in Africa began as a liberation struggle, it later took the form of domestic strife and civil war from the 1990s. Prior to the 1990s development, the majority of African refugees originated mainly from territories that fought for political independence. While Adepoju argues that the majority of African refugees originated from three territories, which were the Portuguese rule, namely; Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, especially in the period between 1960s and 1970s and that these refugees lived mostly in three neighbouring countries sympathetic to the liberation cause, namely; Zaire, Senegal and Tanzania (Adepoju, 1982:22), Hamrell explains that the majority of refugee situations in Africa stemmed from the liberation efforts particularly in the Southern part of the continent (Hamrell, 1967:9). Nindi observes that, until the mid-1970s, most African refugees came from countries where bloody wars were being fought by colonial powers or European settlers to suppress nationalist guerrillas such as Algeria, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Mozambique and Namibia (Nindi, 1986:97). West Africa began to have her own share as from the 1980s occasioned by virulent violent conflicts such as civil wars. Adepoju argues that West Africa experienced various types of forced migration caused by demographic pressure, poverty, poor economic performances and endemic conflicts (Adepoju, 2003:37-41). According to Boamah-Gyau, following civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast as well as political discontent in Togo since the mid-1980s, refugee movements became prevalent in West Africa (Boamah-Gyau, 2008). Most the refugees in West African countries are placed in camps by the help of both host governments and the UNHCR. As posited by Opaye, the primary responsibility for ensuring the physical security of refugees rests with the host government, in accordance with relevant international law and regional instruments. However, where the host governments are often unable to ensure protection of the refugees themselves, host states look to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (Opaye, 2005). This is against this background that this

paper seeks to interrogate the United Nations (with major emphasis on the UNHCR) and the management of Liberian refugees in West Africa between 1990 and 2007.

Conceptual Clarifications

There are three important concepts that require proper and adequate clarifications. This is because these concepts are very significance in this discourse. They are management, refugee and refugee camp.

Management: The word management is a multi-dimentional concept, which has been viewed from different perspectives in the extant literature. According to UNESCO, management is a social process, which is designed to ensure the cooperation, participation, intervention and movement of others in the effective achievement of a given or predetermined objective. Also, Resser defines management as the utilisation of both physical and human resources through cooperative efforts and it is accomplished by performing the functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling (Resser, 1973). Donnelly and others explain that management is the process undertaken by one or more individuals to coordinate the activities of others to achieve results not achievable by one individual acting alone (Donnelly et al, 1984). From the above perspectives of management, Adesote and Adeleke argue that management can be seen two main dimensions, namely, management of work and management of people. While management of work involves the performance of some work in terms of goals to be achieved and assigns the means to achieve it, the management of people deals with the protection and assisting of people Adesote and Adeleke, 2023:21). This paper, therefore, adopts the second dimension of management, which focuses on the management of people, with major emphasis on the Liberian refugees in their host countries in West Africa.

Refugee: Refugee is a concept has been defined in different ways. According to Article 1 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, a refugee is "any person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" Adesote and Ajayi define refugee as someone that is being compelled or forced to flee across national border either through violence, insecurity, and environmental challenge for the purpose of safety (Adesote and Ajayi, 2021:10). Based on the above definitions, there are different categories of refugees, namely political, economic and environmental refugees. Of these categories, our main focus is political refugees. The Liberian refugees were victims of political violence known as civil war and sought safety in both West Africa and beyond. Our study would be limited to Liberian refugees in West Africa during this period of study.

Refugee Camp: Refugee camp is simply referred to as a temporary or permanent settlement created to receive or host refugees who are victims of political crises or environmental disasters in their home countries. Opaye explains that refugee camps are the form of shelter most commonly provided to refugees by host governments and international assistance agencies. They are set up as a temporary solution to the shelter needs of the displaced, thus they serve an important protection function (Opaye, 2005:1). According to Smith, usually, refugee camps (official camps) are built and run by a government, the United Nations, or international organizations, (such as the Red Cross) or Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). However, there are also unofficial refugee camps, like the Calais jungle, where refugees are largely left without support of governments or international organizations (Smith, 2016). In all, refugee camps develop in an impromptu fashion with the aim of meeting basic human needs such as food, clothing and shelter for only a short time. With respect to refugee camps in West Africa during the Liberian civil war, host countries of Liberian refugees in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Cote d' Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria, created one or more refugee camps to accommodate Liberian refugees. These camps were official and permanent refugee camps and were under the management of the UNHCR.

The Liberian Civil War and the Forceful Displacement of Liberian Refugees in West Africa:

An Overview

This section critically examines the nexus between the Liberian civil war and the forceful displacement of Liberian refugees in West Africa. Evidence from existing studies reveal that there are two major forms of conflict-induced

population displacement. They are internal population displacement and external population displacement. While internal population displacement is the forceful removal of persons from their places of origins to another place (place of destination) within the country, external displacement, involves forced removal of people from their places of origins to another country for the purpose of safety (Adesote and Peters, 2024:59). The Liberian civil war led to both internal and external population displacement leading to the emergence of internally displaced persons and refugees. However, in this paper, our main focus is the external population displacement, that is, the Liberian refugees in West Africa.

More importantly, in this section, we are not interested in comprehensive interrogation of the Liberian civil war, which broke out between 1989 and 2003. This is because the discourse has been thoroughly discussed in the existing literature. Without doubt, a number of scholars have interrogated the course, causes and some of consequences of the Liberian Civil War (Ellis, 1995:165-190). One of the major consequences of the war, which is the focus of this paper is the production of refugees in West Africa. The Liberian Civil War occurred in two major phases. While the first phase occurred between 1989 and 1997, while the second phase broke out between 1999 and 2003 (Osunkoya, 2017). During these two phases, a large number of Liberians and nationals of other countries living in Liberia became refugees mostly in West Africa. According to Omeje, the Liberian civil war was the first major regionalised war in the post-colonial West Africa. Within a few years, the war directly and indirectly affected the rest of the Mano River Union (MRU –Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea) and accentuated the destabilisation of the sub-region beyond the Mano River states (Cote d'Ivoire inclusive), making the sub-region a zone of high intensity conflict (Omeje, n.d).

Evidence from the extant literature revealed that the root-causes of the Liberian civil war of 1989 included the marginalisation of the majority of the population by restricting access to political power and economic assets, and an economic crisis with unemployment and increased consumer prices fueling resentment and accentuating societal tensions (Sesay, 1996:35-52). For instance, Sergeant Samuel Doe, the then President of Liberia was widely believed to have introduced a new tribalism in Liberia. The bureaucracy, army, security forces and the public services became permeated with members of his ethnic group, the Krahn, who constituted only four per cent of Liberia's pre-war population of 2.5 million (Sesay, 1996:35-52). Liberia was plunged into its first phase of violent civil war in December 1989 as a result of the invasion of the country by the Charles Taylor's led National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) through the northern Ivorian border (Insight, 2012). Taylor's rebellion, led to the killing and eventual overthrown of the autocratic and repressive rule of then President of Liberia, Sergeant Samuel Doe (Vinck et al, 2011). The outbreak of the war forced the Heads of States of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to create a regional peacekeeping force known as ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) for the purpose of peacekeeping operation. Initially, there was disagreement among the Heads of States of ECOWAS as regards their intervention in intra-state dispute. However, the conflict in Liberia posed a serious challenge to ECOWAS and the ECOWAS Charter because it raised the issue of reconciling the principles of sovereignty with the idea of intervening on humanitarian grounds.

Also, there was the problem of which principle should take precedent over the other, since they both seem to be part of the protocol and charter of Organisation of African Unity (OAU now African Union [AU]) and ECOWAS among the Heads of States of ECOWAS. For instance, while Article III of the OAU Charter, states that member states shall not only respect the sovereignty of all member states, but also shall afford each state its inalienable right to independent existence and resolve to peaceful settlement of disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, or arbitration (OAU Charter, 1963), the ECOWAS Protocol on Non-Aggression (1978) states that the community "cannot attain its objectives save in an atmosphere of peace and harmonious understanding among Member States (ECOWAS Protocol, 1978). As a result of these provisions, ECOWAS was faced with legal problems and challenges justifying its interventions in Liberia. After several discussions, ECOWAS justified the need to intervene on the basis of the Mutual Assistance on Defence Matters (1981), which includes the provision for Allied Armed Forces of the Community (AAFC) (ECOWAS Protocol, 1981). While according to Article 16 of the protocol, the head of state of the member under attack may request action or assistance from the community, Article 4 of the protocol empowers ECOWAS to initiate collective intervention in any internal armed conflict, within any state,

engineered and supported actively from outside likely to endanger the security and peace of the entire community. Also, while Article 6 (3) and article 17 empower the authority to decide on the expediency of military action, to impose a peacekeeping force between the warring factions, or to engage in political mediation, Article 13 (1, 2) provides for creation of the AAFC from earmarked units (ECOWAS Protocol, 1981). Thus, based on humanitarian consideration, ECOWAS saw her intervention in Liberia as inevitable. The decision of ECOWAS as regards her intervention in Liberia was finally reached at the 13th Summit of Heads of States of ECOWAS held in Banjul, the Gambia between 28 and 30 May 1990 under the Chairmanship of Sir Dauda Jawara (the President of the Gambia). At the Summit, a five Standing Mediation Committee comprising Nigeria, Ghana, the Gambia, Guinea and Sierra Leone was constituted. At the first session of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee (ESMC) held at the Kariba Conference Centre, Banjul between 6 and 7 August 1990, under the chairmanship of President Dauda Jawara and attended by heads of states of Nigeria (General Ibrahim Babangida), Ghana (Jerry Rawlings), Guinea (Lansana Conté**)**, Sierra Leone (Joseph Saidu Momoh), Mali (Moussa Traoré) and Togo (Gnassingbe Eyadema) with OAU Secretary General, Salim Ahmed Salim and members of Inter-Faith Mediation Committee (formed by the Liberian Religious Leaders) as observers (Osunkoya, 2017), it was resolved that a multinational peace keeping force be organised and deployed to Liberia to facilitate encampment and disarming of warring factions, to provide interim governance and to create an atmosphere conducive to democratic elections (Tarr, 1993:75).

Between 1990 and 1997, ECOMOG maintained active peacekeeping operation in Liberia. Following the successful peace keeping operations of the ECOMOG in Liberia, violence abated leading to the establishment of a ceasefire agreement (most especially Abuja Accord II of 1996) between the warring factions. This resulted in the successful conduct of legislative and presidential elections in 1997. The Presidential election which was contested by 13 political parties was won by Charles Taylor of the National Patriotic Party (NPP). Thus, on 2 August 1997, Charles Taylor was successfully inaugurated as the 22nd President of Liberia (Tanner, 1998:133-147). During the first phase of the civil war, large number of Liberians became refugees in West Africa, mostly Guinea, Sierra Leone, Cote d' Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria in varying number. Although there are conflicting figures with respect to the number of refugees produced by the war during this phase, Cain observes that during this phase of the war, about 750, 000 refugees and more than 1.2 million internally displaced persons were recorded (Cain, 1999:265-307). Similarly, Dick and Boer argue that, the seven years of violence and bloodshed in Liberia caused the death of about 200,000 people out of a pre-war population of 2.8 million, while more than half of the country's population was forced to flee their homes. Approximately 1.2 million persons were displaced within Liberia, while about 700,000 refugees fled Liberia to neighbouring countries (Dick and Boer, 2001). Also, the UNHCR estimated that 160,000 Liberian refugees were in Cote d'Ivoire, 235,000 in Guinea, 14,000 in Sierra Leone and 17,000 in Ghana at the end of 1996 (UNHCR, 2003).

It is significant to point out that the cease-fire of 1996 was short-lived as longstanding and simmering ethnic tension, corruption, persecution and abject poverty of the people threw the country back into a second civil war in 1998 barely; two years after Charles Taylor was elected as Executive President (Kieh and Klay, 2009:1). During the five-year civil war, which lasted between 1998 and 2003, widely described as the country's second phase of civil war, Liberia was besieged by violent confrontations as Taylor's NPFL, the Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) struggled for power. The LURD and MODEL were the two major rebel groups formed in the country to force Charles Taylor out of office. The second phase of Liberian civil war caused by these rebel groups produced more refugees, who fled the country to escape the repeated skirmishes between the rebel groups and Charles Taylor's army (Levitt, 2005). The crisis continued until the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2003, which led to the attainment of appreciable peace and stability in Liberia (Vinck et al, 2011). According to the estimate of the US Committee for Refugees in 2002, about 80,000 Liberians were internally displaced at the end of 2001 (USCR, 2001). By February 2003, another 6,000 Liberians had fled from Liberia to Sierra Leone, while 30,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) sought refuge near Monrovia (UNHCR, 2003). During the 14-year civil war in Liberia (1989-2003), the host countries of Liberian refugees in West Africa were Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cote d' Ivoire, Nigeria

and Ghana. The brutal war in Liberia created a humanitarian crisis that threatened the security and stability of the whole West Africa. This development necessitated the intervention of the United Nations, through its refugee agency, the UNHCR for the purpose of mitigating the plight and sufferings of innocent Liberian refugees.

For example, by November 1990, the number of Liberian refugees in neighbouring countries in West Africa could be seen in the below table.

Table 1: Host Countries of Liberian Refugees in West Africa as at November 1990

S/N	Host countries	Number of Liberian Refugees
1	Guinea	311,000
2	Cote d'Ivoire	193,000
3	Sierra Leone	130,000
4	Ghana	34,000
5	Nigeria	6,000
	Total	674,000

Source: Maxwell Owusu. 2000. Reluctant Refugees: Liberians in Ghana. *The Journal*, Vol.7, Issue 3,

The above table shows the number of Liberian refugees in each host country in West Africa. From the table, it is clear that Guinea hosted the highest number of Liberian refugees, followed by Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone in that order. Nigeria hosted the least number of Liberian refugees, which are 6,000. The reason why Guinea, Cote d Ivoire and Sierra Leone hosted the highest number of Liberian refugees was because these countries are the immediate neighbours of Liberia and all of them belong to the same sub-regional organisation, known as Mano River Union (MRU). However, Ghana and Nigeria are distant neighbours.

The UNHCR and the Management of Liberian Refugees in West Africa

Prior to the creation of UNHCR in 1950, the United Nations had taken several measures towards the addressing the plight of uprooted persons, most especially the refugees. The first major refugee body established by the UN as regard the management of the refugees was the International Refugee Organisation (IRO). IRO created in 1947 by the UN towards the management of refugees caused by the Second World War. It was an ad-hoc organisation whose mandate was limited to refugees in Europe. Owing to the challenge of the refugee production beyond Europe, the UN was forced to create another organisation. Thus, in 1950, UNHCR was created, with initial three years mandate, which was to terminate in 1953. With the success of UNHCR in the management of refugees during the initial three years, it remained permanent refugee agency of the UN. Other pragmatic steps taken by the UN towards the management of refugees in member states included introduction of Refugee Convention of 1951, introduction of Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugee of 1967, establishment of cooperation with member states and non-governmental organisations and the introduction of durable solutions. All these pragmatic steps were implemented by the UNHCR in the host countries of Liberian refugees in West Africa.

One major step taken by the UNHCR in the management of Liberian refugees was effective cooperation with the host countries of the refugees in West Africa. The UNHCR worked with the governments of all the host countries in area of the establishment of refugee camps for the accommodation of the refugees. Depending on the number of the refugees, different number of

refugee camps were established by the governments of host countries. For instance, while Nigerian government created only one refugee camp (Oru refugee camp) in 1990 to host Liberian refugees (Ugwuegbu, 2001: 47-59), the Ghanaian government set up two different refugee camps, namely Buduburam camp and Krisan camp. While Buduburam camp was established mainly for the Liberian refugees in 1990, Krisan camp was created in 1996 due to the influx of the refugees into the country (Essuman-Johnson, 2003: 139-161). Liberian refugees were accommodated in different refugee camps in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d' Ivoire. For instance, in Sierra Leone, a major destination of Liberian refugees in West Africa and immediate neighbour of Liberia, there were eight refugee camps, that were under the supervision of UNHCR. Some of these camps were Gerahun refugee camp, Taiama refugee camp, Jimmy Gbagbo camp, Largo refugee camp, Kailahun refugee camp and Gondama refugee camp. These camps were created at different times. Each accommodated varying number of Liberian refugees. In Cote d' Ivoire, the government under President Félix Houphouët-Boigny initially opposed the idea of creating refugee camps for the settlement of Liberian refugees who fled to the country. He stated that they should be regarded as 'brothers in distress' and, rather than being settled in camps. Thus, he encouraged local people to take them up in their midst. This was facilitated by the fact that most refugees came from the same ethnic groups that lived on either side of the border: the Gio in the area of Danané where the borders of Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Guinea meet; the Krahn in the area of Guiglo further south; and the Kru plus related groups. However, they were restricted to a region in the western part of the country designated as the Zone d'Accueil des Réfugiés (ZAR). Spontaneous settlement remained the norm, with one exception in 1995, following armed clashes at Taï in southern Guiglo in which many Liberians as well as a number of Ivorians had been killed, the refugee population of that town was moved to a camp set up at Nicla, just outside the town of Guiglo and well away from the border, which was promoted by the UNHCR (Kuhlman, 2002). There were also different refugee camps for the hosting of the Liberian refugees in Guinea. These refugee camps were Lainé refugee camp, Koyama refugee camp, Kola camp, Kouankan refugee camp I, and Kouankan refugee camp II. The largest refugee camp in Guinea that hosted large number of Liberian refugees was the Kouankan refugee camp. With exception of Nigeria where Liberian refugees lived only in the refugee camp created, in other host countries, the refugees lived outside the camps created. Only those in the refugee camps were taken care of by the UNHCR.

Another major area of the management of Liberian refugees in West Africa by the UNHCR was the enactment of refugee laws. This legal instrument was considered significant by the UNHCR. More importantly, the UNHCR worked with the governments of host countries of Liberian refugees in West Africa to enact refugee laws. Although not all the member countries succeeded in enacting refugee laws during this period, all of them made attempts to enact refugee laws. While Nigeria, Ghana, enacted refugee laws following the hosting of Liberian refugees, others like Sierra Leone and Guinea enacted their around 2007; Cote d' Ivoire, which finalised the draft bill of refugee legislation with UNHCR in 2003, was yet to enact it. Those other host countries of Liberian refugees that were unable to enact refugee laws during this period were made to abide by the principle of non-refoulement, which is core principle of refugee law that prohibits States from returning refugees in any manner whatsoever to countries or territories in which their lives or freedom may be threatened (Trémolières, 2009: 247). This principle is usually considered a part of customary international law and is therefore binding on all States, whether or not they are parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. In Nigeria for instance, the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida enacted a Decree (later Act) on 29 December, 1989, which aimed at protecting refugees in Nigeria. The primary refugee policy governing refugees in Nigeria is contained in the Federal Government Decree of 1989. In that year, the military government issued Decree 52 of 1989 (Act 1989, Cap 244 Laws of the Federation in 1990). The Act incorporated the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Protocol and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee problems in Africa. The Act prohibited the refusal of entry, expulsion, extradition or return of persons seeking refuge, until the determination of their status. Indeed, Section 1, sub-section 3 stipulates that:

> *No person, claiming to be a refugee within the meaning of this Act who has illegally entered into or is illegally present in Nigeria, shall be expelled, extradited or returned merely by reason of his illegal entry or presence*

in Nigeria or any part of Nigeria pending the determination of his application for a refugee status (Refugee Status Determination Procedure).

Also, the Ghanaian government under Jerry Rawlings, set up a legal framework to deal with the issues emanating from the influx of refugees into the country (Agblorti, 2011:4). Agblorti argued that the decision of the then government of Ghana to enact refugee law was as a result of lobbying from the UNHCR, other agencies and pressure from the influx of Liberian refugees in the country. Thus, in 1992, the government passed a Refugee Law [Provisional National Defence Council (P. N. D. C.) Law 305D] (Agblorti, 2011:4). Following the influx of Liberian refugees into Ghana, the challenge of managing them became acute. Therefore, in order to address the situation, a national legislation law 305 of 1992 was made and enacted. However, the national legislation took effect on August 27, 1993 (Dick, 2002a.

Also, there was the establishment of refugee management boards by the governments of some of the host countries towards the management of Liberian refugees. The establishment of the refugee boards was made possible by the enactment of refugee laws. For instance, in Nigeria, the 1989 Refugee Act led to the establishment of a body known as the National Commission for Refugees (NCFR). NCFR was charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the interest and treatment of persons, who are seeking to become refugees in Nigeria or persons seeking political asylum in Nigeria and other matters incidental thereto (Osunkoya, 2017). In Ghana, through the passing of the P. N. D. C. Law 305D, the government established Ghana Refugee Board (GRB), a government agency responsible for refugee issues or activities in Ghana (Agblorti, 2001:4 and Dick, 2002). In Cote d' Ivoire for example, the government initially set up an ad hoc National Committee for the Coordination of Refugee Aid in the Ministry of the Interior to oversee the management of the refugees. However, in early 2000, the temporary refugee body was replaced by a permanent office known as the Service d'Aide et d'Assistance aux Réfugiés et Apatrides (SAARA) (Kuhlman, 2002:p.24). In 1996, in Sierra Leone, the government created the Ministry of National Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (MNRRR) with a broad mandate to respond to the immediate humanitarian crisis caused by the influx of Liberian refugees into the country. In 2001, MNRRR was renamed National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) through the act of parliament with the mandate of managing the transition from emergency and relief to development (NaCSA website, 2025). In Guinea, the government set up the Commission for the Integration and Monitoring of Refugees/Commission Nationale pour l'Integration et le Suivi des Refugies (CNISR). All these refugee management bodies worked with the UNHCR in the effective management of Liberian refugees in their various refugee camps.

In terms of provision of relief materials (both food and non-food items), health service and others for the Liberian refugees in the host countries in West Africa, the UNHCR was assisted by other agencies of the UN such as the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The governments of the host countries partnered with the UNHCR, through their respective refugee management boards in the management of Liberian refugees in their various countries. They did not only provide the enabling environment, which helped the UNHCR to cater for the welfare of the Liberian refugees during this period of study, but also assisted her to open office in their countries. The activities of the UNHCR in this respect included the provision of fund and relief materials (such as food and non-food items), which were directly distributed to the refugees by her and through the NGOs (only those that signed agreement with the UNHCR). For instance, in Nigeria, while Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS), Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) and African Refugee Foundation (AREF) were the accredited NGOs (Osunkoya, 2023:79) in Ghana, Christian Council of Ghana, National Catholic Secretariat, Ghana Red Cross Society and Assemblies of God Relief and Development Services were the accredited NGOs. Also, while in Cote d' Ivoire, the Ivorian Red Cross; the Catholic relief agency Caritas were the NGOs (Kuhlman, 2002), in Guinea, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Federation and the National Society were the NGOs (Osunkoya, 2007). In Sierra Leone, some of the accredited NGOs were African Development and Emergency Organization, American Refugee Committee, Arch Diocesan Development Office Bo/Pujehun Development Associates, Caritas Kenema Catholic Relief Services, Christian Children's Fund Environmental Foundation for Africa, International Rescue Committee and Lutheran World Federation (UNHCR Global Report 2005 on Sierra Leone: 240). The table below shows

total budget of the UNHCR towards Liberian refugees in their various host countries in West Africa (Ghana inclusive) as at 1999 is presented in the table below.

Table 2: UNHCR Budget for Liberian refugees in West Africa as at 1999

Total Budget (USD)	Income from contributions (USD)	Other Funds available (USD)	Total Funds available (USD)	Total expenditure (USD)
24, 487, 299	17, 022, 926	5, 561, 856	22, 584, 782	21, 016,605

Source: UNHCR Global Report 1999 (Special Programme), p.111

The table above shows the UNHCR total budget earmarked for the welfare of Liberian refugees in West Africa. One can see vividly that out of the total budget of $24,487,299, only $21,016,605 was spent. The expenditure related to Liberian refugees in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Table 3: UNHCR ANNUAL BUDGET FOR LIBERIAN REFUGEES AS AT 2004

Activities and Services	Annual Programme	Supplementary Programme	Total
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	3,080,482	0	3,080,482
Community Services	590,600	8000	598,600
Crop Production	338,900	0	338,900
Domestic Needs /Household support	736,600	200,000	936,600
Education	1,565,100	0	1,565,100
Fisheries	20,000	0	20,000
Food	78,100	20,000	98,100
Forestry	197,500	0	197,500
Health/Nutrition	1, 257,000	20,000	1,277,000
Income generation	563,000	0	563,000
Legal Assistance	214,000	20,000	234,000
Livestock	50,000	0	50,000
Operational support (to Agencies)	1,797,400	100,000	1,897,400
Sanitation	256,600	0	256,600
Shelter/other infrastructure	228,400	80,000	308,400
Passport / Logistics	2,324,200	800,000	3,124,200
Water (non-agricultural)	373,900	0	373,900
Total Operation	13,671,782	1,248,000	14,919,782
Programme Support	2,690,630	0	2,690,630
Total	**16,362,412**	**1,248,000**	**17,610,412**

Source: OBINNA IDIKA. 2005. UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSION FOR REFUGEES UNHCR RESPONSE TO THE LIBERIAN REFUGEE CRISIS. Unpublished Masters Dissertation, Department of Political Science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, p.57

The implementation of durable solutions was another major effort of the UNHCR in the management of Liberian refugees in West Africa. According to the UNHCR, the ultimate objective

of refugee protection and safety is to seek durable solutions to the problem of people being forced to flee from their homes and to cross an international border. It is important to point out that the search for durable solutions to refugee problem has been a central part of the UN, through its agency, the UNHCR. The statute of the UNHCR enjoins the High Commissioner to seek "permanent solutions to the problem of refugees". UNHCR and partner states published a Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern (now known as the Framework for Durable Solutions) (Office of the UNHCR, 1950). This elaborated the '4Rs': Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, as a process that was intended to bridge the gap between relief and development (UNHCR). Black and Koser argue that durable solutions are the two related concepts of Development Assistance for Refugees and Development through Local Integration. Subsequently, durable solutions were placed within the context of a multilateral dialogue, often referred to as the Convention Plus initiative. This led, most notably, to the signing of an agreement between the refugees' government and host states on a Multilateral Framework of Understanding on Resettlement (Black and Koser, 1999)

With regard to this principal objective, the UNHCR proposed and implemented three traditional solutions (generally known as Durable Solutions), namely local integration, repatriation and resettlement towards solving the problems of Liberian refugees in West Africa. Generally, these durable solutions focused on assisting Liberian refugees to become self-sufficient, independent and to enable them participate actively in the socio-economic life either at a new place of settlement (destination) or their place of origin. The implementation of durable solutions was based on the agreement reached between the UNHCR, the governments host countries of Liberian refugees, and the government of Liberia. While all the three durable solutions were successfully implemented in some countries such as Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Cote d' Ivoire, only two were implemented in the countries like Ghana (that is voluntary repatriation and resettlement). However, the successful implementation of these durable solutions by the UNHCR was based on the signing of a tripartite agreement between the UNHCR, the government of Liberia (first with the National Transition Government) and later with the democratically elected government in 2006) and the national governments of the host countries of Liberian refugees in West Africa (UNHCR, 2004).

Although the process towards the return of some Liberian refugees from the host countries in West Africa to their country by the UNHCR began after the end of the first civil war in 1997, it was halted in 1998 following the outbreak of the second civil war. Thus, the first process of durable solutions was not totally successful. The successful implementation of durable solutions by the UNHCR took place after the end of the 14-year civil war in Liberia and the exile of former country's dictator Charles Taylor in 2003. The second phase of durable solutions was carried out following the emergence of National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) in October 2003 under the leadership of Mr. Charles Gyude Bryant as the Chairman of NTGL with Mr. Wesley Johnson as the Vice-Chairman (Osunkoya, 2017). The first durable solution implemented successfully in the five host countries was voluntary repatriation. In order to facilitate reintegration of Liberian refugees, several community projects were implemented in some major counties in Liberia, namely, Bong, Grand Gedeh, Montserrado and Nimba. The projects were aimed at rebuilding local infrastructure, water supplies, schools among others. For the purpose of ensuring local and national ownership of the projects, receiving communities and returnees were made to participate in the planning process (Lippman, 2004:9-11). Voluntary repatriation, which deals with the return of the refugees to their countries of origin based on their informed and voluntary consent (UNHCR, 2013), was facilitated by the UNHCR with the co-operation of the government of home country, governments of host countries of the refugees and some stakeholders such as the NGOs. While some Liberian refugees returned on their own, others returned under the auspices of the UNHCR. For instance, in Nigeria for instance, according to Reuters news agency report in 2004, about three hundred (300) Liberian refugees left Nigeria on their own in a ship (Reuters, 2004). Also, in Ghana, it was reported that in April 2004, over 200 Liberian refugees voluntarily returned home in a convoy from Ghana (IRIN, 2004). However, under the auspices of UNHCR, it was reported that between December 2004 and May 2007, a total of 2,112 Liberian refugees were voluntarily repatriated from Nigeria out of about 6,000 Liberian refugees registered by the UNHCR and NCFR (UNHCR, 2007). In Ghana, the UNHCR facilitated the repatriation of some Liberian refugees. For instance, while Porter and others

argue that about 3,500 Liberian refugees returned to their country following the restoration of peace in Liberia since 2004 (Porter , 2008:230-252), a report of the UN Mission in Liberia notes that of the 14,000 refugees initially targeted for repatriation only 4,000 returned to Liberia since the programme began in October, 2004 (IRIN, 2004). According to the UNHCR report, the number of repatriates from Ghana reached only 7,000 during the three-year repatriation programme (Kuhlman, 2002:11).

Also, in Cote d' Ivoire, repatriation programme initially began in 1997. Before its full commencement, some Liberian refugees began to return to their country. Kuhlman argues that from 1996 onwards, many Liberian refugees returned home, well before UNHCR began its organized repatriation programme in 1997. He further explains that by the end of 2000, 70,500 Liberian refugees had been repatriated with UNHCR assistance (Kuhlman, 2002:11). The second phase of repatriation operation was undertaken by the UNHCR in Cote d' Ivoire between 2004 and 2007. During this period, while about 3,400 Liberian refugees chose to return in 2006 on their own, over 20,000 of them were returned through the assistance of the UNHCR (UNHCR Global Report, 2006 on Cote d' Ivoire). Also, the repatriation of Liberian refugees from Sierra Leone which commenced in 2004 continued in 2005, but at a slower pace than expected. Over the course of the year, some 6,200 Liberian refugees repatriated voluntarily in safety and dignity (over 4,200 were assisted, some 2,000 returned spontaneously), which was 63 per cent short of the initial target of 13,000. Transport arrangements allowed refugees to take their belongings and vulnerable refugees benefited from appropriate follow-up and care. The verification exercise conducted by UNHCR in refugee camps not only helped revise the number of refugees eligible for assistance but also updated information on refugees with special needs living in the camps (UNHCR Global Report, 2005 on Sierra Leone:240). Similarly, in Guinea, it was revealed that voluntary repatriation of Liberian refugees to Liberia gained substantial momentum in 2006. In that year, more than 25,000 Liberian refugees returned home with UNHCR's assistance. These returnees represented 80 per cent of the target for 2006. Furthermore, nearly 12,000 refugees from Liberia returned spontaneously. This enabled the Office to streamline operations by closing its field office in Kissidougou, phasing out three camps and consolidating at one site those refugees unable or unwilling to repatriate (UNHCR Global Report, 2006 on Guinea).

The second durable solution implemented by the UNHCR was resettlement. Resettlement refers to the transfer of refugees from a country in which they have initially sought protection to a third country that has agreed to admit them with permanent-residence status (Selm, 2004:40). Until the mid-1980s, resettlement was generally seen by states as the preferred durable solution. After the end of the Second World War, it was the primary means by which the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) and, later, UNHCR provided solutions for the displaced (Osunkoya, 2017). This durable solution was implemented for the Liberian refugees in West Africa. Evidence from the literature revealed that prior to 2004 resettlement programme introduced by the UNHCR, the United States of American government had initiated the programme shortly after the beginning of the Liberian civil war in 1989 for the Liberian refugees (Osunkoya, 2017). With the restoration of peace to Liberia in 2003, the UNHCR implemented resettlement programme for the Liberian refugees who were hosted in West Africa. For instance, UNHCR's Multi-Year Operations Plan for the Repatriation and Reintegration of Liberian Refugees and Internally Displaced persons (2004-2007) provides that "resettlement activities for individual cases of Liberian refugees to third countries, from the various countries of asylum, would be pursued as part of protection and durable solution strategies" (IRIN, 2004). The UNHCR placed very high priority cases for resettlement of Liberian refugees, on either medical or protection grounds. Nevertheless, the USA continued with resettlement of Liberian refugees, particularly family re-unification programme up till September 2006. In 2005, about 1,464 Liberian refugees with 598 cases, which comprised those in Priorities one to five applied for resettlement. Although there was no available statistics to show the total number of those approved, according to the report of UNHCR, it might be around 80 percent (UNHCR/WEP, 2006). Generally, the Liberian refugees were resettled in some different developed countries such as United States of America, Canada and Australia in varying number (Osunkoya, 2017). For instance, while some 1,100 refugees who had lived in Sierra Leone since the 1990s were resettled in third countries, namely Australia, Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United States (UNHCR Global Report on Sierra Leone:240),

seventy-six (76) Liberian refugees in Cote d' Ivoire were resettled in third countries (UNHCR Global Report 2006 on Cote d' Ivoire); and twenty-two (22) Liberian refugees in Guinea with special protection needs were resettled in third countries (UNHCR Global Report 2006 on Guniea). The table below further reveals the number of Liberian refugees from different host countries in West Africa that were resettled in the three identified developed countries as at 2004.

Table 4: Resettlement arrivals of Refugees in Developed Countries in 2004 (Liberian Refugees inclusive) (Selected Countries)

S/N	Third Countries	Number of Refugees
1	United States of America	52,868
2	Australia	15,697
3	Canada	10,521

Source: UNHCR Report, 2004

The above table shows the general number of Liberian refugees from their host countries in West Africa that were resettled in three major developed countries in 2004. From the table, large number of Liberian refugees were resettled in USA and was immediately followed by Australia. Canada had the least number.

The last durable solution implemented by the UNHCR towards mitigating the plight of Liberian refugees in their host countries in West Africa during this period was local integration. Valtonen defines local integration as "the ability to participate fully in economic, socio-cultural and political spheres in the host country without relinquishing one's ethno-cultural identity and culture" (Valtonen, 2004:70-96). Agblorti notes that the key to the implementation of local integration as a durable solution is the legal framework of the host country that allows for such a process to take place (Agblorti, 2011:4). While the durable solution was implemented successfully in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d' Ivoire, it was not implemented in Ghana. The non-implementation of the durable solution by the Ghanaian government according to Agblorti was as a result of three main factors, namely imposition of an increased burden on the government, challenge of refugee-host relations and lack of an appropriately constituted institution to carry out the mandate ((Agblorti, 2011:4) The programme was implemented after the implementation of repatriation and resettlement. The local integration of Liberian refugees in each of the four countries was facilitated by the signing of a multipartite agreement between the governments of Liberia and the host country, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the UNHCR in August 2007 (Usman, 2007). The initiative was part of a wider effort to enhance cooperation in West African sub-region on refugee protection and sustainable solutions. According to the provisions of the UNHCR's Executive Committee No.104 (LVI-2005), local integration is a dynamic and multi-faceted two-way process, which require efforts by all parties including a preparedness on the part of the refugees to adapt to the host society without having to forgo their own cultural identity; and a corresponding readiness on the part of the host communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and to meet the needs of a diverse population (Usman, 2007). The multipartite arrangement was a progression from the refugee status to another realm of recognition as citizens of ECOWAS. Under local integration, the refugees become entitled to a set of legal, economic and socio-cultural rights commensurate with those enjoyed by Nigerians and are shielded from any discrimination (Usman, 2007). The multipartite arrangement defines the responsibilities of each party. Before it was implemented in the host countries, sensitisation campaign was carried out between the refugees and the host population. In Nigeria for example, the local integration of Liberian refugees was a gradual process. In 2005, about 70 refugees volunteered to be integrated. Between 2007 and 2008 about 800 refugees registered for integration (Ogunjobi, 2016). In Cote d' Ivoire, the national government made a formal declaration to facilitate local integration on 19 June, 2007. Specifically, the Government expressed its willingness to give all refugees interested in obtaining Ivorian nationality access to the naturalisation process (UNHCR Report on Cote d Ivoire, May 2009). In Guinea, the UNHCR conducted sensitisation campaigns targeting the local administrative authorities, refugees and the host population in order to underline the voluntary, participative and community-based approach of the local integration programme. More than 5,500 Liberian refugees opted for local integration as a durable solution (UNHCR Global Report 2009 on Guinea).

Conclusion

The foregoing discourse has interrogated the UN and management of Liberian refugees in West Africa between 1990 and 2007. It argued that the UN through its refugee agency known as the UNHCR provided humanitarian assistance to Liberian refugees in the five host countries in West Africa, namely Guinea, Cote d' Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria during this period. Although Liberian refugees began to flee to the neighbouring countries like Sierra Leone and Guinea in December 1989 that the Liberian civil war broke out, the UNHCR officially opened its offices in these host countries in 1990. In 2007, the UNHCR formally closed all the refugee camps that hosted the Liberian refugees. It highlighted and discussed major pragmatic steps taken by the by the UNHCR through effective cooperation with the governments of both countries towards effective management of Liberian refugees during period. These pragmatic steps included the enactment of refugee laws, establishment of refugee camps, creation of refugee boards and the implementation of durable solutions. It argued Guinea, Sierra Leone and Cote d' Ivoire hosted more Liberian refugees than Ghana and Nigeria. This was as a result of the fact that the three countries were the immediate neighbours of Liberia. The influx of Liberian refugees in the three countries was reflected in the number of refugee camps that were created by the various governments. It explained that while some refugees lived within the camps created for them in these three countries, some lived outside the camps. They resided with the members of some rural communities. This development led to request conflict between the refugees and the indigenes of the host communities. The UNHCR and the governments of the affected countries took several measures towards resolving the conflicts. It argued that following the temporary restoration of peace into Liberia in 1997 occasioned by the successful conduct of presidential election leading to the emergence of Charles Taylor as the new President, the UNHCR in conjunction with governments of the host countries most especially Guinea, Sierra Leone and Cote d' Ivoire began to implement three durable solutions, namely repatriation, resettlement and local integration. The process was later halted as a result of the outbreak of another second civil in 1998, which lasted till 2003. With the exile of Charles Taylor in 2003, UNHCR resumed the implementation of durable solutions, which were very successful. It lasted between 2003 and 2007. Despite some challenges encountered, the UNHCR successfully managed Liberian refugees in their various host countries in West Africa. This became possible as a result of cooperation with the host governments and supports of other agencies of UN like WFP and UNICEF and the NGOs.

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THE ROLE OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO) IN PROMOTING FREE TRADE AND REDUCING PROTECTIONISM

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WTO, Trade Barriers, Protectionism, Free Trade, Dispute Resolution, Multilateral Agreements

ABSTRACT
The World Trade Organization (WTO) is dedicated to promoting free trade and mitigating protectionist measures through negotiated agreements, transparent practices, and a structured dispute resolution system. This study evaluates the WTO's effectiveness in these domains, particularly examining how its trade policies and enforcement strategies have contributed to the reduction of trade barriers. The study utilizes theories of absolute and comparative advantages as its framework of study. The research methodology involves analyzing secondary data derived from relevant qualitative articles and policy documents. The results indicate a significant decrease in tariffs and an increase in the resolution of disputes since the establishment of the WTO. However, challenges remain due to the emergence of regional trade agreements and the complexities associated with digital commerce. The study finds that, the WTO has contributed in enhancing global trade, however, there is need for the organization to adapt its policies to address contemporary economic challenges to maintain its relevance. While this study uses theories of absolute and comparative advantages to analyze how WTO promote free trade and reduce protectionism, previous researches investigate the WTO from the economic and institutional performance.

Introduction

The World Trade Organization (WTO) serves as a fundamental entity within the global economic framework. It has significantly contributed to the facilitation of international trade and the enhancement of economic collaboration among its member nations (Meltzer, 2011). The organization has consistently advocated the cause of free trade while striving to diminish protectionist tendencies through the formulation and implementation of multilateral trade agreements. It is guided by the principles of non-discrimination, transparency, and predictability in international trade relations. Its key responsibilities encompass managing trade negotiations, enforcing trade regulations, and offering a forum for member states to discuss trade-related concerns. With more than 164 member countries. The WTO is instrumental in advancing free trade, curbing protectionist measures, and encouraging economic growth worldwide (Peres, 2024).

WTO is founded on January 1, 1995, as a successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which had been operational since 1948. The establishment of the WTO represented a significant advancement in the governance of international trade. It aims to create more comprehensive and effective framework for managing global trade relations. This decision was reached during the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations, which took place from 1986 to 19 94. This has resulted in the signing of the Marrakesh Agreement in April 1994 that formally established the WTO (Lee, Sridhar & Patel, 2009). The historical backdrop that led to the formation of the WTO was marked by an increasing acknowledgment of the necessity for a more robust and rules-based system to oversee international trade. Although the GATT was effective in lowering tariffs and encouraging trade liberalization, it was perceived as having limitations in both its scope and enforcement capabilities. The Uruguay Round negotiations aimed to rectify these deficiencies by broadening the range of trade agreements to include services, intellectual property, and agriculture, among other sectors (Baldwin, 2016).

The organization serves as a formal framework for negotiations aimed at lowering tariffs and trade barriers, adhering to principles such as most favored nation treatment and transparency (Kelly & Lee 2023). It supervises the execution of trade agreements, ensuring adherence and promoting collaboration among countries (Matthias 2024). A significant component of the WTO is the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB), which enables member nations to effectively resolve trade conflicts, thereby contributing to the stability of international trade relations (Matthias 2024) (Sugianto 2023). This mechanism plays a crucial role in tackling contentious matters, including agricultural subsidies, which frequently result in protectionist policies (Kelly & Lee 2023).

However, WTO experiences range of criticisms and discontent throughout its history. Common points of contention include issues related to the organization's transparency, its decision-making processes, and a perceived lack of inclusivity during negotiations. Critics contend that the WTO's regulations may favor developed nations, often to the detriment of developing countries. Furthermore, there are significant concerns regarding the effects of trade liberalization on labor rights, environmental protections, and income disparity. It is often regarded as lacking democratic principles and exhibiting favoritism towards affluent countries, especially in its management of the agricultural and textile industries, which are vital for developing nations (McBeth, 2007). Critics argue that the organization promotes a global monoculture and exacerbates inequality, while also appearing to disregard the requirements of less prosperous countries (Trebilcock, 2005; Magnuson, 2010). These criticisms have ignited discussions and debates regarding potential reforms within the WTO to tackle these challenges and promote a more equitable global trading framework (Jorge et al, 2024).

This study intends to explore the intricate mechanisms through which the WTO maintains the principles of free trade, lowers trade barriers, and alleviates the adverse effects of protectionist policies on the global economy. It investigates the historical evolution of the WTO, evaluating its essential functions and analyzing its influence on international trade relations. It aims to offer a thorough understanding of the WTO's vital role in shaping the contemporary trading environment.

While this study uses theories of absolute and comparative advantages to analyze how WTO promote free trade and reduce protectionism, previous researches investigate the WTO from the economic and institutional performance.

Materials and Methods

This study investigates the role of WTO in facilitating free trade and mitigating protectionist measures. To accomplish this goal, a thorough examination of existing scholarly literature, reports, and policy documents regarding the WTO's role will be undertaken. This analysis will encompass both foundational texts and contemporary studies that address the WTO’s operations, challenges, and overall influence. A detailed review of essential WTO documents, including the Marrakesh Agreement, various trade agreements, and reports issued by the WTO Secretariat, will yield valuable insights into the organization's policies, aims, and results. Additionally, official statements, annual reports, and trade policy evaluations will be utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of the WTO in promoting free trade and countering protectionism.

Theoretical Framework

Free trade and protectionism embody two contrasting strategies in the realm of international trade. Proponents of free trade support the unimpeded flow of goods and services across national boundaries, fostering competition and enhancing efficiency. In contrast, protectionism entails the establishment of trade barriers designed to protect domestic industries from external competition.

Free trade is an economic approach that permits the exchange of goods and services across international borders without any limitations or tariffs. This policy fosters open markets and competition, resulting in reduced prices, enhanced efficiency, and a broader selection of products available to consumers (Sless, 2023). It is defined as limited governmental interference, facilitating the unrestricted movement of goods and services across national borders. Arguably, it is regarded as model aims to improve productivity by promoting specialization and comparative advantage (Ke, 2023). Conversely, protectionism is an economic strategy that involves the implementation of restrictions, such as tariffs, quotas, or subsidies, to defend domestic industries against foreign competition. The primary objective of protectionism is to protect local enterprises and preserve jobs within the nation. This approach employs to nurture "infant industries" or in response to economic downturns, as evidenced during the Great Depression and the financial crisis of 2007-2009 (Cambazoğlu, 2022; Nizomov, 2019). Nevertheless, such measures can result in increased prices for consumers, diminished efficiency, and the potential for trade disputes with other countries.

i. The Theory of Absolute Advantage

The theory of absolute is propounded by Adam Smith in his renowned work, "The Wealth of Nations," published in 1776 (Smith, 1937). This concept emphasizes the significance of specialization in production and the division of labor. Smith contended that it is unfeasible for all nations to achieve wealth simultaneously under Mercantilism, as the export of one nation inherently serves as the import for another (Neary, 2003). He asserted that if nations engaged in free trade and specialized according to their absolute advantages, all would benefit concurrently (Schumacher, 2012; Langbiir, 2022).

According to Smith, a country possesses an absolute advantage in the production of a good when it can produce that good more efficiently than any other nation. This term denotes the capacity of an entity to generate a greater quantity of goods or services than its competitors while utilizing the same resources (Krugman, 1996; Machado & Trigg, 2021). Absolute advantage refers to any activity performed more efficiently than by others. Economists apply the term when evaluating the productivity of individuals, firms, or nations in comparison to one another. Nations should focus on producing goods or services where they hold an absolute advantage and subsequently trade with others to acquire goods or services where they are less efficient. This approach to specialization and trade is expected to enhance efficiency, productivity, and overall economic welfare for all parties involved (Krugman, 1993).

ii. Theory of Comparative Advantage

The Theory of comparative advantage is introduced by David Ricardo in his 1817 work Principles of Political Economy and Taxation. It is a fundamental economic theory that expands upon the notion of absolute advantage. It posits that nations should concentrate on the production of goods or services for which they incur a lower opportunity cost, rather than merely their absolute advantages. A nation possesses a comparative advantage in a particular good or service if it can produce it at a lower opportunity cost than another nation (Toraubally, 2023). Opportunity cost refers to the value of the next best alternative that must be sacrificed to produce a specific good or service. By focusing on the production of goods or services with the least opportunity cost, nations can utilize their resources more effectively, resulting in enhanced productivity (Dosi & Tranchero, 2021).

The principle of comparative advantage acknowledges that even if a nation excels in all production areas (absolute advantage), there are still benefits to be gained from specialization and trade. By prioritizing the production of goods or services where they hold a comparative advantage, nations can engage in trade that benefits both parties. This occurs because each nation can acquire goods or services at a lower

opportunity cost through trade than if they were to produce everything independently (Dean et al, 2020). Ricardo's theory suggests that trade can be advantageous for all involved, even when one nation is more efficient across the board. The theory of comparative advantage is widely recognized and serves as a cornerstone of contemporary international trade theory, emphasizing the advantages of specialization, trade, and labor division among nations, which contribute to enhanced global efficiency, economic development, and overall welfare. (Ricardo, 1821).

The theories of comparative and absolute advantage are fundamental in international trade theory, each playing a distinct role in determining trade patterns and resource allocation. Comparative advantage focuses on the ability of a country to produce goods at a lower opportunity cost, while absolute advantage refers to a country's ability to produce more of a good with the same resources than another country.

Results and Discussion

The results of this research regarding the WTO's influence on the advancement of free trade and the mitigation of protectionism provide a detailed perspective on the organization's effect on international commerce. Although the WTO has significantly aided in the liberalization of global trade and the reduction of protectionist measures, its capacity to completely fulfill its objectives has been hindered by several obstacles. The examination of these results underscores both the achievements and the shortcomings of the WTO's influence in molding the dynamics of global trade. The follow section discusses the detailed results.

Functions of the WTO

The WTO serves multiple essential functions that align with its primary objective of fostering a stable, transparent, and predictable global trading environment. These functions promote trade liberalization, guarantee adherence to trade regulations, and assist in the resolution of disputes, thereby establishing the WTO as a pivotal entity in the realm of international economic governance. Below is a summary of the main functions of the WTO.

i. Framework for trade negotiations

The World Trade Organization (WTO) serves as a platform for governments to engage in negotiations regarding trade agreements. It provides a venue for the resolution of trade disputes and administers a framework of trade regulations. In essence, the WTO functions as a forum where member states endeavor to address the trade challenges (Gisela, 2024). The establishment of the WTO was a product of extensive negotiations, and all its activities stem from such discussions. A significant portion of the WTO's current initiatives is derived from the Uruguay Round negotiations that took place from 1986 to 1994, as well as earlier discussions under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Presently, the WTO is facilitating new negotiations under the 'Doha Development Agenda,' which was initiated in 2001 (Schneider-Petsinger, 2020).

The organization has played a crucial role in reducing trade barriers and facilitating market access, it is important to note that the WTO's regulations are not solely focused on market liberalization. In certain instances, its rules endorse the maintenance of trade barriers, particularly for the protection of consumers or to mitigate the spread of diseases (Edwards, 1993; Siddiqui, 2015). However, since its establishment in 1995, WTO members have predominantly struggled to achieve the negotiating goals they set for themselves, particularly those outlined in the extensive 2001 Doha Development Agenda (DDA). By the time of the 2024 Abu Dhabi Ministerial Conference, only two multilateral agreements had been reached by WTO members in nearly three decades: a 2013 agreement focused on trade facilitation and a partial agreement regarding fisheries subsidies, finalized in 2022 (Fergusson, 2006; Gisela, 2024).

ii. Reduction of Tariffs, Quotas, and other Trade Barriers

Tariffs, quotas, and various trade restrictions serve to limit the influx of foreign goods into a nation. Tariffs are essentially taxes levied on imported goods, while quotas impose restrictions on the volume of imports allowed. An extreme form of quota is an embargo, which completely halts the import or export of specific products (Panagariya & Duttagupta,2002; Revell, 2017). Additional measures that can hinder international trade include the establishment of standards and the requirement of licenses. For instance, certain governments may enforce

health and safety standards for imported goods that exceed those applicable to domestically produced items. Furthermore, governments may mandate import and export licenses, which can increase costs and, in some cases, render international trade unfeasible for businesses. Some nations also engage in currency manipulation as a protective strategy (Rojas & Pineda, 2020). When a country's currency depreciates in value compared to that of other nations, its exports become more competitively priced, while imports become costlier. The Chinese government has faced allegations of deliberately devaluing its currency to boost exports and limit foreign imports (Revell, 2017).

iii. The GATT-TRIPS Agreements

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) are essential components of the World Trade Organization (WTO). It aims to address unique and interrelated global trade (Ullrich, 2016). GATT is primarily concerned with the liberalization of trade through the reduction of tariffs and non-tariff barriers, while advocating for principles such as non-discrimination and reciprocity. Conversely, TRIPS seek to establish uniform standards for the protection of intellectual property rights, which may occasionally serve as a barrier to trade rather than promoting trade liberalization (Tellez & Syam, 2023; Igbokwe, 2024).

Furthermore, the GATT's primary objective is to remove trade barriers and foster non-discrimination and reciprocity among its member states (Matthias, 2024). Historically, it has contributed to the stabilization of trade relations, especially in the aftermath of World War II, by mitigating conflicts through diplomatic agreements (Aliyah et al., 2024). Conversely, TRIPS establish minimum standards for intellectual property, which may pose challenges for developing nations by restricting their capacity to tailor laws to their specific contexts (Abdelgawad, 2015). The agreement's provisions on data exclusivity could impede access to medications in these countries, raising significant concerns regarding public health and the availability of generic drugs (Owoeye, 2014). TRIPS introduce important issues regarding equity in intellectual property rights, particularly for less developed nations, thereby underscoring a complex relationship between trade and development.

iv. Dispute Resolution Mechanism

The mechanism for dispute resolution serves as an essential component of the World Trade Organization (WTO), aimed at ensuring the enforcement of trade regulations and the equitable, predictable, and efficient resolution of conflicts among member nations. This mechanism is crucial as it offers a structured, rules-based framework for addressing disputes that arise when one nation perceives that another has breached WTO agreements, such as by implementing unjust trade barriers or providing subsidies that adversely affect foreign industries (WTO, 2022; Pauwelyn, 2020). The Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU) governs the WTO's dispute resolution process, outlining comprehensive rules and procedures that direct the resolution process. The WTO asserts that this framework is fundamental to maintaining the "stability and predictability of the multilateral trading system" (Davey, 2005; Matsushita, Schoenbaum & Mavroidis, 2006).

The dispute resolution process initiates with consultations, during which the involved parties engage in diplomatic discussions to resolve their issues. These discussions are expected to conclude within 60 days following the filing of a complaint. If these consultations do not yield a resolution, the complainant may request a panel review. Panels, generally consisting of three experts, are tasked with evaluating evidence and determining whether there has been a violation of WTO rules (WTO, 2021; Guzman & Simmons, 2005; Pauwelyn, 2020). Should either party contest the panel's conclusions, they have the option to appeal to the Appellate Body, which is made up of seven members responsible for reviewing the legal foundations of the panel's reports. This appellate stage adds an additional layer of scrutiny, ensuring that the decision is legally robust. If a ruling identifies a violation, the offending nation is obligated to comply. If compliance is not achieved within a "reasonable period," the aggrieved party may seek authorization from the WTO to impose retaliatory measures, such as tariffs, against the non-compliant nation (Bown & Keynes, 2020; Shaffer & Apea, 2005; Bown, 2004).

1. Impact of the WTO on Global Trade

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has played a pivotal role in shaping global trade dynamics since its inception in 1995. By facilitating the reduction of trade barriers and fostering economic collaboration, the

organization has contributed to notable growth in trade volume. However, it is important to note that the advantages of this growth have not been uniformly experienced across all member nations. However, organization has been instrumental in achieving an estimated 120% increase in global trade, amounting to roughly $8 trillion in 2003 (Subramanian & Wei, 2003). The active involvement of industrialized nations in trade negotiations has yielded greater trade advantages compared to those experienced by developing countries (Subramanian & Wei, 2003).

Moreover, the WTO's framework contributes to the reduction of production costs and prices, thereby improving consumer options and overall living standards (Griffiths & O'Callaghan, 2002). By advocating for open trade, it stimulates economic growth and job creation, which is particularly vital for developing nations (Griffiths & O'Callaghan, 2002). In addition, the WTO plays a significant role in shaping regulatory governance among countries, affecting the boundaries between market and state as well as institutional authority (Shaffer, 2015). Its agreements, including GATT and TRIPS, create a stable trading environment that is crucial for international business activities (Calle & Calle, 2015). While the WTO has enabled remarkable trade expansion, challenges persist, especially concerning the equitable distribution of benefits among member states and the necessity for reforms to tackle current global trade challenges (Sampson, 2001).

Global trade values have surged nearly 400 times compared to figures from 1950. The associated graphs depicting volume and value reveal a substantial increase in trade activity following the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995. By the year 2022, the average growth rates for world trade volume and value reached 4% and 6%, respectively, since the WTO's formation. Since the ratification of the Marrakesh Agreement, which created the World Trade Organization on April 15, 1994, international trade has witnessed extraordinary growth, exceeding US$ 30.4 trillion in 2023, marking a fivefold increase since 1995. At the same time, tariffs have been significantly reduced under the WTO's framework, leading to decreased trade costs. This trade expansion has coincided with a marked decline in global poverty, underscoring the importance of trade in promoting economic development and improving individuals' quality of life.

2. Challenges and Criticisms of the WTO

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is a global institution that regulates international trade. Despite its important role in promoting free trade and resolving trade disputes, the WTO faces several challenges and criticisms:

i. Unequal Benefits of Free Trade

Critiques of free trade underscore significant inequalities in the manner in which various countries and populations experience its consequences. Although free trade is frequently promoted for its potential to stimulate economic growth, the situation is more nuanced, revealing a spectrum of inequities. Historical and institutional structures often advantage developed countries, thereby maintaining unequal benefits in trade agreements (Milner, 1988). Discriminatory practices can create substantial disparities, making it difficult for developing nations to compete on an equitable basis (Pomfret, 1988).

The agricultural trade sector is particularly skewed, with developing countries bearing the brunt of these distortions. Such imbalances can intensify poverty and inequality, even in the presence of some overall advantages from trade reforms (Anderson et al., 2011). Research indicates that while the elimination of trade barriers has the potential to alleviate poverty, the advantages are not evenly distributed, often favoring more affluent nations (Anderson et al., 2011). A significant divide exists between the endorsement of free trade by economists and the skepticism expressed by the public, primarily

due to concerns over job losses and environmental issues (Coughlin, 2002). The general populace tends to focus more on the drawbacks of trade, especially regarding its effects on local economies and labor conditions (Coughlin, 2002).

ii. The Rise of Protectionism and Nationalism

The increasing prevalence of protectionism and nationalism presents considerable challenges for the World Trade Organization (WTO), affecting its function in the governance of global trade. This transformation is driven by a multitude of factors, including geopolitical conflicts, economic realignments, and the changing landscape of international trade agreements. The rise of China as a significant global economic force has tested the WTO's ability to effectively resolve disputes, as its existing legal framework struggles to accommodate China's distinct economic model (Wu, 2016). The growing adoption of protectionist policies by various nations is a reaction to perceived inequities in trade practices, particularly concerning countries like China, which complicates the WTO's objectives (Baldwin & Baldwin, 1986). Similarly, the diminishing economic supremacy of the United States, coupled with the emergence of other economic powers, has resulted in a more fragmented trading landscape, where nations increasingly prioritize their national interests over multilateral agreements (Baldwin & Baldwin, 1986).

States often rationalize protectionism as a strategy to protect domestic industries, which can undermine the free trade principles that the WTO advocates (Strange, 1985). Arguably, the ambiguity surrounding covert protectionism has led nations to establish legal connections between the WTO and various regulatory matters, such as labor and environmental standards, in an effort to reduce trade distortions (Kim, 2012). This trend illustrates a growing inclination among nations to reconcile domestic regulatory goals with international trade obligations, further complicating the role of the WTO (Kim, 2012).

iii. Stalemate in Multilateral Trade Negotiations and Impact of Global Power Shifts

A major obstacle facing the World Trade Organization (WTO) is its failure to finalize the Doha Development Round, which commenced in 2001 with the objective of lowering trade barriers and enhancing market access for developing nations (Hopewell, 2016). Ongoing disputes regarding topics such as agricultural subsidies and industrial tariffs have resulted in a prolonged deadlock, thereby diminishing the WTO's effectiveness in promoting multilateral trade agreements (Baldwin, 2016). Consequently, nations have increasingly opted for bilateral and regional trade agreements, including the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), circumventing the WTO and diminishing its pivotal role in trade negotiations (Matsushita, 2020).

Similarly, the evolving global economic environment, especially the ascent of emerging markets such as China and India, has introduced new dynamics within the World Trade Organization (WTO). These nations are striving for enhanced influence over trade policies, which has resulted in friction with established powers like the United States and the European Union (Narlikar, 2020). Furthermore, geopolitical tensions and the growing polarization of international relations hinder the process of reaching consensus within the WTO, thereby posing additional challenges to its role as an impartial mediator in trade disputes (Hopewell, 2019).

Conclusion

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has played a crucial role in influencing the global trade environment by advocating for free trade, diminishing protectionist measures, and offering a forum for the resolution of trade conflicts. Established in 1995, the WTO has aimed to

liberalize trade through multilateral agreements designed to stimulate economic growth, improve market access, and facilitate the integration of developing nations into the global economy. However, the organization currently confronts several challenges, such as escalating trade tensions, an increase in protectionist policies, and limited advancements in recent multilateral discussions, particularly regarding the stalled Doha Round. Furthermore, the growing intricacy of global supply chains and the evolution of digital trade have revealed shortcomings within the WTO's framework, which has struggled to adapt to new economic realities. Consequently, while the WTO continues to be an essential entity for promoting free trade, its capacity to effectively tackle modern challenges and mitigate protectionism is limited.

The study recommends for the reform of the World Trade Organization's Dispute Resolution Mechanism to enhance its effectiveness in resolving disputes. Additionally, the organization should adopt a more flexible approach by allowing "plurilateral" agreements. This would enable interested member states to negotiate new regulations on specific issues without the need for unanimous consent. Moreover, the organization should prioritize discussions surrounding e-commerce, data protection, and digital trade standards to address existing regulatory gaps in these areas. It should also strengthen its efforts to support developing countries by providing technical assistance, capacity-building programs, and preferential trade agreements. By implementing reforms that address the unique challenges faced by these nations, they will be better positioned to participate in the global market, benefit from trade liberalization, and compete on a more equitable footing.

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NATURAL RESOURCES AND INTRA-STATE CONFLICTS IN WEST AFRICA AFTER THE COLD WAR

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ABSTRACT
Africa was a theatre of conflicts at the end of the Cold War and West Africa was the epicentre of destructive intra-state conflicts. The massive humanitarian catastrophe and the destabilising effect of civil wars necessitated inquiries on the causes of persistent civil wars in the developing world. Among the several studies of the phenomenon in Africa, the findings of Collier and Hoffler (2000) emerged as the most influential explanation. In their seminal study, Collier and Hoffler (2000) argued that it is greed for resources and not grievances that are the cause of conflicts in resource endowed countries in the developing world. In recent decades, the correlation between resource wealth and wars has held sway as the dominant perspective on the prevalence of conflicts in developing countries. Conflicts in Africa and the West Africa sub-region were explained through this paradigm. This paper is a contribution to the extant knowledge on the nexus between natural resources and conflicts in resource-rich countries in West Africa. Data was sourced from secondary materials: internet sources, textbooks, magazines and newspapers. The paper found that though natural resources were not the primary cause of conflicts in West Africa, these resources were however responsible for fueling and sustaining conflicts in the sub-region. Redesigning the security architecture of states to improve policing; addressing environmental and resource allocation grievances; address citizenship crisis of nomadic herders; implement unbiased policies in the settlement of herder-farmer tensions and the establishment of state-level institutional framework to facilitate peaceful settlement of herder-farmer disputes were recommended as solutions to conflicts in West Africa.

Introduction

Africa was ravaged by civil conflicts at the end of the Cold War. The West African sub-region emerged as the epicentre of intra-state conflicts in the decade after the Cold War. The deadly and destructive nature of these wars, the consequent humanitarian catastrophe and the threat the crisis presented to global peace and security helped raise questions on the causes of wars in Africa and indeed in the developing world. These necessitated series of inquiries to establish the factors that predispose African countries to conflict. Expectedly, these studies have thrown up different positions and explanations. While some have established a strong nexus between natural resources and conflicts in Africa, others have found no

relationship between the abundance of natural resources and conflicts in the continent.

The findings by Collier and Hoffler (2000) in the greed versus grievance thesis was widely acclaimed and accepted as possible reasons for the cause of conflicts in resource-rich countries in the developing world. Collier and Hoffler (2000) linked resource wealth to conflicts plaguing developing countries and argued that a strong correlation exists between resource endowments and the occurrence of civil wars in Africa and the developing world. These findings have been reinforced by Elbadawi and Sambanis (2001); Ross (2001); De Soysa (2002) and others. For these scholars, the quest to benefit from the exploitation of natural resources in resource-rich countries is the cause of conflicts in Africa and is the reason why resource-rich African countries are prone to conflicts. According to these scholars, explaining the motivation for conflicts from the standpoint of grievances is wrong as greed is the primary cause of conflicts in Africa. Even where resources are not directly responsible for the onset of conflict, studies have established correlation between natural resources and the duration of conflicts (Fearon, 2001). Drawing from resource wealth and conflict correlation thesis, it has been argued that West Africa is prone to conflict because of its natural resource endowments. Since the publication of the seminal study by Collier and Hoffler (2000), this position largely held sway as a reliable explanation of the occurrence of conflicts in developing countries.

However, the correlation between natural resources and intra-state conflicts has been challenged under intense scrutiny. In its place, the causes of conflict have been attributed to ethnicity, religion, corruption, the weakness of government and institutions of government to mediate in conflicts etc (Alao, 2011). Exponents of this position advance the argument that it is grievances and not greed that is at the root of conflicts in Africa. It is widely acknowledged though that natural resources are critical to the sustenance of post Cold War conflicts in Africa as conflicting depend on these resources for funding. The civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d' Ivoire are often given as examples of conflicts that were sustained by resources. For instance, both sides in the civil war in Liberia depended on the exploitation of natural resources in prosecuting the war. The country's major exports - rubber and logging- became sources of funding for the Government of Samuel Doe in fighting the insurgents (Alao, 2011). On the other hand, Charles Taylor, the rebel leader, was also dependent on the exploitation of timber and diamonds for funding his insurgency (Stiftung, n.d). Similarly, both sides in the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire – the Government of Laurent Gbagbo and the rebels, Forces Nouvelles (FN) - resorted to trading in illicit diamonds to fund their operations (BICC, 2007).

There is substantial body of knowledge on the role of natural resources as critical elements in the sustenance of conflicts in West Africa after the Cold War. The impact of natural resources in conflicts is also broadly acknowledged in almost all conflict situations in the sub-region. Conflicting parties have almost always focused on controlling areas that produce important natural resources which are exploited to fund the war efforts. This is noticeable across conflict scenes in the sub-region. For instance, in Liberia, the struggle to control diamond producing areas of Western Liberia and the timber producing parts of south-east region of the country became the primary objective of all parties in the civil conflict. The control of these areas by factions in the conflict provided the needed resources for groups and the motivation to continue fighting (Atkinson, 1997).

Where control over resources to aid conflicts is not the primary cause of conflicts, grievances over the exploitation of natural resources have often formed the basis of rebellion and conflicts. A noticeable case is Sierra Leone where the looting of the country's resources by the elite was a grouse in the insurgency by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) (Ross, 2001). Resource-inspired or sustained conflicts have emerged as an issue of grave concern for the peace and stability of the sub-region, Africa and the security of the global community. This paper seeks to expand the frontiers of existing body of knowledge on the relationship between resource wealth in West Africa and the incidence of conflicts. The paper is divided into seven sections. Section one is the introduction which is followed by the framework of analysis. Section three deals with herder-farmer conflict while section four is on oil conflicts. Sections five, six and seven are on illicit mining, gemstones and conflict and the presentation of findings/ recommendations and conclusion respectively.

Framework of Analysis

This paper adopts the analytical framework offered by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler (2000) in *"greed versus grievance in civil wars in developing countries"*. The contention by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler that natural resources are at the root of conflicts in resource-rich countries in the developing world is considered appropriate framework because the paper is aimed at examining the relationship between natural resources and conflicts in West Africa. Economic causes of conflict and associated theories that explain conflicts in society are not new in socio-political and historical thought. In his writings, Karl Marx (1818-1883), more than any other philosopher, dealt extensively on the relationship between the economic lives of individuals and conflict in society. In the *Das Kapital,* the *Communist Manifesto* and several of his celebrated philosophical contributions on capitalism as the cause of conflict in society, Karl Marx contended that capitalism creates economic classes with conflicting interests that are not reconcilable (Rashid, 2017). This formed the foundation of his socio-economic and political theories on the intricate and conflicting economic interests and relationships in capitalism as a mode of production. Karl Marx predicted that conflicting class interests of the bourgeoisie, the class that owns the means of production, and the working class (proletariats) makes conflict a permanent feature of capitalism and that these can only be resolved through proletariat revolution that will end capitalism and establish a classless society (Rosen, n.d).

The philosophical thoughts of Karl Marx have global impact and have continued to inspire further inquiries on man's economic relationships and conflict in society. The challenges of conflict in Africa after the Cold War and the attempts to provide scientific explanations to the crisis have again brought to the fore the relationship between economic factors and prevalence of conflicts in the continent. This was the focus of research in the decade after the Cold War. Amongst the several contributions on the causes of conflict in Africa, the contribution by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler (2000) on the relationship between natural resources and civil wars in developing countries has continued to be a point of reference. After an extensive study of civil wars, Collier and Hoeffler (2000) produced a report entitled "*greed or grievance in civil wars in developing countries"* in which they argued that resource dependent countries are more prone to civil wars. Collier and Hoeffler further contended that natural resources provide a unique opportunity of funding for nascent rebel organizations to begin a civil war as these resources are location specific, produce rents and can be looted for a long period.

Corroborating the findings of Collier and Hoeffler, Ross (2001) contended that natural resources are a factor in the initiation, intensification and prolongation of civil wars in resource–rich developing nations. The greed thesis also resonates with De Soysa (2002) who posited that primary resources dependence have a strong effect on the incidence of civil wars in resource endowed nations. Natural resource availability contributes to conflict because it provides incentives for the formation of rebel groups and the needed resources for their operations. For De Soysa, the greed for resources is therefore a primary driver of conflict in resource wealthy developing nations. De Soysa cited the conflicts in Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo as wars motivated primarily by greed for natural resources.

This analytical framework focuses on natural resources as the root cause of conflict in resource-rich countries. Consequently, in West Africa the abundance of resources is considered as the cause of conflicts in the sub-region. This framework is considered appropriate in highlighting the impact of natural resources on conflicts in West Africa. It seeks to establish the fact that natural resources fuel and sustain conflicts in West Africa sub-region.

a. Herder-Farmer Conflict

Resource-use conflicts are a source of perennial problem in West Africa. The protagonists in these conflicts are herders and farmers. Conflict between farmers and herders in West Africa has a long history (Institute of Security Studies, 2009). Competition for land, water and other natural resources are the underlying factors in these conflicts. Natural resource use by sedentary crop farmers and nomadic cattle farmers is a major source of intra-state conflict in the sub-region. This is because both herders and crop farmers need the same dwindling resources – land and water – for sustenance. As a result, interaction between farmers and herders in the course of promoting their livelihoods is unavoidable. It is these interactions that have often bred uneasy

relationships between the two agricultural groups.

Nomadic Fulani cattle rearing has been a significant part of the history of most countries in West Africa. Long before the independence of Ghana in 1957, Fulani pastoralists have been rearing cattle in that country (Alhassan & Asante, 2022; Adomako, 2019). However, in the 1980s there were increased tensions and incidents of conflict between farmers and herders in the country (Alhassan & Asante, 2022). The response of the Government of Ghana to the frequent farmer-herder conflict was the formation of Operation Cow Leg in 1988 to deal with the problem (Alhassan & Asante, 2022; Adomako, 2019). The objective of the security operation was to "flush out alien Fulani herdsmen from Ghana's territory as a prerequisite for maintaining peace and security, and to promote the livelihood of the country's subsistence farmers" (Tonah, 2002 as cited in Alhassan & Asante 2022:6**).** Obviously, this is based on government's perception of herders as foreigners. In fact, Alhassan and Asante (2022) noted that the Government of President Jerry Rawlings saw Fulanis as foreign invaders from Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali. This informed the mass deportation of Fulanis between 1988, 1989 and 1999. Pastoral Fulanis were also targets of eviction from areas prone to farmer-herder conflict as they were rounded up by operatives of Operation Cow Leg in collaboration with local and district authorities (Alhassan & Asante, 2022). Since 2000, Alhassan & Asante (2022) observed that there have been frequent expulsions of Fulanis from parts of the country that are prone to farmer-herder conflict or where conflicts have been reported. Interestingly, Fulanis pasturing cattle for Ghanaians are considered indigenous pastoralists and exempted from eviction or expulsion (Alhassan & Asante, 2022).

Discrimination against Fulanis in the distribution of social amenities; the denial of citizenship to Fulanis; stereotyping of pastoralists as jihadists, criminals and rapists; lack of land allocated to herders for grazing; the refusal of herders to pay compensation for devastation of farms caused by grazing and the contest for land and water are identified social triggers of the crisis in northern Ghana (Ahmed, 2022). Climate change is considered as an exacerbating factor. Apart from the impact of climate change, Ahmed (2022) noted population growth, urbanization and acquisition of large expanse of land for commercial farming as other factors contributing to herder-farmer crisis in Ghana.

It has been observed that over the decades, climate change has resulted in desert encroachment in northern Nigeria (Onyekuru & Marchant, 2014). Between 1976 and 1995, 425% of arable land was encroached by the surging desert, resulting in the loss of several hectres (Onyekuru & Marchant, 2014). The intensification of the process of desertification has necessitated southward push by pastoralists to seek pastures for their herds. Consequently, there is competition for resources between farmers and herders (Scoons, 1995 as cited in Onyekuru & Marchant, 2014). The stiff competition for land and water and the resulting claims of encroachment by both parties has often led to tensions and clashes. The ensuing conflicts have taken a huge toll on human lives and an unprecedented destruction of properties in the north central zone – the epicentre of the crisis - and across most parts of Nigeria.

Farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria and across West Africa are exacerbated by the intensification of drought in the West African Sahel (Nyong, n,d). Sustained periods of drought in the northern parts are also a push factor for nomadic pastoralists to migrate southward to the tropical zones in search of pastures. This migratory trend over the years has facilitated pastoralist conflict with sedentary farmers south of the Sahara. In a broad study of the literature on the causes of farmer – herder conflict in Africa, Nasssef, et al (2023) found that climate change related conflicts in Africa contributed the largest proportion (56%) of farmer – herder conflict. The complex interaction of socio-political and economic factors which worsens climate related conflicts in West Africa is reinforced by increased population and the pressure it exerts on agriculture (Nyong, n.d). Population increase has altered traditional land use systems as a result of pressure on land. Reduction in available land for cultivation is contributing to farmers' encroachment on traditionally reserved grazing areas and routes thereby bringing them into collision with herders (Nyong, n.d).

The effect of climate change as a causative factor in farmer-herder conflict is generally acknowledged. However, Shettima and Tar (2008) implicated socio-political relations between the two groups as the underlying reasons for the frequent conflict. They argued that simply attributing the cause of the perennial

conflict to environmental changes and its associated scarcity and the consequent competition for resources as the primary cause of conflict will miss the point as it does not properly situate the problem within the socio-political context in which these conflicts occur. They therefore concluded that the sources of conflict between herders and farmers are multidimensional with roots in socio-cultural and political experiences of the two groups. The fact that nomads are regarded as a group of landless people who uses land and other natural resources they do not own while sedentary farmers are treated as the land owners by governments only breeds mistrust and poisons their mutual relationship (Shettima & Tar, 2008). Most governments across West Africa are quick to blame herders for any misunderstanding with sedentary farmers (Shettima & Tar, 2008). This helps to reinforce the perception amongst herders that the state is in alliance with sedentary farmers.

Davidheiser and Luna (2008) introduced historical perspective to the understanding of herder-farmer conflict. They situated the root of the conflict in colonialism. According to Davidheiser and Luna (2008) in pre-colonial times the relations between pastoralists and farmers were symbiotic as the production systems depended on each other. The interdependence coupled with effective traditional dispute resolution systems at the local level promoted amicable relations between the two groups. Davidheiser and Luna (2008) contended that colonialism and the introduction of capitalism greatly disrupted these relations. Davidheiser and Luna (2008) further stated that pressure on land and its degradation, colonialism and the intensification of capitalism combined to enforce artificial scarcity and therefore competition for natural resources by both groups. This, according to the authors introduced elements of conflict in the hitherto mutual relations between the two production systems.

Davidheiser and Luna (2008) further noted that colonial laws and practices which were biased against pastoralists were inherited and implemented by succeeding post-colonial administrations in West Africa. The introduction of modern technology and techniques of farming which enabled the irrigation of arid parts of the Sahel that were used exclusively by pastoralists for their herds further contributed to the crisis (Davidheiser & Luna, 2008). According to Davidheiser and Luna (2008) this impacted farmer-herder relations in two major ways: it increased farming activities in the arid regions which were considered unfavourable for farming thereby encouraging a northward expansion of farmers into pastoral territories and it also encouraged sedentary practice by nomad pastoralists in areas where water sources were located. Davidheiser and Luna (2008) attributed the southward movement of pastoralists to pressure on land due to demographic rise and desertification. This resource-induced migration increased herders' interaction with farmers with whom they have no shared history of integration and traditional institutions and mechanisms of dispute resolution. According to Davidheiser and Luna (2008) this is the root cause of increased land-use conflicts in West Africa. In order to resolve recurring farmer-herder conflict in the sub-region, Davidheiser and Luna (2008) recommended local control of land, adoption of traditional methods of dispute resolution as against the present Western style of adjudication and review of legislations that are biased against either nomad pastoralists or sedentary farmers.

It is the contention of Kendrick and Sanders (2024) that the farmer-herder conflict ravaging the West African sub-region is both a consequence and reflection of the socio-economic and political exclusion and injustices suffered by Fulbe (Fulani) pastoralists across West Africa. Kendrick and Sanders (2024) presented a catalogue of deprivations of the Fulbe across almost all countries in West Africa. According to Kendrick and Sanders (2024), there is general misconception about Fulbe people in West Africa. They are stereotyped as criminals, violent jihadists and aliens in most countries in West Africa. As a result, Fulbe people suffer injustices from governments and other ethnic groups and communities. Kendrick and Sanders (2024) noted that in Ghana and Benin Republic, nomad pasturing is viewed as old fashioned and prone to conflict; this argument is fast gaining currency in Nigeria as well. Consequently, there is general advocacy for ranching in place of traditional methods of herding. Kendrick and Sanders (2024) further noted that in Ghana and Benin Republic, Fulbe ethnic group is denied citizenship and deprived of basic political rights which deprive them of representation in governance and therefore participation in the formulation and implementation of policies that affect them. The absence of Fulbe representation also means that their communities are deprived of social amenities. The Fulbe people also suffer injustices in the

local traditional mechanisms of dispute resolution as these institutions always favour sedentary farmers in disputes with herders. Other causal factors identified are traditional land tenure system that disadvantages Fulbe pastoralists; the increasing presence of oil multinationals across West Africa and the huge expanses of land required to host them; commercialization of farming which shrinks available pasture and attempts by various governments across the sub-region to modernize pastoral farming through sedentary cattle rearing.

b. Oil Generated Conflicts

Environmental degradation in oil producing communities and revenue distribution are common causes of resource-based conflict in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. The despoliation of the environment of oil producing communities by the activities of oil multinationals, systematic alienation of oil producing areas from participation in the oil industry and unfair distribution of oil-based revenue are some reasons for the intractable conflict in the Niger Delta region (Ibaba, 2008). The struggle for the benefits of oil and the oil economy itself continues to be a source of conflict (Ikelegbe, 2005). It is the cause of inter and intra-communal conflicts as well as the conflict between the oil-bearing communities on the one hand and the Federal Government and the multinational oil companies on the other (Ikelegbe, 2005). The contest for benefits from the oil industry has resulted in the emergence of various ethnic-based associations and ethnic militias that have violently attacked both the state and oil companies operating in the region (Ikelegbe, 2005; Ibaba, 2008). Therefore, the crisis in the Niger Delta is the result of decades of oil production without commensurate benefits to the host communities, marginalisation of the oil communities, pollution and environmental degradation of oil-bearing areas. According to Ikelegbe (2005) these are the objective factors that formed the basis of the conflict in the region.

Similarly, Imobighe (n.d) observed the lack of adequate concern for the interests of oil-producing communities in the distribution of oil benefits; lack of protection of the interests of oil-bearing communities in the oil industry; environmental pollution and degradation caused by the oil industry and unfair distribution of oil revenues as the sources of frustration. These discontents have fuelled agitations and the resort to violence and conflict in the oil producing areas (Imobighe, n.d).

Ibeanu (2000) emphasized on the harmful environmental impact of four decades of oil production in the Niger Delta and the exclusion of the area from benefits of the oil industry as the primary reasons in the conflict involving the oil-bearing communities, the oil companies and government. In Sierra Leone, the lack of benefits for resource producing areas provided the springboard for Late Fodah Sankoh to launch his rebellion from the South East province where the bulk of diamonds were produced (Alao, 2011). The broad consensus in the literature on the conflict in the Niger Delta is that environmental degradation resulting from exploration and exploitation activities of the oil industry in the area and distribution of benefits of the oil wealth are fundamental to the crisis.

c. Gemstones, illicit mining and conflict

Theoretical and empirical findings have established a correlation between resource wealth and conflict in Africa (Ross, 2001; Berman, 2017 et al). Artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) has been particularly implicated in recent conflicts in West Africa. ASGM plays a critical role in the initiation, intensity and prolongation of armed conflicts (Ross, 2001). It provides a source of funding and a motivation for armed groups to continue to prosecute a conflict. This is due to the ability of armed groups to extract revenues from mining sites even when not being directly involved in mining operations. Taxation of miners, offering protection for mining activities and serving as guards in mining sites and engaging in mining through proxies are some activities of armed groups that make their adventure lucrative and provides the incentive for armed conflict (Berman, 2017 et al).

There are festering conflicts in various parts of sub-region that are attributed to the activities of illicit mining of gold and other precious stones. Illicit extraction of gemstones, gold and other valuable minerals are often the root cause of conflicts in mining sites and the surrounding environment. Ogbonnaya (2020) noted that illegal gold mining is a factor that promotes conflict in Zamfara state of Nigeria. Quoting a local source, Ogbonnaya (2020) stated that the sponsors of gold mining in Zamfara state are the same people that sponsor cattle rustling and rural banditry. Their objective is to create an environment of insecurity which is conducive for

the activities of illegal miners. Part of the proceeds realised are ploughed back in procuring arms and ammunition for the intensification and sustenance of the climate of insecurity in the area of operation and beyond (Ogbonnaya, 2020). In another vein, the struggle amongst illegal miners for control of mining fields also causes conflict among miners which impacts the security of the state and the region.

Illicit mining of gold, diamonds and other natural resources are known to be responsible for conflicts (Ross, 2001). Ojakorotu (2022) established that the attraction of huge profits from gold mining was a primary reason bandits transformed from robbery and involvement in other criminal activities into gold mining in Zamfara state of Nigeria. Ojakorotu (2022) further noted that conflicts arise from clashes between bandits engaged in exploitation of natural resources and state security agencies. Since 2019, the contest over control of gold mines and mining sites by criminal gangs has been the cause of conflict, general insecurity and the resulting mass displacement of people in Zamfara state (Salati, Adeyemo & Adeyemo, 2022).

The trade in illicit diamonds as a source of funding for rebel groups and other non-state actors in the violence and conflict in Sierra Leone and Liberia is a reference point in the war economies of both countries (Tana high-level forum on security in Africa, 2017). In an empirical study, Salati, Adeyemo and Adeyemo (2022) established that mining sites are notorious for attracting criminal gangs who turn such areas to conflict zones. The point is that armed non state actors and other criminal elements consider the lucrative trade in gold-mining communities of Zamfara state attractive as a source of funding for arms and ammunition that drive criminality and conflict in the state and the entire northwestern zone of Nigeria (Salati, Adeyemo and Adeyemo, 2022). This partly explains the persistence of conflict and insecurity especially in Zamfara and the neighbouring states of Katsina and Kaduna (Salati, Adeyemo and Adeyemo, 2022). Zamfara and the whole of the northwest also suffer from frequent farmer-herder conflict over competition for land and water resources which is common in other parts of the country and the West Africa sub-region (Salati, Adeyemo and Adeyemo, 2022).

d. Conflict diamonds

Conflict diamonds from Sierra Leone presents a classic case of the greed and grievance argument. In their explanation of the prevalence of wars in the Third World, Collier and Hoeffler (2000) dismissed the case of grievance as the cause of wars in resource-rich nations and concluded that the primary motivation for wars is greed over mineral resources. Therefore, for Collier and Hoeffler (2000) it is greed that is at the root of conflicts in resource-rich Third World countries. According to this school of thought, war affords the opportunity for people to loot resources and that is the primary reason for the initiation of conflict. In the past two decades, this school of thought has gained wide acceptance as the dominant explanation for the prevalence of civil wars in Africa.

The nexus between illicit trade in diamonds and civil wars in West Africa was brought to the fore in the civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone and later Cote d' Ivoire (Ross, 2001; Stiftung, n.d; BICC focus, 2008). The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Foday Sankoh launched its attack on Sierra Leone from Liberia in March 1991, with active backing from Charles Taylor and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) (Ross, 2001). The rich diamond resources of Sierra Leone provided the primary motivation for Charles Taylor's support for the RUF (Stiftung, n.d). This partly explains the concentration of RUF attacks on the diamond-rich region and the mining operations in Sierra Leone. Though the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) needed the diamonds to finance its rebellion, there was no doubt that Charles Taylor also wanted the diamonds from Sierra Leone to fund his own insurgency in Liberia, which was the primary reason for the support (Vines & Vanesan, n.d). Indeed the NPFL and the RUF heavily depended on trading in illicit diamonds from Sierra Leone in funding the rebellion in both countries. Similarly, in Cote d' Ivoire, the massive exploitation of diamonds along with cocoa, timber, gold, cotton and oil was to play a significant role in financing the conflict at the onset of the crisis between the military under Laurent Gbagbo and the Forces Nouvelles (FN) in 2002 **(**BICC focus, 2008)**.**

Apart from being a source of financing for the rebels and government, diamonds and other lootable natural resources were critical in staving off eminent defeat particularly of government forces in Sierra Leone. In 1995, the Executive Outcomes, a South African mercenary firm was

engaged to repel the eminent rebel attack on Freetown (Ross, 2001). The agreement with Executive Outcomes was paid for in diamonds and other resources (Ross, 2001). The success of this military intervention saved the government from eminent defeat by the RUF (Ross, 2001).

In 1997 President Tejan Kabbah was overthrown in a military putsch and Sierra Leone was constrained to solicit for the services of another military firm, this time Sandline International, to assist in his reinstatement. The cost of $10 million for the intervention was again borne through the concession of mineral rights to the company (Ross, 2001). Essentially, the role of natural resources in the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone largely supports the findings of Collier on the causes of wars in resource-rich countries. Charles Taylor used the proceeds from the sale of diamonds and timber to prosecute the civil war in Liberia and also fund the insurgency in Sierra Leone and Cote d' Ivoire (Vines & Vanesan, n.d).

In order to stop the conflicts funded from natural resources there is the need to cut off the source of funding as suggested by Collier and Hoeffler (2000). This explains why the United Nations imposed an embargo on diamond sales by the government of Charles Taylor and also banned the sale of timber from Liberia in 2001 (Vines & Vanesan, n.d).

Findings and Recommendations

a. Herder-farmer conflict

Government policies are critical in the deterioration in herder-farmer relations. In countries where governments consistently portray the Fulani as not indigenous to local communities and therefore not citizens are fundamental to the crisis. More often than not, the basis of this claim and persisting perception is the itinerant nature of their occupation which involves herding cattle from one location to the other and across national borders. Consequently, most countries do not consider herders as indigenous to their communities and society. They are often called settlers, aliens and non-indigenes while sedentary farmers are considered as indigenous people. The nomadic nature of their occupation further ensures that they are not adequately represented in government where policies affecting them are formulated and implemented. On the other hand, their competitors for resources are considered as locals and owners of the land. This perception effectively places herders in a precarious situation which can be seen through policies formulated and implemented in conflict situations. Therefore, herders are marginalized both in the communities they identify with and the government they consider to be their own. The result is that their interests are not always protected when they conflict with those of the farmers.

The literature on herder-farmer conflict in Ghana illustrates the dilemma of herders in that country. The formation of Operation Cow Leg in Ghana in 1988 was aimed at flushing out Fulani cattle farmers who were considered aliens by the government. The name 'Operation Cow Leg' alone is suggestive of the target of the policy. The formulation and implementation of the policy is indicative of the fact that herders were not represented. Again, the policy was a clear indication of the fact that the Government of Ghana was on the side of the farmers who were considered as indigenes and the herders often assigned the ignominious tag of migrants or settlers. The denial of citizenship and their exclusion from the enjoyment of the basic benefits of citizenship is sensitive and could be the basis of grouse that fuels farmer-herder conflicts. The grievances arising from this marginalization are exacerbated when government openly takes sides with sedentary farmers. The mere existence of a general perception of government bias will not promote the desired peace as herders will continuously view any government intervention with suspicion.

The competition for common resources will persist and intensify due to demographic pressures and dwindling resources as the impact of climate change takes its toll on resource availability. Therefore, tensions are expected to spike in farmer-herder relations in the years to come. This establishes the critical role of government as a mediator. The success of this all-important role will depend on the perception of government as an unbiased, fair and just arbiter. Developing a data base through proper documentation of herders, showing nationalities and their local communities is vital for the peace process. It will establish the proper identity and nationalities of transnational herders and assist in the resolution of the problem of tagging all herders as aliens or settlers. Governments of the sub-region should go a step further by providing social amenities that will serve the interests of nomadic cattle farmers.

Regular meetings between herders and farmers in order to resolve areas of disagreement in the use of resources should be encouraged and vigorously pursued. Decentralised institutional frameworks to facilitate the resolution of conflicts and encourage peaceful co-existence between the parties should be established in each country. The regular meetings recommended should be facilitated by these state institutions. Areas of disagreement and any build up of tension should be promptly reported to the coordinating body at the state/regional level while serious cases are referred to the central body for resolution. The resort to formal court system for resolution of disputes should be avoided. Any threat to peace has to be reported early to security agencies which should be equipped to intervene in situations promptly before it gets out of hand.

b. Oil conflicts

In several ways, the crisis that disrupted oil production in the Niger Delta illustrates the failure of successive governments in the management of oil resources in Nigeria. First, it demonstrates the incapacity or lack of will on the part of government to take decisive measures to protect the Niger Delta environment. The Niger Delta is heavily polluted and is one of the most polluted environments in the world. Oil pollution is the primary source of environmental degradation that has complicated lives and livelihoods. Fishing and farming are the primary occupations of the people of the delta and destruction of the environment has tremendously impacted on the ability of the people to earn descent sustenance. Livelihoods have been destroyed and the people are exposed to the harmful effects of chemical emissions from the oil industry. All of these are sources of annoyance and frustration for the people and reasons for the uneasy relations between the communities and the oil companies.

Robust institutional and legal provisions to protect the environment and the people are not lacking but corruption, negligence and lack of will on the part of government has rendered interventions ineffective. The problem of revenue allocation and the distribution of resources have contributed in no small measure to the crisis in the Niger Delta. The fact that decades of oil production in the area has only left the region impoverished and underdeveloped is an indication that fundamental injustices have been committed against the people of the Niger Delta. It is the rebellion against these injustices that manifest as tension, confrontation and conflicts in the region.

Remediation and protection of the Niger Delta environment is recommended and gas flaring by the oil companies should be stopped. A review of the revenue allocated to oil producing areas is also necessary as the 13% derivation fund for oil producing areas is the minimum prescribed by constitution. The vigorous pursuit of infrastructural development in the oil-producing areas is also advocated.

c. Illicit mining, gemstones and conflict

Conflicts induced by artisanal and small-scale mining of gold, gemstones and other precious minerals within the borders of independent nations is an indication of lack of capacity of governments to effectively police and secure their territories. This incapacity is a potent threat to states and the stability of the sub-region. Weaknesses in the security architecture of states have exposed countries across West Africa to destabilization by insurgents. This situation is worse in countries that are rich in mineral resources. Illicit mining is a lucrative enterprise that fuels tensions and conflicts. There is the urgent need for governments across the sub-continent to review the security architecture in their respective countries, particularly around mining areas as illicit mining is a lucrative enterprise that attracts conflict entrepreneurs. If illegal and small-scale mining activities are unchecked, the resources flowing from these enterprises will continue to constitute a threat to peace in the sub-region. Regional countries should invest more in policing and in rebranding their security architecture to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

d. Conflict diamonds

Illicit mining and trading in diamonds are major sources of insurgency financing and the sustenance of conflicts as was noted in the civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d' Ivoire. More than any other mineral resource, diamonds are a major source of attraction for conflict entrepreneurs. Like the illicit mining of other minerals, artisanal mining of diamonds indicates the porosity of the security architecture of states with diamond endowments. This weakness can be exploited to initiate and sustain crisis and conflicts in various countries. Review of the internal security of countries particularly in diamond producing

areas is recommended. International collaboration against trading in illicit diamonds as was the case in Liberia, Sierra Leone and later in Cote d' Ivoire is also necessary.

Conclusion

Natural resources are of critical importance to conflicts in West Africa. In the past two decades, natural resources inspired conflicts have wreaked catastrophe and taken a heavy toll on human lives in West Africa. These conflicts have been attributed to greed by some scholars while others are of the view that it is caused by ethnicity, religious differences, corruption and weak governments all of which are endemic in West Africa.

Herder-farmer conflict is a security threat in many countries in West Africa. The competition for dwindling natural resources by herders and farmers is the root cause of these conflicts. The increasing spate of these conflicts and the associated humanitarian crisis has thrust these conflicts to the fore of security discourse in the sub-region. Climate change and its increasing impact on both parties will increase the occurrence of these conflicts.

The exploitation of crude oil and the allocation of its benefits have created discontentment and conflicts particularly in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Exploitation of oil has generated local grievances that have snowballed into conflicts between oil producing communities and the federal government. The destruction of the Niger Delta environment and dissatisfaction with the allocation of oil revenue is the primary cause of the conflict in the Niger Delta of Nigeria.

Illicit mining activities have been known to contribute to conflict in the sub-region. Artisanal and small-scale gold mining in Zamfara is the primary source of the ongoing conflict in Zamfara state and the entire northwestern zone of Nigeria. The infamous blood diamonds from Sierra Leone and Cote d' Ivoire provided funding for the sustenance of the civil wars in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Cote d' Ivoire. Therefore, in diverse ways, illicit mining activities contribute to conflict in West Africa.

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THE DELICATE DANCE: DILEMMAS OF THE IGBO APPRENTICESHIP MODEL IN NIGERIA

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Igbo Apprenticeship Model, Nigeria, Dilemmas, Modernization, Social Mobility, Gender Inclusion, Sustainability, Adaptation

ABSTRACT
The Igbo apprenticeship model, deeply embedded in Igbo culture and a driver of economic success, faces contemporary challenges in Nigeria. This paper explores the key dilemmas of the model, including the tension between modernization and traditional values, limited social and economic mobility, gender and inclusion issues, and concerns about sustainability and relevance. To achieve this, anthropological and historical methodologies were used to generate data, while the qualitative method was used for the analysis. We argue that navigating these dilemmas requires a delicate balance between preserving the model's strengths and adapting to modern realities. Potential solutions include skill development programs, microfinance initiatives, formalization and regulation, promoting inclusivity, and government collaboration. By addressing these challenges and embracing ongoing adaptation, the Igbo apprenticeship model can continue to be a powerful tool for entrepreneurship, community development, and cultural preservation in Nigeria.

Introduction

Apprenticeships provide hands-on job training, often by pairing apprentices with an experienced mentor. They have always been an important way to encourage people to learn a wide range of skills to support their interests and career prospects, as well as delivering significant benefit to the organizations or individuals that invest in them. They bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical experience, offering a valuable path for both individuals and businesses.[29] The phenomenal concept has been a topical issue in both developed and developing economies because of the significant and critical roles apprenticeships have played in building most of the advanced and emerging economies. Our focus, the Igbo apprenticeship model, has been asserted to have played a critical role by contributing to economic growth, job creation,

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and national income, and hence to national prosperity and competitiveness.[30]

For centuries, the Igbo apprenticeship model has served as a cornerstone of Igbo culture in Nigeria. This unique system, rooted in tradition and community, has nurtured generations of skilled entrepreneurs and contributed significantly to the economic dynamism of the region.[31] However, in the face of rapid modernization and shifting social realities, the Igbo apprenticeship model now faces a delicate dance - balancing its cherished values with the need to adapt and evolve in a changing world.[32]

This paper seeks to examine the dilemmas confronting the Igbo apprenticeship model in contemporary Nigeria. We explore the inherent tensions between preserving traditional systems and embracing modern advancements, examine the challenges of promoting social and economic mobility within the model, and address the critical issues of gender inclusion and sustainability. Through this exploration, we aim to highlight the complexities and nuances of the Igbo apprenticeship model. We argue that navigating its current dilemmas requires a multifaceted approach, one that recognizes both its strengths and limitations. By fostering understanding, encouraging dialogue, and implementing strategic interventions, we can ensure that the Igbo apprenticeship model continues to thrive, remaining a source of cultural pride, economic opportunity, and community cohesion in the 21st century.

Concepts of the Igbo Apprenticeship Model

The Igbo apprenticeship model, also known as the Igbo apprenticeship system (IAS), is a unique business tradition practiced by the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria. It's essentially a mix of business training, mentorship, and investment that fosters entrepreneurship. It is a community-driven approach to business development that involves successful business owners hiring apprentices to learn the trade.[33] The apprentices work for a set period, gaining practical experience and financial backing to start their own business. Apprentices gain practical knowledge through hands-on involvement in all facets of the master's business.[34] This experiential learning fosters practical skills and business acumen. Hard work, discipline, honesty, and respect for elders are instilled throughout the apprenticeship, shaping the apprentice's work ethic and character.[35] The initial stage involves a formal agreement between the apprentice's family and the master. The apprentice may reside with the master's family and contribute to household chores while learning basic business principles.[36] The core stage focuses on hands-on learning. The apprentice actively participates in the master's business, mastering the trade's intricacies over

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[36] Ikenga – The Igbo Apprentice: A Model for Youth Empowerment, https://en.wikipedia.org

several years.[37] Upon successful completion, the master often provides financial backing or credit (known as "Izu") to assist the apprentice in setting up their own independent business.[38]

Apprentices acquire valuable skills like negotiation, marketing, financial management, and customer service, preparing them for business ownership.[39] Start-up capital provided by the master bridges a significant financial hurdle for new businesses.[40] Apprentices develop a network with the master and potentially other apprentices, gaining valuable mentorship and connections that can aid future endeavors.[41] The Igbo apprenticeship model offers a unique approach to cultivating entrepreneurs. It emphasizes practical experience, cultural values, and mentorship. While challenges exist, the core principles of this model can inspire and provide valuable insights for fostering entrepreneurship development in other contexts. Overall, the Igbo apprenticeship model is a fascinating example of a community-driven approach to business development. It empowers individuals, strengthens the local economy, and fosters a culture of entrepreneurship.

The Significance of the Igbo Apprenticeship Model in Nigeria

The Igbo Apprenticeship Model holds significant importance for Nigeria, playing a multifaceted role in the country's economic and social landscape.[42] Despite the challenges confronting it, the Igbo apprenticeship model remains a valuable asset for the Nigerian economy. By addressing the existing issues and potentially incorporating aspects of the model into broader economic development plans, Nigeria can further leverage its strengths to achieve sustainable growth.[43] The Igbo apprenticeship model holds significance for several reasons:

i. Economic Empowerment: It creates a cycle of wealth generation. Apprentices become business owners, contributing to the local economy. The numerous businesses established by the Igbo apprenticeship model graduates contribute significantly to Nigeria's economic growth, thereby lessening the burden on the government for job creation and social welfare programmes. These businesses operate across various sectors, stimulating local economies and generating tax revenue[44] and this translates to higher tax revenue for the government, which can be used to fund infrastructure and social programmes.

ii. Entrepreneurial Spirit: The model fosters a culture of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial success through the apprenticeship system leads to higher incomes and a better standard of living for many Nigerians. Apprentices are not just trained in a specific trade but also develop the skills and mindset needed to run their own businesses.[45] Put differently, the model acts as a powerful incubator, churning out new businesses and injecting fresh energy into the economy. A steady stream of skilled and motivated entrepreneurs keeps the economy dynamic. This has contributed to the Igbo's reputation for business savvy. The model has been identified as a major driver of entrepreneurship in Nigeria, fostering a culture of self-reliance and business ownership. It equips individuals with practical skills, allowing them to start their own businesses after completing their apprenticeships, thus creating jobs for

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[43] Agwuegbo C. O. The Igbo Apprenticeship System as a Model …

[44] How The Igbo Apprenticeship System …

[45] Imu Ahia - the Igbo apprenticeship model …

themselves and others and, by implications, reducing unemployment and boosting the overall economy.[46]

iii. Social Upward Mobility: The system offers opportunities for individuals from less privileged backgrounds to climb the social ladder and achieve financial security through hard work and dedication. Apprentices gain valuable skills and seed capital, enabling them to build a better future for themselves and their families.[47] By acquiring valuable skills and starting their own businesses, individuals can and will improve their socioeconomic standing and achieve financial independence.

iv. Community Building: The Igbo apprenticeship system strengthens social bonds.[48] Masters act as mentors, and apprentices become part of a network that provides support and fosters a sense of responsibility towards the community.[49] This means that the masters often provide guidance and support to their apprentices, extending beyond just vocational skills. This contributes to a more cohesive society and, by extension; helps preserve this cultural heritage and instill the traditional Igbo values of hard work, resilience, and entrepreneurial spirit in younger generations.

v. Adaptability: The model helps develop a skilled workforce by providing practical training in various trades. This not only benefits the businesses established by graduates but also contributes to the overall skilled labour pool in Nigeria. As a result, the model is being studied as a potential tool for economic development in other regions.[50] While traditional aspects might need adjustments, the core principles of mentorship, practical training, and community support can be adapted to different contexts.

The Dilemmas of the Igbo Apprenticeship Model in Contemporary Nigeria

The Igbo apprenticeship model, while a cornerstone of Igbo culture and economic success, faces several challenges in contemporary Nigeria. At this juncture, we may outline the key dilemmas of the Igbo apprenticeship model in contemporary Nigeria. Some of the challenges have been mentioned in passing or obliquely in the course of our discussion above. However, it is appropriate now to accord the issue the specific attention it deserves. Below is a synthesis of the key dilemmas:

1. Modernization and Traditional Values: Balancing the transmission of traditional values like hard work and respect with the need for innovation and adaptability is difficult. The Igbo apprenticeship model faces challenges in the modern context, despite its reputation for promoting business in Nigeria.[51] The system sometimes struggles to incorporate new technologies and adapt to changing business practices. The traditional model of the system prioritizes practical training over formal education, hindering apprentices' adaptability to changing business environments.[52] Some of the traditional skills taught do not align with modern market demands, leaving apprentices unprepared for the evolving job landscape. This method does not fully equip apprentices with essential skills for contemporary business realities, such as digital marketing and e-commerce. The informal nature of apprenticeship agreements creates ambiguity

[46] Imu Ahia - the Igbo apprenticeship model …; The Igbo apprenticeship system: A model for equitable …; How The Igbo Apprenticeship System …

[47] The Igbo apprenticeship system: A model for equitable …; Ezeh, P. E. Igbo Apprenticeship: A Model for Youth Empowerment …

[48] How The Igbo Apprenticeship System …; Agwuegbo C. O. The Igbo Apprenticeship System as a Model …; Mbaku, O. N. The Igbo Apprenticeship System: An Informal Institution …

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around expectations, duties, and compensation, potentially causing disputes.[53]

2. Social and Economic Mobility: Apprenticeships are often concentrated in specific trades or sectors, restricting opportunities for career diversification and upward mobility.[54] Although it encourages entrepreneurship, the Igbo apprenticeship system has difficulties advancing social and economic mobility. Entry into prestigious apprenticeships is expensive, potentially perpetuating inequality and hindering access for underprivileged individuals.[55] The traditional male-dominated system in the economy limits women's participation and economic empowerment. Unequal power dynamics and a lack of formal contracts expose apprentices to exploitation and financial exploitation.[56] In fact, issues of unfair treatment, inadequate compensation, and extended periods of indenture raise concerns about exploitation and power imbalances within the system. Emphasis on practical skills hinders future career options, and graduates may lack financial resources to establish businesses, hindering their full economic benefits.

3. Gender and Inclusion: Societal expectations and ingrained gender roles discourage women from pursuing traditionally male-dominated trades. While it is an established tradition that encourages business, women and girls have historically been excluded from the system. The patriarchal system, characterized by societal expectations and a lack of female role models, hinders female participation in apprenticeships (certain trades) or access to leadership positions.[57] Finding ways to ensure equitable access and opportunities for all, regardless of gender or background, remains a challenge. The system often relies on informal networks and social capital, making it difficult for outsiders to access. Prejudice and discrimination from potential masters further hinder these opportunities.[58]

4. Sustainability and Relevance: Ensuring the model remains relevant and competitive in the face of globalization and changing economic trends is crucial. However, the lack of formalization and regulation makes the system vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.[59] A pillar of Igbo economic success for many generations, the Igbo apprenticeship system has difficulty keeping up with a rapidly changing world. The apprenticeship system faces challenges due to limited female participation and government support for the system, which has hindered its growth and adaptability in a changing economy, requiring adaptation to modern skills like digital literacy and business management.[60] The system's emphasis on long-term commitment and delayed gratification is in contrast to the shifting societal attitudes towards education and instant gratification.[61] Simply put, the apprenticeship system faces competition from alternative training programmes and formal educational institutions for the recruitment of young talent.

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Reinvigorating the Igbo Apprenticeship Model

The Igbo apprenticeship model, while facing challenges in contemporary Nigeria, holds immense potential for fostering entrepreneurship. Despite these challenges, the Igbo apprenticeship system continues to play a vital role in fostering entrepreneurial spirit and economic development within the Igbo community. However, acknowledging the dilemmas creates an opportunity for improvement. Navigating these dilemmas requires a delicate balancing act. By preserving the strengths and values of the Igbo apprenticeship model while adapting to contemporary realities is vital for the model to continue to serve as a powerful tool for entrepreneurship, community development, and cultural preservation in Nigeria. These involve initiatives like:

1. Promoting Fair Practices and Transparency: Developing standardized apprenticeship agreements outlining rights, responsibilities, compensation, and dispute resolution mechanisms will protect both apprentices and masters.[62] In line with this, government agencies or industry associations should implement standardized training modules and certification processes to ensure a fair and equal foundation for success for all participants. Advocate for government policies and programmes that incentivize businesses to hire graduates of the apprenticeship system and create a level playing field.[63] Simply put, government agencies or industry associations should establish oversight frameworks to ensure fair treatment of apprentices and adherence to ethical practices. Providing mentorship beyond the immediate master-apprentice relationship will offer apprentices broader guidance and support.[64]

2. Enhancing Skill Development and Modernization: Modernize the curriculum to include digital literacy, marketing, and business management skills, preparing apprentices for the modern business landscape.[65] Develop training modules that address the specific needs and partner with educational institutions to allow apprentices to combine practical training with formal education, creating well-rounded graduates.[66] While establishing scholarship and grant programmes to assist marginalized groups in covering costs associated with apprenticeship participation will encourage apprentices to rotate through different businesses within the model and expose them to a wider range of skills and industry practices.[67]

3. Addressing Social and Familial Considerations: Promoting female participation and tailoring opportunities within certain sectors will address gender bias in the system.[68] This can be done by creating targeted mentorship programmes specifically for women, connecting them with successful female entrepreneurs who can provide guidance and support. Organize workshops and discussions within communities to challenge traditional gender roles and educate families about the benefits of female participation in the system. This should aim at a paradigm shift from trade-specific skills to transferable skills like communication, problem-solving, and business management. This will open up opportunities in diverse fields for women. Financial planning workshops and access to microloans will help new business owners manage family obligations while establishing their ventures.[69] Exploring virtual

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mentorship or apprenticeship programmes will broaden opportunities beyond immediate geographic limitations.[70]

4. Fostering Innovation and Adaptation: Workshops on innovation, business plan development, and market research will equip apprentices with skills to adapt the model to evolving economic conditions.[71] Establishing strong alumni networks will provide apprentices with ongoing support, peer-to-peer learning, and access to potential business partnerships.[72] Partnerships with technology providers will introduce apprentices to digital tools that enhance business operations and customers reach.[73]

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Igbo apprenticeship model offers a unique approach to cultivating entrepreneurs and remains a significant contributor to economic and social development within the Igbo community. It emphasizes practical experience, cultural values, and mentorship. Its emphasis on skills development, access to capital, and cultural values fosters a fertile ground for entrepreneurship and upward mobility. While the Igbo apprenticeship model boasts a rich history and valuable contributions to entrepreneurship, the core principles of this model can inspire and provide valuable insights for fostering entrepreneurship development in other contexts. By acknowledging the challenges and implementing these strategies, the Igbo apprenticeship system can become a more inclusive platform for fostering entrepreneurial spirit and economic empowerment for all members of the Igbo community. This will allow individuals to explore their identities within the system while contributing to its continued success in the modern world. The Igbo apprenticeship system can evolve and thrive in the 21st century by continuous adaptation, promoting fair treatment, and integrating modern business, which can ensure this unique system continues to empower future generations of Igbo entrepreneurs. Simply put by finding ways to address exploitation, promote education alongside experience, formalize agreements, and encourage gender equality, the Igbo apprenticeship model can continue to empower future generations while ensuring fairness and inclusivity.

From the foregoing it is clear that it is difficult for the traditional informal Igbo Apprenticeship Model to adjust to contemporary society. It requires a complex strategy to guarantee its

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relevance. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the paradigm includes built-in adaptability and modernization capabilities. Balancing tradition with innovation will develop a system that is culturally relevant and responsive to the 21st century's challenges and possibilities. To this end, the study proposes.

i. Formalization and Legal Framework: Introducing legal frameworks that protect the rights of apprentices, ensure fair settlement terms, and provide mechanisms for dispute resolution is crucial.

ii. Standardized Training and Certification: Developing structured curricula and certifications to enhance the quality and recognition of the skills acquired.

iii. *Promoting Inclusivity:* Actively encouraging the participation of women and girls in apprenticeship programs to unlock a wider pool of entrepreneurial talent.

iv. Addressing Societal Perceptions: Raising awareness about the value and potential of vocational training and apprenticeship will help change negative stereotypes.

v. Government and Stakeholder Support: Government agencies, business organizations, and community leaders should contribute to providing resources, oversight, and support for the apprenticeship system.

vi. *Modernization and Adaptation:* Integrating modern business practices and technologies into the training process to equip apprentices with skills relevant to today's economy.

DIGITAL FEMINISM AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN MOBILIZING GENDER-INCLUSIVE PEACE MOVEMENTS

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ABSTRACT
Within the wave of online mobilization, a vibrant form of activism known as digital feminism has emerged, spearheaded largely by women who challenge patriarchal norms, amplify marginalized voices, and demand structural change in society. While existing studies have explored women's roles in peace processes, few have specifically interrogated how digital technologies are reshaping feminist engagement in peacebuilding across diverse sociopolitical landscapes. Drawing on comparative case studies from Nigeria, Sudan, and Colombia, this research contributes to scholarship by investigating how women strategically use digital platforms to challenge patriarchal structures, mobilize support, and advocate for inclusive peace and justice. Findings revealed that digital tools enabled women to amplify marginalized voices, mobilize support, and document abuses, thereby reshaping peace narratives and fostering inclusive participation. In Nigeria, the #BringBackOurGirls campaign highlighted the gendered nature of violence and demanded accountability. Sudanese women leveraged social media during the 2019 revolution to resist repression and advocate for gender quotas in governance. Colombian women used digital platforms for truth-telling and reconciliation, foregrounding issues of sexual violence and land rights. Despite these advancements, challenges such as online harassment, surveillance, and limited access to digital tools persisted, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. The study concluded that while digital feminism offers innovative pathways for peace advocacy, it cannot substitute for institutional reforms and intersectional policy change. Recommendations include integrating feminist perspectives into tech governance and peace frameworks, investing in digital training for women peacebuilders, and creating regional digital platforms for collaboration among women in conflict-affected areas. This research contributes to the understanding of digital feminism's unique role in peacebuilding, emphasizing the need for inclusive and participatory approaches to conflict transformation.

Introduction

In recent years, digital platforms have significantly redefined the modalities of feminist engagement, providing new avenues for activism, solidarity, and peacebuilding, particularly in conflict-affected societies. This shift, often described as *digital feminism*, refers to the use of online tools and social media platforms by women to resist patriarchal structures, advocate for gender equality, and demand justice within broader sociopolitical struggles (Baer, 2016; Tufekci, 2017). Digital feminism is not merely a technological extension of traditional feminist activism; rather, it constitutes a radical transformation in how gendered voices engage in the public sphere. Across the Global South, women are increasingly leveraging digital platforms to reclaim agency in peace and security discourses, especially in nations experiencing political violence and armed conflicts. These online feminist movements challenge the normative frameworks of peacebuilding, which often exclude or marginalize women's participation (Tripp et al., 2009; Okech, 2013). In fragile contexts like Nigeria, Sudan, and Colombia, where historical gender exclusions intersect with contemporary digital divides, digital feminism is offering women a platform to shape conflict narratives and demand gender-inclusive peace processes.

A growing body of literature has examined the intersection between technology, feminist activism, and conflict transformation. Scholars such as Milan (2015) and Papacharissi (2015) argue that digital activism allows individuals, especially marginalized groups, to bypass gatekeepers in traditional media and politics, amplifying otherwise silenced voices. Similarly, Eltantawy and Wiest (2011) demonstrate how social media fueled women's participation in the Arab Spring, reflecting its potential for enabling mass mobilization and political engagement. However, much of this scholarship has focused on the Western or Arab contexts, often neglecting the specificities of sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, where both patriarchal violence and digital inequalities are deeply entrenched. In Nigeria, for instance, the #BringBackOurGirls campaign, sparked by the abduction of over 270 schoolgirls by Boko Haram in 2014, brought global attention to the gendered dimensions of terrorism and state failure, mobilizing local and international actors (Olorunnisola & Martin, 2018). Similarly, in Sudan, women were central to the 2019 revolution that led to the ousting of President Omar al-Bashir, using digital tools to organize protests and challenge state repression (Baldo, 2020). Meanwhile, in Colombia, feminist groups utilized digital spaces during the post-conflict transition to document abuses, advocate for survivors of sexual violence, and push for justice in the transitional framework (Lemaitre & Sandvik, 2015).

Despite these insights, existing literature often treats women's digital activism in conflict zones as episodic rather than systemic, failing to interrogate how sustained digital feminist practices contribute to conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Research has tended to focus on momentary digital outbursts, hashtags, viral campaigns, or protests, without fully analyzing the strategic, long-term contributions of feminist actors in redefining peace processes (González, 2020; George & Leidner, 2019). Moreover, much of the discourse on gender and peacebuilding remains anchored in formal institutional frameworks such as UNSCR 1325, neglecting the informal yet powerful roles that women play in grassroots and digital mobilizations (Shepherd, 2017; Nduka-Agwu, 2021). African feminist scholars like Amina Mama and Signe Arnfred (2011) have long advocated for rethinking peace from a feminist standpoint, arguing that the lived experiences of women, particularly in conflict zones, are central to understanding and building sustainable peace. These calls for an epistemic shift are echoed by scholars of Latin American feminism, who emphasize intersectionality, indigenous rights, and post-colonial resistance as crucial to understanding women's roles in conflict and peace (Lemaitre, 2015; Alvarez, 2014).

The cases of Nigeria, Sudan, and Colombia provide compelling examples of how digital feminism disrupts male-dominated narratives of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction. In Nigeria, the #BringBackOurGirls movement not only demanded the rescue of the abducted girls but also exposed the systemic neglect of girls' education and gendered violence by the Nigerian state (Oloruntoba, 2019). The campaign's transnational reach, enabled by platforms like Twitter, transformed it into a global feminist concern, thereby reinforcing the role of digital networks in feminist advocacy. Sudanese women, who made up approximately 70% of protestors during the 2019 uprising, used digital platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp to share updates, document state brutality, and advocate for political inclusion

(Abbas, 2020). Their efforts resulted in the allocation of 40% of parliamentary seats to women in the transitional government, an unprecedented development in the region. In Colombia, during the peace negotiations between the government and FARC, feminist organizations used digital platforms to influence discourse on gender justice, advocating for the inclusion of sexual violence as a key issue in the transitional justice mechanisms (O'Rourke, 2020). Yet, even in these contexts, challenges such as digital surveillance, online harassment, and infrastructural disparities continue to limit the full potential of digital feminist engagement (Gagliardone et al., 2015; Oloruntoba & Adebanwi, 2020).

Despite the increasing visibility and impact of digital feminist movements in these conflict-affected societies, a critical research gap remains. Existing scholarship is yet to systematically examine how digital feminism operates as a tool for conflict transformation and gender-inclusive peacebuilding across different cultural and geopolitical contexts. More importantly, there is insufficient comparative analysis that draws connections between digital feminist practices in Africa and Latin America, two regions with rich histories of feminist resistance but divergent institutional, technological, and cultural landscapes. This study addresses this gap by analyzing the role of digital feminism in mobilizing gender-inclusive peace movements in Nigeria, Sudan, and Colombia. By focusing on these countries, the study offers an intersectional and comparative framework for understanding how digital feminist strategies confront patriarchal structures, influence peace discourses, and reshape post-conflict transitions. The research problem, therefore, lies in the limited understanding of how women in these diverse contexts utilize digital tools not only for activism but also for long-term peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

Social Media, Conflict, and Peacebuilding

In recent years, social media has emerged as a powerful force in shaping contemporary social movements, particularly in conflict-prone and politically unstable regions. The role of digital platforms in facilitating protest and enabling civic engagement cannot be understated. Scholars like Aday et al. (2013) have observed that social media technologies enhance the flow of real-time information, bridge geographical distances between activists, and create virtual spaces where marginalized voices can find expression and solidarity. These platforms not only serve as tools for disseminating grievances but also help in sustaining collective action beyond the boundaries of conventional organizing. Zeynep Tufekci (2017) adds another layer to this understanding by emphasizing the non-hierarchical nature of digital mobilization. Through platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp, groups can organize large-scale protests and campaigns without relying on centralized leadership. This decentralization makes movements more resilient and adaptive, particularly in the face of state repression. However, Tufekci also cautions that while these platforms can galvanize swift mobilization, they often lack the long-term strategic planning that traditional movements rely on. Furthermore, the digital landscape is fraught with challenges, including the spread of misinformation, algorithmic bias, and surveillance by state and non-state actors, which can undermine the goals of social movements.

In the context of conflict and peacebuilding, social media has opened up new channels for political participation, especially for groups historically sidelined from formal governance and decision-making processes. Women, for instance, have used digital spaces to advocate for inclusion, justice, and reform in countries facing political unrest. In Nigeria, the 2020 #EndSARS movement against police brutality highlighted how women-led feminist collectives harnessed Twitter for more than just mobilizing protests. As noted by Ogbonnaya and Onuoha (2020), these groups also used social media to coordinate emergency response efforts, such as fundraising for medical care, offering legal assistance to detained protesters, and documenting human rights violations in real-time. These actions reflect a broader shift where digital activism intersects with grassroots peacebuilding and community support. A similar dynamic was visible in Sudan during the 2019 revolution, where social media platforms played an instrumental role in circumventing the state's information control. In the face of heavy censorship by the Omar al-Bashir regime, Sudanese activists turned to Twitter and Facebook to document state violence and human rights abuses. According to Abbas (2020), women were at the forefront of this digital resistance. They used these platforms not only to raise awareness but also to demand justice and accountability in the post-revolution transitional phase. The digital space thus functioned as both a tool for resistance and a mechanism for

shaping narratives around peace and justice, offering women a means of political engagement that had long been denied in formal arenas.

Despite the potential of social media to amplify marginalized voices and support conflict transformation, its use is not without risks. In many contexts, authoritarian regimes have learned to manipulate or restrict digital tools to maintain control. In Sudan, for example, the military-led government that succeeded al-Bashir periodically shut down internet access as a tactic to quash dissent and disrupt civil mobilization (Badri & Tripp, 2021). These shutdowns demonstrate the fragility of digital reliance in authoritarian contexts, where access to communication tools can be arbitrarily revoked and stalling peacebuilding efforts. In Colombia, feminist groups advocating for land rights and transitional justice face another dimension of digital repression. As Rojas (2021) notes, many of these activists have been subjected to online harassment, cyber-attacks, and surveillance campaigns aimed at silencing their work. These experiences underline the dual nature of digital platforms: while they provide a space for empowerment and organizing, they also expose activists to new forms of vulnerability. In such environments, the very technologies that enable visibility and mobilization can also be used as instruments of repression.

Overall, the role of social media in conflict and peacebuilding is double edged. On one hand, it enables rapid, decentralized mobilization and gives voice to groups historically excluded from formal political processes. On the other hand, it introduces new challenges, particularly in settings where digital rights are poorly protected. As conflicts evolve in the digital age, there is a growing need to critically engage with both the potentials and perils of social media. Ensuring that digital spaces remain safe, accessible, and inclusive is therefore central to harnessing their full capacity for peacebuilding and social transformation.

Gender-Inclusive Peacebuilding and Feminist Interventions

Building lasting peace in any society requires the voices and experiences of everyone, especially those who are often excluded. Around the world, women have faced exclusion from peace negotiations and decision-making, even though they are often among the most affected by conflict. In response, feminist movements have called for more inclusive peacebuilding, one that doesn't just add women to the table but transforms the conversation altogether. Scholars like Cockburn (2004) and Cohn (2013) emphasize that peace must go beyond ending violence; it must address deep-rooted inequalities and promote justice and participation for all. This idea gained momentum globally with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, passed in 2000. It was the first international policy to formally recognize the importance of involving women in peace and security processes. It outlined four key goals: promoting women's participation in peacebuilding, protecting women in conflict zones, preventing gender-based violence, and ensuring support for recovery efforts (UN Women, 2015). Yet, over 20 years later, progress has been limited. O'Rourke (2020) points out that only a small percentage of peace agreements even mention women's needs or rights, showing how far there still is to go.

Feminist peacebuilding is not just about counting how many women are in the room. It questions the entire structure of peace processes, asking whether they truly serve all people. Feminists highlight the importance of intersectionality, a term introduced by Crenshaw (1989), which means understanding how gender intersects with other factors like race, class, and ethnicity. This is especially relevant in countries like Nigeria, Sudan, and Colombia, where women's experiences of conflict are shaped by complex political and cultural histories. In Colombia, for example, Afro-Colombian and Indigenous women have worked hard to make their voices heard during peace talks, especially when it comes to land rights and justice for sexual violence (Rojas, 2021). In Sudan, women played a key role in the 2019 revolution that led to the fall of the authoritarian regime. Sudanese women were not just participants; they were leaders of protests and online campaigns. However, many were sidelined when a transitional government was formed. Feminist activists pushed back, calling for reforms to discriminatory laws and demanding meaningful roles in rebuilding the country (Abbas, 2020). Their efforts show that feminist peacebuilding is about much more than being invited into existing spaces, it's about changing those spaces so they reflect women's realities and priorities.

In Nigeria, feminist organizing has also made a powerful impact. One major example is the #BringBackOurGirls campaign, which began in 2014 after Boko Haram abducted schoolgirls in Chibok. Nigerian women mobilized online and

offline to demand government action, raise global awareness, and advocate for the rights of girls. This movement went beyond a single incident; it highlighted broader issues of gender-based violence, insecurity, and the neglect of women's voices in peace and security discussions (Ogbonnaya & Onuoha, 2020). Since then, Nigerian feminists have continued to lead efforts to make peacebuilding more inclusive, particularly in regions facing armed conflict and displacement.

Still, challenges remain. Many feminist peacebuilders face threats, backlash, and lack of support. Cultural norms, weak institutions, and political resistance often make it hard for their efforts to gain ground. Moreover, grassroots activists are frequently excluded from formal peace talks, which are usually dominated by political elites. Closing this gap means providing more resources, training, and opportunities for women at the community level to influence decisions at the national and international level.

Case Study Analysis: Digital Feminism and Gender-Inclusive Peacebuilding in Nigeria, Sudan, and Colombia

The rise of digital technologies has transformed the landscape of feminist activism and peace advocacy globally. Across diverse conflict-affected regions, women have creatively employed digital platforms not merely as tools of resistance but as means of constructing new political spaces and influencing peace narratives. Three illustrative cases, Nigeria's #BringBackOurGirls campaign, Sudanese women's roles in the 2019 revolution, and Colombian women's digital engagement in the post-conflict process would be discussed.

(i) Nigeria – #BringBackOurGirls: Digital Advocacy and Transnational Mobilization

The 2014 abduction of over 270 schoolgirls from Chibok, Nigeria, by Boko Haram militants sparked global outrage. However, the Nigerian government's initial silence and inaction drew criticism, creating a vacuum that was swiftly filled by civil society actors, predominantly women, who used digital platforms to rally national and international attention. (e.g., the Feminist Coalition and BBOG leaders) used Twitter, Facebook, and hashtags to mobilize national and global attention, pressure political authorities, and organize peaceful protests (Okunade & Ojo, 2021; Egbunike & Olorunnisola, 2015).The #BringBackOurGirls campaign, spearheaded by Nigerian activists such as Obiageli Ezekwesili and Aisha Yesufu, quickly became a transnational feminist movement, amplified by figures like Michelle Obama and Malala Yousafzai (Akinbobola, 2020; Umejei, 2015). This campaign was not merely a call for rescue; it underscored the gendered nature of violence in conflict zones and demanded accountability from state institutions. The hashtag became a digital megaphone for Nigerian women to assert their role in peace advocacy, breaking the silence that had traditionally excluded them from national security discourse. Scholars such as Olonisakin et al. (2011) emphasize that Nigerian women's engagement through social media challenged patriarchal norms that often depict them as passive victims rather than agents of change. Despite the campaign's global reach, its long-term impact on policy change and systemic reform remains contested. While it influenced government action and led to some rescues, critics argue that the campaign was co-opted by political actors and international donors, which diluted its grassroots momentum (Iwilade, 2017). Nevertheless, #BringBackOurGirls remains a seminal example of digital feminism, illustrating how local struggles can be globalized through social media to promote accountability, justice, and peace.

(ii) Sudan – Women in the 2019 Revolution: Digitally Mediated Resistance and Feminist Peacebuilding

In Sudan, the 2019 revolution that led to the ouster of President Omar al-Bashir was characterized by widespread civilian mobilization. Central to this uprising were Sudanese women, who constituted over 60% of protesters and became emblematic of the revolution itself (Khamis, 2020). Social media

played a pivotal role in documenting state violence, mobilizing protests, and shaping public discourse. **Sudanese women** employed **WhatsApp, Facebook, and online forums** to resist gendered repression, amplify feminist voices, and build solidarity in a patriarchal political landscape (Musa & Elamin, 2020; El-Gizouli, 2019).Images of women leading chants, wrapped in traditional Sudanese tobes, circulated widely and redefined the image of resistance. Alaa Salah, dubbed the "Woman in White," became a symbol of the revolution. Her iconic image, shared millions of times, demonstrated how digital platforms can create powerful feminist symbols that rally support and shape international media narratives (Elhussein, 2020). Sudanese women not only organized online but also engaged in political negotiation processes, advocating for gender quotas in transitional governance structures. However, digital feminism in Sudan faced significant limitations. Once the transitional government was formed, the inclusion of women remained superficial, with many activists sidelined in formal power-sharing deals (Baldo, 2021). Moreover, digital surveillance and internet blackouts, common tools in Sudan's authoritarian repertoire, undermined consistent mobilization. This reflects a broader pattern where women's digital activism can be embraced during revolutionary moments but marginalized in institutional peacebuilding efforts (Abusharaf, 2021). Despite these constraints, Sudanese women's digital activism has transformed political consciousness, promoted narratives of inclusive governance and laid groundwork for future feminist engagement in peacebuilding.

(iii) Colombia – Women, Peace, and the FARC: Digital Spaces for Truth-Telling and Reconciliation

Colombia's peace process with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) offers a unique context in which digital feminism intersected with transitional justice. While the 2016 peace accord included a Gender Sub-Commission to ensure women's perspectives were integrated, many grassroots women's groups turned to digital platforms to assert their narratives and contest exclusion (Bernal, 2019). Colombian women used social media not only to support the peace process but to foreground issues of sexual violence, land rights, and historical marginalization. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook became arenas for truth-telling and memory activism, where survivors of conflict-related violence could share testimonies, demand reparations, and connect with global audiences (Lemaitre & Sandvik, 2015). Initiatives like *Red Nacional de Mujeres* and *Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres* curated digital archives and campaigns highlighting the gendered impact of the war. These efforts complemented formal peacebuilding mechanisms, holding the state accountable and ensuring that women's voices shaped the public understanding of reconciliation and justice. However, challenges persisted. Digital divides, especially in rural and indigenous communities, limited broad participation. Moreover, online harassment and threats targeted women who were outspoken, particularly Afro-Colombian and indigenous leaders, revealing the intersectional risks faced by feminist peace activists (Murillo & Trujillo, 2020). Yet, Colombia's experience remains a testament to how digital spaces can be used for participatory peacebuilding. By amplifying women's experiences and creating digital memory repositories, feminist groups have contributed to a more inclusive post-conflict narrative, one that centers justice and equity.

Hence**,** these three cases illustrate distinct yet interconnected dynamics in digital feminist peace activism. In Nigeria, digital tools catalyzed international attention, while in Sudan, they redefined revolutionary leadership. In Colombia, they facilitated participatory justice and collective memory. Across all contexts, a few patterns emerge:

i. Amplification of Marginalized Voices: Digital platforms provided women with

tools to bypass traditional gatekeepers and assert agency in public discourse.

ii. Symbolic Power: Hashtags, viral images, and digital storytelling shaped narratives and identities central to feminist peacebuilding.

iii. Resistance and Backlash: Despite their power, digital platforms exposed women to new forms of violence, including online harassment and surveillance.

iv. Fragmented Gains: Inclusion in digital spaces did not always translate into structural change or formal political participation.

v. Online impact: Digital feminism reframes dominant narratives, fosters collective identities, and sustains global engagement (Gill & Orgad, 2018; Keller et al., 2018). It offers women tools to challenge oppressive norms and build transnational feminist solidarity.

vi. Offline impact: It translates into peaceful protests, policy demands, and social movements (e.g., BBOG school sit-ins, Sudanese street protests, and Afro-Colombian legal advocacy) (Akinbobola, 2020; Abusharaf, 2021).

These findings align with observations by Gouws (2022) and Tripp (2015), who argue that feminist activism in the digital age must grapple with both opportunity and instability like online harassment, government surveillance, or the sudden loss of internet access. These risks can make it hard for activists to stay safe or keep their campaigns going. It also suggests that while digital feminism offers innovative pathways for peace advocacy, it cannot substitute for institutional reforms and intersectional policy change.

Conclusion

This study underscores the significant role of digital feminism in reshaping peacebuilding, particularly in conflict-affected regions like Nigeria, Sudan, and Colombia. Through platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, women have been able to challenge exclusion, amplify their voices, and mobilize global support for peace and justice. The research extends existing feminist peacebuilding theories by highlighting how digital tools facilitate a more decentralized and grassroots form of activism, providing new ways for women to participate in peace processes, traditionally dominated by men.

The findings confirm that digital platforms not only offer a space for women to engage in advocacy but also provide an avenue for resistance, allowing activists to circumvent state censorship and documentation of abuses. This adds a new dimension to conflict transformation, showcasing how digital activism can reshape peace narratives and influence political outcomes. However, the study also reveals the darker side of digital activism, such as online harassment and surveillance, which pose significant risks to activists.

In contrast to previous research that emphasizes traditional peacebuilding methods, this study demonstrates how digital feminism brings both opportunities and challenges. It highlights the need for deeper institutional support to ensure that digital tools can be effectively leveraged for gender-inclusive peacebuilding.

Recommendation

1. **Enhance Digital Literacy and Security for Women**: To maximize the impact of digital feminism in peacebuilding, it is essential to provide women peacebuilders with comprehensive training in digital literacy and cyber security. Empowering them with the skills to navigate and protect themselves in online spaces ensures they can advocate effectively and safely without falling prey to online harassment or surveillance.
2. **Integrate Feminist Perspectives into Tech Governance**: The digital space must be shaped by inclusive policies that reflect feminist values. It is crucial to involve women's voices in the development of tech platforms and digital policies to ensure that these spaces remain safe, accessible, and equitable for all, particularly marginalized women in conflict zones.
3. **Foster Collaboration across Digital Platforms**: Creating regional and

international digital platforms where women in conflict-affected areas can collaborate and share experiences is vital. These platforms should facilitate networking, knowledge exchange, and coordinated actions that amplify the voices of women across borders, strengthening collective advocacy for peace and justice.

4. **Support Institutional Backing for Digital Feminist Movements**: Governments and international organizations should offer institutional support to feminist digital movements. This includes recognizing digital activism as a legitimate form of peacebuilding and providing resources and protection for women activists operating in risky environments.
5. **Strengthen Global Accountability Mechanisms**: International frameworks such as UNSCR 1325 should be enhanced with stronger enforcement mechanisms that hold governments accountable for ensuring women's active participation in peace processes, both online and offline. This would ensure that digital feminist activism leads to tangible political and social change.

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CIVIL SOCIETY RESPONSES TO THE IMPACT OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR ON FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 sparked a highly international violent conflict, which has been global in impact. The conflict's global impact has manifested in severe disruption to global agricultural systems and activities, resulting in food insecurity. As shown in food inflation, Nigeria has borne the brunt of this impact, resulting in heightened food insecurity. However, how civil society has responded has remained a knowledge gap amidst the developing corpus of literature. This paper fills this gap by interrogating civil society's responses to the conflict. Using a qualitative approach and drawing on the Human Security Theory (HST) as its theoretical framework, the paper finds that the Russia-Ukraine conflict has significantly disrupted global supply chains, with Nigeria experiencing severe impacts due to its reliance on imports of fertilisers and agricultural commodities. The war halted fertiliser deliveries from Russia, a key supplier, due to logistical challenges and sanctions, leading to months-long delays and reduced agricultural productivity. This strain on farming inputs has further deepened food insecurity in Nigeria, particularly for small-scale farmers who struggled to afford increasingly scarce and expensive fertilisers. The findings reveal that the Russia-Ukraine conflict has significantly disrupted global supply chains, with Nigeria experiencing severe impacts due to its reliance on imports of fertilisers and agricultural commodities. The war halted fertiliser deliveries from Russia, a key supplier, due to logistical challenges and sanctions, leading to months-long delays and reduced agricultural productivity. This strain on farming inputs has further deepened food insecurity in Nigeria, particularly for small-scale farmers who struggled to afford increasingly scarce and expensive fertilisers.

Introduction

Intense combat between the national militaries of Russia and Ukraine since February 2022 has remained a global hot topic. The sustained interest in this conflict derives from the status of both countries. Both countries are major grain producers, responsible for a significant chunk of global grain trade through their contributions of 40% to global grain exports (Lin et al., 2023). Expectedly, the conflict between these two countries has been connected to severe adverse consequences, which have been determined to exacerbate food insecurity through the innovation of new challenges and exacerbation of existing weaknesses due to disruptions to food production and supply chains (Behnassi & El Haiba, 2022), as well as drastic reductions in wheat exports from both countries (Mottaleb et al., 2022) resulting from the continuous entanglement of the grain trade with war politics (Neji et al., 2024). The consequent state of play has had drastic implications for countries across Asia and Africa that rely on both countries to meet most of their wheat demand. (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2022), with substantial academic literature documenting the extent of the impact on African countries (Feng et al., 2022) as a result of the vulnerability occasioned by excessive dependence on the two warring countries by African countries (Nweke et al., 2022). West Africa has directly been impacted by these consequences, with the number of people at risk from acute food insecurity rising by as much as 9.7 million (Filho et al., 2023). Nigeria, by its membership in the West African region, shares in the burden of the food security crisis occasioned by the conflict. Indigenous scholarship has indicated that the conflict has "heightened food insecurity in Nigeria" (Ekoko, 2024, p. 724), augmenting broader conversations that have pointed towards an increased threat to food security arising from the consequences of the war (Adebayo, 2023, Balana et al., 2022). This article situates itself within the context of these conversations, focusing on exploring the responses of the civil society sector to the food security crisis occasioned by the Russia-Ukraine war. As proximate actors to the communities affected by food security crisis, it is considered a given that civil society organisations may be better placed to effectively address the needs of vulnerable communities exposed to the impact of food security crisis. Furthermore, the complementary roles played by civil society actors in support of state institutions is a documented modern political reality. The paper's focus on this issue augments a gap in the literature. For its discussion, the paper adopts a six-part structure. Following this introductory part, it reviews literature related to the paper's central focus and attempts to clarify keywords. In the next section, an outline of the methodology is presented. This is followed by a results and discussion section, where the paper discusses the main findings made during its inquiry. The final section concludes and summarises the paper. Ultimately, the paper's discussions address the limited scholarly focus on the contributions of civil society in mitigating the impact of the significant food security crisis in Nigeria exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine conflict by exploring how actors from that domain have responded.

Conceptual Clarification

Conceptualising Food Security

Food security, at the conceptualisation level, presents an interesting challenge for scholars who seek to delineate it. This is a result of its flexibility, which is reflected in the existence of various definitions, estimated to be roughly close to 200 (Maxwell, 1992) that have often had research and policy implications (Peng & Berry, 2019). The vast complex of definitions surrounding the concept reflects the imperative of presenting a perspective of the concept which allows for its proper conceptualisation in keeping with events in the evolution of modern global history. Peng and Berry (2019) have demonstrated that evolutions in the conceptualisation of the concept have closely shadowed price disruptions in agricultural commodity markets, energy markets and evolutions in global thinking about national security. That said, classical definitions of food security, particularly in the 1970s, underscored notions such as "food availability" and "price stability of basic foods" (Peng & Berry, 2019:2). Such ideas could be seen in World Food Conference delineation of the focus of food security to be:

> *"…availability at all times of adequate world supplies of basic food-stuffs, particularly so as to avoid acute food shortages in the event of widespread crop failure, natural or other disasters, to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption in countries with low levels of per capita intake and to offset*

fluctuations in production and prices" (United Nations, 1975, p. 14).

From the perspective of the Food and Agriculture Organization, this availability was not restrictive but universal, and it was to be made possible in physical and economic dimensions (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 1983). Arguably, this definition set the pace for a rights-based perspective of food security. The rights-based perspective, which associated food security with human rights, entered into the lexicon with the publication of the Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Programme in 1994, which rather brought a less coherent approach to conceptualising food security (Peng & Berry, 2019). Yet this, and subsequent evolutions, set the context for the evolution of the definitions of food security to arrive at that offered by the Food and Agriculture Organization, FAO, in 2008. According to this definition, food security is assessed as a collection of four interrelated components: availability, accessibility, utilisation, and stability (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2008). In that sense, this disposition contends that food security exists only when the supply side and the ability of the consumer to generate effective demand are guaranteed. Furthermore, according to the FAO, disruptions to any component can drastically alter the existence of food security, leading to varying levels of food insecurity, and such may emanate from social and political conditions (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2008). Armed conflicts are one such shock that may severely jeopardise food security. The literature, within the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, has documented that such impact emanates from a variety of mechanisms that affect agricultural activities. Violent conflicts can generally feature the forceful redirection of human capital away from agricultural activities towards combat activities or instigate significant forced migration, which often means that agricultural and food production activities generally come to a halt (Filho et al., 2023; Rabbi et al., 2023; Hassan & Bilali, 2022), which coupled with the destruction of agricultural infrastructure, frequently means food production capacity is reduced (Filho et al., 2023). Furthermore, direct impacts on food distribution are often the case in conflicts given violent conflicts often feature restrictions to markets which may be produced by the direct actions of conflict actors to secure their food supplies (Hassen & Bilali, 2022) or inadvertent restrictions occasioned by fighting (Shemyakina, 2022; Halmaghi et al., 2023). Distribution disruptions may reflect pressures from conflict-induced disruptions to food production and accessibility through impacts such as increased costs for agricultural inputs like fertilisers and food production costs, resulting in higher food prices (Rabbi et al., 2023; Hassan & Bilali, 2022). Such can often produce micro-level changes to the food utilisation capacity of households, which undoubtedly experience income disruptions that affect their ability to cope and diversify their nutrition (Bruck et al., 2019a; 2019b), thus producing such effects as increased dependence on less preferred food and drastic cuts to meal portions (George et al., 2020).

The rights-based approach to food security establishes it as a social problem that demands collective, comprehensive action from society's political, social, and economic sectors. Vyas (2000) has demonstrated that this need has increasingly attracted interventions from state and non-state actors, including civil society. This participation of CSOs, as has been argued, tends to moderate the quality or output of interventions by state actors (Walsh-Dilley & Wolford, 2015) and is often a significant contributor to the legitimacy and relevance of state-initiated policies (Kepple & Segall-Correa, 2017).

Increasingly, civil society organisations have been grafted into global institutional frameworks for combatting food security. They have become shared partners in the efforts to address hunger coordinated by the Food and Agriculture Organisation, owing to the FAO's recognition of the impact that can be generated by leveraging the capacity and capabilities of CSOs and their status as the nearest institution and representative of the poor (Food and Agriculture Organisation, n.d.). Increasingly, civil society actors have taken prominent roles, including complementing state responses to the food security problem induced by the coronavirus pandemic by way of distributing food relief to vulnerable populations (Brunet et al., 2021). In Africa, action has also taken the form of advocacy for the development of sustainable food systems and revisions to existing policy frameworks that will re-orient such frameworks to be rooted in inclusiveness and accountability (African CSIPM Popular Consultation Space, 2023), mirroring successful advocacy led by CSOs for reforms to global institutional frameworks, such as the UN Committee on World Food Security (Duncan, 2016). In one instance, civil society partnership

with the Burkinabe state resulted in the creation of the Agricultural Bank of Burkina Faso (SNV, 2020).

Civil society engagements in advancing food security in Nigeria have been ongoing for decades. Indeed, tangible evidence accumulates to buttress the fact that a collection of civil society groups has been engaged in efforts to promote food security both at micro and macro levels. The contributions of faith-based organisations may well be noted in this regard. Catholic Church-backed groups have implemented several initiatives which have been targeted at the extension of capital credit facilities to farming groups and households to support food security (Morse & McNamara, 2021). Another important factor has been cooperative societies. These groups, especially those operating in urban centres, have featured the mass mobilisation of private finance for the mass purchase of food items (Adedapo & Alabi, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

The Human Security Theory

Civil society engagements in the theatre of guaranteeing food security fit within the perspective of the Human Security Theory. As a theoretical position, human security conceptualises the objective of all actions carried out by social institutions as oriented towards guaranteeing the welfare of the human being. According to Alkire:

> *"Human security is "people-centred"; it focuses the attention of institutions on human individuals and their communities worldwide. This emphasis on human beings distinguishes human security from the objective of protecting state territories that dominated security policies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Human security shifts that focus to persons, regardless of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, citizenship, or other distinguishing characteristics". (Alkire, 2003, p. 3)*

The food security crisis resulting from the Russia-Ukraine war aligns closely with these concerns raised within the purview of the Human Security Theory as it threatens individual and community welfare through increased food prices, disrupted supply chains, and reduced food availability and accessibility.

CSOs, as proximate actors to affected populations, play a critical role in mitigating these threats. By addressing the availability, accessibility, utilisation, and stability dimensions of food security within a human security framework, they can help stabilise vulnerable communities.

Guided by this people-centred perspective, CSOs can advocate for inclusive policies that prioritise vulnerable populations by lobbying for government support packages for smallholder farmers and subsidies to cushion the impacts of increased agricultural input costs. They can also provide emergency relief, such as food aid and financial assistance, to alleviate immediate hardships, complementing state efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Beyond immediate responses, CSOs can build resilience by training farmers in sustainable agricultural practices, promoting alternative fertilisers, and supporting climate-resilient farming methods, aligning with the long-term goals of human security. Additionally, CSOs can monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of state and international responses, providing data-driven recommendations to ensure equitable and inclusive policies.

Methodology

This paper is rooted in a qualitative methodology. Data is collected from secondary sources, which include peer-reviewed academic journals and documents published by major international organisations such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in Nigeria. Documents downloaded from the NBS' electronic library were particularly useful for extracting data on food inflation from 2021-2024, with which this paper constructed a dataset for subsequent analysis and visualisation using charts and graphs. The paper also draws on the media narratives documented in national dailies. Such media narratives were extracted using a search query combining "civil society" and "food security".

Findings

Impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on food security in Nigeria

The Russia-Ukraine conflict is a dominant source of disruptions to global food systems. The Food Price Index, a mechanism launched by the FAO to monitor global food prices, witnessed a major increase, unprecedented since the mechanism's establishment, just one month after the outbreak of fighting between Russia and Ukraine (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

Nigeria's vulnerability to the impact shocks of the war extends from its dependence on Russia for agricultural products. In 2021, Nigeria accounted for 76% and 31.2% of Russia's potassium and nitrate fertiliser exports (Aminu, 2022). Such dependence relatedly pushed policy changes, some of which occurred within three months from the commencement of hostilities. By May 2022, Nigeria had redirected its focus to non-Russian sources for fertiliser.

Such a decision was based on supply chain deficiencies. A Nigerian government official said, "Russia was unable to deliver, so we bought spots from traders in Canada." (Nnodim, 2022, p. 1). Within the local media, there was an understanding that Russia's inability to deliver its obligations was essentially not 'deliberate' but rather a consequence of political dynamics, as its ability to deliver became constrained by Western sanctions imposed. This was especially concerning against the backdrop of already documented existing deficits occasioned by the Coronavirus pandemic (Okojie, 2020). Such changes affected farmers and reduced their output by a significant amount, as told in the following story about a farmer in Gombe:

> *"It was July 2022, five months after Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the beginning of the peak season for farmers applying fertilizer. He placed an order for 700 bags of urea — a form of nitrogen — with a Nigerian manufacturer. Not until October, four months after the peak season, did he finally receive his shipment. This year, Mr. Abubakar ordered 2,100 bags of NPK, a mixture of the three primary nutrients, from an agribusiness supplier in Lagos. He prepaid the full balance — 48 million naira, or about $61,000. Several weeks later, a sales manager informed him that production had been halted at the factory. Mr. Abubakar never received his shipment, while waiting four months for a refund. With limited inventory, his sales have dropped by half. In the Gombe area, a shortage of fertilizer worsened." (Goodman, 2023, p. 1)*

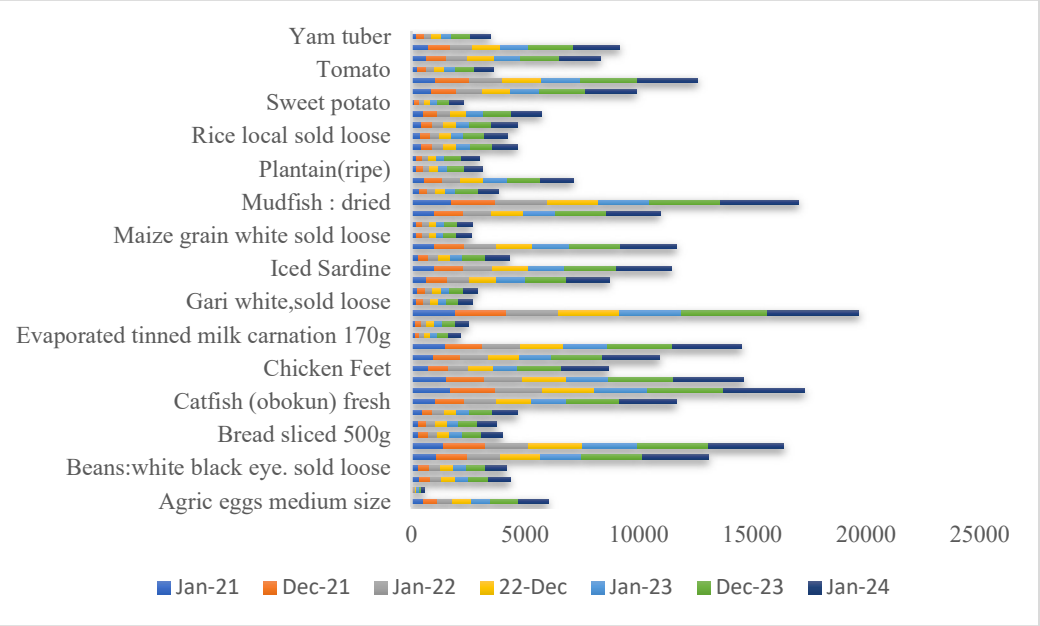
Such delays in fertiliser delivery, such as Mr. Abubakar receiving his order months after the peak season, reduce crop yields, strain farmers' financial resources and limit their capacity to invest in subsequent farming activities, further reducing productivity. As seen in areas like Gombe, fertiliser shortages escalate market prices, making it unaffordable for many small-scale farmers and deepening inequality in access to agricultural inputs. Consequently, reduced fertiliser availability and application result in lower crop yields, shrinking the food supply and driving up prices, exacerbating food insecurity at both household and national levels. It becomes thus unsurprising, given that background, that food prices have continuously proceeded on an inflationary trend.

These inflationary trends are captured by annual publications by the National Bureau of Statistics.

As shown by

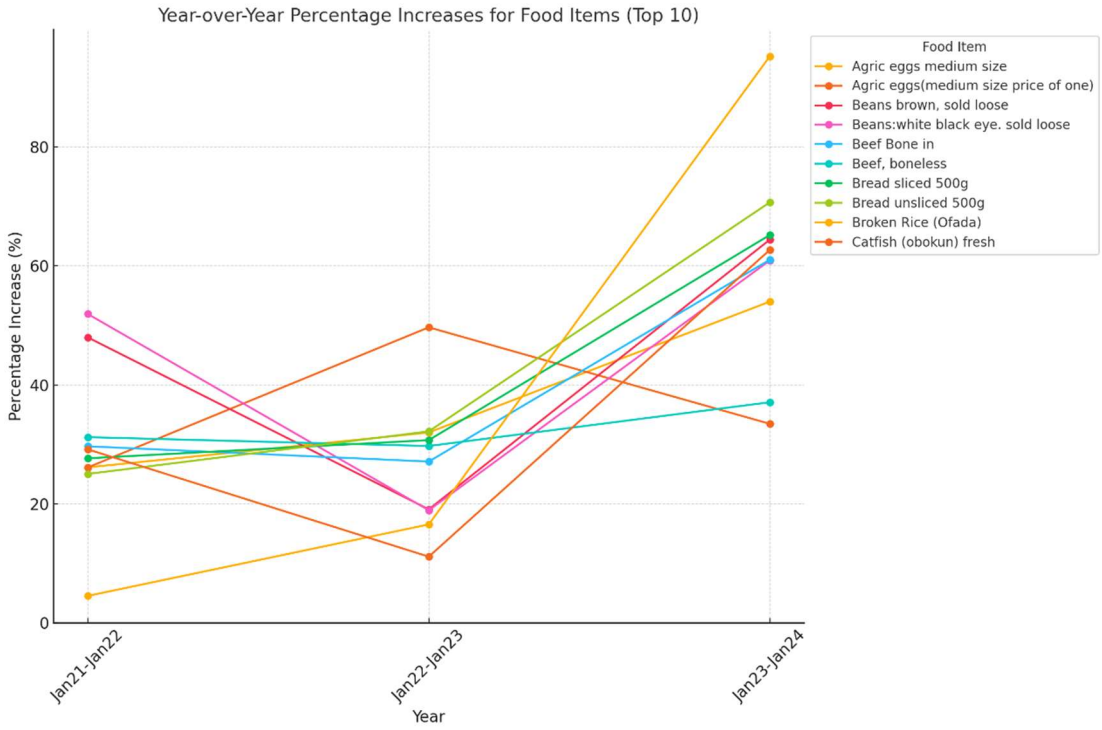
Figure 1, there has been a steady and often dramatic rise in food prices between January 2021 and January 2024 across various commodities in Nigeria. Protein-rich foods like boneless beef and frozen chicken saw some of the most substantial price hikes, with boneless beef increasing from ₦1,421.14 in January 2021 to ₦3,315.78 in January 2024, reflecting a 133% rise. Similarly, staples such as beans and rice, essential to the average household, experienced significant price escalations. For example, the price of white beans increased from ₦316.92 in January 2021 to ₦921.38 in January 2024—a nearly 191% rise.

Figure 1: Food Price Watch for Selected Food Items



Source: Authors' compilation from National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reports.

Figure 2: Year-over-Year percentage increases for food items



The year-over-year analysis of food prices from January 2021 to January 2024, as illustrated in *Figure 2*, reveals substantial variability across commodities, driven by inflationary pressures and global market dynamics. A notable trend is the sharp rise in prices of protein-rich and processed foods such as boneless beef, frozen chicken, and smoked catfish, reflecting increased production and distribution costs. Staples like eggs and bread also experienced consistent price increases. At the same time, items like white gari and yellow gari exhibited more subdued fluctuations, with occasional declines for specific items, such as onions, due to seasonal supply variations.

These inflationary surges are strongly tied to disruptions in the global fertiliser supply chain caused by the Russia-Ukraine conflict. As major exporters of fertilisers, Russia and Ukraine's supply chain interruptions led to a steep rise in global fertiliser costs. In Nigeria, where a large portion of agriculture relies on imported fertilisers, the result was reduced crop yields and higher production costs for staple crops such as maize, rice, and beans. These agricultural challenges and heightened transportation costs due to inflation contributed to the cascading effects on food prices. For instance, maize prices increased by over 200%, from ₦210.74 in January 2021 to ₦633.91 in January 2024. Again, given Ukraine and Russia's agricultural prowess in wheat production, the disruptions caused by the fighting further complicated an already extensive issue of high wheat prices. This is evident when one considers the narrative that:

> *"Rises in the prices of wheat flour and bread have been witnessed since the war began. Wheat flour and bread prices have generally been high since 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic until 2021, when prices began to decline marginally. However, global market disruptions due to the war led to rising domestic prices of wheat, especially in March 2022 and this has continued since. For instance, wheat flour prices increased by about 24% from January 2022 to December 2022, while that of bread increased by about 29% within the same period" (Asante-Addo et al., 2023, p. 4)*

Civil society responses

To the extent Nigeria's food crisis has been severe, civil society organisations' response has been mainly streamed as "advocacy." In October 2024, the Nigerian Red Cross Society held a fundraising event to increase advocacy for the plight of vulnerable populations worst hit by the food security crisis, buttressing a need for urgent action (Nigerian Red Cross Society, 2024).

Nonetheless, instances of civil society organisations delivering food aid directly to vulnerable populations have also been noticeable (Redaction Africanews, 2024). Beyond Lagos, there have been distributions in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Niger State (Voice of Nigeria, 2024), Anambra (Vanguard , 2023) and Osun (Ogunwade, 2023). Such operations increasingly have been shaped by resource constraints. Non-governmental organisations involved in food aid distribution have increasingly complained about having to work with donor funding cuts and reduced the volume of aid extended because of deteriorating purchasing power (Okay Africa, 2024).

However, as it should be noted, these efforts have been mainly driven not by an intent to address food security within the context of the Russia-Ukraine War. Instead, various efforts made by civil society organisations have been as a response to localised events, such as fuel subsidy removal (*cf.* Redaction Africanews, 2024; Okay Africa, 2024; Voice of Nigeria, 2024; Vanguard, 2023; Ogunwade, 2023).

Conclusion

From all indications, Nigeria has been exposed to several vulnerabilities, as its dependence on external actors ensures that the country is far from insulated from the extreme shocks of conflicts outside its borders, no less its external borders. Thus, while there has been little by way of direct interface between the Russia-Ukraine conflict and food security and civil society responses, the indirect effects of this conflict have mainly added to the complexity of socio-economic problems faced by Nigeria, especially in the post-Covid era. Mitigating the exposure of the Nigerian state and enhancing its capacity to respond to shocks entail several concerted policy steps and measures.

Recommendations

To that end, the study recommends that the Nigerian government prioritise establishing and expanding local fertiliser manufacturing plants to reduce reliance on imported fertilisers and

address supply deficits, which were accentuated by the Russia-Ukraine war. Nonetheless, partnerships between the government and civil society are also necessary for such efforts. Such partnerships should be designed or actively pursued to scale food aid initiatives and advocacy efforts through various measures, including increased funding and the development of early warning systems and mechanisms to track global supply chain risks and local food security challenges, thus enhancing the capacity for timely, proactive, and comprehensive responses to crises like the Russia-Ukraine war.

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DIVIDEND POLICY AND CORPORATE PERFORMANCE OF NIGERIAN FIRMS

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Dividend Policy, Investment, Profitability, & Earnings-per-Share (EPS)

ABSTRACT
Managing corporate dividend had forever being a fragile task that requires understanding and consideration of the managerial and business growth variables that are attached to it. This study examined the relationship between corporate dividend policy and the corporate performance of Nigerian manufacturing firms, via three of the literature posited corporate performance indicators: Firm's Profitability, Investments, and Earnings-per-Share, which existing related studies had ignored. The study was built on Ross and Mitnick's 1973 and 1975 Agency theory of corporate behaviour. It is a quantitative research design that x-rays a sectoral population of about 173 NSE's listed Nigerian manufacturing companies, from which twenty-five (25) stratifiedly selected manufacturing samples were tested, covering a period of 10 years (i.e., 2014 to 2024). Two of the dividend theories (Irrelevance and Flow-of-funds) were empirically verified in quest to ascertain their relevance and position. Data gathered were empirically analyzed using, Econometric and Multiple-regression technique, coupled with the t-test reliability mechanisms. The study in its contribution to the wealth of knowledge, established in contrast to most existing related studies that significant positive relationship exists among a firm's dividend policy, its corporate investments, profitability, and earnings-per-share: the tested indicators of firm' corporate performance. And it is on the basis of these revelations that the study recommends to the managers of manufacturing companies in Nigeria, to adopt much flexible dividend policy pattern that is educative and communicative enough, to assist them, motivate and convince corporate investors towards prioritizing the need for re-investment of their dividend yields over immediate cash-out in their contribution towards aiding improved corporate performances and desired growth.

Introduction

Over the last two decades, financial scholars' attention has been drifted to some managerial issues regarding modern corporate dividend management. This is because of the debatable role; a firm's dividend policy could play on corporate performances and growth. However, despite the large numbers of studies on dividend management, little or no attention has been given to the roles of some of the firm's-specific based-endogenous variables, such as: firm's profitability, investment, earnings-per share, degree of corporate ownership, shareholders' demands to just name a few of the theoretically postulated indicators of corporate performance. This neglect has created lacuna in this area of study and thus, leave some questions to be answered (Frank & Gray, 2024).

Extant studies in sizeable numbers have argued how so many factors affect the performances of corporate organizations and, one of those literature posited factors is, Dividend policy (Su, 2024). Dividend policy has been described in Corporate Finance and Accounting literature as one of the controlling mechanisms for taking corporate economic advantages (Bo & Lesink, 2015). In last decade of study, empirical studies had shown that interaction among major elements of corporate performance indicators, to a large extent, needs to be addressed, given the alarming deterioration rate in global corporate performances and conflict of interest between the owners of the business and their managerial teams. In response to this call, some studies attempted to verify how various market frictions in the economic world have been driving linkages among corporate performance indicators but at expense of: Profitability, Investments and Earnings-per-Share, which this study aimed at addressing in order to fill the gaps found in this area.

In general, if we are to go by the saying that the value of a firm is the function of its dividend payouts, the tendency of dividend policy directly impacting the companies' cost of capital would be high (Kempner 2021). And if this happens, to curb the multiplier effect of high cost of capital and other vices that could be distorting corporate growth, there would be need to understand the relationship between a firm's Dividend policy and its corporate performances. Another question that needed to be answered is: Could corporate Profitability, Investments and Earnings-per-Share of a firm, be influencing its Dividend choices? And if answers to all of these queries are positive, it therefore negates the assertion of Irrelevance theory and several extant studies' position on the irrelevance of Dividend payouts policy on corporate performances.

Statement of the Problem

The alarming rate of theoretical contradictions and empirical neglect of salient managerial issues with regards to corporate financial decisions, especially of those involving shareholders' interest, which studies have established to be one the genesis of corporate conflicts that usually informs poor business performances and retard growth, prompted this study. Conventional literature in corporate finance has long been criticized for overlooking the importance of dividend policy in determining aspects of corporate behaviour, as well as the theoretical development that relate to overall corporate performances and advances in econometric techniques (Knight, 2011). Theory of dividend irrelevance and flow-of-funds postulation and approach to managing firm's dividend decisions, which has generated a lot of debates amongst academics in the last decade, is set to be tested in this study, as a quest to ascertain its stands through empirical efforts.

Also, the deterioration rate in the last fifteen years of corporate operations in Nigeria, as recorded in the Nigerian stock exchange's annual market value reports of manufacturing firms in Nigeria, has as well spurred this study. It is evident that companies of high repute are facing difficulties in scaling through both internal and external economic and managerial challenges (Akanni, 2024). One notable area of concern to institutional managers is the signaling effect of dividend payouts to shareholders. If this sectoral need is not addressed, the multiplier effect on Nigerian economy at large could be disastrous. In general, the study logic here is to assist in addressing theoretical, variable, methodical, sectoral, and geographical study gaps, found in the existing studies, thereby contributing to the wealth of knowledge in academics, literature and as well, providing empirical evidences that will assist Nigerian manufacturing Industry and Nigerian economic and financial policy makers on salient areas, requiring reliable information and guidance during planning.

Research Questions

Given the prevailing problems as discussed above, the underlying questions are:

i. Is there significant relationship between Dividend Policy and Corporate Performance?

ii. Do corporate Profitability, Investment and Earnings-per-Share inform Dividend choices?

Objectives of the study

The mission of this study is to examine on general basis, the role of a firm's Dividend Policy on its Business Performance, while its specific objectives are to:

i. Ascertain the relationship between dividend policy of manufacturing firms and corporate Profitability.

ii. Determine the relationship between dividend policy of manufacturing firms and corporate Investment activities.

iii. Establish if there exist, relationship between dividend policy of manufacturing firms and Earnings-per-Share.

Research Hypotheses

Following the study's mission of enquiry and the underlying questions to be answered, these underlisted null Hypotheses are raised:

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between Dividend policy and corporate Profitability.

$H0_2$: There is no significant relationship between Dividend policy and Investment choices.

$H0_3$: There is no significant relationship between Dividend policy and Earnings per Share.

The test results of these hypotheses will assist this study in establishing some facts that would end theoretical debates and nullifies those that are poorly postulated or un-empirically supported.

Conceptual Clarifications

This section appraised and provides definitions and simple interpretation of the terms, employed in this study. The idea is to aid quick understanding of this study in its entirety.

Dividend is the name given to the financial returns that accrues to a firm' shareholders as a result of the money (capital) they invests in the business through acquisition of corporate stocks of that company (Kempner 2021). *Dividend Payouts* on the other hand, are the percentage amount of money from the corporate earned profits in a production year, which the company expends to the corporate stockholders based on their held shares (Eriki & Okafor, 2024). *Dividend Policy* is the statutory and agreed set of corporate rules and guidelines that a company adopts and followed to decide its dividend activities, especially how much of its operational profits are to be distributed to shareholders as dividend and other affiliated dividend decisions' components (Knight, 2011). Going by these definitions, it showed that dividend management is a tricky financial decision of a firm that cut across the employed managers of shareholders' wealth; the wealth owners; and prospective investors. This is because each of these parties is interested as followed: *The Managers*: What perception will our wealth owner and prospective investors be having on our managerial acumen and sensitivity to their needs and interests? *Shareholders*: Is my capital invested in this company, yielding fast and as desired? What rationale is the part of profit accrued to me? Are the managers conceding profit information from us or not? *Prospective Investors*: Is this company worthy to be invested in, based on their dividend declaration information and policy? What prospects do I, if joined and what benefit do I stand to gain in the nearest future? These and many other worrying questions run through the mind of these set of stakeholders, which only corporate dividend policies could answer. Also, an aspect of the theory of dividend policy is a part of continuum of control allocations between managers and investors, and hence, cross-sectional variations in dividend policy are driven by this underlying factor.

The allocation of control between the manager and investors is important not because of Agency or private information problems, but because of its potentially divergent believe that can lead to a disagreement about the value of the project available to the company and, the underlying factor here is, the Corporate Performance. *Corporate performance* is at the heart of managerial function of every organization, as it depicts the company's market presence, capital sources and bases, branches and institutional structures, growth rate, caliber of corporate investors, size of the firm, catchments, products, amongst many other valuables and parameters that their business portfolio carries (Samuel, 2023). Corporate performance simply means how well and fast a firm is doing. And in real life, are mostly premised on several economic factors and growth determinants, which are measured over time through the corporate success record, in line with corporate goals. Theoretically, analysis of a corporate performance is premised on the development of a modeling methodology to help in the diagnosis of past performances, and thus provide a framework for evaluating the effect of the changes in operating parameters as a guide for future planning. This Organizational performance is usually measured in practice, by the choice of the management form of wealth to be held. If the performance of an organization is good, there will be little or no disagreement between the firm's management and their shareholders (Ghosh & Subrata, 2020). To ensure efficient evaluation of the corporate performance, most emphasis is on the assessment of the current corporate behavior of such organization. This has to do with firm's goals that must be well structured in line with specific measure to achieve such goals. Each of the company's set perspective must therefore be considered critically and simultaneously, so as to ensure its overall efficiency and effectiveness to succeed. And if any aspect of the evaluation is over-bloated, the performance evaluation therefore becomes 'unbalanced' (Davidson, 2023).

Earnings-per-Share implies portion of a company's profit that is allocated to each outstanding share of its common stock. It is a crucial metric for investors to gauge a company's profitability and overall financial health (Wilkes, 2005). It is worthy of note that corporate owners consider all their investment returns as accruing, not just from dividend payments, but from the additional gains from capital appreciation on their shares. Normally, an investor does not intend to hold the share in perpetuity, but rather wishes to sell the shares and obtain capital gains. When he sells the shares, the buyer is also simply purchasing a stream of future dividend expectations. The reason the capital gain expectation arises is because of the future dividend streams that could between the time the investor purchased the shares and when he sells them, improves. This can simply be demonstrated thus:

Suppose an investor or shareholder buys a share with the expectation to hold it for two years, the value of the share held is the present value of the two years dividend payments, plus discounted value of the price he expects to receive on selling the share in the future.

So, if Po = Price of share today P2 = Price of share at the end of the 2nd year

D1 = Dividend per share to be received at the end of 1st year

i = Discount rate; and D2 = Dividend at end of 2nd year, Then Po = D1 + D2 + P2 divided by (1+i) 2 (1+i) 2 (1+i) 2 respectively. The shareholder/investor who buys the share at the end of the 2nd year pays P2 for it and expects to hold it for two further years. So, looking at it from time 0 (zero), it will give us: P2 + D3 + D4 + P4 divided by (1+i) 2 (1+i) 2 (1+i) 2 (1+i) 2 respectively.

It is important to note that most of the firms listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange clearly have well defined dividend policies that are basically based on the general dividend practice in their respective industries. In the above model, a higher agreement between the manager and investors implies a higher stock price. So the above model simply predicts leverage and dividend payout ratio to be inversely related to the firm's stock price.

Methodology

This study is designed, a quantitative empirical research. The lens of the study is on the Nigerian firms. The specific target population is the 173 NSE's listed Nigerian manufacturing companies, from which 25 stratifiedly selected manufacturing samples were taken for scientific examination. A firm is considered worthy for selection, once it possesses all study requirements in terms of: Age; Industrial classification; Products portfolios; Assets;

Liabilities; Profit & Loss information; NSE's listing status; Shareholders' size, Dividend payouts information, amongst other sampling criteria. The period of enquiry covers year 2014 to 2024 (i.e., a 10 year). The data for this study are purely secondary, which were generated from the selected sampled firms' annual reports and books account. Information related to business capital formation, profits, cash flows, share held, earnings allotted to shares, previous and current dividend payout policy, the capital investments, amongst other important variables were extracted from the data sources. All the information are then carefully analyzed, using multiple regression analytical approach, through the aid of e-view software and t-test apparatus, to verify the study's hypotheses. To actualize the general and the specific intentions of this study, all encompassing Econometric Model was adopted from Luke's (2021) study of corporate relationship, which this study deemed fit to improve, in order to assist in filling the lag methodical gap found in related extant studies. The model is therefore stated thus:

DIVP = f (ROCE, FIXA, EPS)

Specifying in econometric format; we have:

DIVP = ao + a1ROCE +a2FIXA + a3EPS + ut

Where: DIVP, a0, a1, a2, a3, ut represent dividends paid to shareholders, intercept term, impact on ROCE, impact on FIXA, impact on EPS and error term respectively.

ROCE, FIXA and EPS represent Return on Capital Employed, fixed Assets and Earnings-Per-Share respectively.

Description and Measurement of Study's Variables

i. Dividend Payout (DIVP): This is used as the measure for corporate dividend policy tested. It is the amount a firm pays-out to its shareholders from the corporate operational profits, as yield on his/her capital invested in the company. DIVP is therefore measured as: Total Ordinary Dividend *divided by the* Number of Ordinary Shares.

ii. Return on Capital Employed (ROCE)*:* This is used as the measure for corporate profitability tested. It is the aggregate measurement of a firm's operating money efficiency and timely yields. ROCE is therefore measured as: Operating Profit *divided by the* Capital Employed, ^{x} 100.

iii. Fixed Assets (FIXA): This is used as the measure for corporate investments tested. These are capital assets owned by a firm, which are meant to yield more money over a long period of time. FIXA is measured as: Summation of all long-term real assets the tested firms.

iv. Earnings-per-Share (EPS): This is the measure for the tested corporate shareholders' earnings per shares held. EPS is the portion of a company's profit that is allocated to each of outstanding share of the common stock**.** It is therefore measured as the: Profit after Tax *divided by* Number of ordinary issued shares, ranked on the basis of Dividend payouts, ^{x} 100.

Theoretical Framework

Given the nature and scope of this study, the study adopts Agency theory as its central theoretical framework due to its explicit description and analysis of corporate structure and practices. It is an economic and managerial supposition that extensively addressed corporate behaviour and other corporate contractual relationship and performances, which is in line with behavioural approach adopted by this study. Ross (1973) and Mitnick (1975) postulates the Agency theory of corporate management as a theory that balance corporate rifts, which states that: a corporation is a nexus of contracts between various stakeholders, primarily the shareholders and their managers, who definitely may have different interests and goals, but must align them all, in order to balance-off and actualize their common goals (Imran, 2022). Some of the areas touched by this theory are: issue of corporate growth, corporate control, conflict of interests, ownership separations, agency motivation, risk and uncertainties, including several other corporate and economic issues. It is a corporate theory propounded in the early part of 70's from two independent theories of economics and management, the result of combined efforts of Ross and Mitnick in the years 1973 and 1975 that this study considered the most grounded basis to best explain the nitty-gritty of corporate financial decision

making, interrelationship of corporate growth determinants and of the overall business performances.

To bring out the best of this study, since the issue of dividend is the one we are treating here, Irrelevance theory of dividend and Flow-of-Funds dividend management approach as postulated by Merton Miller and Franco Modigliani in the year 1961 are also adopted as the study's specific theoretical framework that best explain this type of dividend issue. Modigliani and Miller (1961) observed that 'The theoretical principles underlying the dividend policy and its impact on a firm performance can be described either in terms of the Dividend irrelevance or Dividend relevance theory'. Therefore, Dividend policy is irrelevant for the cost of capital and the value of the firms in a world without taxes or transaction cost. This therefore shows that when investors creates any income pattern by selling and buying shares, the expected returns required to induce them to still hold such a firm's shares, which should/will be invariant to the way the firm packages its dividend payments and new issues of shares. It is to be observed that a firm's assets, investments opportunities, expected future net cash flows and cost of capital are not affected by the choices of dividend policy.

On the other hand, the Flow-of-funds approach is based on the argument that corporate finance, investment, and dividend payout decisions are interrelated. Dhrymes and Kurz (2010) posit that a company faces an outflow of fund mainly through its variable and fixed costs in the form of tax, dividend payout, and investment outlays. It is obvious that most companies rely so much on inflow of funds from sales and proceeds of various forms from external finance sources such as profits from operations, loan/debt or stock issuance. The argument of flow–of–funds approach is that companies will have to consider extensively, their fund-raising choices alongside their fund-spending plans before trading-off between outlays for capital investment and dividend payouts, especially in a situation where capital market is gravely imperfect (Agrawal & Jayaraman, 2024). In general, this study chose to test the postulations of these two theories (Irrelevance and Flow-of-Funds) so as to ascertain their stands and relevance on corporate dividend management. If this study's empirical tests support their suppositions, it therefore justifies them but if not, it will then call for amendments or total rejection.

Results from Data Analysis

Table 1:

Sampled Nigeria Manufacturing Firms and Extracted Data Summary

S/N.	Name of Companies Examined	Dividends Per Share (N/K)	Profitability (Return on Capital Employed) (%)	Earnings Per Share (N/K)	Investments (Fixed Assets) (N)'000
1.	Fidson Healthcare Plc.	1.00	33.6	23.58	13,976,234
2.	Nestle Nigeria Plc.	1.50	72.81	403.50	12,567,832
3.	Nigeria Breweries Plc.	3.00	89.45	94.89	21,875,467
4.	PZ Cussons Plc.	0.08	31.8	0.89	15,987,647
5.	Unilever Nigeria Plc.	0.50	9.68	5.50	34,756,544
6.	Vita-foam Nigeria Plc.	0.65	15.8	9.91	9,234,675
7.	Dangote Cement Plc.	0.08	6.0	1.47	18,389,354

8.	Flour Mills of Nigeria Plc.	0.25	14.29	0.50	11,128,648
9.	Cadbury Nigeria Plc.	0.10	18.97	7.45	26,320,289
10.	Total Oil Nigeria.	7.00	64.77	132.34	41,564,738
11.	BUA foods Nigeria Plc.	0.14	9.12	1.36	14,322,987
12.	Mobil Oil Nigeria	5.00	96.02	117.16	15,904,124
13.	Beta Glass Plc.	1.00	10.24	3.16	19,204,563
14.	Cutix Plc.	0.30	39.50	3.75	22,446,874
15.	Indorama Petrochemicals Ltd.	0.25	6.51	3.70	34,453,467
16.	DN Tyre & Rubber Plc.	0.75	17.53	43.12	9,456,876
17.	Union Dicon Salt Plc.	0.05	2.21	0.05	6,125,986
18.	United Nigerian Textiles Plc.	1.25	102.96	110.22	10,756,986
19.	Honeywell Flour Mill Plc.	0.10	5.57	1.24	8,344,863
20.	Sunflag Nig. Textiles Ltd.	4.00	236.44	34.20	7,578,984
21.	Okomu Oil Palm Plc.	0.25	23.58	6.59	31,865,146
22.	Nord Automobile Plc.	0.08	3.25	1.54	12,865,765
23.	Dangote Oil Nigerian Plc.	100	13.06	127	1,006,503,718
24.	Guinness Nigeria Plc.	90.0	2.86	150	158,052,582
25.	Innoson Motors Nigeria Ltd.	125	12.6	7.27	18,579,292

Source: Nigeria Stock Exchange's Fact Books, Annual Reports and Accounts (2025).

N.B: These data were analyzed in line with the earlier stated Econometric-Model for the study, using e-view software apparatus.

Table 2**:**

Iterative Regression Analysis Results

Variables	**Coefficient**	**Std. Error**	**t-Statistic**	**Prob.**
C	-4.653247	3.368612	-1.381354	0.1832
ROCE	0.021953	0.019774	1.110180	0.2808
FIXA	6.56E-08	5.83E-09	11.25369	0.0000
EPS	0.013386	0.012564	1.065397	0.3000
AR(1)	1.659286	0.130175	12.74662	0.0000

R-squared	0.940729	Mean dependent var	14.21177
Adjusted R-squared	0.928251	S.D. dependent var	35.49828
S.E. of regression	9.508569	Akaike info criterion	7.525316
Sum squared resid	1717.845	Schwarz criterion	7.770743
Log likelihood	-85.30379	F-statistic	75.39051
Durbin-Watson stat	1.983739	Prob(F-statistic)	0.530000

Source: Researcher's E-view Regression software (2025).

Table Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

From the results presented in the Table2 above, we can depict that autonomous DIVP is negative when all other variables are held constant. Consequently, a unit change in DIVP will result into a positive change of about 0.021953 units in ROCE less the autonomous component when all other variables are held constant. Also a unit change in DIVP will result in a positive change of about 6.56 units in FIXA less the autonomous component and all other variables held constant. And if they are specified in econometric format, we therefore have it as:

DIVP = -4.653247 + 0.021953ROCE + 6.56FIXA + 0.013386EPS

T-Ratio = (-1.381354) (1.110180) (11.25369) (1.065397)

R-Squared = 0.940729, R – Squared Adjusted = 0.928251

D.W Stat =1.983739 f-stat = 75.39051

Furthermore, a unit change in DIVP will result in a positive change of about 0.013386 units in EPS less the autonomous component and all other variables held constant. Using the T- ratio to test for their statistical significance, we find out that the FIXA variable is statistically significant. This is due to the fact that it's observed T-value is positive and more than the rule of thumb of 2. The other variables are not statistically significant because their observed t-values are lesser than the rule of thumb of 2. From the R-squared of 0.940729, the regression co-efficient indicate that about 94% of the changes in the dependent variable is explained by the changes in the independent variables. The D.W statistic of 1.983739 indicates the absence of auto – correlation since it is in the neighborhood of the rule of Thumb of 2.

Test Result of Study's Hypotheses

The following study hypotheses were tested as stated below:

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between Dividend policy and corporate Profitability.

$H0_2$: There is no significant relationship between Dividend policy and Investment.

$H0_3$: There is no significant relationship between Earning per Share and Dividend policy.

The hypotheses above were tested by considering the f-tabulated and f-calculated values.

Decision Rule: Reject the null hypothesis if the f-calculated is greater than the f–critical (i.e., the t-test's table value) at 5% level of significance.

Decision: A comparative analysis of both the f-calculated value of 75.39051 and f-tabulated of 0.5300 shows that the f-calculated values were all higher than the f-tabulated values. It therefore means that the studies reject the 3-null hypotheses and accept alternate hypotheses which means that there is a significant positive relationship between Dividend policies, corporate profitability, Investments and Earnings-per-Share of the tested corporate organizations, that are representing the Nigerian conglomerates of manufacturing firms. This outcome negates the tested Irrelevance dividend theory and supports the Flow-of-funds' supposition, which is n tandem to Adediran and Alade (2013) findings, positing that significant positive relationship exists between Dividend policy and its profitability.

Thrust of the Work

This study has provided fundamentals for addressing some of the practical challenges, facing the Nigerian manufacturing sector, in its quests to provide insights and guidance on corporate policy formulation, control, and performance management. It also addresses and put to rest the age-long gaps found in the theoretical and empirical studies, specifically addressing, sectoral, methodical, variable, and geographical lacunas. In its contribution to the growing body of literature in field of Accounting, Finance and Managerial Science, this study successfully verified the supposition of Modigliani and Miller's Irrelevance theory, postulating the irrelevance of dividend decision to corporate performances and its affiliated corporate financial decisions, which empirical evidence from this study negated. The regression and other tests results of this study revealed the fact that there exists, significant positive relationship amongst Dividend policies, corporate profitability, Investments and Earnings-per-Share as against most related

existing studies. And since the study had rejected all 3-null formulated hypotheses in acceptance of the alternatives, it can therefore be said that the corporate dividend test on the twenty-five (25) stratifiedly sampled manufacturing Nigerian firms' performance, is positive, and that the four variables tested, have direct impact on one another.

In another contribution of this study to knowledge, empirical evidence from this study shows that the Flow-of-funds' supposition is supported. It simply means that a firm's flow of funds, informs its corporate performance, going by the fact that any steady inflow of funds will give rise to an impressive investment activities and dividend payouts.

In general, it can be said at this juncture that a firms' dividend policy is an important part of its corporate life, given the fact that its payouts have ability to establish and sustain corporate peace, agency trusts, give operational direction, and signal corporate performance to stakeholders, which the Agency theory that this study is built upon, extensively argued.

Conclusion

Since the study' decision rules favour the existence of significant relationship between the tested variables, the study therefore concludes that:

i. On general basis, there exists, significant relationship between a firm's Dividend policy and its corporate performances.

ii. And on specific basis, there exists, significant positive relationship between a firm's Dividend policy and its Profitability;

iii. There also exists, significant positive relationship between a firm's Dividend policy and its Investment activities;

iv. And that there exists, significant positive relationship between a firm's Dividend policy and its shareholders' Earnings-per-Share (EPS).

Recommendations

Following the findings and the conclusions of this study, it is therefore recommended that:

The corporate managers of the Nigerian manufacturing firms should consider the adoption of a flexible Dividend Policy pattern that fits into their mission and vision statements, and which is self-explanatory and convincing enough to motivate and convince their corporate existing and prospective investors, towards prioritizing the need for re-investment of their dividend yields over immediate cash-out, in order to aid improved corporate performances and desired growth.

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THE PERCEPTION OF ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF EGBU ON HERBAL MEDICINE IN RELATION TO PENTATEUCHAL THEOLOGY OF 'ESE

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Herbal Medicine, Pentateuch, Theology, Herbs ('Eseb'), Diocese of Egbu

ABSTRACT
In spite of the fact that the Bible does not condemn herbal medicine, there are different perceptions and understanding among people. Some people perceive herbal medicine to be evil, fetish and views the herbal practitioners as idol worshippers, while others accept the use of herbs. Some Christian organizations and Churches condemn the use of herbal medicine, derogating it to be Satanic. These controversies that trail herbal medicine has become an issue to be investigated, in light of Pentateuchal Theology of 'eseb' (herb). This study will therefore, examine the perception of the Diocese of Egbu in Imo State Nigeria, on the use of herbal medicine. This study used basically sociological research method and exegesis which involved the use of books, journals, articles, periodicals, oral interviews, questionnaire, and internet resources relevant to the study. This study was able to find out that the book of Genesis which is the book of all beginnings gave an account on how herbs ('eseb') came into existence through the work of God creation on the third day by sprouting forth from the earth. On the sixth day after man was created God instructed man that herbs will serve as meat for him and to the animal kingdom. Herbs is not in any way connected to Satan, neither is it evil nor fetish, but God the Creator in Genesis 1:12, saw that herbs was good and would be of great benefit to man and animals. Herbs ('eseb') according to Genesis 1:11-12, 29-30; came into existence through the spoken word of God. This depicts how much love God has for humanity and his ability to provide and supply man's need even before creating man. Therefore, herbal medicine is a gift of God to mankind which should be appreciated and respected as it contributes to longevity and add nutritional value to human diet. The researcher therefore recommends that seminars and conferences be held to educate both Christians leaders and Christians on the subject matter of herbal medicine. Professionals in the field of herbs should be encouraged by government policy for them to carry out research on some of the curative herbs that are found in our localities in other to authenticate their potency.

Introduction

The history of herbal medicine is as old as the history of human existence. Its date to the Paleolithic age approximately about 60,000 years ago. The Sumerians created list of plants for herbal medicine 5,000 years ago, with written evidences. In Africa ancient Egypt at15^{th}Century B.C. made use of herbal medicine and this was mentioned in *Egyptian medicinal Papyri* ('ebos *papyrus'),* covering more than 700 drugs mainly plant origin. Herbal medicine is the use of plants for curative and healing purpose to cure various illness, sickness, disease to mention but the few. In general, Herbal medicine discusses the importance of herbs, medicinal content and purposes. So many ancient cultures used herbal medicine for curative and healing purposes as this was the only source of remedy available for them and also had them documented. Herbal medicine had been in long use before the advent of Orthodox medicine[74]. World Health Organization (W.H.O) estimated that 80% percent of the population of some Asian and African Countries presently use herbal medicine for some aspect of primary Health care[75] During the 45th Inaugural Lecture at the University of Calabar, Prof. Frank N.I. Morah in his paper presentation stated; "that herbs have gotten its origin from the Bible. Using Genesis 1:11-12,

> *And God said, let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind; and God saw that it was good.*

He further stated that plants through the special power given to them by God act as chemical industries and are able to heal and cure illnesses?.

Pentateuch theology is the revelation of God goodness towards mankind which is progressive. It also recognizes God who created the heaven and the earth (Elohim) as the only true God, who is the source of all being and exercises sovereignty over all that exist[76]. Pentateuch theology of 'eseb' (herb) is God's preservation and providence that meet human needs for food, healing, clothing, shelter and worship utensils[77]. Pentateuch theology reveals that 'eseb' (herb) is God given gift to benefit human being. God gives directives to mankind to use herb ('eseb') that consists of vegetables, trees, and fruits for food and for healing. God determines what man and animal eats. Pentateuch theology does not discourage the use of herb for medicinal purpose. So man needs to move closer to nature in appreciation of God's wonderful endowment in his provision[78]. God is concerned about mankind he created in his image and that is why from the beginning he created herb for food and healing and said; "it is good"

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Perception of the Diocese of Egbu on Herbal Medicine

Historical Background of Egbu

Egbu is an autonomous community located North – West of Owerri town in present day Imo State. It is located on Longitude 7.2.E and Latitude 5.28.N and falls within the rain forest region in the Southern part of Nigeria and has the typical characteristics of a rain forest belt; high temperature, abundant rain, rich arable land and tall trees. And is synonymous with Otamiri, (a historical river that made the land so unique) as the case of ancient Egypt which was referred to as the gift of the Nile. Egbu can be appropriately described as the gift of River Otamiri[79].

According to oral tradition, Egbu existed over a thousand years before the advent of the Europeans. From genealogical reckoning the great grandfather of Egbu was Ofoakuru who originally occupied a piece of land not far from the present day Egbu. Ofoakuru's first son was called Ome. Enyi, Ezelukwu and Nneorie are the children of Ome. Ome was a tactful and peaceful man. He was a polygamist and had many more children. He was well respected by his family because he was a disciplinarian. Enyi, Ome first son became the head of the family after Ome's death. Enyi had five sons; Ihitta Ogada, Awaka, Egbu, Owerri, and Naze. His five sons founded a clan called; 'Alaenyi'. These five towns which make up Alaenyi have similar traditions and customs responsible for their bond of unity. Enyi, like his father Ome, maintained the unity of his family. After the death of Enyi, his family scattered to different location because of internal rancor. Egbu the third son of Enyi was dynamic, witty and highly industrious He was a polygamist and had three sons; Okochi, Ubaeze, Uba. Egbu and his large family peacefully earlier settled at Apu-otu-obo-. This site is now been occupied by Umuayalu village in Egbu. They had a famous Egbu culture/festival known as; mgbugbuzo – which brings all family members together[80].

There was an administrative structure existing with democratic processes long been practiced in Egbu before the advent of the British Government to Nigeria in 1900.The administrative setup in Egbu helped the Europeans governance greatly. As there administration was carried out using the existing structure in Egbu. Administrative set up; The Eze Egbu, the Oha na Okoro, the Obilobi, and the age grades. This structure made the flow of information from the Eze to his subjects very easy[81].

Before the coming of Christianity, Egbu people had various deities which they worshipped, they are: Ala-Egbu, Otamiri, Amadioha, Okwuishi, and Akirioche. They also recognize the existence of one Supreme God known as; Chi-ukwu, and chukwu. Each of these deities had a shrine and a Chief priest, but when the people of Egbu accepted Christianity, the worship of these deities began to phase out. The shrines are still there for the purpose of research in social history, 98% of the Egbu people are now Christians. There are two main denominations well known in Egbu, which are; the Anglican Church in Ogodo and the Roman Catholic Church at Ishiuzo village. In recent times there are many other Christian denominations that have sprung up in Egbu, following the current trend of religious explosion all over the country[82].

ii. Advent of Church Msissionary Society in Egbu

The Church Missionary Society did not come to Egbu until the early parts of the 20th centuries. Though they have arrived at Onitsha since 1857. Travelling in those days was hazardous and means were scarce. The distance between Onitsha and Owerri was covered by trekking. Through strange and hostile villages in those days, even strangers were considered dangerous and should be attacked. It took sixteen years (1857-1873), for the missionaries

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to establish at Obosi. Then it took fifty years to reach Owerri. The fifty years was not spent in trekking; there were other logistics problem common to explorers in those days[83].

In 1900, the British Administrator has arrived Owerri and chosen the town as garrison for soldiers. Who carried out the ARO expedition of 1902. When this operation was completed, two company of soldiers were still left help Government control the area. Mr. Harold M. Douglas became the first district commissioner in Owerri, but the whole area of southern Nigeria was under the Acting High Commissioner Mr. Leslie Problyn. It is good to note here; that it was Mr. Problyn who brought the initiation for religious expansion and activities in Owerri. In 1904, Mr. Problyn suggested to Bishop Tugwell of the Church Missionary society that Owerri might prove a possible centre for mission work. Coincidentally this came at a time the CMS at Onitha were anxious to find a better place than Onitsha itself for the study of Igbo language. And had also been desirous of producing a union version of the Igbo Bible, which will be used all over the lgbo land. Mr. Problyn added to his report about Owerri; that the purest Igbo was probably spoken in Owerri area. Bishop Tugwell embraced this unusual suggestion (unusual because in those days, it was the missionaries who invited the government and not the other way round). Bishop Tugwell then suggested to the CMS authority in England to allow Archdeaconry Thomas J. Dennis who was known to be a scholar in the classic to come to Owerri to survey the possibility of establishing a missionary Centre and then of translating the Bible. As a result of this Archdeacon Dennis and an Igbo Catechist Alphonso Chukwuma Onyeabo arrived in Owerri through Oguta in April 1905. They were well received by the district commissioner Mr. Douglas but they did not like to stay with him, rather chose to stay with Chief Igwe who was said to be the most popular chief in Owerri. And were well received, stayed with him for some nights and preached to the enthusiastic crowd in Owerri. Also visited the neighboring town which include, Nekede, Naze, Egbu, Uratta, and Awaka.Dennis on getting back to London, recommended Owerri area very highly. The reasons were as follows; the people were receptive, hospitable and wanted the missionary to stay on. Their Igbo language spoken was as pure as any other language in the country. The town were closed together with a good road network connecting them. It took the CMS authority in London some nine months to make up their mind for Dennis to be released for the assignment. In the interim, by November of the same year (1905), Bishop Tugwell, Mr. Onyeabo and some others arrived in Owerri again through Oguta. They were again received by Mr. Douglas. When it was time to select a missionary Centre, Owerri, Egbu and Nekede were considered. Owerri was ruled out because of the presence of soldiers there. Nekede was also ruled out because it was far too south, occupied by Delta Pastorate Church and had the presence of soldiers as well. Egbu was chosen as the ideal place for the CMS Centre of Operation[84].

iii. Historical Overview on Anglican Diocese of Egbu

In 1907, through the help of the church missionary society a temporary church house was built at Egbu. They kept experiencing a large turnout of people for the church activities. Little did they know that this temporary building will turn out to be a Cathedral. In the early 1930's the need to build a permanent church being felt among the congregation. This will replace the temporary church which is a mud and thatch structure. Surveyor Williams, a Sierra-Leonian who lived in Umuodu village in Owerri. Brought the plan for the new building from Egypt for adoption by the building committee. It was adopted on the recommendation of the Rev. A.C. Onyeabo. The contract was signed in 1933 and the foundation laying work started. The building was stopped around 1943 because of unfaithfulness from the part of the contractor. In 1948, the building work resumed not on contract again but now on direct labour. The building was completed in 1955, and was dedicated on 24th of December, by Right Reverend Patterson Cecil, J. Patterson Bishop on the Niger, assisted by Rt. Rev. Dennis B. Hall and Rt. Rev. S.N. Nkemema. The church is All Saints Parish[85].

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On the 27th January,1959, the Rt. Rev. Georges Eyles Irwin Cockin (who was consecrated at Onitsha two days earlier, on the Day of Feast of St. Paul) as the Bishop of the New Diocese of Owerri was enthroned in the Parish Church of All Saints Egbu, which now became his Cathedral. After the enthronement service of the Bishop, All Saints Egbu Parish now became the Cathedral Church of the Diocese of Owerri from 8th February, 1959. During the civil war (1966 - 1970) Bishop Cockin went back home to England during the heat of the war. The Venerable B.C. Nwankiti was consecrated on St. Mark's Day (April 25th, 1968), as the second Lord Bishop of Owerri with effect from 1st January, 1971. The Anglican Diocese of Owerri was covering the whole of Imo State as of then. On the 21st of June, 1975, the Diocesan Board of the Anglican Diocese of Owerri moved a motion to build another Cathedral that will be adequate enough in size for the Diocese, since the Diocese is large. A committee was set up for this purpose. The main purpose of this new Cathedral project was to relocate the Cathedral at Egbu to Owerri axis, this was a serious hidden agenda. There were some misunderstandings between the committee in search for the land and the Egbu people. On the 7th March, 1978, the Diocesan Board issued a letter announcing that the Ugwu Orji land have been approved for the new Cathedral project. And this letter was meant to frustrate the Egbu community. The Egbu community on the 24th August, 1978, sent a delegation to the Provost, and Church commit e asking the Anglican Mission of Owerri to pull out of Egbu to Ugwu Orjiby 1st October, 1978. By 1st October 1978, the Egbu community started boycotting church services and other mission activities. The Egbu community started worshiping at Eze Ochoronma III. There was also a period of press battle between the two parties. On the 22nd April, 1979, the Cathedral Church of the All Saints was sealed off by the Egbu Community, following a synod resolution on 10th February, 1979; that the new Cathedral will be erected at the Ugwu Orji site in the Owerri Capital Territory. The Egbu community voiced out that since the Diocese of Owerri had plans for another Cathedral at Owerri site then it will be good if they started their own worship over there and leave their community alone[86].

Around the middle of January 1996, a Bishop was elected for the proposed Diocese of Egbu. Rev. Canon Emmanuel Uchechukwu Iheagwam, a Professor of Zoology. He was consecrated at All Saints Cathedral, Abuja, on the 11th of February, 1996. On the 15th, he was enthroned at the Cathedral Church of All Saints, Egbu by the Most Rev. (Dr) J.A. Adetiloye, the Archbishop, Primate and Metropolitan of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), and also inaugurated the Diocese of Egbu at the same ceremony. The Rt. Rev. Iheagwam thus became: by Divine Grace, the first Lord Bishop of Egbu. The Diocese of Egbu comprises the parishes of Amala, Awaka, Egbu, Emeabiam, Emii, Ihiagwa, Nekede, Ngor and Okpala, Amato, Ntu, Obiangwu, Obibi-Ezena and Umudekwune. Presently, the Bishop of Egbu is; The Rt. Rev. Godfrey Enyinnaya Okoroafor[87].

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Anglican Diocese of Egbu Perception on Herbal Medicine

Anglican Diocese of Egbu Perception on Herbal Medicine

The Lord Bishop of Egbu Diocese, Rt. Revd. Geoffrey Enyinnaya Okoroafor; acknowledges that herbs were created by God for man both for medicinal purpose and for meat both to man and animals. He stated that the Anglican Church is a bible believing church and the scriptures is one of the tripod that make up the Anglican Church: He firmly believes in what is written in Genesis 1:11-12,29-30.He encourage the church not to go against what comes from God who is the creator. He mentioned a herb by name 'akurumashotop' (lemon grass), which is boiled and given to person with 'iba' (malaria) to drink. This has been effective till date and he is a witness to it. He believes herbs are medicinal in nature. Concerning herbal practitioners, they are variety; those that works on broken bones, and those that serve as birth attendants (in the diocese they have one of the parishioners who is into it and his work is very effective). Some are using diabolical powers in carrying out their activities, some makes incantation and pour libation as they carry out their services, while there are those who do their services without attaching anything to it. Truly herbal medicine is cheaper than going to hospital but depending on what manner of illness the patient is suffering from. He also noted, with modernization many people prefer going to the hospitals, but that does not mean there are not those who totally depend on herbs for curative purpose. He also said that there are some illnesses which is advised to be treated with herbal medicine, because when the victims are taken to the hospital their condition gets worsen. He gave an example 'ochiere' (swollen leg with pores). Church members should be re-orientated about the importance of herbal medicine and not wait to Ven. Morrison Nwoke, archdeacon of Emi archdeaconry; he grew up with his grandmother, who had over time given him herbal medicine. The grandmother has a garden where she had planted some herbal medicine which she uses to take care of her children and neighbours who fail ill, or needed herbs for one condition or the other. He believes herbs comes from God according to Genesis 1:11-12,29-30. And that God over time have given gift to humans who are knowledgeable in the use of herbs for curative purpose, which his grandmother is among such. For those who don't have money to go to house and those that the hospital/healthcare centre is far from can use herbal medicine for cures. But when an illness proves stubborn to herbs, then there is need to quickly rush such a person to a nearby hospital, clinic or healthcare centre. Herbs are created by God so Christians should be free to make use of what the heavenly father created. And those who are not knowledgeable about herbs should feel free and ask question from those who have the knowledge. The church encouraging people to use herb is not yet a fundamental issue in the church, so am not sure if the church have taken cognizance of these. May be the church fathers should look into and once in a while encourage the priest to teach on the subject matter. Training programs can be organized for priest on the importance of herbs and its relevance in the modern society

Ven. Duke Okere, Vicar St. Matthew Anglican Church Ohekelem; believes herbs were created by God and believes in the healing power in herbs, as he has seen people who got cured from their illness through herbal medicine. Affirms there are different kinds of herbal practitioners and everyone have their source of inspiration in what they are doing. He said, some worked as apprentice with herbal practitioners to learn the work, some are gifted from their family lineage (inherited), while others are inspired from 'chi'. Herbal medicine is encouraged in the church as it is from God. Some parishioners[88] are knowledgeable about herbs, for such they don't need assistance from anyone to use herbs when it is needed. Herbs is cheaper than going to hospital. With the advent of technology and modernization, herbs cannot cure all illness, in my own opinion, because some illness need be diagnosed through modern technology to ascertain what is really wrong with the patient, which is not obtainable with herbal practitioners. Training programs and orientation program via seminars and conferences.

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Ven. Marshall Ajoku, archdeacon of Naze Archdeaonry; believes in herbal medicine and believes in their potency. He drinks herbs regularly. I do not wait to fall ill before taking herbs. God created herbs and have given the knowledge of it to the sons of men. He has garden where he planted medicinal herbs. Herbs are good for illness as they help to purge the body system by flushing out any form of illness. There are herbs in the environment around where I live, but you need to have knowledge of the herbs before using them. The church is not doing much in encouraging the use of herbs to their parishioners. There is need for sensitization on the subject matter of herbal medicine. Training program can be organized where importance of herbs and its relevance can be discussed.

Ven. Chidi Amadi, archdeacon of Egbu archdeaconry; believes in herbal medicines and affirms they are from God. There are different kind of herbal practitioners. Some of them are gifted from God, why some of them carry out rituals regularly to help them in carrying out their services. Herbs can also be used for preventive purpose. It can be used as part of human diet, with this illness is quietly driven away from someone life. We should not wait until we fall ill before using herbs. Herbs grow around the environment we live and they are easily accessible, but there is need to have knowledge in the herbs themselves. Yes, herbal medicine are cheaper than going to the hospital in my opinion. The church has not discouraged the use of herbal medicine, but have not made it a subject of discussion or as a major issue to be looked into. Consciously, parishioners use herbal medicine and none of them can come forward pointing to any priest who is speaking against herbs, even the 'olugbu' (bitter leaf) taken as meal is also medicinal. With the advent of technology, herbal medicine can only cure related illness, while some illness needs technological gadgets to diagnose the illness. Trainings should be organized on the subject matter.

Ven. Nathan Amaechi, archdeacon of Awaka archdeaconry; God created in herbs. Herbs are medicinal in nature. Truly some herbal practitioners are gifted from God while some make rituals and incantations during the use of herbs for curative purpose. Herbs are everywhere around us. But you need to know the herbs that are for medicinal purpose. Herbal medicine is cheaper than going to hospital. The church will need to do more on this subject matter. The church has so many issues facing her, as such taking the matter of herbal medicine as a serious matter may take time, until training programs and seminars are organized to enlighten the church on the importance and relevance of medicine.

Ven. Ugochukwu Ekeada, archdeacon of Okpala archdeaconry; God created herbs and herbs are medicinal in nature. When a woman is delivered of her baby, she is given 'miri oku' (medicinal drink for a woman who is just delivered of baby), the drink cleanses her inner part of her body, and restoring both strength and energy to the woman. Herbal practitioners are of different kinds, we have those that attend to those with mental issues ('dibia ara'), the birth attendants ('dibia omumu'), those that attend to person with broken bones (dibia okpukpu), diviners (dibia afa), and those that cures with herbs (dibia mgborogwu). Herbs can be used as medicine when someone is sick. Herbs are gotten in the bush, forest, garden and environments. Herbal medicine is cheaper than orthodox medicine. The church do encourage members to use herbal medicine since it is created by God. Herbal medicine can cure all manners of illness. Through training programs, seminars, conferences and orientation program.

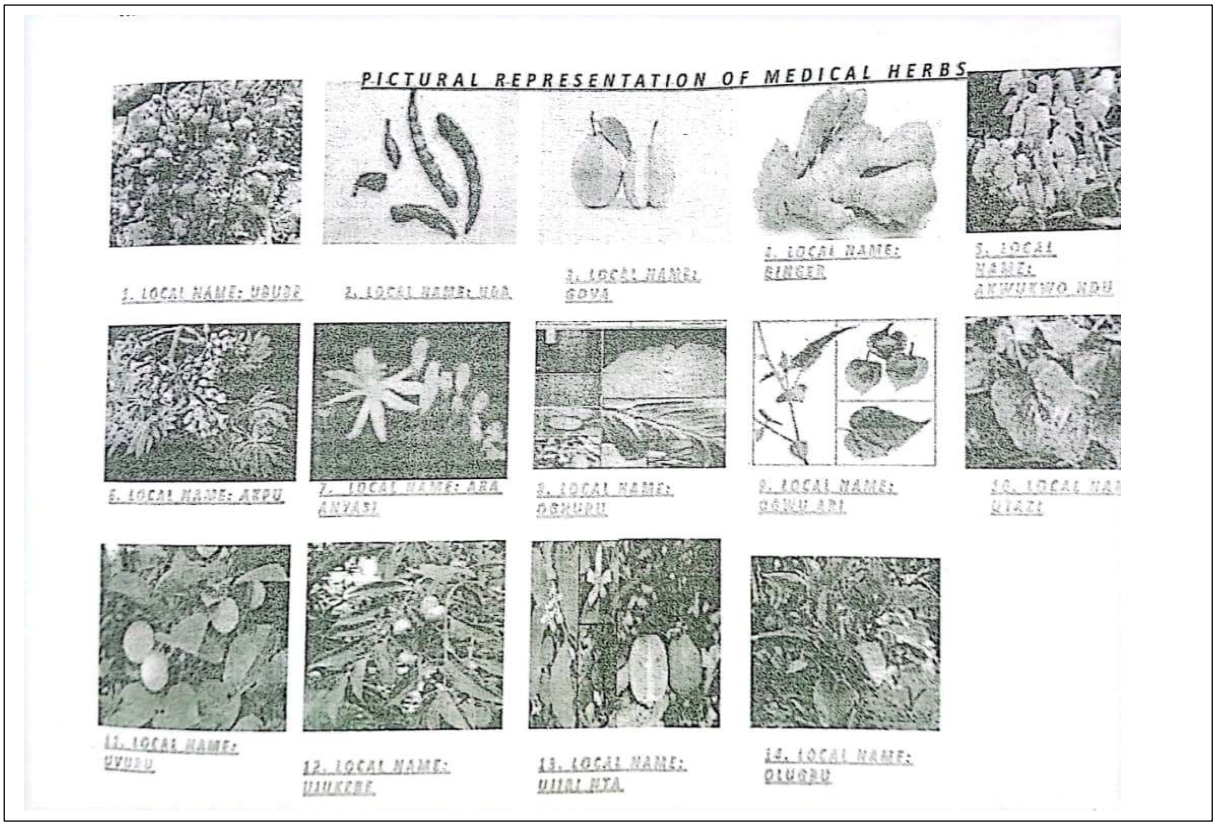
Revd. Hycinth Njoku, retired clergy of St. Matthew Anglican Church Ohekelem; God created herbs according to Genesis 1:11-12, 29-30. There are different kinds of herbal practitioners. Some are gifted from God, while some are not. Herbs can also be used as preventive measures and can be used as part of human diets. Herbs are gotten from the environment we live. Herbal medicine is cheaper than orthodox medicine. The church encourages the use of herbal medicine but we need to do more. Herbal medicine can cure any illness. Orientation program should be organized to teach and train people on herbal medicine.

Mr. John Nwauzor Onyemachi, engineer in Egbu Diocese; God created herbs. And herbs are very medicinal. He testified he was having a tooth problem, he was advised to start using a medicinal powdered toothpaste for his teeth cleaning, after a while the tooth ache was gone, now he uses his to chew meat and bones which he could not do before. There are different kind of herbal practitioners. Herbal medicine should be used effectively and when a patient feels he is not getting the result he needs, then he can proceed to the hospital. Herbal medicine is cheaper than going to the hospital. The church

needs to do more in the aspect of encouraging parishioners to use herbal medicine. Some churches even announce that herbal medicine is evil and satanic, warning their members to stay away from it. Herbal medicine cures illness but not all illness. Orientation and enlightenment programs should be organized to sensitize the church on the importance of herbal medicine.

Mrs. Chinyere Ujunwa, Msc. Geography from Umuokoro in Egbu Diocese; believes that God created herbs and believes that herbs are medicinal. Tells of her experience when she was growing up how her mother prepares lemon grass, with the mixture of other herbs for her and her siblings every weekend. Truly with this exercise you can hardly find any one falling ill in the house. She is married with children and also prepares the same herb for her children once in a while, along with the mixture of bitter leaf and scent leaf, which she believes reduces high sugar level in the body. Herbal practitioners are of different kind and serve different purposes. With the advent of orthodox medicine and technology, we can solely rely on herbs even though they are highly medicinal. There is need to regular go to the hospital for medical checkup. Herbs are gotten from garden and I have one, also can be gotten from the environment where we live. Herbal medicine is cheaper than going to hospital, but when a person is faced with a stubborn illness let the person go to hospital for proper checkup. The church will need to improve this, because you can hardly see any church where this is discussed as a subject matter, except for the churches that openly condemns herbal medicine. Periodically churches should organize orientation program where herbal medicine should be the subject of discuss.

iv. Medicinal plants



V. Local name: 'Ububе' **Botanical Name**: *'Alchornea cordifolua'*

Family: Eophorbiaceae **Life:** Shrub
Parts used: Leaves, Twigs

Ethno-botanical uses: Leaves boiled and used to bath children with smallpox. Leaves also used as fodder for goats. Twigs also used as chewing stick to treat toothache.

Local name: 'Uda' **Botanical Name:** *Xylopia aethiopica*

Family: Annonaceae **Life Form:** Tree
Parts Used: Fruits,

Ethno-botanical uses: Fruits used in combination with piper nigrum tetrepleura tetraptera, capiscum frutescens to prepare concoction for women who newly delivered believed to help in uterus contraction. Used to treat asthma, stomach-aches and rheumatism.

Local name: Gova **Botanical name*:*** *Psidium guajava*

FAMILY: Myrtaceae **Life form:** Tree **parts used:** Leaves, Fruits and stem

Ethno botanical uses: Matured fruits edible, stem used as chewing stick. Leaves boiled with cymbopogon citrus aurantifolia (sliced fruits and leaves) carcica pataya, and aziradchita indica leaves. Hot preparation put in a cup and drank also poured into basin and patient covered with a thick cloth over the steam to sweat for malaria treatment. The preparation is boiled and used to bath the following morning and evening for four days. Fresh leaves also chewed to stop stooling. It is used to treat inflammation, diabetes, hypertension, wounds, pain relief.

Local name: Ginger
Botanical name*:* *Zingiber officinale*

Family: Zingiberaceae **Life form:** Herbs **Parts used:** Whole

Ethno botanical uses To cure a migraine, scraped and crush, place on eyelids, and face open eye several times and close again to feel the impact. Used to treat arthritis or nausea disorders.

. **Loical name***: 'Akwukwo ndu'* Botanical name: *Bryophyllum pinnatum*

Family: Uglyhuridthis or Crassulaceae **Life form:** Herb **Parts used:** Leaves

ETHNO-BOTANICAL USES: Squeeze juice from heated leaves mixed with talc powder for the healing of navels in infants. Leaves crushed and applied on wounds for healing.

Local name; 'Akpu'
Botanical: Ceiba pentandra

Family: Bombacaceae **Life form.** Tree
Parts used: Leaves and stem

Ethno botanical uses: Fresh leaves and vegetable barks boiled in water and for diabetes and erectile dysfunction treatments. The silk is used in some medical preparations. Matured stem used as timber for construction.

. **Local name**: *'Ara anyasi'* Botanical name**:** *Glyphaea* brevis

Family: Titiaceae **Life form:** Shrub **Parts used:** Stem, bark, and leaves

Ethno botanical uses: Steam used as cane during masquerading during the festival. Barks scraped and boiled with leaves for fever, venereal diseases and tooth treatments.

Local name; 'Oghuru' **Botanical nam,e**: *Cleistopholis patens*

Family: Annonaceae **Life form:** Tree
Parts used: Bark

Ethno botanical uses: Leaves combined with uvuria chamae for malaria treatment or stem bark boiled in water with yam and taken for quick relief of malaria.

Local name '*Ogwu* ari' **Botanical use**: *Physalis angulate* **FAMILY**: Solanaceae **Life form:** Shrub **Parts used:** Leaves and bark

Ethno-botanical uses: Leaves applied to fresh cuts to stop bleeding. Leaf decoction used to treat a cough, and also taken for malaria. Leaves squeezed and taken to reduce blood sugar, recommended for diabetics.

Local name: '*Utazi'* **Botanical name:** *gongronema latifolium* **FAMILY**: asclepiadaceae **Life form:** climber **parts used:** leaves

Ethno botanical uses-: leaves used as vegetables for preparation of pepper soup, yam stew, used together with other spices for postpartum women and treatment of stomach aches

Local name: *'Uvuru'*
Botanical name: *Nauclea latifola*

Family: Rubiceae **Life form:** Shrub **parts used:** Fruits, roots and bark

Ethno-botanical uses. Roots and stem bark boiled with potash for venereal disease treatment. Leaves boiled with other leaves for malaria treatment. Leaves also used as fodder for goat.

. **Local name**: '*Ujukere'*
Botanical name: *spondias mombin linn*

Family: anarcardiaceae **Life form:** Tree **Parts used:** Leaves, Fruits, Bark

Ethno botanical uses-: stems used in fence making, ripe yellow fruits edible leaves used as fodder for goats but not newly pregnant females, causes abortion, also used to remove placenta after delivery, bark used for the treatment of venereal diseases, dysentery and diarrhoea.

. **Local name**: 'Ujiri nta' **Botanical use**: *Citrus aurantifolia*

Family: Rutaceae **Life form:** Tree **Parts used:** Leaves, Fruits and stem

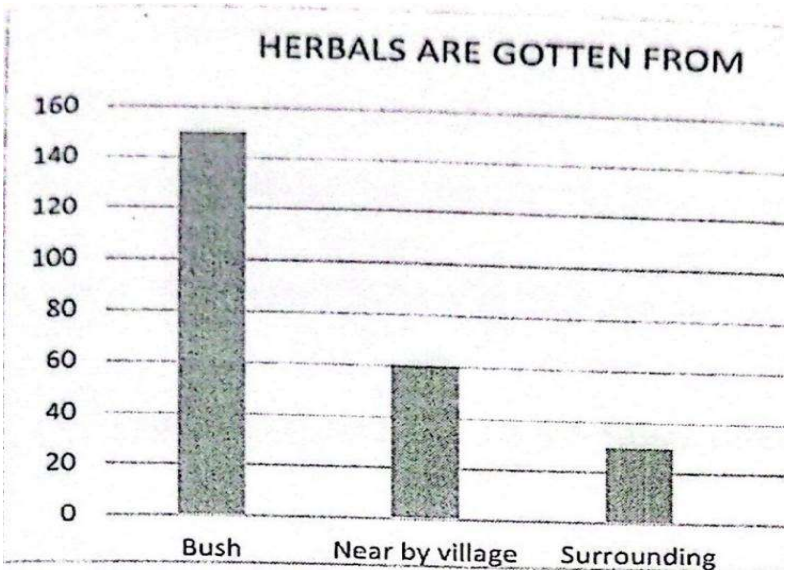
Ethnobo -:botanical uses Fruit highly medicinal added to various medical preparations. Used for stomach upset clean bitter tongue and mouth especially during a high fever. Fruits cut into pieces and added mixed in boiled water with LIPTON teabags. For fever treatment. Fruits cut and used to wash male organ after sex to prevent venereal disease. Leaves and twigs also cut and used for chewing stick.

. **Local name**: '*Olugbu*'
Botanical user: *vernonia amygdalina*

Family: compositae **Life form:** shrub **Parts used:** Leaves, barks,

Ethno-Botanical uses: leaves applied to fresh cuts to stop bleeding. Leaf decoction used to treat a cough, and also taken for malaria. Leaves squeezed taken to reduce blood sugar, recommended for diabetics[89].

Herbals Are Gotten From



Field Survey

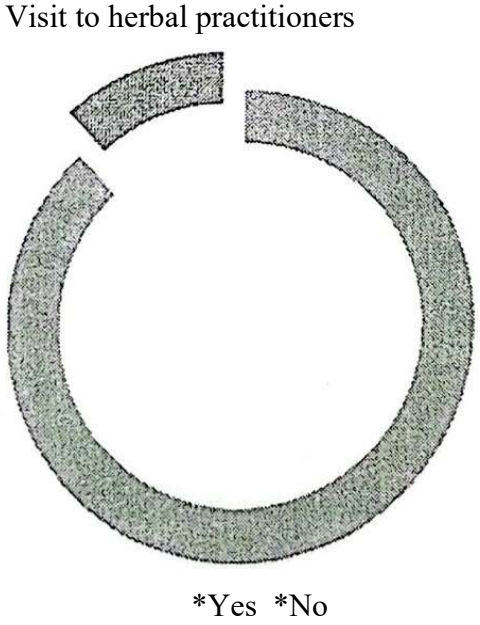
Visit to the Herbal Practitioner

220(88%) respondent accepted they visit the herbal practitioner and 30(12%) respondent don't visit the herbal practitioner.

[17] Ugwu, V. *E. Traditional Healthcare in Nsukka: An Ethnographical Approach.* Unpublished B.A. Project. Department of Archaeology. University of Nigeria, Nsukka. World Health Organization (1978)"The *Promotion and Development* of *Traditional Medicine".* Technical Report Series. Geneva ,17. 1998.24

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Visit to the Herbal Practitioner

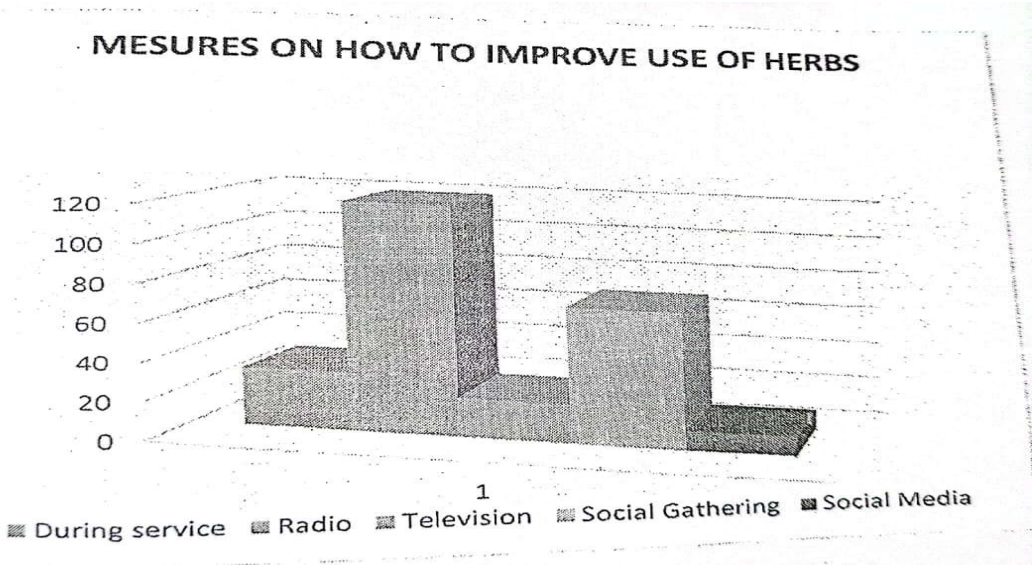


Field Survey

Measure on how to Improve the use of Herbs

120 (48%) respondents believe through the use of Radio people will be encourage on herbal use 70(28%) believe through social gathering, 30(12%) during church service, 20(8%) through television advert and 10(4%) through social media.

Measure on how to improve the use of herbs



Source; field survey 2019

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THE ANALYSIS OF THE INCIDENTS OF ELECTORAL MALPRACTICES IN THE 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN OYO STATE

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KEYWORDS
Electoral malpractice, BVAS, voter trust, electoral reforms, Oyo State, 2023 elections

ABSTRACT
Conducted amidst notable electoral reforms and technological advancements especially the Electoral Act 2022 and the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) the 2023 presidential election in Oyo State, Nigeria, though improved, was tainted by rampant electoral frauds involving vote buying, ballot box theft, voter intimidation, and technological malfunctions. This paper investigates the nature and forms of these malpractices, evaluates how well electoral reforms serve to regulate them, and studies their influence on voter confidence, participation, and the legal validity and acceptability of the election result. Using Institutional Theory, the paper looks at how institutional shortcomings drove ongoing electoral fraud by means of a qualitative research approach based on secondary sources including reports, media analysis, and academic publications. The findings indicate that while legal and technological innovations were commendable, their implementation was affected by systemic inefficiencies, inadequate training, and poor enforcement strategies. The study concludes with recommendations intended to enhance electoral integrity, institutional responsibility, and democratic government in Nigeria.

Introduction

Persistent challenges have from time past characterised Nigeria's electoral system, including electoral frauds such vote buying, ballot box theft, and result tampering. Often, these problems have called into question the legitimacy of elections and damaged people's confidence in the democratic system. The 2023 presidential election in Oyo State was no exception, as reports of irregularities and malpractices surfaced during and after the electoral process.

Oyo State, located in the southwestern region of Nigeria, has a diverse political landscape with

a history of competitive elections. In the 2019 general elections, the state witnessed a significant shift in political power, with the People's Democratic Party (PDP) gaining prominence. However, the 2023 presidential election saw the All Progressives Congress (APC) reclaiming dominance, as its candidate, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, secured victory in the state. According to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Tinubu garnered 449,884 votes, defeating his closest rivals, Atiku Abubakar of the PDP and Peter Obi of the Labour Party, who received 182,977 and 99,110 votes respectively (Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), 2023).

Various reports indicated cases of electoral fraud during the election despite the official results. For instance, in Ibadan Southeast Local Government Area, there were claims of overvoting in certain polling units and the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) was said not to have been used in some locations. Such events called into question the integrity of the electoral process and the efficacy of technological interventions such as BVAS in reducing electoral fraud (Vanguard News. 2024).

During the 2023 elections in Oyo State, the spread of false election results also presented notable difficulties. Warning people not to share unofficial election results on social media, the Oyo State Police Command underlined that such behaviour could provoke violence and compromise public order. This emphasises the need for effective communication tools to offset misleading stories and the part misinformation plays in aggravating electoral conflicts (Daily Post Nigeria. 2023).

INEC took various steps meant to improve the legitimacy of the electoral system in reaction to these difficulties. The commission increased the number of polling units in Oyo State to 6,390 and registered an additional 340,938 voters to improve voter access and reduce overcrowding. Despite these efforts, the reported irregularities underscore the persistent issues affecting Nigeria's electoral system and the need for comprehensive reforms to address them (The Nation Newspaper, 2022).

The paper focused on the following objectives; to find and examine the particular types of electoral fraud that took place during the 2023 presidential election in Oyo State. To investigate how well electoral reforms and technological innovations—e.g., BVAS—help to reduce electoral malpractices in Oyo State. And to evaluate how electoral malpractices influence voter confidence, participation, and the general legitimacy of the 2023 presidential election in Oyo State.

Statement of the Problem

Malpractice in elections continues to be a major problem in Nigeria's democratic process, compromising the integrity of elections and weakening public confidence in democratic institutions. Reports of vote-buying, voter intimidation, and the circulation of false election results during the 2023 presidential election in Oyo State illustrated these problems. For example, the Oyo State Police Command cautioned people against spreading unverified election results on social media, stressing the possibility of violence and disturbance of public order caused by false information (Pulse Nigeria, 2023).

Although national-level studies have shown electoral anomalies all around Nigeria during the 2023 elections (Mene, 2024), there is an obvious gap in the literature on localised studies concentrating particularly on Oyo State. A thorough knowledge of the particular socio-political dynamics and elements influencing electoral malpractices in the state is hampered by this lack of localised research. Moreover, current studies frequently ignore the state-level electoral fraud mitigation potential of technological interventions like the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS).

Filling this gap is essential for creating focused plans to fight electoral malpractices in Oyo State. Focussing on the 2023 presidential election in Oyo State, this paper offers insightful analysis of the specific problems encountered throughout the electoral process and guide the creation of localised interventions to improve the integrity of next elections.

Conceptual Clarification

Deliberate acts that skew the electoral process define electoral malpractice, hence compromising its fairness and integrity. Among these include voter intimidation, ballot box snatching, result fabrication, result falsification, and vote-buying. Such malpractices undermine public confidence in democratic institutions and impede the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria (Wali, 2024).

Technological innovations like the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) were introduced by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to improve election integrity. The efficacy of these technologies in reducing electoral fraud, however, has been hampered by issues including technical glitches and inadequate competence among electoral officials (Nachanuya & Joseph, 2024).

Empirical studies have highlighted the prevalence and impact of electoral malpractices in Nigeria: Mene (2024) conducted a quantitative study across six Nigerian states, revealing that political influence, security challenges, media bias, and perceived corruption significantly contributed to electoral irregularities during the 2023 general elections. The study emphasized the pertinence of stringent regulatory frameworks to enhance electoral transparency.

Wali (2024) likewise looked at Nigeria's election-related legal frameworks, finding ongoing problems including vote-buying, voter intimidation, and judicial inefficiencies eroding electoral integrity. The report recommended improving judicial procedures and increasing INEC's operational capability.

Ejiofor et al. (2024) examined the reasons and consequences of electoral fraud in Nigeria from 2015 to 2023. Major causes of electoral fraud, according to the report, were poverty, greed, ignorance, corruption, and lack of patriotism. It also underlined the detrimental effects of such malpractices on Nigeria's growth and suggested actions like giving INEC complete autonomy and setting up electoral mobile courts for quick prosecution of violators.

Several theoretical frameworks provide insights into the phenomenon of electoral malpractices in Nigeria: Utilitarianism Theory posits that actions are right if they promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Applying this to electoral practices, it suggests that electoral actors should prioritize the collective well-being over personal gains. The commonness of election malpractices, therefore, points to a departure from utilitarian values since actions motivated by personal or political objectives can cause great societal damage (Ejiofor et al., 2024).

From the Marxist Theory of the State viewpoint, the ruling class uses state institutions to preserve its power, hence using the state as a tool of class dominance. In the Nigerian setting, this theory clarifies how political elites use electoral procedures, sometimes illegally, to sustain their power (Ovuoh & Okafor, 2021).

Radical Political Economy Framework**:** Proposed by scholars like Claude Ake, this framework suggests that the high value placed on political office in Nigeria lead to intense competition and, consequently, electoral malpractices. The state's inability to mediate political conflicts due to internal factionalism exacerbates this issue, turning elections into zero-sum games where the winner takes all (Ikpe, 2015).

The literature reveals that electoral malpractices in Nigeria are driven by a combination of socio-economic factors, institutional weaknesses, and the high premium placed on political power. While technological and legal reforms have been introduced to address these challenges, their effectiveness is limited by systemic issues such as corruption, inadequate enforcement mechanisms, and political interference. A comprehensive approach that includes strengthening institutions, enhancing civic education, and promoting a culture of accountability is essential to mitigate electoral malpractices and foster democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Methodology

It is a qualitative study based on secondary data. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for exploring complex social phenomena, such as electoral misconduct, in their natural contexts (Creswell, 2014). By focusing on in-depth analysis, this approach allows for a richer understanding of the underlying factors, stakeholders' perceptions, and institutional weaknesses that contributed to electoral irregularities in the state.

A descriptive and interpretive research design is employed to provide a detailed account of the types, causes, and implications of electoral malpractices observed during the 2023 presidential election. This design facilitates the exploration of patterns in political behaviour and institutional responses, particularly the effectiveness of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and other electoral reforms implemented by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The study relies exclusively on secondary sources of data. These include: Official election reports from INEC. Academic journal articles and peer-reviewed publications. Election observer reports (e.g., European Union Election Observation Mission, YIAGA Africa). News reports from credible media outlets such as *The Guardian Nigeria*, *Vanguard*, and *Premium Times*, and Legal documents and press statements from relevant government agencies.

Documents were selected based on relevance, credibility, and publication date, with a focus on materials produced between 2022 and 2024. The data was analysed using thematic content analysis**,** which involves identifying, coding, and interpreting patterns and themes related to electoral malpractice (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method enables the extraction of insights about systemic issues, electoral behaviours, and institutional challenges.

Theoretical Framework

Particularly for the 2023 presidential election in Oyo State, Institutional Theory offers a useful tool for examining the ongoing electoral malpractices in Nigeria. At its heart, Institutional Theory argues that formal rules, norms, and procedures establish institutions that shape the behaviour of actors within a system and affect results by means of established practices and expectations (Scott, 2014).

In the context of Nigeria, institutions such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the judiciary, and security agencies are pivotal in shaping the electoral landscape. These institutions are tasked with ensuring free, fair, and credible elections. However, Institutional Theory highlights that when institutional rules are weak, inconsistently applied, or influenced by political interests, they can foster environments conducive to malpractice (North, 1990).

Despite the introduction of reforms—such as the Electoral Act 2022 and the deployment of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS)—institutional weaknesses persist. Reports from the 2023 presidential election in Oyo State documented instances of vote-buying, delays in BVAS deployment, and allegations of partiality by electoral officials (YIAGA Africa, 2023). These lapses reflect not just technological or procedural failures, but a deeper institutional problem where formal rules are undermined by informal practices and political manipulation.

Institutional theory also introduces the concept of isomorphism, which refers to the tendency of institutions to conform to norms and behaviours prevalent in their environment to gain legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In the Nigerian context, political actors often conform to informal rules such as bribery or coercion—to remain competitive in elections, especially when such behaviours are normalized and go unpunished. This creates a cycle where electoral malpractice becomes institutionalized and self-reinforcing.

The theory further explains how institutional voids—the absence or weakness of mechanisms that ensure compliance and accountability—allow for malpractices to flourish. In Oyo State, the failure to swiftly prosecute electoral offenders and enforce legal consequences contributes to a culture of impunity. This institutional gap undermines democratic norms and reduces public trust in the electoral process (Wali, 2024).

Applying institutional theory underscores that technical reforms alone are insufficient. There must be strengthening of institutional capacity, autonomy, and integrity. For example:

i. INEC must not only have the legal authority but also the operational independence to enforce electoral laws.

ii. Electoral tribunals must be insulated and protected from political influence to adjudicate disputes fairly.

iii. Civic institutions should be empowered to monitor elections and demand accountability.

By reinforcing institutional norms and ensuring consistent application of rules, it is possible to disrupt the cycle of malpractice and promote a culture of democratic integrity.

Forms of electoral malpractices that occurred during the 2023 presidential election in Oyo State

Several kinds of electoral misconduct that challenged the integrity of the electoral process plagued the 2023 presidential election in Oyo State, Nigeria. These malpractices not only

affected the fairness of the election but also damaged public confidence in democratic institutions.

1. Ballot Box Snatching and Electoral Violence

Ballot box snatching was a significant issue during the election. In Ogbomosho South Local Government Area, heavily armed thugs invaded polling units, snatching already thumb-printed ballot papers and disrupting the voting process. Former Governor Senator Rashidi Ladoja reported similar incidents in areas such as Iwo Road, Aperin, and Oja Igbo, attributing these occurrences to inadequate security presence (Ripples Nigeria. 2023, March 20).

The Oyo State Police Command confirmed the arrest of 18 individuals involved in electoral offences, including ballot box snatching and related violence. These arrests were accompanied by the recovery of seven firearms and 30 live cartridges, indicating the severity of the electoral violence (Blueprint Newspapers. 2023, March 15).

2. Vote Buying and Voter Inducement

Vote buying was another prevalent malpractice during the election. Although specific incidents in Oyo State were not detailed in the available reports, the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) arrested individuals in various states for vote buying, highlighting the widespread nature of this issue (Daily Post Nigeria.2023, February 26).

The prevalence of vote buying undermines the democratic process by influencing voters' choices through financial incentives, thereby compromising the principle of free and fair elections.

3. Dissemination of Fake Election Results

The circulation of fake election results on social media platforms posed a significant challenge during the election. The Oyo State Police Command warned residents against spreading unverified results, noting that such actions led to tensions and attempted attacks on polling units. Law enforcement agencies had to intervene to prevent potential violence resulting from the dissemination of false information (Daily Post Nigeria. 2023, February 25).

The 2023 presidential election in Oyo State was significantly affected by electoral malpractices, including ballot box snatching, vote buying, and the spread of fake election results. These problems underline the necessity of thorough electoral reforms, improved security policies, and greater public knowledge to guarantee the integrity of coming elections.

The effectiveness of electoral reforms and technological innovations in curbing electoral malpractices in Oyo State

Primarily because of the use of technology and legislative reforms meant to improve the integrity of the electoral process, the 2023 presidential election was a notable turning point in Nigeria's electoral past. Key to these initiatives were the implementation of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the passage of the Electoral Act 2022. This study looks at how well these policies reduce electoral fraud in the state.

1. Implementation of BVAS in Oyo State

Prior to the general elections, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) conducted mock accreditation exercises across Oyo State to assess the functionality of the BVAS devices. The Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), Dr. Adeniran Tella, affirmed the success of these exercises, describing BVAS as a "game changer" for the upcoming elections. The devices were lauded for their efficiency in authenticating and verifying voters, as well as uploading accreditation data, thereby enhancing transparency and reducing the likelihood of electoral fraud (Voice of Nigeria, 2023).

2. Impact of the Electoral Act 2022

The Electoral Act 2022 introduced several provisions aimed at strengthening the electoral process. Notably, it mandated the use of electronic devices, such as BVAS, for voter accreditation and result transmission. Additionally, the Act provided clearer definitions for electoral offenses, including overvoting, and stipulated that any polling unit where the number of votes cast exceeds the number of accredited voters would have its results cancelled. These provisions were instrumental in promoting accountability and deterring malpractice (S.P.A. Ajibade & Co, 2022).

3. Challenges and Limitations

Despite the advancements, the deployment of BVAS was not without challenges. Reports indicated instances of device malfunctioning, including failures to start and battery issues, which disrupted the accreditation process in some polling units. Furthermore, discrepancies between the voter register in the BVAS and the printed voter register were observed, leading to confusion and delays (The Cable, 2023).

Moreover, the failure of INEC's Result Viewing Portal (IReV) to function optimally on election day raised concerns about the transparency of the result collation process. The Commonwealth Observer Group noted that the lack of adequate testing and limited training of polling staff contributed to these technological shortcomings, thereby affecting the overall credibility of the elections (Biometric Update, 2024).

4. Incidences of Electoral Malpractices

Despite the technological and legislative reforms, traditional forms of electoral malpractice persisted. Instances of vote buying were reported, with observers noting the distribution of money and food items to influence voters' choices. Additionally, there were cases of ballot box snatching and voter intimidation, particularly in areas with limited security presence. These incidents underscored the need for comprehensive strategies that address both technological and human factors in the electoral process (Ripples Nigeria, 2023).

Indeed**,** the introduction of BVAS and the Electoral Act 2022 represented significant strides toward enhancing the integrity of Nigeria's electoral process. In Oyo State, these measures contributed to improved voter accreditation and a reduction in certain forms of electoral fraud. However, the challenges encountered, including technological malfunctions and persistent traditional malpractices, highlight the need for continuous improvements. Future efforts should focus on comprehensive training for electoral staff, robust testing of technological tools, and stringent enforcement of electoral laws to ensure free, fair, and credible elections.

The impact of electoral malpractices on voter trust, participation, and the overall legitimacy of the 2023 presidential election in Oyo State.

The 2023 presidential election in Oyo State, Nigeria, was marred by various electoral malpractices that significantly impacted voter trust, participation, and the overall legitimacy of the electoral process. These malpractices compromised the democratic values and called into question the reliability of the electoral system.

Impact on Voter Trust

Electoral malpractices eroded public confidence in the electoral process. The failure of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to transmit election results electronically in real-time, as promised, led to widespread scepticism about the transparency and fairness of the election. This breach of trust was highlighted by Laolu Akande, spokesperson for former Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, who stated that INEC's actions broke Nigerians' trust during the presidential poll (Pulse Nigeria. 2023, February 27).

Furthermore, the European Union (EU) observers reported that the shortcomings in law and electoral administration hindered the conduct of well-run and inclusive elections, damaging trust in INEC (Al Jazeera. 2023, June 29).

Impact on Voter Participation

The erosion of trust due to electoral malpractices contributed to a significant decline in voter turnout. Out of the total 93.47 million registered voters, only 24.9 million participated in the 2023 presidential and National Assembly elections, representing a 26.72% turnout—the lowest since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 (This Day Live. 2024, August 17).

In Oyo State, incidents of vote-buying, voter intimidation, and logistical challenges further discouraged voter participation. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) reported attempts to intimidate voters and INEC officials by party supporters and thugs, leading to disruptions in the voting process.

Impact on Electoral Legitimacy

These malpractices' cumulative impact raises questions about the validity of the presidential election in 2023. Citing widespread violence, rigging, and irregularities, opposition parties and civil society groups condemned the electoral procedure. The European Union observer mission said that operational failures and lack of

transparency undermined confidence in the process and called into question the right to vote. These problems resulted in legal disputes and demands for electoral reforms to restore the integrity of Nigeria's democratic system.

The 2023 presidential election in Oyo State highlighted significant challenges in Nigeria's electoral system. Electoral malpractices undermined voter trust, reduced participation, and questioned the legitimacy of the election outcomes. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive reforms, including strengthening electoral laws, enhancing transparency, and ensuring accountability to rebuild public confidence in the democratic process.

Conclusion

The 2023 presidential election in Oyo State, though conducted under the umbrella of significant reforms and technological innovations such as the Electoral Act 2022 and the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), was still fraught with notable electoral malpractices. These included ballot box snatching, vote buying, voter intimidation, and technological failures. While the introduction of BVAS enhanced voter accreditation and was intended to reduce fraud, the inability of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to fully deploy and manage this technology contributed to operational inefficiencies and loss of public trust.

The persistent occurrence of electoral misconduct undermined the principles of free and fair elections, significantly eroding voter trust, decreasing voter turnout, and compromising the legitimacy of the electoral outcome. Despite advancements in legal and technical frameworks, the lived experience of voters and observers indicated that substantial gaps remain in the implementation and enforcement of electoral reforms.

Recommendations

Strengthening INEC Capacity and Independence: There is a pressing need to enhance the operational and technical capacity of INEC. This includes regular training for electoral officials, efficient logistics management, and timely deployment of sensitive materials. Moreover, the independence of the commission should be reinforced to reduce political interference and ensure impartiality.

Improving Technological Infrastructure and Testing: While BVAS and IReV are promising tools, their reliability must be ensured through rigorous pre-election testing, continuous improvements, and provision of backup systems. Clear guidelines on the use and troubleshooting of these technologies should be established and widely disseminated.

Effective Prosecution of Electoral Offenders: The culture of impunity surrounding electoral offences must be broken. INEC, in collaboration with law enforcement agencies, should ensure the arrest, prosecution, and punishment of individuals involved in vote buying, ballot snatching, and violence to deter future misconduct.

Civic Education and Voter Sensitization: There should be sustained efforts to educate the electorate on their rights and the implications of electoral fraud. Civil society organizations and media houses should collaborate with the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to carry out voter sensitization campaigns, especially in rural and semi-urban communities.

Security Sector Reform and Electoral Protection: Electoral security must be prioritized. Security agencies should be better trained in non-partisan election monitoring and rapid response to incidents of violence and intimidation. Deployment should be strategic and based on intelligence reports about flashpoints.

Strengthening Legal and Institutional Frameworks: Existing legal frameworks should be reviewed to address new dimensions of electoral malpractice. Additionally, the Electoral Act should be strictly implemented, and loopholes that allow manipulation must be closed through legislative amendments.

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