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Article

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POWER-SHARING AND INSTITUTIONAL DESIGNS FOR STABILITY IN NIGERIAN STATE

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Abstract

Despite the adoption of various power-sharing mechanisms aimed at managing Nigeria's complex ethno-religious and regional diversity, the country continues to grapple with persistent political instability, violent conflicts, and deep-seated grievances among its constituent groups. Institutional frameworks such as federalism, the federal character principle, and the informal practice of zoning political offices were designed to promote inclusiveness, equitable distribution of resources, and a sense of belonging among Nigeria's diverse populations. It is against this backdrop that this study investigated the effectiveness of power-sharing mechanisms in fostering national integration and mitigating ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, a country marked by deep-seated ethnic, religious, and regional divisions. The research was guided by four specific objectives and four questions focusing on the historical rationale for power-sharing, the effectiveness of the Federal Character Principle, the impact of federalism and state creation, and the extent to which these mechanisms have addressed conflict and secessionist agitations. A descriptive survey design was adopted. The population included political officeholders, public servants, academics, and civil society actors. A total of 250 respondents were purposively and stratifiedly selected from the six geopolitical zones to ensure regional and group representation. Data were collected using a 60-item structured questionnaire titled "Institutional Power-Sharing Assessment Questionnaire (IPSAQ)" rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated by experts and pilot-tested in Kogi and Abia States, yielding a reliability index of 0.84. Questionnaires were administered physically and electronically over six weeks, and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics like means and standard deviations. The findings revealed that while power-sharing is historically justified—rooted in Nigeria's colonial legacy, civil war, and constitutional reforms—its practical impact remains limited. The Federal Character Principle provides symbolic inclusion but is undermined by corruption, weak enforcement, and perceptions of regional dominance. Similarly, federalism and state creation enhance minority representation but deepen inter-state inequality and

economic dependence. Power-sharing arrangements have had minimal success in resolving ethno-religious tensions and secessionist pressures, largely due to elite manipulation and failure to address underlying socio-economic grievances. The study concludes that while power-sharing has contributed to a degree of stability, it must be reformed and complemented by broader structural changes to foster genuine national cohesion.

Keywords: Power-sharing, Federal Character Principle, Federalism, National Integration, Rotational Presidency, Institutional Design

Introduction

Nigeria is a nation marked by extraordinary ethnic, religious, and regional heterogeneity. With over 250 ethnic groups and more than 500 languages, the country is often described as one of the most culturally diverse in the world (Suberu, 2001). The three dominant ethnic groups: the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Yoruba in the Southwest, and the Igbo in the Southeast have historically played central roles in national politics, shaping the country's federal structure and competing for control over the state apparatus. These ethnic blocs are often aligned with religious identities: the North is predominantly Muslim, the South largely Christian, and the Middle Belt a mix of both, creating a complex ethno-religious landscape (Mustapha, 2006). This diversity, while a potential source of strength, has often been a catalyst for division, especially when manipulated by political elites for partisan gain. From the colonial era to the present, Nigeria's political evolution has been characterized by contestation among ethnic groups over access to power and resources. During the colonial period, the British administration adopted an indirect rule system that reinforced ethnic and regional divisions, setting the stage for future fragmentation (Afigbo, 1989). At independence in 1960, Nigeria adopted a federal constitution aimed at balancing the interests of the major regions, but this arrangement soon collapsed under the weight of inter-ethnic rivalry and electoral violence.

The First Republic (1960–1966) was marred by political instability, rigged elections, and ethnic mistrust, culminating in the January 1966 military coup and a counter-coup in July of the same year. These events laid the foundation for the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), a secessionist conflict that cost over a million lives and further exposed the fragility of national unity (Nwolise, 2003). In the aftermath of the war, the federal government adopted the slogan "No victor, no vanquished" and introduced reconciliation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction policies. However, the fundamental structural imbalances that contributed to the conflict remained largely unaddressed. Over the decades, various regimes have introduced institutional frameworks intended to manage diversity and foster unity. One of the most notable of these is the federal character principle, enshrined in Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution, which mandates the equitable representation of the various ethnic and regional groups in public institutions and appointments (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Another is the state creation policy, which increased the number of states from 3 at independence to 36, theoretically to bring governance closer to the people and reduce ethnic tensions (Suberu, 2001).

Additionally, informal mechanisms like zoning and power rotation whereby political parties alternate leadership among regions have been adopted to reduce political exclusion and ensure a sense of belonging across the federating units (Ibeanu & Egwu, 2007). For example, since the return to democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria has witnessed an unofficial agreement to rotate the presidency between the North and the South, as seen in the successive presidencies of Olusegun Obasanjo (Southwest), Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (Northwest), Goodluck Jonathan (South-South), Muhammadu Buhari (Northwest), and Bola Ahmed Tinubu (Southwest). Despite

these mechanisms, however, Nigeria continues to experience recurrent episodes of violence and instability, such as the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast, farmer-herder clashes in the Middle Belt, and separatist agitations by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the Southeast. These events highlight the limitations of current institutional arrangements in achieving genuine national integration and political stability (Akinola, 2013; Onuoha, 2014). Critics argue that while power-sharing arrangements have helped to avert total state collapse, they have also entrenched ethnicity and mediocrity in public administration. The federal character principle, for instance, is often perceived as undermining meritocracy, thereby weakening institutional effectiveness (Ojo, 2009). Furthermore, elite manipulation of these frameworks has fostered patronage politics and deepened the exclusion of marginalized groups, especially women and minority ethnicities outside the dominant tripartite structure. In this context, the central question emerges: Does power-sharing genuinely work in Nigeria? That is, do the institutional designs intended to manage diversity and promote unity contribute meaningfully to sustainable peace and political stability, or do they merely provide short-term fixes that obscure deeper systemic dysfunctions? This study seeks to explore this question by critically assessing Nigeria's power-sharing institutions, using both historical analysis and contemporary examples.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the adoption of various power-sharing mechanisms aimed at managing Nigeria's complex ethno-religious and regional diversity, the country continues to grapple with persistent political instability, violent conflicts, and deep-seated grievances among its constituent groups. Institutional frameworks such as federalism, the federal character principle, and the informal practice of zoning political offices were designed to promote inclusiveness, equitable distribution of resources, and a sense of belonging among Nigeria's diverse populations. However, the recurrence of secessionist agitations (e.g., IPOB in the Southeast), ethno-religious violence (particularly in the Middle Belt), and insurgencies (such as Boko Haram in the Northeast) suggests that these mechanisms may not be delivering their intended outcomes effectively.

Scholars have argued that while power-sharing arrangements in Nigeria have been moderately successful in preventing outright state collapse, they often reinforce elite dominance, ethnic clientelism, and a culture of entitlement rather than fostering true national integration and democratic stability (Suberu, 2001; Ojo, 2009). The federal character principle, for instance, is widely criticized for promoting mediocrity and inefficiency in public institutions, as appointments are often based on ethnic representation rather than competence (Mustapha, 2006). Similarly, zoning arrangements, though intended to reduce inter-group competition, have been manipulated by political elites and lack constitutional backing, resulting in tensions during leadership transitions (Ibeanu & Egwu, 2007). Furthermore, many of these power-sharing mechanisms are reactive rather than preventive, lacking the structural depth to address historical injustices, marginalization, and the socio-economic roots of conflict. The prevailing model of elite-driven accommodation often excludes grassroots participation, and this top-down approach has failed to quell growing distrust between ethnic and regional groups. The persistence of political unrest, despite decades of experimentation with various forms of institutional power-sharing, raises a critical question: Does power-sharing genuinely work in ensuring stability in Nigeria's divided society, or are these arrangements merely superficial remedies that obscure deeper systemic issues? This study, therefore, seeks to critically assess the effectiveness of Nigeria's power-sharing designs in managing diversity and promoting political stability.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to critically assess the effectiveness of power-sharing institutional designs in promoting political stability and national integration in Nigeria's deeply divided society. The study is specifically designed to:

- i. Examine the historical context and rationale behind the adoption of power-sharing mechanisms in Nigeria.
- ii. Assess the effectiveness of the federal character principle in promoting inclusiveness and national integration.
- iii. Evaluate how federalism and state creation have influenced inter-ethnic and regional relations in Nigeria.
- iv. Investigate the extent to which power-sharing arrangements have mitigated ethno-religious conflicts and secessionist agitations.

Research Questions

- i. What is the historical context and underlying rationale behind the adoption of power-sharing mechanisms in Nigeria?
- ii. How effective is the federal character principle in promoting inclusiveness and fostering national integration in Nigeria?
- iii. In what ways have federalism and the creation of new states influenced inter-ethnic and regional relations in Nigeria?
- iv. To what extent have power-sharing arrangements helped to mitigate ethno-religious conflicts and secessionist agitations in Nigeria?

Literature Review

Power-sharing refers to institutional arrangements aimed at managing societal divisions, particularly in pluralistic or divided societies. Arend Lijphart (2018) defines consociationalism as a model that emphasizes grand coalitions, segmental autonomy, proportionality in political representation, and minority veto rights. It is particularly suitable for societies with deep ethnic, linguistic, or religious cleavages. In contrast, Donald Horowitz's integrative model (Horowitz, 2017) critiques consociationalism for entrenching divisions and instead proposes electoral incentives and institutional designs—such as vote pooling and cross-ethnic alliances - to foster intergroup cooperation and reduce sectarianism. Federalism, another power-sharing approach involves territorial decentralization that allows subnational units (like Nigeria's states) to exercise autonomy. As noted by Suberu and Diamond (2018), federalism has been deployed in Nigeria to manage diversity and reduce tensions by providing ethnic groups with some control over local affairs.

Key Concepts

- i. **Ethnic Fragmentation** refers to the presence of multiple identity groups with competing interests. It complicates governance, especially in states like Nigeria, where no single group has demographic or political dominance (Adeniran & Ibrahim, 2020).
- ii. **Institutional Design** is the configuration of political institutions (electoral systems, federal structures, appointment processes) aimed at ensuring inclusion and stability (Omede & Bakare, 2018).
- iii. **Elite Bargaining** involves informal negotiations among powerful actors to share political offices and state resources, often underpinning zoning and rotational agreements (Ojo & Adebayo, 2021).

Historical Context of Power-Sharing in Nigeria

Colonial Legacy and the Foundation of Ethnic Politics: British colonial rule institutionalized ethnic divisions in Nigeria primarily through the policy of indirect rule, which relied on existing traditional authorities to govern on behalf of the colonial administration. This system, first implemented in Northern Nigeria and later extended to the West and East, entrenched local ethnic identities by empowering emirs, obas, and chiefs to administer justice, collect taxes, and manage local affairs. In effect, this fostered the development of parallel administrative structures based on ethnic and regional lines, creating minimal interaction across ethnic groups and stifling the emergence of a unified national consciousness. Furthermore, the colonial practice of administrative compartmentalization - governing the Northern, Western, and Eastern regions as separate political entities with distinct policies - reinforced the perception of Nigeria as a union of disparate groups rather than a single nation (Adebanwi & Obadare, 2017). This structure contributed significantly to the politicization of ethnicity, as access to political power and economic resources became increasingly tied to regional and ethnic identity. Consequently, in the lead-up to independence, political mobilization occurred largely along ethnic and regional lines. This culminated in the formation of regionally dominant and ethnically aligned political parties such as the Northern People's Congress (NPC), representing mainly the Hausa-Fulani North; the Action Group (AG), based in the Yoruba-dominated Western Region; and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), drawing support primarily from the Igbo East. These parties not only mirrored the colonial administrative divisions but also deepened inter-regional rivalries, laying the groundwork for post-independence political instability and the eventual breakdown of the First Republic. The long-term consequence of this colonial legacy was a weak foundation for national integration, as politics in Nigeria remained centered around ethnic patronage and regional competition. The inherited structure made it difficult to develop national institutions that could transcend identity cleavages, ultimately complicating efforts at inclusive governance and sustainable democratic development.

Nigeria's First Republic and the Failure of Elite Consensus: The First Republic (1960–1966) marked Nigeria's initial attempt at democratic governance following independence from British colonial rule. However, the period was characterized by intense regionalism and ethnic-based politics. The three dominant political parties—the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in the North, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) in the East, and the Action Group (AG) in the West - were closely aligned with the major ethnic groups: Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba, respectively. These parties functioned more as regional hegemons than national platforms, resulting in a fragmented political landscape devoid of national consensus or integrative leadership (Olasupo & Fayomi, 2018). Efforts to form coalitions were largely opportunistic and unstable. The NPC and NCNC formed an alliance at the federal level, marginalizing the AG, which was then confined to the Western Region. This exclusion, coupled with allegations of electoral manipulation and corruption, led to widespread disillusionment. The Western Region crisis of 1965 - commonly referred to as the "Wild Wild West" - was marked by violent protests, electoral fraud, and political assassinations. These tensions further deteriorated inter-regional trust, ultimately setting the stage for the military coup of January 1966. The failure of political elites to transcend regional loyalties and build a unified national project culminated in the breakdown of civilian rule and the eruption of the Biafran War (1967–1970), which exposed the fragility of Nigeria's national cohesion.

Post-Civil War and the Emergence of the Federal Character Principle: In the aftermath of the civil war, the Nigerian government, under General Yakubu Gowon, initiated a "Reconciliation, Reconstruction, and Rehabilitation" agenda to heal the deep wounds left by the conflict. One of the major structural outcomes of this post-war initiative was the formal institutionalization of the **Federal Character Principle**. Introduced in the 1979 Constitution and retained in the 1999 Constitution (Section 14[3]), this principle was designed to prevent ethnic domination by ensuring that appointments to public service and distribution of government resources reflected the diverse character of the Nigerian federation (Ayoade, 2020). The rationale behind this policy was to promote national integration by giving every state and ethnic group a stake in the federal structure. It sought to address the perceived marginalization that had fueled the Biafran secession. However, while the Federal Character Principle has contributed to a more inclusive representation in federal institutions, critics argue that it has often prioritized ethnicity over merit, encouraged tokenism, and reinforced sectional identities rather than national unity.

Military Regimes and Constitutional Engineering: Between 1966 and 1999, Nigeria experienced a series of military governments that significantly altered the structure and philosophy of governance. One of the most impactful strategies adopted by the military was the aggressive creation of new states and local governments. From the original 3 regions at independence, the country evolved to 12 states in 1967, 19 in 1976, 21 in 1987, 30 in 1991, and finally 36 states by 1996. The justification was to weaken the dominance of the major ethnic groups, accommodate minorities, and bring governance closer to the people (Ezeibe, 2020). In parallel, military rulers engaged in constitutional engineering, introducing new constitutions or revising existing ones to reflect their vision of centralized but supposedly inclusive governance. While the structures adopted during these regimes retained the façade of federalism, in practice, the central government held excessive power, particularly over fiscal and security matters. As such, the military's interventions were often contradictory: they promoted administrative devolution through state creation, yet simultaneously centralized political authority in the presidency or military high command. These conflicting tendencies created enduring tensions within Nigeria's federal system.

Fourth Republic and Informal Power Rotation Arrangements (Zoning): With the restoration of civilian rule in 1999 and the commencement of the Fourth Republic, Nigeria adopted a new form of elite consensus through informal power rotation, popularly known as zoning. While not constitutionally codified, zoning refers to the practice of rotating key political offices - especially the presidency - between Nigeria's six geopolitical zones (North-West, North-East, North-Central, South-West, South-East, South-South). This mechanism was devised to manage inter-ethnic competition and ensure a sense of inclusion for all regions in the national leadership structure (Ogundiya & Baba, 2022). The People's Democratic Party (PDP), Nigeria's dominant party from 1999 to 2015, pioneered this arrangement by alternating presidential candidates between the North and South. This informal practice helped defuse elite-level tensions and prevented the monopolization of power by any single region. However, its lack of legal backing has made it vulnerable to manipulation. Disputes over zoning have become flashpoints in party primaries and national elections, as seen in the controversies surrounding presidential nominations in 2011, 2015, and 2023. While zoning has contributed to relative political stability by encouraging elite compromise, it remains contentious and is criticized for prioritizing regional balance over competence and democratic choice.

Institutional Designs and Power-Sharing Mechanisms in Nigeria

Nigeria's institutional framework reflects a combination of formal and informal power-sharing arrangements designed to manage its deep ethno-regional divisions and promote national cohesion. These mechanisms include federalism, the federal character principle, political zoning, representational structures within state institutions, and electoral rules that seek to foster inclusivity and integration.

Federalism and State Creation as Mechanisms of Devolution

Nigeria operates a federal system consisting of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), a structure intended to manage ethnic plurality and ensure subnational autonomy. The federal arrangement allows individual states to exercise considerable powers in local governance, such as education, infrastructure, and law enforcement. State creation has been one of the most significant tools used by both military and civilian regimes to accommodate demands for minority inclusion and to decentralize power from the dominance of the three major ethnic groups—Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo (Suberu & Diamond, 2018). Successive military governments, particularly from 1967 to 1996, strategically increased the number of states to create a more balanced federation. This process gave ethnic minorities greater access to political representation and federal resources, thereby reducing secessionist tendencies in certain regions (Ezeibe, 2020). However, critics argue that while state creation has enhanced representation, it has also led to fiscal dependence on the federal government, administrative inefficiency, and the proliferation of weak subnational units.

Federal Character Principle and the National Character Commission

The Federal Character Principle, first introduced in the 1979 Constitution and retained in Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution, aims to reflect Nigeria's diversity in the distribution of public offices and national resources. It mandates that no ethnic group or state should dominate federal appointments, thus institutionalizing inclusion and proportional representation. The Federal Character Commission (FCC), established in 1996, oversees compliance with these requirements across all ministries, departments, and agencies. This principle has been instrumental in diffusing perceptions of marginalization and enhancing national unity by ensuring that all states and regions feel represented in the national framework. Nevertheless, scholars have raised concerns that this approach sometimes undermines meritocracy, encourages mediocrity, and entrenches ethnic patronage in public institutions (Ali & Umeh, 2019). Moreover, implementation is often inconsistent and subject to political manipulation, raising questions about its effectiveness as a sustainable power-sharing tool.

Political Party Zoning and Informal Elite Agreements

Beyond formal institutional arrangements, Nigeria also relies on informal elite agreements to share power. Zoning, a practice popularized by the People's Democratic Party (PDP), involves rotating political offices - particularly the presidency - among the six geopolitical zones to ensure equitable regional representation. Though not constitutionally enshrined, zoning has become a widely accepted political norm and is also used in appointments to ministerial and legislative leadership positions. The All Progressives Congress (APC) and other parties have adopted similar arrangements to balance regional interests during party primaries and national elections (Ojo & Adebayo, 2021). Zoning helps reduce inter-group political rivalry and elite-level tensions by assuring marginalized regions of eventual access to national power. However, it has been criticized for being undemocratic, as it restricts political competition and prioritizes geographic

origin over competence. Disputes over the interpretation and rotation of zoning arrangements have also triggered internal party crises and national debates, particularly during the 2011 and 2023 elections.

Structure of the Executive, Legislature, and Judiciary

Nigeria's governance architecture is tripartite, consisting of the executive, legislature, and judiciary, all of which are designed to reflect the country's federal character. The executive branch, headed by the president, is required to appoint ministers from each of the 36 states, thereby ensuring broad national representation. The legislature is bicameral, comprising the Senate (where each state has equal representation with three senators) and the House of Representatives (with membership based on population). This structure provides both equality of states and population-sensitive representation, theoretically balancing the interests of larger and smaller states. However, political appointments to executive and judicial offices often reflect ethno-regional considerations rather than professional merit. According to Ibrahim and Nwachukwu (2020), appointments to high-level judicial and security positions have at times mirrored the ethno-political preferences of the president in power, thereby undermining public trust in the neutrality of state institutions.

Electoral Systems and Inclusivity

Nigeria's electoral system incorporates features designed to encourage national integration. Specifically, the presidential election employs a two-tier threshold: a candidate must secure not only a simple majority of votes but also at least 25% of votes in two-thirds of the 36 states. This provision is intended to ensure that elected presidents possess a broad national mandate and appeal across ethnic and regional lines. Despite these integrative mechanisms, the electoral process is often marred by violence, vote-buying, and regional polarization. Adeniran and Ibrahim (2020) argue that elections in Nigeria are typically contested along ethnic and religious divides, with parties mobilizing voters based on sectional identities. Consequently, while the system encourages geographical spread in theory, it has not completely eliminated divisive politics in practice.

Methodology

Research Design: This study employed a descriptive survey research design, which is appropriate for collecting detailed information on people's opinions, perceptions, and experiences with power-sharing institutions in Nigeria. The design enabled the researchers to examine how formal and informal power-sharing mechanisms (such as federalism, federal character, and zoning) contribute to political stability and national integration in Nigeria's divided society.

Population of the Study: The population comprised key stakeholders in Nigeria's political and administrative system, including political officeholders, public servants, scholars of political science and public administration, and civil society actors. These groups were selected due to their firsthand experience and informed perspectives on the implementation and outcomes of power-sharing mechanisms in Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Technique: A sample of 250 respondents was selected from six geopolitical zones of Nigeria to ensure regional representation. The sample included: 60 public servants in federal ministries, 50 members of political parties (PDP, APC), 40 academics in political science and related disciplines, 50 civil society actors, and 50 local government officials. Purposive and stratified random sampling techniques were employed. Purposive sampling was used to identify participants with relevant knowledge and experience, while stratified random sampling ensured proportional representation from each geopolitical zone and group.

Instrument for Data Collection: A structured questionnaire titled "Institutional Power-Sharing Assessment Questionnaire (IPSAQ)" was used to collect data. The questionnaire consisted of 60 items. The items were rated using a 5-point Likert and rating scales.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument: The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts in political science and research methodology from the University of Ibadan and Ahmadu Bello University. Their feedback was used to refine ambiguous items. A pilot study was conducted with 30 respondents from two non-sampled states (Kogi and Abia). The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient yielded a reliability index of 0.84, indicating high internal consistency of the instrument.

Method of Data Collection: The researcher administered the questionnaire physically and electronically (via email and Google Forms) to reach a wider demographic and reduce geographic limitations. Data collection lasted six weeks to ensure adequate response rates.

Method of Data Analysis: Data were analyzed using both **quantitative and qualitative techniques**. Descriptive statistics such as **means, and standard deviations** were used to summarize responses.

Research Question 1: What is the historical context and underlying rationale behind the adoption of power-sharing mechanisms in Nigeria?

Table 1: Historical Context and Rationale for Power-Sharing Mechanisms

S/N	Questionnaire Statement	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
Sub-cluster 1: Colonial Legacy & Post-Independence Conflicts				
1	Power-sharing was adopted to manage ethnic rivalries inherited from British colonial rule.	4.20	0.80	Agreed
2	The 1966 coups and civil war (1967-1970) necessitated power-sharing to prevent recurrence.	4.50	0.60	Agreed
3	The 1979 Constitution institutionalized power-sharing to address regional dominance.	3.90	0.90	Agreed
4	Fear of Northern hegemony motivated Southern demands for rotational presidency.	4.10	0.85	Agreed
5	Power-sharing emerged as a compromise to unify fragmented groups after independence.	4.00	0.95	Agreed
Sub-cluster 2: Constitutional & Institutional Design				
6	The federal character principle (Section 14(3)) mandates equitable power distribution.	3.80	0.75	Agreed
7	Zoning in political parties ensures diverse representation in leadership.	3.60	0.85	Agreed

8	Revenue allocation formulas were designed to reduce inter-regional resource conflicts.	3.40	0.95	Disagreed
9	Quota systems in education/employment aim to rectify historical exclusion.	3.70	0.80	Agreed
10	Power-sharing mechanisms were embedded to stabilize military-to-civilian transitions.	3.55	0.70	Agreed
Sub-cluster 3: Socio-Political Objectives				
11	Power-sharing prevents marginalization of minority ethnic/religious groups.	3.65	0.90	Agreed
12	It promotes national cohesion by ensuring all groups "have a stake" in governance.	3.45	0.85	Disagreed
13	The rationale includes mitigating secessionist pressures (e.g., Biafra).	4.30	0.65	Agreed
14	Power-sharing was adopted to balance Muslim-Christian political influence.	3.95	0.75	Agreed
15	It seeks to reduce patronage networks by diversifying bureaucratic appointments.	3.30	0.95	Disagreed

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents (10 out of 15 items) agreed to a high extent that power-sharing in Nigeria has strong historical and rational foundations. Key justifications include managing ethnic rivalries from colonial rule ($\bar{x} = 4.20$), addressing civil war trauma ($\bar{x} = 4.50$), and constitutional efforts like the federal character principle ($\bar{x} = 3.80$). However, lower mean scores for revenue allocation ($\bar{x} = 3.40$), national cohesion claims ($\bar{x} = 3.45$), and patronage reduction ($\bar{x} = 3.30$) suggest concerns over implementation effectiveness. Overall, while the rationale for power-sharing is widely supported, gaps in practice remain evident.

Research Question 2: How effective is the federal character principle in promoting inclusiveness and fostering national integration in Nigeria?

Table 2: Effectiveness of Federal Character Principle in Promoting Inclusiveness

S/N	Questionnaire Statement	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
Sub-cluster 1: Representation & Access				
1	The principle ensures ethnic diversity in federal appointments.	3.30	0.90	NE
2	It provides equitable access to public sector jobs for minority groups.	3.40	0.85	NE
3	Quotas in universities improve educational opportunities for disadvantaged states.	3.10	1.00	NE
4	Federal character reduces dominance of major ethnic groups (Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo).	2.90	0.95	NE
5	It guarantees ministerial positions for all 36 states.	4.00	0.75	E
Sub-cluster 2: National Unity & Perception				
6	The principle fosters a sense of belonging among Nigerians.	3.20	0.80	NE
7	It is perceived as a tool to weaken ethnic distrust.	2.85	0.90	NE
8	Citizens view federal character as promoting "unity in diversity."	3.00	0.85	NE
9	The principle enhances loyalty to the nation over ethnic identity.	2.75	0.95	NE
10	It reduces inter-group competition for federal resources.	3.10	0.80	NE

Sub-cluster 3: Implementation Challenges				
11	Federal character appointments prioritize quota over merit.	4.20	0.70	E
12	Corruption undermines equitable implementation of the principle.	4.40	0.65	E
13	Compliance is enforced more in theory than practice.	4.10	0.75	E
14	Minority groups still feel excluded despite the principle.	3.90	0.80	E
15	It has failed to address perceptions of Northern overrepresentation.	4.00	0.85	E

Table 2 shows that respondents largely perceive the Federal Character Principle as ineffective in promoting true inclusiveness and national integration. While it ensures basic geographic representation (e.g., ministerial slots for all states, $\bar{x} = 4.00$), it falls short in areas like equitable job access, reducing ethnic dominance, and fostering unity. Most statements on national cohesion and fairness scored below 3.50. However, respondents strongly agree that implementation is undermined by corruption ($\bar{x} = 4.40$), quota-over-merit practices ($\bar{x} = 4.20$), and weak enforcement. Thus, the principle's impact is seen more as symbolic than substantive.

Research Question 3: In what ways have federalism and the creation of new states influenced inter-ethnic and regional relations in Nigeria?

Table 3: Influence of Federalism and State Creation on Inter-Ethnic/Regional Relations

S/N	Questionnaire Statement	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
Sub-cluster 1: Conflict Mitigation & Autonomy				
1	State creation reduces agitation by granting autonomy to minority groups.	3.80	0.75	Agreed
2	New states ease resource control tensions (e.g., Niger Delta).	3.40	0.90	Disagreed
3	It minimizes ethnic clashes by separating rival groups into distinct states.	3.30	0.85	Disagreed
4	State boundaries align with ethnic identities, reducing internal conflicts.	3.10	0.95	Disagreed
5	Fiscal federalism allows states to develop at their own pace.	2.90	0.80	Disagreed
Sub-cluster 2: Political Representation				
6	More states increase minority access to federal resources.	3.70	0.70	Agreed
7	State creation balances power between North and South.	3.50	0.75	Agreed
8	It strengthens state-level governance over local issues.	3.20	0.85	Disagreed
9	New states empower historically marginalized communities.	3.85	0.65	Agreed
10	It dilutes the political influence of dominant ethnic groups.	3.00	0.90	Disagreed
Sub-cluster 3: Socio-Economic Effects				
11	State proliferation deepens inter-state inequality due to uneven resources.	4.10	0.60	Agreed
12	Competition for statehood fuels ethnic resentment (e.g., Middle Belt).	4.00	0.75	Agreed
13	Smaller states improve grassroots service delivery.	3.30	0.80	Disagreed
14	Over-dependence on federal allocations stifles state	4.20	0.70	Agreed

	economic innovation.			
15	State creation fragments social cohesion by emphasizing sub-ethnic identities.	3.95	0.65	Agreed

Table 3 shows that respondents have mixed views on how federalism and state creation have shaped inter-ethnic and regional relations in Nigeria. While there is agreement that new states grant autonomy ($\bar{x} = 3.80$), increase minority access to resources ($\bar{x} = 3.70$), and empower marginalized groups ($\bar{x} = 3.85$), many disagree that they effectively reduce ethnic clashes or improve governance. Socio-economic concerns ranked high, with strong agreement that state creation has led to inter-state inequality ($\bar{x} = 4.10$), ethnic resentment ($\bar{x} = 4.00$), and fiscal dependence ($\bar{x} = 4.20$). Overall, federalism brings limited unity benefits but also deepens economic and ethnic fragmentation.

Research Question 4: To what extent have power-sharing arrangements helped to mitigate ethno-religious conflicts and secessionist agitations in Nigeria?

Table 4: Impact of Power-Sharing on Conflict Mitigation and Secessionist Agitations

S/ N	Questionnaire Statement	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
Sub-cluster 1: Ethno-Religious Conflict Management				
1	Power-sharing reduces violence by including all groups in decision-making.	3.30	0.85	Low Extent
2	Rotational presidency prevents religious polarization (e.g., Muslim-Christian divide).	3.60	0.80	High Extent
3	It de-escalates farmer-herder conflicts through inclusive dialogue.	2.90	0.95	Low Extent
4	Quota systems in security forces build trust in conflict zones.	3.20	0.90	Low Extent
5	Power-sharing pacifies volatile regions (e.g., Middle Belt).	3.10	0.85	Low Extent
Sub-cluster 2: Secessionist Agitations				
6	Power-sharing weakens separatist movements (e.g., IPOB, Yoruba nation).	3.40	0.75	Low Extent
7	It addresses grievances driving Biafra resurgence.	2.80	1.00	Low Extent
8	Resource control concessions reduce Niger Delta militancy.	3.70	0.70	High Extent
9	Inclusive policies diminish support for Oduduwa Republic agitation.	3.10	0.80	Low Extent
10	Power-sharing integrates secessionist leaders into mainstream politics.	3.50	0.65	High Extent
Sub-cluster 3: Structural Limitations				
11	Elite manipulation of power-sharing fuels resentment (e.g., "cabal" influence).	4.10	0.60	High Extent
12	Power-sharing ignores non-ethnic triggers (e.g., unemployment, poverty).	4.00	0.75	High Extent
13	It fails to resolve deep-seated historical injustices.	4.20	0.70	High Extent
14	Inconsistent application heightens distrust (e.g., breached zoning agreements).	4.30	0.65	High Extent

15	Power-sharing is a superficial solution to systemic governance failures.	4.00	0.80	High Extent
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Table 4 shows that respondents perceive power-sharing as having limited impact on reducing ethno-religious conflicts and secessionist agitations in Nigeria. While mechanisms like rotational presidency ($\bar{x} = 3.60$) and resource control in the Niger Delta ($\bar{x} = 3.70$) received moderate support, most items in conflict and secession clusters were rated low. In contrast, respondents strongly agreed that elite manipulation ($\bar{x} = 4.10$), inconsistent application ($\bar{x} = 4.30$), and failure to address poverty and historical grievances ($\bar{x} = 4.00$ – 4.20) undermine power-sharing's effectiveness. Overall, it is viewed more as a cosmetic fix than a lasting solution to Nigeria's deep-rooted divisions.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that power-sharing in Nigeria is historically justified by colonial legacies, civil war trauma, and constitutional efforts to unify the country. This aligns with the assertions of Olasupo and Fayomi (2018), who emphasized that Nigeria's colonial administrative system entrenched ethnic divisions, making post-independence governance highly fragile. The Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970) further exposed the dangers of exclusionary politics, necessitating power-sharing mechanisms to prevent recurrence (Ayoade, 2020). Scholars like Ezeibe (2020) argue that these historical factors laid the groundwork for consociational designs such as federalism and the Federal Character Principle. However, implementation gaps persist, as power-sharing often functions more in theory than in inclusive practice (Ali & Umeh, 2019). The findings of the study revealed that the Federal Character Principle provides symbolic representation but remains ineffective in fostering true inclusiveness and national integration. Although the principle mandates geographical spread in appointments (Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution), it has often been manipulated, prioritizing quota over merit (Ibrahim & Nwachukwu, 2020). Respondents viewed the principle as ineffective in addressing ethnic distrust and marginalization. This supports the position of Ogundiya and Baba (2022), who found that despite institutional attempts to balance representation, feelings of alienation and overrepresentation -especially of the North-persist. Moreover, Suberu and Diamond (2018) note that compliance is uneven, and corruption has eroded the principle's credibility, reducing its integrative potential.

The findings of the study revealed that federalism and state creation have enhanced political inclusion for minority groups but have simultaneously contributed to ethnic fragmentation, inequality, and overdependence on federal allocations. This reflects the arguments of Ezeibe (2020), who noted that while state creation grants minority regions a sense of autonomy and political voice, it also leads to intense competition for federal resources and fosters ethnic resentment. Similarly, Adeniran and Ibrahim (2020) argue that the logic of state proliferation, rather than promoting unity, often results in administrative inefficiency and financial dependence. The rise of identity politics and increased inter-state inequality, especially between resource-rich and resource-poor states, underscores the structural imbalance within Nigeria's federal arrangement (Ojo & Adebayo, 2021). The findings of the study revealed that power-sharing arrangements have had limited success in mitigating ethno-religious conflicts and secessionist agitations due to structural, political, and socio-economic limitations. Despite efforts like rotational presidency and resource control concessions, respondents believe these measures only partially reduce secessionist pressures (e.g., from IPOB or the Oduduwa movement). According to Ibrahim and Nwachukwu (2020), such arrangements do not address

deeper grievances related to injustice, poverty, and historical marginalization. Furthermore, the elite manipulation of power-sharing agreements, as discussed by Ogundiya and Baba (2022), has undermined public trust. Horowitz's (2019) critique of consociationalism is relevant here, as he warned that power-sharing without accountability often reinforces elite dominance rather than resolves conflict.

Conclusion

The study concludes that while power-sharing in Nigeria - through federalism, state creation, the Federal Character Principle, and zoning - was introduced to manage ethno-religious and regional divisions, its effectiveness is limited. Though historically justified, these mechanisms often suffer from poor implementation, elite manipulation, and failure to address deeper structural issues like poverty and injustice. As such, power-sharing has only partially promoted stability and unity. For lasting impact, it must be complemented by reforms that ensure equity, merit, and inclusive governance.

Recommendations

The study recommends as follows:

- i. The Nigerian government should ensure the full and transparent implementation of existing power-sharing provisions - particularly the Federal Character Principle - by empowering the Federal Character Commission with greater autonomy and enforcement authority. This will help reduce elite manipulation and restore public confidence in equitable representation.
- ii. While inclusiveness is essential, the current quota-based system should be restructured to incorporate merit-based criteria, especially in sensitive sectors like education, security, and public service. This reform should aim to balance equity with competence, addressing both historical disadvantages and performance gaps.
- iii. Power-sharing alone is insufficient to ensure national unity. The government should tackle underlying structural issues including poverty, unemployment, and historical injustices through inclusive development policies, job creation, and youth engagement programs. This will reduce the appeal of secessionist movements and ethno-religious conflicts.
- iv. There is a need to re-evaluate Nigeria's state creation model, focusing on economic viability, governance efficiency, and service delivery, rather than ethnic balancing alone. A review of the revenue allocation formula should also be conducted to reduce overdependence on the center and encourage fiscal responsibility and innovation at the state level.

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